

SUFI CASTIGATOR

**Ahmad Kasravi and the Iranian
mystical tradition**

Lloyd Ridgeon



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SUFI CASTIGATOR

Sufi Castigator investigates the writings of Ahmad Kasravi who was one of the foremost intellectuals in Iran. It studies his work within the context of Sufism in modern Iran and mystical Persian literature and includes translations of Kasravi's writings.

Kasravi provides a fascinating topic for those with interests in Sufism and Iranian studies as he attempted to produce a form of Iranian identity that he believed was compatible with the modern age and Iranian nationalism. His stress on reason and the demystification of religion caused him to repudiate Sufism and much of the Sufi literary heritage as backwards and believe it a reason for the weakness of modern Iran. Kasravi's historical observations were weak, and his writings indicate that he was working towards pre-determined conclusions. However, his works are of significance because they contributed to a major discussion in the 1930s–40s about the ideal image and identity that Iranians should adopt. Despite the academic weaknesses of Kasravi's works, he had a profound effect on the next generation of thinkers.

Sufi Castigator is a stimulating and meticulously researched book and includes two lengthy translations of Kasravi's works, *Sufism* and *What does Hafez Say?*, and will appeal to scholars of Middle Eastern studies.

Lloyd Ridgeon is senior lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Glasgow. His research interests include Sufism, Islamic theology and history, modern Iranian politics and culture and Iranian cinema and literature. He is the author of *Aziz Nasafi*, and he has recently edited a reader entitled *Religion and Politics in Modern Iran*.

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Ahmad Kasravi

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FOR JESSICA, WITH LOVE AND GRATITUDE
FOR SO MUCH

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Initially the project was small in scope, as I had intended to focus only on Kasravi's *Sufigari*. Reading the text of *Sufigari* was problematic enough, and I owe a huge debt to Dr Ali Shiri, for we spent many hours together, studying Kasravi's text, trying to fathom the badly edited text and rendering it into coherent English. Gratitude is also due to a number of scholars who contributed in a variety of ways. These include Dr John Gurney, Prof. C.E. Bosworth, Dr H. Katouzian and Prof. Majd al-Din Keyvani.

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The photographs of Kasravi that appear in this book were supplied to me by Amir Kojoori, a grandson of Ahmad Kasravi. I am very grateful for his kindness in allowing me to re-reproduce these images from the Amir Kojoori Collection, Beverly Hills, California. The image that appears at the end of Chapter 4 is found on the cover of a Qajar era *Divan-e Hafez*. It is reproduced with the kind

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permission of © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. (The image is catalogued under the reference Per.389.) Many thanks are due to Cara Williams for her assistance with this image. The photograph of E.G. Browne is reproduced from the 1923 Cambridge University Press edition of *A Year Amongst the Persians*. I would like to express my thanks to CUP for permission to re-print this photograph.

Most research involves some degree of financial cost. Over the years I have been very fortunate to receive a number of travel grants from the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS). The latest grant enabled me to spend some time in Tehran in the summer of 2002, where I was able to meet with several eminent scholars to discuss my research on Kasravi. This financial assistance from BIPS is indispensable, as field work in Iran not only assists in current research, but it also permits researchers to network and establish contacts that I have found can be very fruitful in future projects. It is hoped that BIPS continues its support. Chapter 5 of the present book was first published in *Iran* (2004), the journal of BIPS, under the title “Ahmad Kasravi’s Criticisms of E.G. Browne”.

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THE BACKGROUND

Introduction

Anti-Sufi sentiment has a long history in Islamic lands, aside from the executions of famous Sufis such as Hallaj¹ and ‘Ayn al-Qozat²; criticisms of Sufi “innovations” in life-style and practical matters are present in the writings of mediaeval scholars such as Ibn Jawzi, while Sufi metaphysical “deviations” were the focus of Ibn Taymiyya.³ In the contemporary period, practical and metaphysical issues continued to be of concern to a wide range of Muslims, including clerics and lay intellectuals who desired to modernise the societies in which they lived. Yet for the latter group, the concern about the effects of Sufism was focused on a new social unit, the nation-state, which had been emerging during the nineteenth century in the Middle East but was actively promoted to a greater degree in the aftermath of the First World War. Modernisation for intellectuals in the Middle East was not merely a matter of establishing the political and economic institutions of a strong national, centralised state, for modernisation required a certain mentality that in essence focused on “rational” behaviour and religion. A rational form of religion was desirable because it contrasted with emotional and uncontrollable mystical forms of worship and “experience”, which some witnessed in a form of Sufism, that attempts to transcend reason to reach the Truth through rituals such as ecstatic dancing and bodily deprivations. Sufi belief and ritual epitomised what was worse in the Islamic tradition for modern Islamic reformists of the Salafi tradition, which attempted to strip Islam of all the innovations and corrupt beliefs that had perverted “pure” Islam. Typical of such reformers was the Syrian Rashid Rida (1865–1935) whose acerbic rejection of Sufism reached boiling point when he witnessed the ecstatic dancing of the “whirling dervishes” in Tripoli.⁴ Another reason for anti-Sufi sentiment was the hegemonic power it enjoyed among its adherents and its sympathisers, which was enshrined within Arabic, Turkish and Persian literature to the extent that the works of Persian Sufi poets enjoyed prestige that for many were second only to the Qur’an.

Aside from explicitly “Islamic” reasons for anti-Sufism, there were political reasons that help to explain why the mystical tradition was sometimes perceived as a threat. The socio-political power of Sufi leaders over their followers was a

potential danger to the existence of the nation-state, and therefore, for example, the leader of the secular Turkish republic, Kemal Atatürk, banned the Sufi brotherhoods in 1925 (following a major rebellion by a Kurdish Naqshbandi Sufi, Sheikh Sa'îd), and other anti-Sufis such as Ahmad Kasravi engaged in an annual book-burning ritual when mystical literature was flung into the flames.

Anti-Sufi activity that was undertaken for the benefit of the nation-state belittled the relationship between modernity and freedom. Indeed, the linkage of anti-Sufism with nationalism in itself hints at coercion and the attempt to impose a new hegemonic order on society. Katouzian has claimed that nationalism "conceives of 'the nation' as an organic body, and underrates the importance of ethnic, linguistic and social divisions within it. It is aggressive and offensive towards other peoples and races".⁵ Of significance too is that it can underrate religious diversity within the imagined nation. Nevertheless the persistence of religious belief, in particular, attachment to mysticism (whether Sufi, Christian, Jewish or other forms of mystical claims) despite its "irrationality", indicates that the appeal of the mystical tradition was too great for the reforms of Atatürk or the polemics of Kasravi to overcome. Although there is little doubt that traditional forms of Sufi activity have declined dramatically over the past one hundred years in many parts of the Islamic world,⁶ scores of leading Iranian intellectuals, politicians and religious figures have either been inspired by the mystical tradition (as shown in the writings of Khomeini,⁷ Shari'ati⁸ and Sorush⁹) or have noted its resilient staying power (Motahhari¹⁰). The reasons for the durability of Sufism are complex but its survival in one form or another may be attributable to the perception that Sufism serves as a form of dissent against authoritarian power structures (such as Atatürk's secular state) and that it provides individuals with what they consider to be an intimate relationship with God. The panaceas offered to Muslims in the twentieth century that have ranged from various attempts at forms of Westernisation and socialism to a "puritanical" form of Islam (whether Wahhabi, Salafi or Shi'ite) ironically may have contributed to the preservation of forms of Sufism in the Middle East.

In recent years there has been an expansion of academic literature on anti-Sufism,¹¹ and perhaps the most useful of general surveys is Elizabeth Sirriyeh's *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*.¹² Despite this interest in modern anti-Sufism, it remains true that "a high proportion of the research [on modern Sufism] has been undertaken by sociologists and anthropologists and sometimes also by political scientists but [there is] certainly far less by those for whom the classical Sufi tradition is of major concern".¹³ It was a result of such observations that persuaded me to engage in a research project that combined my own interests in both mediaeval Sufism and modern Iran, and it was Ahmad Kasravi's anti-Sufi writings that provided me with such an opportunity. The decision to pursue this project was attributable in part to his reputation as one of the foremost (and controversial) intellectuals of twentieth century Iran. Indeed, he has been termed "outstanding"¹⁴, and even his opponents, such as Ruhollah Khomeini, have stated that he was a "a historian well-versed in history and a good writer".¹⁵

I first became acquainted with Kasravi's writings as an undergraduate student at Durham University, where I read passages of his *History of the Constitutional Revolution* with Dr Paul Luft. Having graduated, I continued my studies in Japan, where I was introduced to Dr Iraj Parsinejad who asked me to translate an article that he had written about Kasravi as a literary critic (and which contains a brief section on Kasravi's anti-Sufi views). When Sirriyeh published her book, I was conscious that an investigation into Kasravi's anti-Sufis views would be of benefit to those interested in modern Sufism, contemporary intellectual activity in Iran and the Middle East and Islam in general. Very ambitious in scope, Sirriyeh's *Sufis and anti-Sufis* covers a wide historical span (about two hundred years) and focuses on the Arab, Turkish, Indian and Iranian thinkers (the only Iranian to be studied in any depth, however, is 'Ali Shari'ati). The work presented here builds upon Sirriyeh's pioneering efforts and offers a more specific and detailed analysis of Ahmad Kasravi.

Whether or not one agrees with Kasravi's views on Sufism, his position as one of the major forces on the intellectual scene in Iran in the first half of the twentieth century cannot be denied. His writings on diverse topics ranging from language,¹⁶ gender,¹⁷ history¹⁸ and religion¹⁹ were all concerned with the well-being of Iran, and an analysis of these works assists modern scholars to appreciate the strength of Iranian national sentiment during a period when chauvinistic Iranian nationalism emerged as a significant factor in socio-political affairs. Kasravi's nationalism and his attacks on irrationality certainly had an effect on a subsequent generation of leading Iranian thinkers, including Jalal Al-e Ahmad²⁰ and 'Ali Shari'ati.²¹ Moreover, his criticisms of Shi'ism galvanised the clerical forces to respond in writing, and indeed, Ruhollah Khomeini's *Unveiling of Secrets* was written to refute such works.²² Ironically then, Kasravi contributed to the re-assertion of clerical participation in society which had its ultimate conclusion in the 1978 revolution which elevated Khomeini to the position of Iran's spiritual and political leader.

Given the significance of Kasravi in the modern Iranian intellectual tradition, it is surprising that so little attention has been paid to him by academics. In English there have been several articles published on various aspects of Kasravi's thought that are worthy of mention. These include two articles written by the late Mohammad Ali Jazayeri who was an active member of the *Azadegan*, the party established by Kasravi in 1941. Jazayeri's two articles that were published in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* concentrated on the issue of Persian poetry,²³ and he also wrote a long article entitled "Kasravi, Iconoclastic Thinker of Twentieth Century Iran"²⁴ which serves as a summary of Kasravi's views. Ervand Abrahamian's "Kasravi: The Integrative Nationalist of Iran" provides a brief survey of Kasravi's life, his "ideology of solidarism" and his form of nationalism.²⁵ The subtext of nationalism once again appears in an article by Amin Banani, "Ahmad Kasravi and the 'Purification' of Persian".²⁶ There is also some unpublished material in English that is devoted to Kasravi's thought, and this includes William Staley Jr's *The Intellectual Development of Ahmad Kasravi*,²⁷ and

Minoo Ramyar's *Sayyid Ahmad Kasravi: Historian, Language Reformer and Thinker*.²⁸ The most extensive treatment of Kasravi's life appears in a chapter within Iraj Parsinejad's *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran*,²⁹ in which the main focus is on Kasravi's views on literary criticism in general, novels and reform of the Persian language.

Translations of Kasravi's writings in English are even fewer in number than scholarly analysis of his works. The only texts that have been published are *Dar Pīramun-e Islam* ("On Islam") and *Shi'ehgari* ("Shi'ism"), which were translated by M.R. Ghanoonparvar.³⁰ Providing a full list of Kasravi's numerous writings would be inappropriate in this book, however, a selected bibliography of sixty-six works is provided in *On Islam and Shi'ism*. Kasravi continues to be of interest to Iranian scholars, and two works that appeared just before the Islamic revolution are worthy of mention, namely H. Asil's *A Survey of Kasravi's Political Thought*,³¹ and 'A. Dastghayb's *A Critique of Kasravi's Works*.³² More recently, Iranian scholars have paid attention to Kasravi with the publication of a series of articles on various elements of Kasravi's thought in the 2002 publication of *Iran-nameh*³³ and in the collection of articles that originally appeared in the first year of publication from his newspaper, *Payman*.³⁴ The assassination of Kasravi has also been covered in *Qatl-e Kasravi* ("The Murder of Kasravi") by Naser Pakdaman.³⁵

This book is composed of four analytical chapters and two chapters that are translations of Kasravi's own works. Chapter 2 describes the variety of opinions of Sufism in Iran in the generation prior to and during Kasravi's life. A wide cross section of views including those of clerics, intellectual reformers (some influenced to a great extent by the West, others more comfortable with their traditional Islamic and mystical heritage and yet others who rejected Islam or at least desired major re-interpretation) and Sufis themselves are presented to reveal whether Kasravi's criticisms were unique or not. Following this, Chapter 3 analyses Kasravi's criticisms of Sufism, in particular those that are found within a section of his book *Sufigari*. This critique is then compared to the views of Kasravi's contemporary Islamic reformers (although from different geographical locations) to demonstrate that contrary to Kasravi's opinion, Sufism (regardless of its rationality or otherwise) could have been utilised as a force for social integration. Chapter 4 is an annotated translation of the whole text of Kasravi's *Sufigari* ("Sufism"). One of Kasravi's major complaints regarding Sufism is that it had been promoted by European orientalist in their attempts to undermine Iran and preserve Western hegemony in the region. Kasravi was particularly critical of Edward G. Browne, and Chapter 5 weighs Kasravi's rejection of Browne's scholarship by first assessing Kasravi's criticism and second by investigating the motives behind Browne's study of Iranian literature and religion. Chapter 6 investigates Kasravi's dislike for certain forms of Persian literature, in particular, Hafez, the celebrated "mystical" fourteenth century poet, and Chapter 7 provides a translation of Kasravi's book, *Hafez cheh mi-guyad?* ("What Hafez Says?").

The difficulty of translating Kasravi's works has been noted elsewhere, and in the translations of Kasravi works presented here I have tried to remain as literal

as possible, and only on a few occasions have I yielded to the temptation to render a much more “reader-friendly” approach. The translation of *Sufigari* is based upon the third edition (which includes Kasravi’s introduction). I have not been able to see earlier editions.

Kasravi’s life

Ahmad Kasravi was born in 1890 in the Azari speaking city of Tabriz in north-east Iran, where his father, Mir Qasim, was a carpet trader. Mir Qasim was a religious man yet he disapproved of manifestations of popular Shi‘ism including *rawzeh-khani* (commemoration of the massacre of the third Shi‘ite Imam, Hosayn, and members of his family at Kerbala) and *ta‘ziyeh* (passion plays depicting the events of Kerbala). His religiosity, however, led him to send his eldest son Mir Ahmad to study in a Najaf seminary, and when he died, Ahmad, the second son, was responsible for fulfilling the father’s desire of having a scholar of religion in the family.

Ahmad Kasravi’s studies were cut short by his father’s death, yet by his family’s insistence (and despite his own reluctance and distaste for traditional religious education – “by pressure and force they made me become a molla”³⁶) he resumed his studies at the new seminary that had opened in Tabriz. After four years, at the age of twenty he graduated and he was persuaded to become the local preacher. However, his distaste for his occupation became evident:

I didn’t behave like the mollas. Just as I said, I refused to wear the big, tall, loose turban, I didn’t wear yellow or green shoes, I didn’t put on white trousers, and I didn’t let my beard grow. I wore shoes with heels and machine-woven socks, and I fastened a belt around my waist . . . and since my eyes-sight had become weak, at the doctor’s orders I wore spectacles. This was another reason that I was considered “Westernised”. All of this did not accord with “justice” which was a condition for being a preacher and a molla.³⁷

In 1911 the Russians occupied Tabriz, and the anti-constitutionalist former monarch, Mohammad ‘Ali Shah, attempted to re-instate himself on the throne. Kasravi gave sermons in Tabriz in which he encouraged people to take up arms against the Russians and supported the aims of the Constitutionalists, while other clerics in Tabriz were suspicious of Constitutionalism because of its supposed connection with secularism. Some clerics collaborated with the Russian forces in order to take revenge on their religious opponents, and Kasravi described how he forced himself to watch the executions of these supporters of Constitutionalism so that he would never forget the savagery of the bigoted clerics.

In the same year, Kasravi became aware of the need to learn European languages to further his knowledge. He mentioned that in the seminary in Tabriz there were classes in the astronomy of Ptolemy to which he would occasionally

listen, and he would also read the writings on astronomy by the sixteenth century scholar, Sheikh Baha'i. Interest in astrology was increasing in this period because of the appearance of Haley's Comet, which in some way was linked by some to the possible re-appearance of Mohammad 'Ali Shah in Iran. Kasravi sought further information on astronomy in Arabic journals and also in European literature. His entry into European literature came through Camille Flammarion's "Astronomy", which had been translated into Russian and then into Persian by Talebof.³⁸

Kasravi's command of Arabic was first class and he had published several articles in Egyptian and Syrian Arabic journals, but he realised the importance of understanding French and English. To this end he began to learn English from the teachers of the American Memorial School in Tabriz where he was employed as a teacher of Arabic. However, he resigned from this school because of the sectarianism between Muslim and Christian students.

At this time, the Russian revolution of 1917 inspired many movements in Iran with socialist leanings, and one of these was the Azarbayjan Democrat Party. Kasravi was involved in mediating between the various factions within this party, indicating his standing within the region. He also organised the Democrat Party's local food relief committee during the severe famine of 1918. However, Kasravi distanced himself from the Democrat Party when it adopted a more separatist position and declared the independence of the Republic of Azadestan. Kasravi felt that his life was threatened because of his political and religious views, and since most of those who sympathised with his opinions were in prison, he decided to flee to Tehran.

Once in the capital in 1919 he met with 'Ali Asghar Hekmat (who was then the head of personnel at the Ministry of Education). It is worth noting Kasravi's account of this encounter, as it reveals an interesting dimension of his personality:

In Tehran I tried at first to find a job for myself, and I knew it was best to ask for work at the Ministry of Culture [Education]. One day I went there. Mr. 'Ali Asghar Hekmat was the chief of recruitment, and he asked about my intentions. When he saw me with a [a molla's] turban and cloak he couldn't believe that I knew English. He said, "Are you prepared for someone to test you?" I replied, "First, I will give that person a test, and then I'll sit [his] test." He said, "How [shall we do this]?" I replied, "In an English dictionary there are 450,000 words, and an English speaker knows no more than 10,000 of them, for he doesn't need to know any more than this. Now it is likely that the person who wants to test me will choose the words from the dictionary, and he will want to show that he has stumped me. Therefore it would be better if I go first, and show that I have stumped him." He said, "Well, this will be the test, and it is clear that you know English." Then we talked to each other a little in English.³⁹

Kasravi was offered a position as an Arabic teacher. It was most probably around this time that he became acquainted with several of the new generation

of men of letters, including Sa'īd Nafisi, whose recollection of Kasravi is worth mentioning:

At that time Kasravi wore a black turban, an outer cloak and a long tunic, and he threw a black sleeveless cloak over that. His small black turban was the best evidence that he had been a religious student in Tabriz. He had a thin face, high cheekbones, a troubled and irritated countenance . . . He spoke Persian with a distinct Azarbayjani accent, but he talked very deliberately. The first conversation that I had with him proved to me that he was a very fearless man, and he even voiced his own particular beliefs without any special concern. He had no fear of saying something that was contrary to tradition or contrary to the beliefs of others. The famous expression that “his head smelt of lamb and spinach stew (*qurmeh-sabzi*)” is quite appropriate.⁴⁰

The expression “his head smelt of *qurmeh-sabzi*” is a colloquial idiom, used frequently with a political implication. The person who is described in this way is characterised as rash and invites trouble.⁴¹ Kasravi soon returned to his family in Tabriz,⁴² and in 1921 he entered the Ministry of Justice, where he worked for the next ten years in various locations within Iran. This gave him the opportunity to become acquainted with the languages and histories of these regions, providing him with the background for his academic works. Kasravi was uncompromising in establishing justice and rooting out corruption in his work within the Ministry, and unsurprisingly he made several powerful enemies, which resulted in his recall from various places and his relocation in remote areas. Yet during this period, Kasravi continued his academic writing, the value of which was recognised by Denison Ross who summarised some of Kasravi's work.⁴³ It was probably at about this time that Kasravi was made a member of the Royal Asiatic Society (although it seems he was unaware of this).⁴⁴ It was as a result of the good opinion that European orientalisks had of Kasravi that Taymurtash, the Minister of Court, on his return from a European trip, offered Kasravi a scholarship to devote his attention to academic work. Kasravi declined the offer, claiming that all of his writings had been produced while employed at the Ministry of Justice, so there was no need to resign his position. Kasravi was probably worried about the implications of receiving a stipend from the state, which could easily be withdrawn if he wrote anything that was perceived to be against its interests.

Kasravi's commitment to pursuing justice even resulted in his judgement against Reza Shah, when he defended some farmers against the claims of the first Pahlavi monarch. However, as a result of the pressure against him, Kasravi resigned from the Ministry of Justice, and he decided to pursue the career of a lawyer, while at the same time teaching Iranian history. As a lawyer he was involved in a number of high profile cases, including his defence in 1938 of the so-called 53, a group of Marxists led by Taqi Arani (see Chapter 2).

During the 1930s Kasravi's activities in the fields of journalism and research intensified. He set out his world-view in 1932–3 in a work called *Ayin* (Creed) which also served as a refutation of left-wing ideas that were becoming increasingly popular in Iran. In 1933–4 he published *The Five-Hundred Year History of Khuzestan*⁴⁵ and between 1934 and 1941 he published *The Eighteen Year History of Azarbayjan*,⁴⁶ the aim of both works being to denigrate separatism within Iran. Moreover he launched a monthly journal in December 1933 entitled *Payman*, of which he was editor and “almost sole writer”.⁴⁷ Recognised as one of Iran's leading academic figures, Kasravi was a target for the Ministry of Education who were seeking staff for the newly established University of Tehran. However, Kasravi's views on the detrimental effects of classical Persian poetry (including Hafez, Khayyam and Sa'di) on Iranian society, which he had made public in his writings and speeches, resulted in the Minister of Education denying Kasravi a lectureship (see Chapter 6). Kasravi was not prepared to compromise and he remained an iconoclastic figure among literary circles, breaking with many of the most respected academics of the era.

In 1941 Reza Shah was forced to abdicate, as Britain and the Soviet Union desired an Iran that was secure from the threat of the influence of Nazi Germany. Reza Shah's young son Mohammad Reza became the new Shah, and there ensued a period of relative political freedom which permitted greater public expression through books, periodicals and newspapers. From 1941 until his death in 1946 Kasravi published a remarkable number of pamphlets and articles. Many of these were composed of articles that had already been published in *Payman*, and this accounts for much of the repetition that one finds in Kasravi's writings. The political freedom allowed Kasravi to establish an organisation called the *Azadegan* that served to promote his ideology throughout the country, with branches in all major cities. Kasravi believed that reform of Iran could only be achieved through educating the masses, and the main elements of reform (the promotion of democracy, economic welfare and education and the improvement of social and personal life) were contained within sixteen points that he outlined in a speech in 1941. These points were further disseminated within the official newspaper of the *Azadegan*, *Parcham*, edited by Kasravi, and variations of *Parcham* were printed between 1942 and 1945. The perceived radicalism of the ideas espoused by the *Azadegan* and their ritualistic burning of books that they disliked resulted in members being beaten up, imprisoned, dismissed from governmental jobs and denied promotion.⁴⁸ (Kasravi notes that the first day of the Persian month of *Dey* was set aside for the book-burning festival.⁴⁹ Moreover, he notes that this festival was observed in Tehran, Ahvaz, Tabriz, Maragheh, Urumieh and Kashmar.)⁵⁰ The strength of the *Azadegan*, however, has been questioned, as Abrahamian states that at its height the party could only attract no more than a few thousand supporters.⁵¹

By 1945, Kasravi believed that having awakened Iranians to the problems facing the country, the *Azadegan* were ready to take control of Iran, however, a month later an attempt was made on his life. The individuals responsible for the

assassination attempt were members of a group called the *Feda'īyan-e Islam* (Devotees of Islam), a radical group of Shi'ites who were outraged by Kasravi's 1944 critique of traditional Shi'ism. Yet the public disquiet caused by the *Azadegan* resulted in greater opposition from the clerics, who forged an alliance with elements within the government, including the speaker of the parliament who publicly accused Kasravi of advocating anti-Islamic views, and furthermore, Premier Sadr brought charges of propagating "heretical ideas" against him.⁵² On 11 March 1946 Kasravi was shot dead by members of the *Feda'īyan-e Islam* during the last session of the preliminary hearings of the heresy charges brought against him.

That Kasravi was a man full of contradictions there can be little doubt; his writings range from the polemical and over-exaggerated rantings of an individual blinded by his own ideology to careful and sophisticated historical observations. Yet the polemical writings, such as those on Sufism, Shi'ism, Persian poetry and literature, are significant because of the reaction that they caused. Kasravi's works on these topics touched a raw nerve among Sufi sympathisers (or those who appreciated traditional Persian literature) and Shi'ites not because they were reasoned works (indeed, they were not) but because of the general secularising trend of the times and the need to defend these major elements of Iranian identity. Moreover, Kasravi's polemical works and his activities were taken seriously because of his reputation and position in Iranian society. He was respected as a scholar by European academics and even his critics admired his work on the Constitutional Revolution.

Kasravi should be lauded for his bravery in questioning sacrosanct opinions regarding religion and literature. His patriotism cannot be questioned, and even though his views on how to promote Iran were questioned by many within Iran, his steadfast rejection of superstitious beliefs (including elements of Sufism and Shi'ism) and his opposition to the wholesale absorption of Western culture into Iran struck a chord with many Iranians. It is worth noting how he was remembered in *Sokhan*, one of the leading journals of Kasravi's era:

One of the most tragic events that has occurred in recent times is the assassination of Ahmad Kasravi in the Palace of Justice... He was one of the intellectuals of this country, and his equal, unfortunately, are few in number. This industrious and profound man was a researcher of Iranian history and compiler of Persian words, and was esteemed and respected not only by those Iranians who thirst for knowledge, but also by the world's specialists of the East... We did not agree with many of his recent[ly expressed] opinions... but anyway, every Iranian who thirsts for knowledge must regard the careful and scholarly works of Kasravi with respect and must recognise the worth of the service of this intellectual. The assassination of Kasravi... is one of the shameful stains which has befallen our society, and Iranians are defamed in the opinion of the world because the murder of such an intellectual and sinless man – for the crime of expressing a belief contrary to public opinion – is an example of barbarity.⁵³



Figure 1.1 The young Kasravi. “His head smelt of qurmeh-sabzi”.

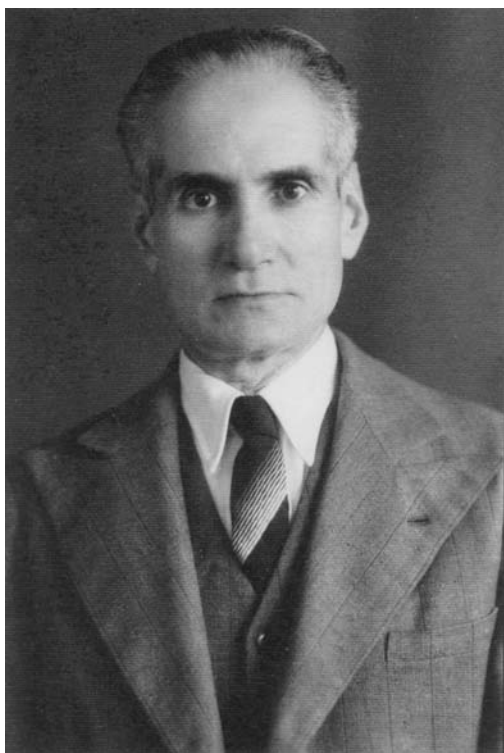


Figure 1.2 The mature Kasravi.



Figure 1.3 Ahmad Kasravi with his second wife 'Azizeh (on Kasravi's right) and their children: Zahra (far right), Jalal (seated in front at his father's feet) and Behzad (between Kasravi and 'Azizeh). Also in the photograph are Kasravi's daughters from his first marriage: Hamideh (next to Kasravi, wearing a hat) and Nafiseh (far left). Two of Kasravi's children from his third marriage are also in this photograph: Farrokhzad (who stands between Kasravi and Hamideh) and Mahin who is sitting on the floor next to Jalal). The young lady sitting next to Nafiseh is probably Kasravi's niece, and the lady between Zahra and Hamideh is the family maid. This photograph was taken in 1929-30.

OPINIONS OF SUFISM IN IRAN, 1850–1950

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to describe the diverse opinions about Sufism that existed in Iran between 1850 and 1950, a century that captures both Kasravi's and the preceding generation. Such a wide temporal horizon will be investigated because the intellectual currents and prejudices of one generation always have a bearing on the subsequent one. The whole period was one of remarkable, if not unprecedented, change in Iran, as from 1850 onwards the forces of modernisation and the threats of European imperialism from both Britain and Russia resulted in the realisation that Iran was placed in a precariously weak economic, political and military situation. The international circumstances and increasing information about the advances in science and the socio-economic welfare of European countries contributed to the growing demand among some of Iran's intelligentsia and religious classes for reform of the autocratic royal court and for a change in values among Iranians. Aside from the turmoil associated with contacts with the West, there were also indigenous factors that presented the state and other power-brokers with potential threats. One of the most explosive issues was the emergence of Babism, out of which developed Baha'i-ism. A combination of all of these factors helps to explain why Iran was in such a state of ferment in the second half of the nineteenth century and the subsequent fifty years witnessed circumstances that perpetuated a sense of upheaval. These included the granting of a constitution which limited the autocratic rights of the Shah (and which also gave rise to the subsequent chaos and civil war), the continuing threat to Iran from Britain and Russia (and then the Soviet Union) and the rise of Reza Shah and his policy of absolute rule, modernisation and secularisation.

One might suppose that in such circumstances the attention given to Sufism by the court, the intelligentsia, the Shi'ite establishment and other groups interested in Iran would have been overshadowed, but this was far from the case.¹ Although these groups had varying degrees of concern about Sufism, the intelligentsia and the Shi'ite clerics remained conscious of the Persian mystical tradition and contributed to the on-going discussion of its place in modern Iran. Moreover, the Sufis too did not remain as an isolated group within society that was immune from

national and international developments and opinions, and some Sufis adopted the new trappings of modern life and embraced contemporary ideals to meet the challenges of the twentieth century.

Despite this there did seem to be a consensus that traditional forms of Sufi ritual and practice were on the decline. In the words of the celebrated historian of Persian Sufism, ‘Abd al-Hosayn Zarrinkub,

Towards the end [of the Qajar era], aside from the discovery and promotion of the new thinking – and what has been called “progressive thought” which regarded mysticism and Sufism as the cause of the decline of the kingdom and nation – the existence of perpetual conflict between the [Sufi] sheikhs in defending [their claims to] *qotb-ship* [i.e. spiritual leadership] was also among the reasons for its accelerating decline, and with the start of the Constitutional Revolution and in subsequent years, the market day of Sufism in Iran virtually ceased to exist. Despite this, there is a literature worthy of consideration from the long history of Sufism and its ups and downs that remains as a legacy.²

Although Kasravi claimed that the Sufis were not few in number, his views accord with those of Zarrinkub concerning the hidden influence of Sufism through Persian literature, which contained the Sufi “evil teachings”.³ Another respected intellectual who lived and wrote in this period was Sa‘id Nafisi, and he expressed a similar view to that adumbrated by Kasravi, although he was more favourably inclined to Sufism. He observed:

Sufism has been completely adopted from the day it appeared. All thinkers, poets from Iran and India have, whether they want to or not, been Sufi-natured up to today. This wisdom has settled so deeply in the peoples of these two countries, that they themselves do not know to what extent they are Sufi.⁴

The challenges facing Sufism in the modern period were unique, because in addition to the traditional complaints and criticisms against it (such as the permissibility within Islam of certain Sufi beliefs and ritual activity) there were new questions that were raised concerning the desirability of such beliefs and rituals within a modern nation-state with a rational, secularising tendency. At stake was the creation of Iranian identity and the ability to influence those who possessed power, and this involved not only the court and politicians but also the Shi‘ite clergy and the intelligentsia.

Before describing how various groups in Iranian society responded to Sufism between 1850 and 1950 it should be stressed that use of the terms “Sufi”, “Shi‘ite cleric” and “intellectual” are not mutually exclusive. Each of these is an umbrella term including a wide variety of followers; Sufis may also be Shi‘ite clerics, and intellectual in the Iranian context included secular individuals, devout Shi‘ite

Muslims and also Sufis. Examples abound of Sufis who were Shi'ite clerics or *mojtaheds*,⁵ and likewise there are examples of modernising intellectuals who were affiliated or sympathetic to Sufi groups, as will be shown in this chapter.

Shi'ite clerics

Shi'ism became the state religion of Iran under the Safavid dynasty (1501–1722) which had emerged at the beginning of the sixteenth century as a mystically inspired movement that was supported militarily by Turkish tribes that bestowed their allegiance to their spiritual master who was the leader of the Safavid Sufi order. However, the eclipse of Sufism under the Safavids probably reflected the realisation by the Shah that the maintenance of law and order would be difficult to effect given the claims of competing and conflicting groups, including the various extreme Sufi movements (such as the Qizilbash) and the Shi'ite clerics. Aside from political considerations, the criticisms of Sufism by the Shi'ite clerics of this period reflected a combination of distaste for the theological implications of Sufi belief and disgust at Sufi rituals. For example, in the seventeenth century Molla Mohammad Taher Qommi complained of the ritual of *chelleh*, a period of forty days for spiritual contemplation during which, according to Qommi, the Sufi experienced visions and believed he had ascended to God and sometimes viewed himself as God.⁶ Such theological criticisms and also the accusation that some individuals use Sufism as an excuse to satisfy their greed and participate in musical concerts were common during this period.⁷

Clerical authority was based upon the claim that the senior Shi'ite clerics, or *mojtaheds*, were responsible for guiding the community, because they were those best qualified through their learning and rationally derived knowledge to interpret the probable will and desire of the Hidden Imam. This notion of authority and power based on learning contrasted with the Sufi belief in mystical experience, through which the individual could gain access to God. Even though most of the Sufi orders, at least by the end of the Safavid dynasty, had themselves adopted Shi'ism as their own form of Islam, the Sufi claim of direct experience of the divine by-passed the *mojtahed's* argument to be the best representative of the sacred realm on earth. Such Sufi claims continued into the Qajar period, and so, for example, Safi 'Ali Shah (d. 1898), one of the most prominent Sufis of the late nineteenth century, described how just as the Mahdi (or the Hidden Imam) will arrive in the world of phenomena (the Shi'ite doctrine being that the Mahdi will establish a brief period of justice prior to the end of time) he also appears mystically within the gnostic possessing the power of "spiritual witnessing".⁸ True authority lies with the Imam to whom all obedience is due, but since the Imam is in occultation and it is the gnostic that has direct contact with him, the Imam's "guiding functions devolve practically upon the *qotb* [the Sufi gnostic]".⁹ Some scholars have claimed that the Sufis actually recognised the *mojtahed's* deputyship of the Imam in juridical matters;¹⁰ however, acceptance of this view must be taken with caution, especially in the light of Safi 'Ali Shah's remark that the Sufi

sheikh or *pir* is the successor (*khalifeh*) of Mohammad Mostafa in the holy law (*shari'at*) and the deputy of 'Ali's vicegerency through the designation of friendship (*be-nass-e valayat*) in the Sufi path (*tariqeh*).¹¹

It would be too simplistic, however, to describe the Shi'ite clerics as claiming absolute authority over believers, as Sachedina concludes that Morteza al-Ansari, the leading Shi'ite cleric of nineteenth-century Iran, held that "the rescript of the twelfth Imam, although in some sense portending the general deputyship of the Imamate jurist, lacks sufficient evidence to establish total discretion of the jurist over the lives and property of believers".¹² Bearing this in mind, the clerical revolution for the absolute obedience given by Sufi disciples to their masters is understandable. The reformist cleric Shari'at Sangalaji (1890–1944) abhorred the authority of the Sufi sheikh over his disciples and that they frequently compared the relationship of the disciple to the sheikh in terms of a cadaver in the hands of the washer of the dead.¹³

An example of obedience by a disciple to a sheikh can be witnessed in the episode concerning the aforementioned Safi 'Ali Shah and his disciple Zahir al-Dowleh (1864–1924) who was the Shah's son-in-law and Minister of Public Ceremonies. Naser al-Din Shah (r. 1848–98) sent Zahir al-Dowleh to Safi 'Ali Shah's *khanaqah* so that he could know what was going on there; however, Zahir al-Dowleh was spiritually affected by Safi 'Ali Shah and became one of his disciples.¹⁴ Following this there is the remarkable story of how on Safi 'Ali Shah's command Zahir al-Dowleh came to the *khanaqah* having walked slowly in a "female fashion" through the streets of Tehran in dervish clothing, carrying the Sufi *kashkul* and axe and praising 'Ali. At a certain crossroads he paused for a quarter of an hour and continued his praise of 'Ali in a loud voice, and passers by were astounded that a minister of the Shah's court behaved in this manner. They dropped gold and silver coins into the *kashkul* and Zahir al-Dowleh proceeded on to the *khanaqah*. When Safi 'Ali Shah saw Zahir al-Dowleh he was happy and said, "I wanted to make you fall from that peak of grandeur that the pride of royal connection has brought about in you." He then commanded Zahir al-Dowleh to change his clothes and to serve the people.¹⁵ It is unclear whether this episode actually took place, but it has certainly been reported within Sufi circles as fact and serves as an good illustration of how the disciple must be loyal and obedient to his spiritual master.

It was also the spiritual teachings of Sufi masters or sheikhs that was the cause of some distaste for the clerics. The Sufis are well known for their spiritual interpretation of sacred texts, including the Qur'an, and for some, their method of "spiritual unveiling" permitted too great a degree of hermeneutical flexibility. Sufi hermeneutics contrasted with that of the clerics, so that one of the prevailing tendencies in Mashhad in the early twentieth century defended "the independent understanding of Qur'anic knowledge... from allegorical and rational inferences from Islamic texts, and firmly rejects Islamic philosophy and mysticism".¹⁶ (This later was known as *maktab-e tafkik* or school of segregationism).

Another source of power over which the Shi'ite clerics and Sufi competed against one another was financial. Traditionally, the clerics could expect to receive the religious taxes (*khoms*). From this source of revenue the clerics were then able to offer bursaries to religious students, and the number of bursaries a cleric was able to create was an indication of the esteem he enjoyed. The Sufis had to compete financially with the clerics, and Chahardahi claims that the Sufi orders received a tithe, rather than the *zakat* and *khoms*, and he cites a Ne'matollahi Sufi, Shams al-Orafa (d. 1935), who stated, "One eighth of yearly profit, properly accounted, must be handed over to the sheikh's *khanaqah* which will be used for the benefit of the poor [Sufis]."¹⁷ Whether those who donated one-eighth of the profit and the *khoms* to the Sufis and to the clerics can only be conjectured. However, it can be assumed that as Iran's economy deteriorated in the nineteenth century with the dramatic increase in European imports, it would certainly have been difficult for Iranians to meet all of these financial "obligations".

The competition between clerics and Sufis for Iranian hearts and pockets applied even to the person of the Shah. The Shah did not wield absolute and unquestioned power in Iran, for the monarchs of the Qajar dynasty were aware that their claims to legitimacy were somewhat tenuous, as Shi'ism denies political legitimacy to monarchs, which belongs to the Hidden Imam, and in his absence, to his representatives. Believing that they were these legitimate representatives, the clerics recognised the *de facto* legitimacy of the monarchy so long as Islam was observed. The institutional power enjoyed by the clerics in Iran during this period also helped to guard their privileged position in society, as they controlled the religious courts, officiated at the signing of commercial agreements in the bazaar, and were largely responsible for education. The influence that the *ulema* enjoyed at the royal court depended to a large extent upon the religious proclivity of the ruler, but an example of the extent of clerical power can be illustrated by the fact that Fath 'Ali Shah (d. 1834) was pushed into a disastrous war with the Russians in 1826 by clerical persuasion.¹⁸ Moreover, the attempts of Naser al-Din Shah to generate income by granting concessions to Europeans failed partly due to the resistance of the *ulema*.¹⁹

Sufism re-emerged in Iran in the nineteenth century after its eclipse under the Safavids, and inevitably it was regarded as a threat by some clerics to their own position in society. This was particularly the case during the reign of Mohammad Shah (1836–48) who was attracted from an early age to Sufism. During his reign the Sufis and their shrines enjoyed lavish royal patronage, and Sufis were even awarded with posts at court. The advances made by the Sufis during Mohammad Shah's reign were "never entirely lost, and they enjoyed a position of security and even respect in the reign of Naser al-Din Shah", yet they never represented anything more than "a mild irritant for the ulama".²⁰

Aside from issues of power, finance and theology, Shi'ite clerics were also concerned with Sufi practices, which the scholarly Shi'ite clerics regarded as superstition and innovation. (Of course, the Shi'ite tradition too had its own share of "superstitions" and here it is possible to witness a convergence of folk Sufism

with folk Shi'ism.)²¹ Typical of the criticisms of Shi'ite clerics are those of Khalkhali, an influential cleric during the period of the Constitutional Revolution in the first decade of the twentieth century. In a treatise written in 1907 Khalkhali condemned the Sufis for transgressing the law, superstition, pomposity, begging and smoking opium.²² The Sufis have often been associated with the smoking of opium, and indeed, Safi 'Ali Shah freely admitted to smoking it at a *khanaqah* in Haydarabad as if there was nothing unusual or problematic about the practice.²³ Another issue of concern for the Shi'ite clerics surrounded the lack of respect that the Sufis paid to the Qur'an and to the holy law. Safi 'Ali Shah mentioned how some people complained about his rendering of the Arabic Qur'an into Persian verse, thus providing a *tafsir* of God's word for literate Persians.²⁴ Safi 'Ali Shah's response was that he had put into verse the interpretation of the Qur'an, not the Qur'an itself.²⁵

At this point it is necessary to distinguish clearly between popular Sufism, which its critics sometimes associated with begging, smoking opium, excessive asceticism and ecstatic dancing, and a "higher" and more intellectualised version known as *'erfan* (sometimes translated as gnosis).²⁶ The difference between Sufism and *'erfan* was not something that emerged during the period of Qajar Iran; indeed, eminent scholars of the School of Isfahan during the Safavid era were also critical of the ecstatic Sufi tradition and its superstitions and tricks,²⁷ preferring a more philosophical and theoretical approach to metaphysical questions that at the same time did not negate the possibility of mystical experience. In the latter half of the nineteenth century the study of *'erfan* was led by Hajji Molla Hadi Sabzevari, Molla 'Ali Modarres Zonuzi (who was also a Sufi initiate and wrote a response to questions posed to him from a Qajar prince)²⁸ and Aqa Mohammad Reza Qomsha'i, and Tehran became the centre for following Islamic philosophy and *'erfan*.²⁹

The study of *'erfan* was adopted too by some of the leading clerics of the first half of the twentieth century, thus Shari'at Sangalaji was taught *'erfan* in Tehran by one Mirza Hashem Eshkevari,³⁰ and Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–89) took classes in the same subject offered by Mirza Mohammad 'Ali Shahabadi (1875–1950) and Mirza 'Ali Akbar Hakim Yazdi (d. 1925). Khomeini mentions the suspicion that some clerics held for mysticism to the extent that it was necessary to find a preacher to testify from the *minbar* that Mirza 'Ali Akbar Hakim Yazdi actually read the Qur'an. Sympathetic to the tradition of *'erfan*, Khomeini was later to observe, "Those who wear cloaks and turbans and denounce the mystics as unbelievers do not understand what they are saying; if they did they would not denounce them."³¹ Another example of the suspicion surrounding *'erfan* concerns the difficulty in obtaining mystical texts; as a young scholar in Mashhad (the holiest city in Shi'ite Iran because of the existence of Imam Reza's tomb) in the 1920s, Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar could not find a copy of Rumi's *Divan-e Shams* (perhaps due to the Sufi nature of the contents, or, as Franklin Lewis suggests, because Rumi was a Sunni).³² Such caution about *'erfan* resulted in some holding secret classes (as in Khomeini's case),³³ and even if the classes were public then

the prerequisites for entry into the class prevented access to those who were not serious or academically minded. E.G. Browne has recorded the difficulty in attending Hajji Molla Hadi Sabzevari's classes on metaphysics and Molla Sadra. His students would have had to have shown proficiency in preliminary studies of Arabic grammar, logic, mathematics, jurisprudence and scholastic theology.³⁴

There were some clerics, however, who regarded both Sufism and *'erfan* as dangerous; perhaps the best example is provided in the writings of 'Allameh Abu Fazl Borqe'i, which were probably published in the 1950s.³⁵ Of particular note is Borqe'i's works entitled *Haqiqat al-'erfan: taftish dar shenasa'i-ye 'aref va sufi va sha'er va hakim va dervish* ("The Truth of Gnosis: A Search to Recognise the Gnostic, the Sufi, the Poet, the Wise Man and Dervish").³⁶ This book is 391 pages in length and is divided into seven sections: the words of God, the prophet and the immaculate imams (peace be upon them) on the subject of Sufism and the dervishes; the words of the Shi'ite *ulema* about them; mention in the books of the Shi'ite learned ones on this topic; the states (*ahval*), ways, saying and beliefs of the gnostics and the spiritual elders; refutation of their innovations with rational and legal proofs; the infidelity of the gnostics, spiritual elders and philosophers, and an exposition refuting them; that the originators and heads of the orders have not been Shi'ites and that all of the Sufi sects are the same in being lost.

These headings offer an indication of Borqe'i's opposition to the Sufis, but the majority of the text contains two sections, five and six, which examine the Sufi innovations (*bi'dat*) and Sufi heresies (*kofr*), respectively. The fourteen Sufi innovations that Borqe'i discusses are primarily concerned with practice, and 131 pages are devoted to this topic. The sub-titles in chapter five reflect the Sufi innovations which are "causing disunity among Muslims"; the long moustaches of the Sufis (which for Borqe'i contravened the practice of Mohammad); "passionate love (*'eshq*)"; "poetry and the poets"; "inappropriate interpretations and filthy, gnostic explanations and accounts"; "the silent and loud *zekr*"; "*chelleh*, asceticism (*riyazat*) and spiritual witnessing (*mokashafeh*)"; "spiritual witnessing and charismatic powers (*mokashafeh va karamat*)"; "establishing the *morshed*, the pole and the *vali-ye amr*"; "knowledge, books, asceticism (*zohd*), piety (*taqva*) and the [refutation] of them"; "music, dancing, and singing"; "going to the *khanaqah* and abandoning the mosque"; "unity between enemies and friends without [feeling] revulsion"; "inventing *hadiths*, defamation and lying" and "customs, etiquette and Sufi paraphernalia". The sixth section reflects Borqe'i's dislike of Sufi theology and faith, and this chapter (which is fifty pages in length) contains twelve heresies: denial of the fundamentals of religion (*osul-e din*); making legal (*halal*) prohibited things (*haram*); the unity of existence (*vahdat-e vujud*), unification (*ettehad*), religious acts that may or may not be performed and the relinquishing of obligatory acts, claiming connection (*vesal*) to the Truth, the pre-determinism (*jabri*) of the Sufis and gnostics, the fatalism (*qadari*) of the Sufis and gnostics, devotion to the *morshed* in worship, witnessing the Truth, and reincarnation (*tanasukh*).

Having explained in detail the innovations and heresies of the Sufis, Borqe'i then provides a summarised version in an index (or a list that appears at the very

end of the book), of fifty-two beliefs of the gnostics and Sufis that stand in contrast to Islam, and he offers the “correct” Shi‘ite understanding directly opposite to the Sufi innovations.

As one might expect, Borqei utilises much of that dimension of the Shi‘ite tradition that rejects Sufism. In chapter one he focuses his attention on sacred scripture, in particular the sayings of Mohammad and the Imams. The most extensive section in this chapter is a discussion of fourteen *hadith* (from Mohammad and the Shi‘ite Imams); the seventh *hadith* that is cited serves as a good example and is traced to Imam Reza who said, “No one speaks of Sufism and dervish-hood unless he wants to deceive people, or unless he [himself] is lost or is stupid.”³⁷ Borqei’s discussion of how the Sufis made certain Qur’anic verses null and void is short and disappointing. It is significant, however, because of his desire to protect the sacred texts of Shi‘ites from Sufi “distortions” while at the same time utilising them to reveal the evils of the Sufi tradition. This methodology is a feature that distinguishes Borqei’s anti-Sufism from those anti-Sufis who did not write from within the clerical context. What they all share in common, however, is an appeal to reason, and Borqei’s anti-Sufi text states in the introduction that the logic of Islam is based on revelation and the sayings of the immaculate Imams, and there is no other evidence for Muslims, although reason (*‘aql*) is a proof in all religions.³⁸ The protection of Shi‘ism through revelation and reason was necessary for Borqei because he felt that in the contemporary period there was a danger that greed and self-promotion could result in religion being manipulated and in an increase in conflicting opinions. This is a serious problem because “foreign enemies” have taken advantage of this situation and they support minorities, overturn Islam, pollute and destroy the nation (*mellat*) and take riches in plunder that make their own countries flourish. “We would prefer that there are no intellectual differences and schisms in the nation so that our state and nation can be at peace, because schisms cause misfortune and destruction.”³⁹ This linkage of Sufism with the weakening of the nation, and its connection with foreign powers, is a theme that re-occurs among anti-Sufis in the twentieth century as will be shown in the course of this book.

Not all clerics were opposed to the Sufi or *‘erfani* tradition, however, as the interest shown by Ruhollah Khomeini in mysticism clearly demonstrates. In 1930 Khomeini completed his first independent treatise on *‘erfan* in Arabic called *Mesbah al-hedayat* (“The Lamp of Guidance”), and although it was not printed, it was circulated in manuscript and several of his elders in Qom wrote glosses upon it.⁴⁰ Parts of this work include sections inspired by the ideas of Molla Sadra who portrayed a mystical journey to perfection composed of four stages. These four stages, as explicated by Khomeini, depict the type of ontology of which Kasravi was so critical. In the first stage, man casts aside the veils of sensuality which had previously tempted him to enjoy worldly pleasures and he is able to witness the divine through creation: “the face of the Presence of the Truth and the face of God is revealed for him and the end of this journey is when he sees all creation as a manifestation of His Majesty, the Truth, and he observes everything as

His signs”.⁴¹ Khomeini uses the terms that have been common currency among Sufis and gnostics for centuries, and so, for example, he says that during the first journey, the seeker has a truthful existence through the state of annihilation (*fana*). In this state, it is possible that God bestows his favour upon the individual and the state of annihilation is terminated and the seeker recognises himself as nothing but a slave to God. It is here that the second journey commences, a journey “from the Truth [witnessed in creation] to the Truth by means of the Truth”. Again, Khomeini utilises the familiar Sufi terminology by stating that in this station, the seeker enjoys the state of subsistence in God (*baqa*). During this state, the seeker experiences God directly, and worldly concerns are completely transcended. During the third journey “from the Truth back to man” the mystic returns to the creatures, and although having a share in prophethood, he does not have the authority to legislate. He is able to “see the reality of things and their perfection and the circumstances of their progress to the first station and their return to their original homeland”. In the fourth journey, “from man to man by means of God”,

he watches over creatures and their work and needs . . . and in so far as he can, he makes them return to God, and he informs others of everything he has known and of everything that is an obstacle for the travelling in God, and it is during this time that legislative prophethood is yielded for him.⁴²

He brings religion and religious law and he makes exoteric commands pertaining to the body and he gives information about God Most High and His attributes and names and the rightful mystical learnings to the degree that the able ones have the talent for comprehending.⁴³

The implications of Khomeini’s mystical world-view are difficult to unravel because his texts offer a somewhat ambiguous presentation of the identity of the individual who engages in the four journeys. Some scholars have suggested that Khomeini himself believed he had passed these journeys; for example, Baqer Moin claimed, “Khomeini’s strength and self-righteousness . . . was based upon his mythical view that he had been through the four journeys sought by the Sufis, to reach absolute unity with God.”⁴⁴ Other scholars have been more cautious, as Vanessa Martin observes that for Khomeini the perfect man who completes the four journeys has the status of a prophet or Imam, although she also adds that there are hints to the effect that the status of the perfect man may also be identified in ordinary mortals.⁴⁵

It is significant, however, that Kasravi did not mention the political ramifications of Khomeini’s writings, and this was because the text was only distributed among a select élite and was not published. However, on the subject of power and kingship, Kasravi comments that it is the Sufis who claim to bestow kingship upon others rather than taking it themselves, and he gives examples from the medieval period as well as from the modern era.

Khomeini's interest in *'erfan* did not come to an end with the publication of *Mesbah al-hedayat* as in 1944 he published a work entitled *Kashf al-asrar* ("Unveiling of Secrets"). This was partly a response to the work of 'Ali Akbar Hakimizadeh who had once been a cleric, but had been attracted to the kind of world view that was advocated by Kasravi, and had published a short essay entitled *Asrar-e hezar saleh* ("Thousand-year old secrets") which questioned some of the fundamentals of Shi'ism⁴⁶ (and which was published by Kasravi's press).⁴⁷ In Khomeini's response (in *Kashf al-Asrar*) he made use of the *'erfani* tradition and cites Ibn 'Arabi and Molla Sadra.

Khomeini's attachment to *'erfan* was so strong that it informed his teaching of ethics, in which he held classes on Thursdays and Fridays. The effect that these classes had upon his students is, perhaps, best expressed by Morteza Motahhari, who attended Khomeini's lectures: "the ethical lessons delivered by the figure I adored (each Thursday and Friday) made me inebriated. The lessons were, in reality, lessons of divine knowledge (*ma'arif va sair va suluk*) and not only ethical lessons in the narrow technical sense".⁴⁸

At about the same time that Khomeini was teaching his ethics and *'erfan*, Seyyed Mohammed Tabataba'i (1901–81) was also asked to teach Molla Sadra's "four journeys" when he moved to Qom. His course became very popular, to the extent that over one hundred pupils attended, yet the stipends of all those who attended the lectures were curtailed by Grand Ayatollah Borujerdi, the leading clerical figure in Iran. Borujerdi's reason for this action is somewhat vague ("the open teaching of the Asfar in an official seminary setting, that is not appropriate"), but even more revealing is his admission that he had also studied the text as a student, but in secret!⁴⁹ 'Allameh Tabataba'i's reason for teaching this text was because of his belief that it was Islamic philosophy and mysticism that had a better chance of challenging the secular ideologies that were becoming increasingly popular in Iran than the obscurantist literalism of some of the traditional Shi'ite clergy.

Tabataba'i's concern with mysticism and philosophy should not be regarded as merely intellectual, as it appears that he engaged in traditional Sufi ascetic practice (although not the antinomian variety) and certainly believed that he had received certain spiritual unveilings. Tabataba'i's writings include an account of a dream in which he was spoken to by the prophet Idris, and this dream "was the first transformation that connected the material world of nature to the supernatural realm for me".⁵⁰ Another indication of Tabataba'i's active engagement with the mystical tradition that went beyond mere speculation was his practice of bibliomancy (determining a course of action with reference to the message contained within a random *ghazal* from the *Divan-e Hafez*).⁵¹ Moreover his description within his work "The Kernel of the Kernel" of what the wayfarer witnesses and experiences during the spiritual journey suggests that he may have believed that he had gone through something similar himself (although it may also be possible that he was drawing on the works of celebrated mediaval Sufis such as Najm al-Din Kobra whose writings also describe such mystical, visionary journeys).

In his *‘erfani* perspective, Tabataba’i did not see any contradiction between mysticism and Shi’ism, for he describes how the particular guide for the wayfarer is the Twelfth Imam for

the source of all that which finds concrete existence and manifestation in the world of creation is the Divine Names and Attributes, and the reality of the Imam is the same as the Names and Attributes of God... Accordingly, in the process of wayfaring, the traveler traverses within the planes of the Imam’s luminosity. Any spiritual station he may ascend or status he may attain, the Imam already possesses and accompanies the wayfarer in that plane and station.⁵²

Moreover, Tabataba’i’s portrayal of the spiritual journey is one that conforms to Shi’ite piety and the observance of legal norms, and those who believe that they have reached such advanced spiritual stations that the *shari’a* is no longer applicable to them merely make prevarications and false assertions.⁵³

Sufi critics among the intellectuals

From the late nineteenth century to the period in which Kasravi was composing those works of his that were critical of Sufism and mystical Persian literature, there emerged a growing criticism of Sufism within circles that may be characterised as reformist and intellectual. Perhaps the most famous of all nineteenth-century Islamic reformers was Seyyed Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, frequently associated with the popularisation of Pan-Islamism. Afghani believed that Sufis had contributed to the decline of the Muslim world; specifically, he believed the Sufis were irrational, encouraged fatalism and blindly followed their sheikhs.⁵⁴ Subsequent Iranian reformers (especially those who were not so interested to preserve their Islamic heritage) were concerned with “social critical realism” which some considered to be the antithesis of Sufism. Such reformers included Mirza Fath ‘Ali Akhundzadeh (1812–78) who criticised the poetry of Rumi for its “pantheism”, doctrine of annihilation (*fana*) and the return of the human spirit to God.⁵⁵ But perhaps the most virulent opponent of Sufism among these nineteenth-century reformers was the Babi sympathiser Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani (1853–96) whose critique of Persian poetry includes the following:

As a result of their exaggerations and excesses, lying has been implanted in the simple nature of people. Their eulogies and admirations have encouraged kings and the viziers to commit atrocities and stupidities. Their mystical and Sufi poetry has led to nothing but laziness, animalistic sluggishness, and the production of beggars and vagabonds. Their sonnets about roses and nightingales has encouraged the youth to pursue pederasty and booze... it was the otherworldly mysticism and Sufism of Sheikh Iraqi, Maghribi and others which has produced so many lazy, spineless, passive beggars.⁵⁶

In the tradition of Kermani was Zayn al-‘Abedin Maragheh’i (1838–1911) who deplored the content of Sufi love poetry in Persian literature and regretted that the poets had not spoken of love for the country or nationalism.⁵⁷ He claimed, “Till now no one in our dear land has spoken a word about love of country, nor put down in writing useful matters from which the common people may benefit as required.”⁵⁸ “Our compatriots ought to know that there is another ‘love’ besides the love of Leili and Majnūn, Farhad and Shīrīn, Mahmūd and Ayāz.”⁵⁹ Zayn al-‘Abedin Maragheh’i adds that there is no more demand for the allusions found so frequently in Sufi poetry, and he says, “Instead of ‘Black Mole Above the Lip’ one should speak of the black coal in the mine . . . the ‘Story of the Candle and the Moth’ is worn out, speak about founding Spermaceti Candle Factory.”⁶⁰

Mention should also be made of Jamal al-Din Va’ez (Isfahani) who was a great supporter of the Revolutionary Committee, one of the secret societies set up in the years leading to the Constitutional Revolution and which advocated the overthrow of despotism and the establishment of the rule of law and justice.⁶¹ (It is interesting to note that Abrahamian claims that among the members of this committee was the leader of a Ne’mati order.)⁶² Jamal al-Din was a great exponent of secularism; indeed, he had been thrown out of Isfahan for his “audacious advocacy of secular ideas”⁶³ and his criticisms were levelled at the Shi’ite clerics and Sufis. In his essay of 1900 *Lebas-e taqva* he complained of the Sufi nomadic life and their parasitical nature as they had no jobs to procure a livelihood, and he also rebuked them for gambling and engaging in “other forbidden deeds”.⁶⁴

Criticisms of Sufism also emerged in the decade after the Constitutional Revolution, for Sa’id Nafisi mentions a controversy that erupted within the Democrat Party in the wake of the First World War, in particular between Bahar⁶⁵ and one Mirza ‘Ali Asghar Khan Taleqani. Taleqani published a series of articles in his newspaper *Zaban-e Azad* (Free Speech) under the title, the “School of Sa’di”. In these articles Taleqani argued that traditional Persian poetry had inculcated a “dervish spirit” among Iranians which was the cause of their weakness and backwardness.⁶⁶ Nafisi claims that this dispute raged not only in Tehran but in other cities too, especially in Shiraz (which was the birth place of Sa’di), and he concludes that the controversy over Sufism and mystical Persian literature was not an event instigated by Kasravi (for this occurred in the 1930s) but that he merely “rekindled the fire”.⁶⁷

With the rise of Reza Shah and the increasing contact with the West, the intellectual currency in Iran developed an increasing secular flavouring. This can be attributed in part to the rising level of cultural and scientific knowledge derived from the West, in particular, forms of nineteenth-century liberalism, reason, the stress on individualism and positivism. During the nineteenth century Western intellectuals were increasingly critical of established religion and were adopting a more “rational” world-view, and this perspective was adopted by some of the Iranian intellectuals. Typical of such intellectuals was ‘Ali Dashti (1894–1982) who achieved fame during the reign of Reza Shah as editor of the newspaper *Shafaq-e Sorkh* (“Red Dawn”) which ran between 1922 and 1935. Dashti’s views on

religion and mysticism can be gleaned from his *Ayyam-e mahbas* (“Prison Days”), a book composed of his writings during Reza Shah’s rule.⁶⁸ One of the striking elements of this work is the lack of Islamic reference as opposed to the citations from and references to Western thinkers. Although not a “practicing” Muslim,⁶⁹ there are references in this work to God, and Islam as the best religion to render humans happy due to its ethical duties.⁷⁰ The concern for the welfare of the community at large resulted in Dashti rejecting mysticism as a means of social progress. Moreover, the practical circumstances of humans in the modern age (especially the dependence on material things) has resulted in life being an endless struggle which can only be resolved through effort. To engage in mystical renunciation in order to attain happiness is considered impractical by Dashti because humans cannot free themselves from “love of the self”.⁷¹ Consequently, he recognised that Sufism was instrumental in “paralysing the powers of resistance and struggle in the individual members of a nation and weakening the moral fabric of a society”.⁷² Dashti’s distaste for Sufism increased when he was researching a book on Rumi (published in 1958)⁷³ and he visited some *khanaqahs* and met with some Sufi sheikhs. “He was struck by the hypocrisy, the pretentiousness, the amateurish, superstitious-filled, and pseudo-magical trickery of the Sufi clergy.”⁷⁴

An intellectual who possessed a similar opinion of Sufism and mysticism was Sadeq Hedayat (1903–51), who is regarded by many Western observers as Iran’s most famous modern novelist and whose fiction is dark and pessimistic. Hedayat was one of the leading literary figures of his time, and therefore his writings represent a certain trend within the Iranian literati. The themes of oppression and despair are prominent in his work, as is biting criticism of much of the Islamic religious tradition in Iran. Perhaps a good reflection of the type of personality that was Sadeq Hedayat is manifested through his works about and opinion of ‘Omar Khayyam, the great twelfth-century composer of quatrains, made famous in Britain in the nineteenth century by Fitzgerald’s rather loose translations. But just as Fitzgerald distorted Khayyam’s poetry to suit the sensitivities of elements within Victorian Britain, Hedayat too had a tendency to push Khayyam into the background and bring forth his own thoughts and psychology in the guise of an interpretation.⁷⁵ Hedayat claims that Khayyam should be considered a Deist who denied an immanent God who acted in the particulars of the world, and therefore the world-view of Hedayat’s Khayyam stands in opposition to that of the Sufis.⁷⁶

Hedayat’s refusal to witness any ultimate values in Sufism is best reflected in a short story entitled *Mardi ke nafs-ash-ra kosht* (“The Man who Killed his Soul”) which appeared for the first time in a collection of his short stories entitled “Three Drops of Blood” in 1932.⁷⁷ This story tells the fate of Mirza Hosayn ‘Ali, a school teacher who had a keen interest in Sufism, to the extent that he lived in seclusion and whose pleasure was in reading Sufi and gnostic texts. He regarded Sheikh Abu’l-Fazl, a teacher of Arabic,⁷⁸ as a guide on his Sufi path, although he is portrayed as rather pompous. Yet Mirza Hosayn ‘Ali had some doubts concerning the mystic path, especially when he pondered some of the verses by Hafez and

Khayyam which he understood as enjoining humans to worldly pleasures. In an attempt to resolve his problem Mirza Hosayn 'Ali decided to refer to his sheikh, but on reaching Abu'l-Fazl's house he found an irate man accusing the sheikh of making his daughter pregnant. Mirza Hosayn 'Ali's doubts about the sheikh deepened when he learnt that he ate roast partridge privately while publicly partaking of crusty bread and mouldy cheese. Realising that the sheikh was a charlatan, Mirza Hosayn 'Ali became depressed and thought that he had wasted his youth in his Sufi yearnings. So he then went to a bar where he drank wine, listened to music and returned home with a prostitute. The story ends with the non-appearance of the teacher at school, and the readers are left to assume that he has committed suicide; rather than killing his lower, selfish ego, or soul (*nafs*), Mirza Hosayn 'Ali took his own life.

In itself the story is not that convincing. Why would Mirza Hosayn 'Ali become so full of doubt about the truth of mysticism because of the actions of one individual? Indeed, those learned in Sufi texts would be familiar with warnings about those who abuse Sufism for their own personal gain. Yet, the story serves as a barometer for the anti-Sufism that was prevalent among a group of intellectuals who reacted against the hypocrisy of some "Sufis" and who also rejected the ultimate truths that could be derived from following the Sufi path. Is it the voice of Mirza Hosayn 'Ali or Hedayat himself when on drinking wine in the bar, and on looking at the prostitute's face he comprehended the mystery of life – to enjoy worldly pleasures, as advocated by Hafez and Khayyam? Salvation through mysticism is not the answer to the pain of existence, and this rejection of religion has its ultimate expression in the suicide of Mirza Hosayn 'Ali (or Hedayat), as suicide is forbidden within the Islamic tradition.⁷⁹

Towards the end of his life Hedayat became associated with the Tudeh Party,⁸⁰ Iran's Communist movement. The forerunner of the Tudeh Party emerged in the 1930s, and in 1935 a study group of young Marxists was formed, with its chief ideologue being Taqi Arani, a German educated university professor. This group published a newsletter called *Donya* ("The World") in which Arani presented his views. Arani and his fellow Marxists, amounting to fifty-three individuals, were arrested in 1937 and brought to trial, and Arani received a maximum ten-year sentence, but he died within two years. Kasravi had little time for Arani's left-wing views, and indeed, the former's first book, *Ayin*, "was aimed [in rejection] at the theory of class struggle".⁸¹ Nevertheless, ever a man of principles, Kasravi was prepared to defend his Marxist adversaries during their political trials in 1938.⁸²

Arani's opinions of Sufism are contained within a fifty-nine page article published in *Donya*, called '*Erfaan va osul-e madi*' ("Mysticism and the Principles of Materialism").⁸³ The basis of Arani's argument lies in his argument that all thought is subject to material influences; the brain is composed of matter and it is influenced by external, material factors, including food, temperature, and its social environment. Humans become aware of universal laws by reflecting on their needs and their classification of the information about their material

conditions. The input of God, or a divine being, is something that is not considered in Arani's view and stands strikingly in contrast with Sufi thought. Arani views mysticism in general as a belief that appears in times of despair and material loss; when a group in society has no hope for progress and advancement it finds solace in mystical ideas by scorning worldly pleasures that are beyond its reach and by considering the existential differences between itself and the more fortunate group as imaginary and superficial. In this way, Sufi ideas are an attack on the enemy.⁸⁴ With regard to the emergence of mysticism in the Islamic tradition, Arani seems to believe that its origin was the result of opposition to the centralised and despotic caliphate in Baghdad. Indeed, he argues that Sufis such as Mansur Hallaj were middle class, and his declaration of "I am the Truth" was not a claim to divinity, but rather it was a cry against "power and the special importance [attributed to] God", and Hallaj's execution was to preserve the central power of the caliphate,⁸⁵ which was necessary given the support that mysticism enjoyed in Iranian villages.

Arani's understanding of Sufism is in some ways more sophisticated than Kasravi's because the former recognises important distinctions among the Sufis (such as the different ideas of the unity of existence (*vahdat-e vujud*), incarnationism (*holul*) and union (*ettehad*)).⁸⁶ Moreover, he does not regard Sufism as static, as he mentions that Sufism develops in response to changing material conditions. However, although the language and tone may be milder than that found in Kasravi's writings, there is little doubt that Arani had no sympathy for Sufism, and his criticisms of the Sufis include their use of narcotics to induce "states of yearning and attraction"⁸⁷, the invention of chains of initiation⁸⁸ and the scant regard for reason.⁸⁹

True to his Marxist beliefs, Arani argued that dialectic materialism would inevitably prevail and mysticism and Sufism would disappear. He does not discuss in depth the state of contemporary Sufism in Iran, yet in his introduction he comments that the aim of the article is to "awaken the masses to avoid the disease of mendicancy, contentment, seclusion, opium, and the madness of claiming divinity, and to encourage people to [adopt] a material life and to [engage] in a struggle to preserve life".⁹⁰ Obviously Arani believed that there was a certain mentality among some Iranians at least, which needed to be cured. However, he also seems to recognise that "formal" Sufism was declining, as he claimed that the Safi 'Ali Shahs and the Gonabadi Sufis of Iran were disappearing and that although Eastern Sufism may merge with European mysticism for a while, ultimately the world would no longer listen to the preaching of such mystics.⁹¹ Arani's positive prediction for the future of materialism is due to his belief that

today, the principles of materialism and logic have connected humans to all sciences, industries, societies and arts, and it has liberated humans from common superstitions whether through nature, biology, physiology or sociology, and it has shown humans the path of happiness.⁹²

Supporters of Sufism among the intellectuals

Thus far presented, the modernist intellectual tradition in Iran has been very critical of Sufism, yet a full picture must take into account the emergence of a group of intellectuals and academics in the 1920s–30s, some of whom entered the political world and became great supporters of mystical Persian literature. Within this group we may include Mohammad ‘Ali Forughī, ‘Ali Asghar Hekmat, Sa‘id Nafisi, Badi‘ al-Zaman Foruzanfar, Mohammad Qazvini and Mohammad Mo‘in, who were all inspired by the literary and ethical merits of the texts, although their formal affiliation to Sufi orders remains unclear.⁹³

Forughī first emerged as a politician during the constitutional period and became Reza Shah’s prime minister on two occasions (1926, 1933–5). He had a great affection for Persian literature, in particular for Sa‘di and Ferdowsi, and he also published a selection of Hafez’s *ghazals* in 1937.⁹⁴ Yet he was severely censured by Kasravi because of the belief that Iran should promote its internationally recognised poets, including those such as Khayyam, Hafez and Rumi who had all received much attention from the European community of scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Another politician who was active in publishing Sufi related material was ‘Ali Asghar Hekmat (who was the minister of education (1933–8), and also chancellor of Tehran University between 1935–8). His publications on Sufis and mysticism include “A Lesson from the Divan of Hafez”,⁹⁵ a book on the fifteenth-century Sufi, ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami⁹⁶ (and in 1947 he translated into Persian the third volume of E.G. Browne’s *A Literary History of Persia*, something which probably would have incurred the wrath of Kasravi (see Chapter 5) had he been alive at the time).⁹⁷

Kasravi’s anger was, no doubt, exacerbated further by some of the academics within the Faculty of Theology of Tehran University that had opened in 1935. Badi‘ al-Zaman Foruzanfar (1900–70) is a good example of such scholars; having graduated from a religious seminary, he was appointed vice-president of the Faculty of Theology and became professor of Islamic mysticism soon after.⁹⁸ His first publication was a history of Iranian poets of the early centuries, which appeared between 1929 and 1933, and after completing his dissertation on Rumi in 1936, the Iranian Ministry of Culture asked Foruzanfar to prepare selections from the *Masnavi* for students. So in 1943 he published *Selections from the Masnavi*, which included an introduction in which he defended Sufism from the kind of criticisms that Kasravi levelled against it.⁹⁹

There were other prominent academics associated with the University of Tehran who were publishing and editing works written by Sufi authors. For example, Sa‘id Nafisi’s publications during the 1930s and 1940s included editions of poetry from Rudaki,¹⁰⁰ Kashani,¹⁰¹ ‘Attar¹⁰² and Hafez.¹⁰³ Nafisi’s colleague Reza-zadeh-Shafaq (1895–1971) was also productive, having published a popular work for high schools entitled *The History of Literature in Iran* in which he praised the mystical poets.¹⁰⁴ His views of Rumi’s verses provide a typical example of his

attraction to mystical poetry, which accepts the “reality” of mysticism:¹⁰⁵

The special quality of Mawlana’s *ghazals* is the effervescence and tumult of love that moves anyone possessing a heart and arouses his or her emotions. In fact, in each *ghazal* there is a trace of spiritual attraction, mystical state (*hal*), fire and palpable ardour, and in essence, the spirit of the *samaʿ* and the gnostic dance is blown into the majority of *ghazals*, because passion and obvious excitement and the burning of love is manifest throughout.¹⁰⁶

In a section on Hafez he states: “Hafez’s spiritual greatness and mental power proceeded from the mystical consciousness which in him attained perfection.”¹⁰⁷ There is little doubting, therefore, Rezazadeh-Shafaq’s sympathies with the mystical tradition. Also worthy of mention is Mohammad Mo’in (1917–71) who published in 1940 a work of some 800 pages on Hafez, a book that he dedicated to the “pure spirit of Hafez”. In his introduction, Mo’in lamented that materialism ruled the contemporary world and stated that humanity feels the need of spiritual consolation. Returning to the great poets of the past could assist in this, and his descriptions of Hafez as having discovered “the secret of happiness” and “the reality of life”¹⁰⁸ are based upon his view that Hafez was essentially a mystic. Mo’in even described Hafez as a “celestial poet” (*shaʿer-e malakuti*)¹⁰⁹ who had a “heavenly book” (*ketab-e asemani*)¹¹⁰ and claimed, “After Jalal al-Din Mawlavi, Hafez is the most obvious manifestation of the gnostics (*ʿarefan*) in this period.”¹¹¹

Another great scholar of Hafez was Mohammad Qazvini (1877–1949) whose publications on Hafez include *An Investigation of the Works, Thought and Life of Hafez*.¹¹² Like Mo’in, Qazvini considered Hafez the greatest of all Persian poets, and in a conversation with Dr Ghani he remarked that if a statue from each country were to be erected in Hyde Park, then the form of Hafez would be found in London as the Iranian representative.¹¹³

Western opinions of Sufism

A source worthy of inspection in an inquiry concerning Iranian opinions of Sufism can be found in the literature written by Western scholars and travellers in Iran during the period in question. Although caution needs to be exercised when investigating such literature, it is probably true to say that the comments of such travellers reflect to varying degrees the opinions of their Iranian friends or hosts. Many European writers were indiscriminating in their portrayal of Sufism, lumping the various Sufis groups within a single mould, yet there were great differences in the types of Sufism that existed in this period, especially when the Khaksar-Jalali dervishes are compared with the Neʿmatollahi Sufis. In this section, the descriptions of Sufis by Morier, Lady Sheil and C.J. Wills probably reflect their experiences with Khaksar dervishes who have been characterised as

wandering dervishes.¹¹⁴ Zarrinkub claimed that they were prevalent in the late Qajar period and were numerous in Tehran, Khorasan and Fars.¹¹⁵

Western criticisms of Sufism in nineteenth-century Iran can be found in a satirical novel by James Morier, entitled *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isfahan*, which was published in 1824.¹¹⁶ This English work was then translated into Persian in the late nineteenth century by Mirza Habib Isfahani; yet many Iranians believed the book to have been written by a native Iranian, so accurately portrayed were the customs, traditions and foibles of Iranians.¹¹⁷ *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isfahan* includes extensive sections in which Sufis are presented in a derogatory fashion (for example, the names of the Sufis are *Dervish Sefer* (“the wandering dervish”) and *Dervish Bideen* (“the dervish without religion”). At one point, Dervish Sefer admits: “We hold men’s beards as cheap as dirt; and although our existence is precarious, yet it is one of great variety, as well as of idleness. We look on mankind as fair game – we live upon their weaknesses and credulity.”¹¹⁸ Although Morier presents a caricature of Sufism in his book, it was certainly the one that Iranians recognised, and it confirms that there were individuals who regarded the Sufis as charlatans and tricksters.

Writing some time after James Morier, Lady Sheil recorded her memoirs and experiences of travelling in Iran in the early 1850s.¹¹⁹ In a section relating her observation on antinomian Sufis (including a dervish who spent his time exclaiming “Wool! Wool!” as he wandered through the bazaar in Tehran, encouraging others to reject the material world, and another who on begging would declare “A thousand toumans! I won’t accept anything less!”), Lady Sheil remarked that

the character of these derveeshes is exceedingly low in general estimation, and yet a certain reverence is attached to the profession. Under the pretence of abandoning the vain cares of a fleeting world, they devote their lives to idleness and the inebriation arising from chers, roving from city to city, by the orders of their moorshids, or spiritual chiefs, and levying contributions from the multitude.¹²⁰

Lady Sheil also described how the Sufis exacted taxes on the wealthy by sowing a field of wheat, a yard square, adjacent to the property of respectable householders. The Sufi then blew his horn and screamed devotions until he received his presents. Other Sufis hurled “dreadful abuse” on those whom they met, cursing those who refused to submit to their extortion.¹²¹

Another negative portrayal of dervishes is found in C.J. Wills’ account, *Persia As It Is*, which was published in 1887. (Wills was a doctor who spent fifteen years in Iran between 1866 and 1881.) He considered all dervishes as mendicants who told stories, had marvellous memories, possessed the arts of the ventriloquist and the mimic and were mesmerists and conjurors. Moreover,

Dervishes have all the vices of the Persians. They drink, they eat and smoke both bhang and opium; they are as a rule dangerous and

insidious libertines; their victims in purse and person being the ignorant village women... In fact, if a man in the East has utterly gone wrong, he burns his ships, buys a tall hat, a leopard skin, and a big club, and, without ceremonial or initiation, he becomes to all intents and purposes a dervish – a vagrant and companion of vagrants.¹²²

Wills adds, “The Persians themselves consider that a dervish *per se* has no virtues, but that he is able by his *nuffus* (or holy inspiration) to perform miracles and foretell events.”¹²³

In contrast to these negative portrayals of Sufism, which must have been informed to some degree by indigenous Iranian perspectives, there are also positive descriptions of Sufism by British citizens who had experience of Iran. Sir Percy Sykes (who worked for British army intelligence and spent over twenty years in Iran between 1893 and 1918) visited the shrine of Ne‘matollah Vali (1331–1431) in Mahan and remarks approvingly that the *morshed* at the shrine believed that all religious fanaticism is the result of ignorance and should be swept away to make room for universal love.¹²⁴ Sykes also alludes to the prophecies of the fourteenth-century founder of the order, which gained much currency in nineteenth-century Iran (prophecies that the last Shah of Iran would be called Naser al-Din,¹²⁵ and that the Muslims would eventually reign supreme, the last prophecy was prevalent in the wake of the Indian “Mutiny”).¹²⁶

A veritable mine of information on Sufism in late nineteenth-century Iran is present in the writings of E.G. Browne, the British orientalist about whom there is much to be said in Chapter 5. At this point, however, it is worthwhile to refer to his *A Year Amongst the Persians*,¹²⁷ which is an account of the year he spent in Iran between 1887 and 1888 and in which there are many references to Sufism. In this work Browne often recorded the anecdotes told to him by Iranians, and one such episode reveals, perhaps, a stereotype and caricature of a certain form of Sufi. Browne was told that a poor man was travelling alone in a desert when he saw a terrible looking dervish coming towards him, carrying “an enormous and ponderous club”. The poor man climbed a tree to get out of the path of the dervish who decided to sit beneath the shade of the very same tree. The dervish set out five clay figures before him and addressed the first as ‘Omar, the second Caliph recognised by the Sunnis and rejected by the Shi‘ites for usurping the rights of ‘Ali to guide the Muslim community. The dervish asked the clay figure why he had not recognised ‘Ali’s rights, and of course there was silence in response to the question. Angry at this the dervish smashed the figure with his club. The dervish then addressed the second clay figure as Abu Bakr, the first Sunni Caliph, also rejected by the Shi‘ites. The dervish gave this clay figure the opportunity to account for his sins, but following a brief silence, the dervish once more pulverised the clay figure with his club. The third clay figure was addressed as ‘Ali, and the dervish asked it why he had allowed himself to be sidelined by his adversaries. When silence was followed, the dervish once more demolished the figure. The dervish then brought forth “Mohammad”, the fourth clay figure, and asked that

since he enjoyed “Divine Inspiration” why did he take no precautions concerning his succession. Once again, following a silence the dervish destroyed the figure with his club. The last clay figure was addressed as “Allah” and was asked the divine mystery behind all the troubles that had befallen the prophet’s family. At this juncture, the poor man, still hiding in the tree, lost his fear of the dervish and angrily objected in a loud voice at the smashing of Mohammad and ‘Ali and warned the dervish that God’s wrath would smite him. On hearing this, the dervish was afraid, thinking he had heard the voice of God, and he uttered a loud cry, dropped his club and slumped to the floor, dead. The poor man came down from the tree and discovered that the cloak of the dervish concealed a hidden treasure of golden coins.¹²⁸

This anecdote pokes fun at the wandering dervishes, who are commonly associated with poverty but who were also viewed by many of their non-Sufi contemporaries as avaricious, money-seeking hypocrites. Yet as a caricature it reveals an antinomian dimension of Sufism that the “orthodox” considered reprehensible. Browne’s *A Year Amongst the Persians* is littered with references to dervishes that he met, yet despite his favourable opinion of the Sufis, his following remarks about a dervish that he chanced to meet betray the sentiments of Iranians themselves:

He was one of those dervishes who inspire one with respect for a name which serves but too often to shelter idleness, sloth, and even vice. Too often is it the case that the traveller, judging only by the opium-eating, hashish smoking mendicant, who, with matted hair, glassy eyes, and harsh, raucous voice, importunes the passers by for alms, condemns all dervishes as a blemish and a bane to their country.¹²⁹

The opinions of Western scholars concerning the glories of Iranian civilisation and history (which included the Sufi tradition) became significant in the 1920s and 1930s because of the activities of an organisation named *Sazman-e Anjoman-e Melli* (Society for National Heritage). This was an organisation that was formed in 1921 around a nucleus of some of the leading academics and politicians of the day, including Mohammad ‘Ali Forughī, ‘Ali Asghar Hekmat, ‘Isa Sadiq, ‘Abd al-Hosayn Taymurtash (the court minister) and Hasan Pirnia (a former prime minister). The organisation’s aim was to “preserve, protect and promote Iran’s patrimony”,¹³⁰ and in its attempt to achieve this end, Western academics were invited to Iran to offer their opinions about the importance of Iranian heritage. The German archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld was invited to Iran in 1925, as was the American art historian Arthur Upham Pope. Pope’s lecture in 1925 was heard by the power-brokers in Iran, including Reza Khan who was soon to become prime minister. In the course of his speech, Pope praised Persian poetry, indicating that the voices of Ferdowsi, Sa’di, Hafez and Khayyam stirred hearts everywhere. Although the Sufi nature of some of these poets was to be questioned by Kasravi, his general point that the Western academics praised Persian poetry (much of it Sufi) remains valid. However, his view that they did so to promote the interests of

the Western nations is rather controversial (and this topic is addressed in more detail in subsequent chapters). It is perhaps worthwhile noting the extent to which foreign opinions on Iranian culture and civilisation were considered in this period, in an attempt to recultivate “good taste”. In 1934 the Congress of Orientalists was held in Iran to celebrate the millennium of Ferdowsi, and many Western scholars were invited to attend and participate. In addition to presenting their papers, trips were arranged to Tus (where Ferdowsi’s grave is located), and on route the visitors were taken through Nishapur, where the grave of Khayyam can be found. The story of the trip is recounted by ‘Isa Sadiq who described the pleasure of the Middle East specialists when they approached Khayyam’s tomb. Some of them read Khayyam’s verses in Persian, and Sir Denison Ross recited Fitzgerald’s versions aloud. One of the visitors began to weep because of the emotion and passion of the occasion, and the other guests followed suit.¹³¹ It is likely that Kasravi would have heard of this episode, especially since he was a member of the Congress of Orientalists,¹³² and he must have been bemused on hearing these events that celebrated a poet whose verses he detested and whom was not generally considered by most Iranians to be a great poet until Fitzgerald had published his translations.¹³³

The Sufis

Increasing calls for modernisation from 1850 until the rise of Reza Shah included the accountability of the royal court and regulation of the political process through more open suffrage, equality, justice and greater efficiency in the bureaucracy. In essence, the demands for modernisation were appeals for greater participation within an orderly system. Furthermore, the reformism advocated by individuals such as Akhundzadeh in the late nineteenth century and ‘Ali Dashti of the twentieth century was a form of modernism that included the demystification of religious beliefs. Order, discipline and control of religion were major elements defining the rule of Reza Shah that transformed Iranian society and culture dramatically.¹³⁴ Reza Shah’s form of modernisation was one that was imposed from the top down, and therefore the democratic aspect of modernity was not accorded much importance. Potential threats were dealt with accordingly, including religious (whether Sufi or jurist), so that the clerical authorities, although not completely ignoring the challenge of the Sufi tradition, had to focus their energies elsewhere in their attempts to preserve and promote their interests in Iran.¹³⁵ Likewise, the Sufis had to respond to the challenge of modernity, which predates the emergence of Reza Shah, for as we have seen, the criticisms of Sufism from the intellectuals appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century.

This section presents a case study that will highlight how one of the Sufi traditions in Iran responded to these new circumstances (a task that has been made easier due to the publication of informative pieces of work in English in recent years).¹³⁶ The focus of attention will be directed to the Safi‘alishahis, one of the

largest of the Ne‘matollahi groups of Sufis.¹³⁷ The Safi‘alishahis have been selected as a case study for a number of reasons: first, their fame and relative numerical strength in Iran; second, because their response to the changing times offers a contrast to the stereotypical portrayal offered by the critics of Kasravi’s ilk; and finally because there is a substantial quantity of literature (both primary and secondary) with which to work.

***The Safi‘alishahis: an aristocratic order
searching for Sufi universalism?***

One of the most celebrated Sufis of the late nineteenth century was Safi ‘Ali Shah (d. 1898) who was a disciple of the Ne‘matollahi sheikh, Rahmat ‘Ali Shah (d. 1861), and then Monavvar ‘Ali Shah until he severed his connections with the latter. In 1877 he created the nucleus of what was to become a separate line of Ne‘matollahi Sufism, which was eventually institutionalised by royal decree in 1899 in the form of an organisation known as the Society of Brotherhood (*Anjuman-e Okhovvat*), see Figure 2.1.

The Ne‘matollahis were well known for their aristocratic connections, and some of Safi ‘Ali Shah’s poetry would have done nothing to quell the resentment of those who disliked the corruption and nepotism of the royal court. Safi ‘Ali Shah’s works include sycophantic praise of the fourth Qajar monarch, Naser al-Din Shah, who was unfortunate to live at a time when Iran was caught between the two superpowers of the age (Russia and Britain). These two nations prevented each other from gaining the upper hand in Iran, thereby preventing Iran from achieving significant socio-economic development. Although there were some attempts at social reform and modernisation, the reign of Naser al-Din Shah is not usually known for its freedom,¹³⁸ and the weakness of the central government was partly attributable to the extravagances of the royal court (including expensive royal tours in Europe), the non-remittance of taxes from the provinces and



Figure 2.1 The Safi‘alishahis and the Society of Brotherhood Leaders.

the granting of monopolies to European companies. Despite this, Safi 'Ali Shah said that in forty years of rule, (the Shah) had made Iran flourish just as if there had been forty world-experienced, wise, perfect and just monarchs.¹³⁹ Moreover, he described the Shah's royal court as just, and Iran was referred to as enjoying such security that even small children could carry gold and jewels from one city to another, whereas in previous times thieves and villains abounded.¹⁴⁰ The charges of nepotism and sycophancy would have been all the more stronger in light of the gift of land made to Safi 'Ali Shah by Mohammad Mirza Sayf al-Dowleh (who was the son of 'Azd al-Dowleh, one of the sons of the second Qajar monarch, Fath 'Ali Shah) so that a *khanagah* could be built for Safi in Tehran.¹⁴¹

The relationship of the Safi'alishahis with the Iranian aristocracy needs further investigation because these Sufis claimed that their form of Sufism addressed the problems of Iran's hierarchical social structure. Given the increasing demands for widening participation within social institutions, the claims made by Safi 'Ali Shah and his successors may be regarded as a self-conscious attempt to respond to the forces of modernity.¹⁴² The Safi'alishahi order became structured through the Society of Brotherhood, and its leaders stressed the "brotherhood" of its members regardless of rank and status; yet despite this, the aristocratic connections of the organisation persisted well into the Pahlavi dynasty.¹⁴³

Safi 'Ali Shah's successor was 'Ali Khan Qajar who came from an aristocratic family and whose father was a minister of state and had twice been the governor of Shiraz.¹⁴⁴ 'Ali Khan Qajar also had a distinguished career at court as he was made minister of public ceremonies by Naser al-Din Shah, received the honorific title of Zahir al-Dowleh, was also given the Shah's daughter in marriage and was governor of Gilan, Hamadan, Kermanshah and Tehran. Zahir al-Dowleh (whose Sufi names were Safa 'Ali Shah and *Mesbah al-Valayat* (lamp of friendship)) was able to extend the patronage of the highest echelons of court society to Sufism, and he achieved this through the creation of the Society of Brotherhood. Sympathetic sources claim that Safi 'Ali Shah had desired to create this society himself,¹⁴⁵ but it was Zahir al-Dowleh who founded the Society of Brotherhood, to which end he received royal assent in 1899.

The names of the leading members of the Society of Brotherhood in its formative years under Zahir al-Dowleh betray its aristocratic leanings,¹⁴⁶ as do its connections with the latter Qajar monarchy. These connections included an interest expressed by Ahmad Shah (the last monarch of the Qajar dynasty, deposed in 1925) who sent the crown prince, Mohammad Hasan Mirza, to the Society's base in Tehran. It is claimed that he was even initiated as a dervish in 1911, on the occasion of the twelfth anniversary of the Society's establishment. On this occasion, Zahir al-Dowleh was able to stress the principle of equality of its members, claiming that, "it was the Society of Brotherhood that smashed the face of the arrogant ones, and made the contemporary leaders and the sons of the rulers of the age sit on their knees with the poor (*foqara*) and tradespeople".¹⁴⁷ These ideals reflect Zahir al-Dowleh's support of the Constitutionalist Movement, and indeed, as an aristocratic supporter of Constitutionalism he was subject to intimidation

from Mohammad ‘Ali Shah. The aristocratic tag and the connections with monarchy persisted despite the demise of the Qajar dynasty and the death of Zahir al-Dowleh. Indeed, the cordial relationship between the Society of Brotherhood and the Pahlavi dynasty may have been based upon the position enjoyed by Zahir al-Dowleh’s successor Binesh ‘Ali Shah (or Seyyed Mohammad Khan Entezam al-Saltaneh), who served as Reza Shah’s director general in the Interior Ministry.¹⁴⁸ In addition, Binesh ‘Ali Shah’s son, who a member of the Society, was a friend of Reza Shah’s son from 1936.¹⁴⁹

It seems unlikely that the Safi‘alishahis encouraged universalism and the connections with the aristocracy for their own mercenary purposes. There are sufficient indications that leaders of the movement were genuine in their efforts to eradicate social distinctions. For example Safi ‘Ali Shah’s attempt to present Sufism as a spiritual and ethical reformist movement is revealed in an endeavour to spread his message beyond aristocratic circles. His versified Persian interpretation (*tafsir*) of the Qur’an (*Tafsir-e Manzum*)¹⁵⁰ was written to render the Qur’an (and its mystical meanings) intelligible to all literate Farsi speakers.¹⁵¹ (This must have been regarded as a threat by some of the Shi‘ite clerics who viewed themselves as the legitimate interpreters of the Qur’an, and some may also have been repelled at this “tampering” with the divine word. The controversy over this *tafsir* reached as far as Naser al-Din Shah who was tempted to exile Safi ‘Ali Shah from Tehran but was persuaded to refer the case to the leading Shi‘ite cleric, Ayatollah Shirazi, whose fatwa decided in favour of Safi’s work.) Zahir al-Dowleh was also committed to eradicating social distinctions and his slogan and that of the Society of “brotherhood, equality and service to the people” is reflected in his pro-constitutional activities, which resulted in the anti-constitutionalist monarch Mohammad ‘Ali Shah destroying his house in Tehran (which also served as the head-quarters of the Society of Brotherhood). Subsequently, Zahir al-Dowleh organised charitable activities called the Festival of Charity in the summer of 1909 to raise funds for the families of those killed and wounded in the constitutional struggles. He was able to “invite” senior state officials to these events which lasted for about two weeks, and many of them donated large sums of money to help. Donators included the minister of war, the interior minister, the prince ‘Ayn al-Dowleh and Qavam al-Dowleh.¹⁵²

The Anjuman-e Okhovvat: a modernist Sufi organisation?

The emergence of a well-organised society (which had a register, a constitution, a system of financial accountability, chairs to sit on (instead of sitting on a carpet))¹⁵³ with Sufi ethical ideals at this time should not be surprising for a plethora of secret societies with socio-political agendas appeared on the death of Naser al-Din Shah. The development of Society of Brotherhood is an interesting case, however, because it demonstrates how Sufism could operate within a society that was increasingly turning to modern and Western models of organisations with socio-political agendas.

The modernising tendency was initiated by Safi 'Ali Shah, although it is not always easy to distinguish between the trappings of modernity with elements already existent within Sufi life-styles. For example, Safi 'Ali Shah's attempts to "cleanse" Sufism included his advise to Zahir al-Dowleh to wear normal clothes and his order that no one should remain idle without a job or profession (a rejection perhaps of the life-style of the wandering dervishes).¹⁵⁴ Yet this advise has a certain resonance with the Malamati Sufi tradition of the mediaeval period, a tradition that attempted to conceal outward manifestations of piety and spirituality in order to avoid the pitfalls of pride and reputation. Safi 'Ali Shah's views reflected, perhaps, the mushrooming of individuals claiming overarching spiritual authority, as he commented that "in Tehran the *morsheds* of poverty are greater (in number) than professional and craft masters".¹⁵⁵ (Safi 'Ali Shah also discussed a group of "Sufis" who were opposed to the Imams, but they merely wore Sufi clothing and were "wolves" in sheepskins. Such individuals not only made use of Sufism (also claiming to perform "charismatic powers"), but their kind were also found among the *ulema*, and it is on this point that Safi 'Ali Shah stated that he viewed no incompatibility between those who follow the *shari'at* and those who follow the *haqiqat*.¹⁵⁶)

Some of the trappings of Western culture, which have been associated with modernity, were embraced by the Safi'alishahis, and this is nowhere more evident than in the charity raising events of Zahir al-Dowleh in 1909. During these events the guests were entertained with a Western-style orchestra, a lottery, and were nourished with "expensive" food (it is assumed that the proceeds of these events were used for charity),¹⁵⁷ and there were stalls selling books and haberdashery goods.¹⁵⁸ These features, the Western-style orchestra and, in particular, the lottery¹⁵⁹ indicate that this "quasi-tariqa"¹⁶⁰ was comfortable with new modes of activity, and perhaps more significantly, it felt at ease in promoting an ethical code, which some Iranians viewed as a Western import and also un-Islamic.¹⁶¹

A feature that should not be ignored in this discussion of the *Anjoman-e Okhovvat* is the presence of women. It seems likely that the wife of Zahir al-Dowleh, Malakeh-ye Iran, the daughter of Naser al-Din Shah, shared her husband's mystical inclinations, and indeed, she is shown in a photograph with her two daughters in dervish costume, carrying the Sufi axe and begging bowl. Of more interest is that the ladies are virtually bareheaded.¹⁶² While it could be argued that this photograph of bareheaded ladies was intended for private viewing and did not necessarily reflect the "modernising" tendency of female liberation from the *hejab*, it is significant that Malakeh-ye Iran used to go to the meetings of the *Anjoman-e Okhovvat* unveiled, and moreover, she used to address the members of the order which included both men and women.¹⁶³ Another remarkable episode surrounding Malakeh-ye Iran was that she composed a song that became popular and was sung by both men and women.¹⁶⁴ While it was not unheard of that females composed poetry and songs, in general in Qajar Iran, the composition of poetry was a male domain and it was considered shameful for females to expose, or "unveil" themselves in this literary fashion.¹⁶⁵

The modernising tendencies of the Society of Brotherhood are also evident in its publications. Based in Tehran, the *Majmu'eh-ye Akhlaq* ("Magazine of Morals") was published from 1905 and continued to print in total eighteen issues which contained contributions in verse and prose from Zahir al-Dowleh.¹⁶⁶ This magazine of eight pages discussed ethical issues, mainly written by Mirza Ibrahim Khan (the Deputy for Isfahan in the Second National Assembly), and according to Browne it "professedly avoids political and religious matters".¹⁶⁷ (Zahir al-Dowleh was also instrumental in founding a weekly paper in Hamadan, called '*Adl-e Mozaffar* and then changed its name to *Ekbatana*.)¹⁶⁸ Another member of the Society of Brotherhood, Hajji Dadash, established a branch in Kermanshah, and from there he published a journal (*The Magazine of Brotherhood*) which "explored current, worldly affairs and in many cases related them to patriotic or nationalist themes".¹⁶⁹

One of the major issues that plagued the Sufis of the late Qajar and early Pahlavi period concerned *qotbiyyat*, or spiritual leadership, which demanded ultimate allegiance to a spiritual master, the position of which was often earned through hereditary succession. Discussions and conflict surrounding *qotbiyyat* were present in the major Sufi orders of Iran during the period in question,¹⁷⁰ and disputes over succession frequently led to an ever increasing splintering of the orders. The Safi'alishahis suffered this problem as much as other orders, as four individuals claimed to be the exclusive successor to Safi 'Ali Shah,¹⁷¹ and Binesh 'Ali Shah (the successor of Zahir al-Dowleh) was also opposed by Vafa 'Ali Shah (d. 1949) (who Kasravi claimed was a disciple of Safi 'Ali Shah) and Hajji Dadash. It was perhaps a result of the Society's ideal of equality, combined with a self-conscious recognition of the damage that the squabbles over *qotbship* had on public perceptions of Sufism, and the increasing awareness of equality within other social institutions (Iranian or otherwise) that Binesh 'Ali Shah, as vice-president of the Society of Brotherhood's Consultancy Council, decided to abandon the tradition of appointing a successor and *qotb*. Indeed, during his own lifetime the leader of the Consultancy Council was more of a first among equals (perhaps taking the ideal of brotherhood and equality of the Society to its ultimate conclusion), standing in contrast to the charismatic, authoritarian guide, which was the traditional Sufi model. Although the Society remained without a *qotb*, it was agreed that Sufi sheikhs could be appointed by the Consultancy Council for the spiritual guidance of the Sufis.¹⁷²

Although the organisation seems to have been comfortable with the trappings of modernity, this did not mean that it jettisoned its Sufi heritage both in terms of ritual and belief. The life and writings of Safi 'Ali Shah manifest elements of the Sufi tradition that anti-Sufis and modernists criticise as irrational and incompatible with the modern age. For example, his writings contain stories in which he believes that he heard a guiding, divine voice,¹⁷³ that Ne'matollah Vali appeared in his heart and acted as his host during a pilgrimage to the saints tomb in Mahan¹⁷⁴ and that he was miraculously saved from drowning in a river (the water of which rose dramatically, caused by divine wrath for Safi's intention to drink wine) by his sheikh's brother.¹⁷⁵ Critics of Sufism, such as Kasravi, would also

have disliked Safi's espousal of the unity of existence (*vahdat-e vojud*) which is commonly associated with Ibn 'Arabi (d. 1265) and has been understood by its opponents as a monistic or pantheistic worldview.¹⁷⁶

Yet Safi 'Ali Shah was also critical of elements of the "Sufi" tradition in Iran, perhaps a reflection of the splintering of the Ne'matollahi order, and the abuse that Sufism has always suffered at the hands of the unscrupulous. Indeed, his following comments could easily have been written by Kasravi a generation later:

Some make claims to *qotbiyyat* in their writings and they boast of 'I and no other', contrary to [the practice of] famous and unknown [masters]. And some others claim perfection through the subjugation [of nature], alchemy, summoning spirits, talismans, the [mystical] wisdom of letters and words, the exorcism of evil spirits, and *zeker* recital in [their attempts] to curry favour or cause separation, and some others speak about dervish-hood by reciting litanies and reading the treatises of past masters such as the *Masnavi*¹⁷⁷ and the *Fusus*¹⁷⁸ without learning the science of Sufism from its adherents, and they deny the recognised or unrecognised gnostic of their time.

And some others invent unknown things in mentioning the circumstances of their contemporaries, and in each gathering they say that we were assembled together in so and so a time, in so and so a party, with so and so, and this and that took place.

They always talk of these things with reference to the dead or those who are absent, but not to those worthy who are present.¹⁷⁹

Under Zahir al-Dowleh the Society of Brotherhood maintained a traditional Sufi perspective, typified in his six principles for membership: respecting God's commands, compassion for God's creatures, serving the people of God (the fellow Sufis), devoting oneself to God's path, concealing the mystery of God and obedience to the friend (*vali*) of God, which for Zahir al-Dowleh meant Safi 'Ali Shah.¹⁸⁰ Moreover it is possible to see within Zahir al-Dowleh's ideas an attraction to a mystical dimension of letters; thus he spelt out that the real meaning of dervish (which in Persian is composed of the letters d, r, v, i, and sh) in the following fashion: the 'd' in dervish represents *dorosti* (correctness), the 'r' is symbolic of *rasti* (honesty), 'v' stands for *vahdat va yeganegi* (unity and oneness), 'i' represents *yaqin-e kamel* (utter certainty) and 'sh' is for *shokr dar asayesh va sakhti* (gratitude in both comfort and in adversity).¹⁸¹ In addition, Zahir al-Dowleh opened the Society of Brotherhood with 110 members, a number which has the very same numerical value of the sum of numbers contained in the letters *ayn*, *lam* and *ye*, which spell 'Ali. It is not clear whether this was designed with the intention of receiving some mystical blessing or whether it was purely symbolic and had more to do with asserting the identity of the society.

The society met weekly on Thursday evenings, and distinctly religious activities also took place during the months of Moharram, Safar and Ramadan when the

members observed lamentations and recited religious poems in its *khanaqah*. Moreover, the Society celebrated the births of Mohammad and ‘Ali and the latter’s appointment as the prophet’s successor at Ghaderr¹⁸², and each year during the month of Farvadin the Society held the Festival of Flowers during which special songs were composed and played by the orchestra.¹⁸³

Yet the Sufism of Zahir al-Dowleh has a very different taste from the more ecstatic form contained within his master’s writings, and it would seem that the Society of Brotherhood served as an extension of Zahir al-Dowleh’s political and Sufi perspectives. Afshar claims that as governor of Hamadan he was known as a supporter of the Constitutionalists and a friend of the people and that such opinions spilled over into the Society of Brotherhood,¹⁸⁴ and Safa’i observes that for many years people had imagined that dervishes conditioned their body, abstained from work, wore patched and dirty clothes, adopted seclusion as a way of life and sometimes begged. For Safa’i, the greatness of Zahir al-Dowleh was that he used mysticism to serve society and brought the spiritual and Sufi teachings out of the *khanaqah* and took them to the centres of society in order to awaken people’s minds and improve their ethics and make them aware of the concept of freedom.¹⁸⁵

The Society of Brotherhood was particularly concerned with worldly matters and ethics, and this is reflected in its constitution (written by Zahir al-Dowleh) which does not mention any kind of mystical vision and only refers to God once in the context of not performing ugly acts since God is everywhere and witnesses everything. The mention of Sufi ritual practice is also very brief, with passing reference to the observance of reciting *zehr* and litanies. Instead, the constitution is more concerned with external behaviour, the general tenor being an exceedingly sober manifestation of Sufism. It rejects the kind of Sufis who beg for a living or else rely on the charity of others: “The pinnacle of honour is when (Sufis) earn a living through their own labour and effort.” Interestingly too, the constitution states that it is impermissible to “insult the *ulema* of the holy law, rather one should express amity (*mavaddat*) because the kernel requires a skin, and the body needs clothes”.¹⁸⁶ The stress on ethics was continued after Zahir al-Dowleh, as its leaders were people who did not “pretend to spiritual unveiling and vision, and neither like the other *shaykhs* of the path, to supernatural things”.¹⁸⁷

Zahir al-Dowleh’s poetry reflects the concerns of Sufism and its aim of serving God, and union with him on the one hand with humanistic ethics on the other. The latter is typified in a poem contained in *Varedat* in which he protests at the practice of grain hoarding, something of which he had first-hand knowledge as governor of Hamadan, when he threatened to resign unless he was given the authority to take appropriate action to make the hoarders sell at a reasonable price. Having assembled a large mass of angry and hungry people, he instigated them to march on the stocks, and the grain was subsequently sold at reasonable prices:¹⁸⁸

If we have a Shah he is building up a store of grain

If we have a minister he is a thief and despises humanity

All the princes drink the people's blood...
 What is their sorrow if the poor are all dead?
 Neither the full person has any mercy for the hungry
 Nor the prince has any sympathy for the poor.
 You see a dead person in every road
 Frozen to death from cold and hunger.
 There is much food everywhere,
 In the kitchens, stores and shops
 But there is no pity in hearts
 That they could show mercy for people in this state...
 We must go and smash the stores
 Open them up and eat, there is no other choice.¹⁸⁹

His Sufi poetry, however, is traditional in describing complete devotion to an immanent God;

Listen to a short account about the people of the path,
 Listen to a secret of theirs, in truth.
 A path has sprouted from the heart and soul
 And from all places they have turned to God.
 They are strangers to everyone, they are people of the heart –
 Unaware of themselves and united to the Truth (*be-haqq vassel-and*) –
 There is nothing except trust (in God) for them
 There is nothing except poverty in their thoughts.
 They are in the stage of traversing the path
 They have amassed gnosis, in truth.
 The path-revealer is on the way to annihilation (*fana*)
 The masters of honour are [leaning] on the throne of subsistence
 (*baqa*).¹⁹⁰

In this survey a wide variety of opinions related to Sufism have been described, ranging from outright rejection to sympathy and ardent support. By the time that Kasravi commenced his criticisms of Sufism in the 1930s, the nature of Sufism in Iran had changed dramatically from its mediaeval or even its nineteenth-century manifestations. Kasravi himself admitted this in his *Sufigari*, for he claims in the introduction that Sufism no longer has the power to attract individuals to renounce their worldly possessions and leave for the *khanaqah* or adopt a wandering life-style. Life in Iran during the 1930s and after would certainly not have permitted such a life-style; certainly, the centralising reforms of Reza Shah would not have tolerated the kind of antinomian Sufi activity that is commonly associated with groups such as the Qalandar. Indeed Kasravi notes that one of Reza Shah's accomplishments was the eradication of the Sufis in public: "He cleansed the markets and streets from the filth of the mollas and the dervishes."¹⁹¹ Yet as has been shown, some groups of Sufis had adopted the kind of world-view of which

Kasravi would have approved, including performing acts of charity, working for one's livelihood and marrying and having children. The case study of the *Anjoman-e Okhovvat* and the focus on Zahir al-Dowleh illustrates this point, as does the Society's further development in the 1930s and beyond, when the role of a single leader was replaced with a consultative council, and the members of which did not "pretend to 'disclosure and vision' "¹⁹² Such tendencies were not limited to the *Anjoman-e Okhovvat*, as another branch of the Ne'matollahis, the Soltan'alishahis manifested other reformist tendencies.¹⁹³

The creation of modern Iran was the major aim of the intellectuals and politicians of Iran during Kasravi's lifetime, and it is hardly surprising that Persian literature became one of the points of controversy. Since much of Iran's literary heritage is of a mystical nature, Sufism became one of the topics that was a cause of intense debate. One of the intriguing points in this debate is the lack of information concerning Reza Shah's position on Sufism,¹⁹⁴ although the opinions and policies of Hekmat and Forughi in promoting Sufi literature served his policy of fostering a sense of national glory in Iran. While Kasravi shared the aim of establishing a modern nation-state in Iran, he was concerned that Iranians did not possess the requisite mentality to achieve this and, in particular, he pinpointed the hegemonic Sufi world-view that was enforced by a rich literature that dated back over a thousand years. As already noted, many scholars, both Iranian and otherwise, have noted the influence of Sufi literature, and its power has been summarised by de Bruijn who commented, "Classical Persian literature . . . up to the present century, continued to be the most conspicuous element of the Persian cultural identity."¹⁹⁵ It was with this that Kasravi wished to engage in battle, as he considered it a threat to the nation-state of Iran.

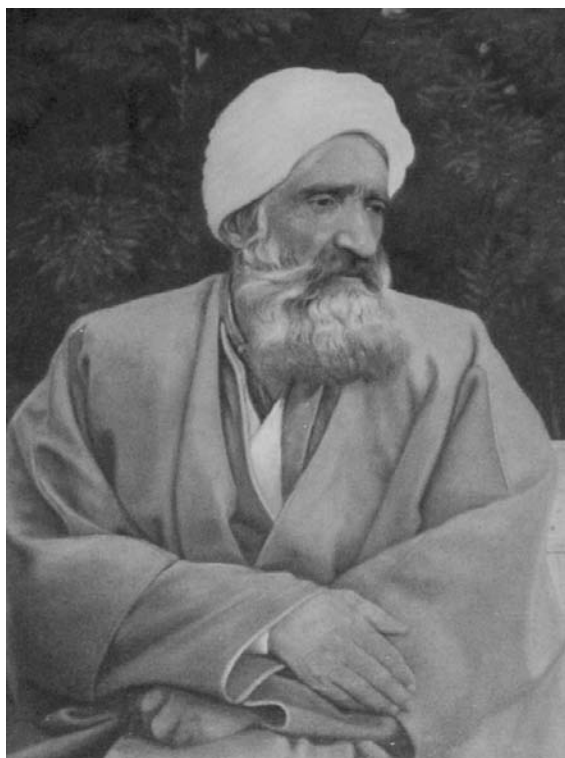


Figure 2.2 Safi 'Ali Shah.



Figure 2.3 Zahir al-Dowleh in dervish clothing.

SCOURGE OF THE SUFIS

Kasravi's rejection of Persian mysticism

Introduction

In the previous chapter the diverse opinions of Sufism that existed in Iran in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were examined, and even though there was no uniform or systematic opposition to the Sufis there was common ground between some clerics, intellectuals and even some Sufis who opposed the more antinomian aspects of the Sufi tradition. The most virulent opposition to Sufism, however, came from the pen of Ahmad Kasravi, in particular his work *Sufigari* ("Sufism"). This anti-Sufi work was the result of Kasravi's despair for a weak and disintegrating Iran, a process that he had witnessed ever since the period of the Constitutional Revolution. In addition to this, Kasravi's own understanding of modernism and his "rational" theology most surely contributed to his tirades against Sufism. In contrast to Kasravi's polemical discourse there were reformers in Islamic lands who regarded Sufism as one of the components that could be utilised for the creation of a nation-state. Two good examples of this are Ziya Gökalp, from the Ottoman-Turkish context, and Mohammad Iqbal, the Indian intellectual.

This chapter will present the nationalist context in which Kasravi formulated his ideas about Sufism, and following this, his work *Sufigari* will be examined and then contrasted with the views of his contemporaries, Gökalp and Iqbal. Although Gökalp and Iqbal lived in contexts different from those of Kasravi, both Anatolia and British India were experiencing political and social difficulties which perhaps were on a par with the problems that existed in Kasravi's Iran; therefore, the aim of strengthening the nation remained the same, and the conflicting views of these three scholars on Sufism reinforce the view that imagining nationalism is an exercise in myth-making.

Kasravi and Iranian Nationalism

The rich cultural diversity of Iran is manifested in the composition of its peoples that include the Azaris of the north-east, the Gilanis of the central-northern region where Iran meets the Caspian Sea, the Turkomans of the north-east, the

Baluchis of the south-east, Arabs of the south-west, Lurs of the west and Kurds of the west and north-west. All of these groups have their own language, although linguistic differentiation has been mitigated by the commonality of bi-lingualism (the uniting language being Farsi (or Persian)). These regional, linguistic and ethnic groups are separated from each other by natural geographical features, and it is pertinent to speculate on the possibility that the inhabitants of the Iranian territorial periphery might share greater cultural affinity with their neighbours on the other side of the Iranian border than with the centre in Tehran. In this light one wonders what it is that binds Iranian society together (if indeed one accepts that it is bound together).

Hopes of Iranian unity were weak in the aftermath of the First World War, when Iran became embroiled in entanglements with the Soviet Union and Britain due to its strategic importance. Foreign exploitation of regional grievances against the central authorities in Tehran exacerbated local uprisings into articulate movements demanding autonomy. Thus, strong regionalist demands (including land distribution and the assembling of provincial councils) emerged from the provisional branch of the Democrat Party in Azarbayjan under Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani.¹ In Gilan too, the Jangali movement under Mirza Kuchek Khan called for administrative autonomy, and the movement made an alliance with Soviet forces (that had landed in Iran in 1920) which resulted in the proclamation of the Gilan Republic and the formation of the Communist Party of Iran. In the north-east of Iran, Colonel Mohammad Taqi Khan Paysan formed a revolutionary committee with local Democrats to establish a provincial government of Khorasan with its own National Army.² National disintegration also seemed to be a possibility in the south too, as there were rumours that the British intended to separate the oil-rich region of Khuzestan (which was becoming known as the “emirate of the Arabs”³) from Iran and invest power in the local chief, Sheikh Khaz‘al.⁴

These regional movements with their demands for autonomy or increased participation within the Iranian structures of power failed for a variety of reasons, and regionalism was laid to rest (temporarily, at least) by Reza Shah. Nevertheless, these examples reveal just how immanent was the danger of foreign intervention and the consequence of national disintegration. It is in this context that Kasravi wrote in 1942, “Our younger intellectuals cannot possibly understand, and thus cannot possibly judge the reign of Reza Shah. They cannot because they were too young to remember the chaotic and desperate conditions out of which arose the autocrat named Reza Shah.”⁵

Kasravi was not the only Iranian of his generation to be vexed about the lack of unity within Iran. Another example expressing this concern is found in the writings of Hosayn Kazemzadeh, who published the newspaper *Iranshahr* from Berlin between 1922 and 1927. In an article on “Religion and Nationality” within *Iranshahr*, the author wrote, “the problem of communalism is so serious that whenever an Iranian travelling abroad is asked his nationality, he will give his locality – not the proud name of his country”.⁶

As a nationalist, Kasravi was not a great theoretician, and Abrahamian has remarked that he did not compose a single detailed, analytical work on the topic of nationalism in which the structures that shape perceptions of the nation, such as political will and consent, language, culture and origins could have been discussed.⁷ Instead, there are comments scattered throughout his oeuvre such as the following, which appears to endorse a nationalism based on self-determination:

Nationalism is when twenty million people who live in a single country make an agreement among themselves to co-operate and support one another in [all] circumstances. If someone from Kerman or from Khuzestan is injured then the people from Azarbayjan and Gilan and all the others should assist him. And if a problem arises in Khorasan, then the people of Mazandaran, Gilan and all the others should rush to help. Everyone should see this country as his own house, and they should join hands and attempt to make it flourish.⁸

In Kasravi's opinion, regionalism was not the only reason for the weakness of the Iranian nation, for religious sectarianism (even within individual cities)⁹ had also contributed to this problem, which existed prior to the appearance of Western powers in the Middle East, but who worked at this fissure to promote their hegemony over the region. Kasravi claimed to be a first-hand witness of such religious sectarianism and he offers the examples of Sunni-Shi'ite hatred¹⁰ and Ne'mati-Haydari communal conflicts that were common between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹¹

Kasravi did not believe that religion was necessarily an obstacle to the progress of the nation, although he viewed the contemporary understandings of Islam (throughout the whole of the Islamic world) as having deviated from the essence of Islam and religion. Unadulterated religion was composed of six elements: the world has a creator, God; the world is orderly and operates through God's laws; human beings are God's chosen and select creation; good and evil exist in the world, and humans must strive to overcome evil; humans possess the faculty of reason by which they are able to discern right from wrong; there is another life after existence in this world.¹² These six points mirror Kasravi's understanding of the beliefs that Mohammad taught during his prophetic career; yet this represents only half of the prophetic message which also included a political dimension (the creation of a state in the name of Islam, laws, taxes, fighting the infidel and striving to advance Islam).¹³ Kasravi argued that the dimensions of belief and politics no longer existed in the twentieth century in a symbiotic fashion, for the dimension of belief had been perverted by erroneous teachings and the political unity of Islam had long vanished; indeed, Western advances had made the single Islamic state a remote dream. In these circumstances, Kasravi remarked that some Muslims had attempted reform by stating their desire to return to the essence of Islam, and he cites the example of the Wahhabis, who are well known for their anti-Sufi and anti-Shi'ite views. (Indeed, Kasravi regarded the Sunni

Muslims as being “less corrupt” than other Muslim groups,¹⁴ and he observed that the Wahhabi Sunnis “are the best group among Muslims”¹⁵.) However, he remarked that this aim of re-capturing the essence of Islam was doomed to failure because the circumstances of the contemporary age are so different from those of Mohammad’s time, and it is implied that the political dimension of Mohammad’s Islam must be jettisoned and replaced with a system more suited for the modern age.¹⁶

It is not surprising that many Shi’ites found Kasravi’s views so problematic, especially when he commented, “The Moslems’ claim that Islam was the last religion is a baseless statement and is incompatible with God’s law and progress.”¹⁷ This statement is not so startling as it appears at first glance, especially when Kasravi’s understanding of religion (the six principles mentioned earlier) is considered. The “Islam” included in the above quotation refers to a reified version that includes “traditional” rituals and its political heritage rather than the “rational” version that Kasravi elaborated in his *pak-dini* (or pure religion).¹⁸ This form of religion can be viewed as a process theology that responds to the changing circumstances of history and allows for flexibility, and indeed, Kasravi did not consider it an abrogation of Islam:

Pakdini is a replacement for Islam; it is what follows it. In essence and foundation, there is no difference. The differences lie in the path and some of its bases. And this must be so. This has been the will of God and this is His law.¹⁹

The religion that Kasravi envisaged was one in which God’s active presence was removed from the world and forms of contact with the divine, such as that claimed by the Sufis or the claims of representation by the *mojtaheds* for the Twelfth Imam, were denied. In effect, Kasravi was very much a Deist, and his understanding of religion, although universalist, did not necessarily negate the development of the nation-state. Despite his claim of the congruency of *pak-dini* with Islam, Kasravi was criticised for proclaiming a new religion, with himself as the new prophet. In addition to this, his criticisms of Shi’ism²⁰ resulted in his being charged with “slandering Islam”, and during his trial he was assassinated by members of a radical Shi’ite group, the *Feda’iyan-e Islam*.

Aside from trying to reform Islam, Kasravi made strenuous attempts to provide a basis that could unite the peoples of Iran. One of the major elements was the reform of the Persian language, an issue which had occupied the minds of many intellectuals prior to Kasravi. Mirza Malkam Khan (1833–1908) had suggested the use of a brand new alphabet to replace the Arabic alphabet in which several of the letters have the same sound when pronounced by a Persian,²¹ and Jamalzadeh had satirised the inability of Persians to communicate with one another in his short story “Persian is Sugar” (published in 1921) because of their inclinations to Arabic words or European expressions or because of their regional dialects. Under Reza Shah the movement to “Persianise” Farsi became serious,

perhaps inspired by similar nationalist movements in the Middle East, including Turkey (where in 1928 the Arabic script was abolished in favour of a Latin alphabet). The official “Persianisation” of the language was promoted by the Persian Language Academy which had been established in the 1930s to remove unnecessary words of non-Persian origin. This policy enjoyed the support of a wide cross section of intellectuals, ranging from Kasravi to the novelist Sadeq Hedayat, whose interest in ancient Iranian languages may have contributed to his promotion of modern Persian. (Indeed, Hedayat was indignant at the Azarbayjani Democrat Party’s attempts to replace Persian with Turkish after the Second World War.²²) Kasravi’s independent “reform” of the Persian language was undertaken through his publications, and his use of extremely obscure Persian words at the expense of easily recognised Arabic or Turkish equivalents necessitated the inclusion of glossaries at the back of his pamphlets and articles. The difficulty of understanding Kasravi’s writings and some of the flaws in his aims for language reform were succinctly expressed by the Persian scholar Ehsan Yarshater:

In order to understand his writings in the newspaper *Parcham* one must have a special dictionary to look up word after word. And what is perplexing is that a rationalist scholar like Kasravi, fired up with zeal for Persian-worship and Arabic-purging, remained unaware of the fundamental point that language is the instrument of comprehension, not an arena for innovation.²³

(After Kasravi’s assassination a dictionary of his obscure Persian words was published, which in itself is indicative of his failure in the reform of the Persian language.²⁴) Some of his alternatives for non-Persian words are quaint and understandable, such as using *bashandegan* instead of *mawjudat*, while others are unfathomable without an explanation, such as *sat*, meaning pages (instead of the more usual *sahfah*).

Reform of the language is extremely important in this analysis of the emerging Iranian nationalism because of the religious associations embodied within Arabic words. To remove such words and replace them with Persian equivalents is an additional step in the transformation of Islam. For example, prayers are recited by Muslims in Arabic, since the prayer is composed of various verses from the Arabic Qur’an, God’s word. If a Persian speaker performed his or her prayers in Persian, it is possible that the perceived “spirituality” of such ritual activity would have been severely diminished by the demystification of language. Likewise, the linguistic reforms advocated by Kasravi would have divorced Iranians from much of their rich literary heritage, especially the mystical literature, such as Rumi’s *Masnawi* and many others. However, given Kasravi’s negative attitude towards Sufism, this may well have been one of the un-stated aims in his desire to reform the language.

Through his writings on religion and language it is clear that Kasravi’s ultimate concern is the defence of Iran, and encompassed within both of these spheres of

religion and language lies the Iranian mystical tradition, in particular, Sufism. The following will focus upon Kasravi's criticisms of Sufism and at the same time offer alternative views of Sufism that were elaborated by his contemporaries to show that elements of Sufism could have been utilised to bolster the message of nationalism, that is to say, progress in the modern nation-state does not necessarily have to be hampered by belief in, or sympathy for, Sufism.

Kasravi's criticisms of the Sufis

The most substantial work that Kasravi published on Sufism is an essay of some eighty pages that first appeared in 1943–4 entitled *Sufigari* ("Sufism"). The essay consists of an introduction and eight chapters: the origins of Sufism, the evils attributable to Sufism, Sufism's evil conduct with Islam, Sufism has been nothing but a source of the spirit's weakness, the Sufis have not had the least fear in lying, how the Iranians were vanquished by the Mongols, the benefits gained by the Sufis from the Mongol episode and the truths that one can find in Plotinus's discourses. Following on from these 80 pages and 8 chapters there are 15 exceedingly short footnotes and no bibliography.

Kasravi commences his essay by claiming that Sufism had not been eliminated with the onset of modernity; instead, Sufism (and therefore its evil teachings) was thriving. Moreover, these evil teachings had been absorbed unnoticed by the Iranians into their culture, especially through literature. Second, Kasravi argued that modernity, or modern knowledge, was unable to defeat Sufism. He claimed that modern knowledge and Sufism had weakened each other; Sufism was weakened in the respect that knowledge no longer permitted the individual Sufi to be a "wanderer of the world" but restricted him as an "armchair" Sufi. Knowledge was weakened in the respect that Sufism acted as an antidote to the harmful effects of knowledge; as for Kasravi, knowledge was twinned with materialism. He implied that modern knowledge had reached a pinnacle in Western Europe and also Communist Russia; yet even so, Christianity had not been destroyed in these places, implying perhaps that Christianity survived because it served to lighten the darkness and prevalence of materialism. Kasravi's real targets here are those sympathetic to "materialism", namely the Marxist group associated with Taqi Arani. He also ridicules the views of an opposing group (but recognisable as a reflection of the views of Mohammad 'Ali Forughī) which maintains that Sufism can serve to remedy the evils that materialism has in society.

Third, and perhaps more controversially, Kasravi believed that the Western powers utilised Iranian Sufism in their political aims of maintaining a weak Iran. He accused Western orientalists of editing classical Persian Sufi texts and distributing them in Iran in conjunction with the Iranian Ministry of Culture.

It is in the first of the points mentioned here, Sufi evil teachings that received most attention in *Sufigari*. However, Kasravi's criticisms consist merely of generalisations that have been made by the opponents of Sufism over the centuries, and his main points will be analysed in depth later in this chapter. One of the

weaknesses of the second point centres on Kasravi's linkage of Sufism with Christianity, because the two are not alike. Christianity has had its own mystical tradition which has been viewed in a very suspect fashion by the more "orthodox" Christian establishment, and the survival of Christianity may have nothing to do with the characteristics and circumstances that have enabled mystical Islam to survive, despite the growth of "modern knowledge". The third point also lacks substantiation, and its venom seems to have been directed at a Persian edition of 'Attar's *Memoirs of the Saints*, produced by R.A. Nicholson²⁵ who has not been noted for the form of orientalism that depicts the "other" as lazy, irrational or inferior. Kasravi's criticisms of European orientalisks are scattered in his works on literature and Sufism, and his criticisms of E.G. Browne are detailed in Chapter 5.

Despite the flaws in his arguments, Kasravi's criticisms of Sufism merit attention because they represent an interesting reaction of an Iranian modernist to Iran's mystical heritage. This section focuses on the issues raised by Kasravi's first point, the evil teachings of the Sufis, simply because this focus on the evil teachings by far predominates in Kasravi's text. Although it is the "evil teachings" of the Sufis that dominates the whole of the text, Kasravi attempted to guard himself from accusations of making gross generalisations by qualifying his criticisms on a few occasions. Thus he claims that not all Sufis have been bone-idle and parasitic, as some leading Sufis taught their disciples about the necessity of earning one's own living, and in addition, he states that not all "Sufis have been evil, and sometimes some of them were merely content in sincere purity, and the prevention of lust and selfishness".²⁶ Yet, he concludes that such Sufis have been few and, taken all together, Sufism has been a calamity for Iran.²⁷

The unity of existence

Kasravi's first complaint about the Sufis concerns the doctrine of *vahdat-e vojud*, commonly translated as the unity of existence and associated with Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1240) and his school of mystical thought. Kasravi criticises this Sufi school for claiming a relationship with God that borders on pure monism, and he includes celebrated mystics of the mediaeval period such as Najm al-Din Razi and Jalal al-Din Rumi among its proponents. He indicates that this school is alive and well even in the twentieth century, typified by the activities and discourses of the Indian mystic, Mehr Baba.²⁸ Kasravi summarises a number of theological problems associated with the unity of existence. His first question is that if humans are all "of God" (*az khoda*) and will ultimately return to him, then what is the need for human effort on earth in following the divine injunctions brought by the prophets? Kasravi's second complaint is that followers of this school of Sufism have belittled the significance of humanity, the noblest of God's creation, by linking the idea of the unity of existence with beasts and animals. The third problem raised is that followers of the unity of existence hold this world in contempt, and therefore they abstain from worldly pleasures. For Kasravi, this is

incompatible with their belief that all creation is somehow “of God”. If God created or manifested the world and humans share in its or his existence, then why should anything be held in contempt?²⁹

The unity of existence has aroused controversy within Islam since it was articulated in a coherent fashion in the medieval period of Islamic history.³⁰ Theologians, jurists and Sufis themselves have all at one time or another opposed the common perception of what Ibn ‘Arabi is supposed to have said. Indeed, even in the modern age, the unity of existence has been the subject of debate,³¹ epitomised by the writings of the distinguished Pakistani scholar Fazlur Rahman who echoed Kasravi’s own criticisms when he described Ibn ‘Arabi as “thoroughly monistic” and his world-view as a form of “polytheism”³² which “produces a fatalism that could not fail to numb the moral faculties”³³. Yet a close examination of Ibn ‘Arabi’s works reveals that the unity of existence has its basis not in divine immanence or presence within the individual, as Kasravi supposed. Ibn ‘Arabi’s world-view has been the subject of much scholarly activity in recent years, and a consensus has emerged that the essence of the school of unity of existence is neatly summarised by Ibn ‘Arabi’s expression “He/not He”.³⁴ This reflects the Qur’anic explanation that in some respects man resembles God, since the Qur’an states that God “blew of His spirit” into man.³⁵ Yet the Qur’an also confirms that “nothing is like Him”.³⁶ Thus the unity of existence both affirms and denies the idea of the divine human, and for this reason it is incumbent for Muslims to follow the guidance offered by the prophets and to strive for perfection rather than adopting a fatalistic perspective.

Kasravi’s second criticism of the unity of existence, that it belittles humans by encompassing wild beasts and animals, is a gross simplification and misrepresentation of *vojudi* thought. Many Sufis of this school portrayed man as the greatest of God’s creation, as the perfect man functions as a mirror in which it is possible to witness God’s attributes. Animals too manifest certain of God’s attributes, but they cannot be compared to the comprehensive nature of man who is able to reflect the fullness of the divine, although in a condensed and summarised fashion.

The third criticism of the *vojudi* school, namely abstaining from this-worldly pleasures, is also a mis-representation of Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought. The task for *vojudi* Sufis is to recognise the reality of each and every thing, which means understanding its position in the world in relation to the divine, and to derive pleasure from it accordingly. The ultimate manifestation of the divine according to Ibn ‘Arabi was during sexual union because it imitates God’s relationship with man.

Ibn ‘Arabi perceived triplicity inherent in all things in the cosmos.³⁷ Sexual union is that which, by the joining of two parts, produces a third, and thereby imitates God’s creative act of “breathing” into the form of man to create him in His own image.³⁸

In other words, Sufis may, with some legitimacy, enjoy worldly pleasures so long as the spiritual realities inherent within them are recognised.

Sufi idleness

The second major criticism of Sufism offered by Kasravi concerns their alleged idleness. He complains of their practice of remaining in the *khanaqah* and yet still acquiring a source of livelihood (usually by begging). Indeed Kasravi considers begging a great evil and refuses to contemplate the benefits that Sufis claim this practice has in taming the ego, or soul, and rendering it humble. He offers several examples from the classical Sufi tradition, in particular from the biography of the tenth-century Persian Sufi, Abu Sa'id Abi'l-Khayr, to illustrate his case.³⁹ Yet throughout his work, he is very selective with his citations. One can find numerous cases in Persian mystical literature in which the necessity of working for a living and earning one's own daily bread is a pre-requisite of the Sufi path.⁴⁰

Sufi idleness was instrumental in fostering additional sins, according to Kasravi. Apart from begging in their attempt to secure their livelihood, the Sufis also resorted to fabricating lies and claiming that they were able to perform supernatural feats such as walking on water or flying through the air. Since they were able to exercise considerable influence among the uneducated masses through claims of such powers, the Sufis were able to exert a significant hold upon the imagination of the people and therefore, they were a potent political force with which to be reckoned. Their "lies" extended into the political realm, for Kasravi argued that the Sufis were political opportunists in the respect that they claimed to have the power to make a person king or to bring calamities upon those who opposed them. The brevity of Kasravi's text probably limited him in providing examples of this, but he offers the case of Abu Sa'id Abi'l-Khayr who is said to have "given" Khorasan and Iraq to Toghril and Chagri, leaders of the Seljuq Turks who defeated the Ghaznavid Sultan, Ma'sud,⁴¹ and he also cites the contemporary example of the Indian spiritualist Mehr Baba (mentioned earlier), who claimed that he was instrumental in the advent of Reza Khan to the throne of Iran.⁴²

Political opportunism also resulted in the Sufis praising political leaders of dubious spiritual qualities, such as the Sufi poet who lauds the justice of Timur Shah⁴³ (who is more commonly known for his tyranny). Kasravi could have provided more contemporary examples, especially episodes taken from the Zahabi order. The thirty-sixth leader of the Zahabis, Jalal al-Din (d. 1913), received the title of "Majd al-Ashraf" (d. 1913) from Naser al-Din Shah, and he subsequently dedicated his *Resaleh-ye Mozaffariyeh* written in 1899 to Mozaffar al-Din Shah.⁴⁴ A reflection of continued Zahabi loyalty to the royal court is evident in their support for the Qajars during the Constitutional Revolution, a loyalty that is perhaps attributable to the Qajars' recognition of Zahabi custodianship of the important shrine of Shah Cheragh in Shiraz.

Another form of Sufi lying was the adoption of the prevailing, popular manifestations of Islam at any given time. Kasravi claimed that the Sufis did not really have a religion at all⁴⁵, and this contributed to their adaptability. In his own words:

[The Sufis] have gone along with the faith of the people wherever they have been. In Iran they became Shi'ite, and they linked themselves with

‘Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, and in the Ottoman empire they were Sunni and they traced their *selseleh* back to Abu Bakr.⁴⁶

Kasravi’s arguments are unsubstantiated. There is no proof that the Sufis have “gone with the faith of the people”, for it is just as easy to argue that the “people have gone with the faith of the Sufis”. Kasravi’s argument is vague because he does not say when the Iranians became Shi‘ite. Since he mentions the Ottoman empire in the same sentence, it could be speculated that he believed the wholesale adoption of Shi‘ism in Iran occurred at the beginning of the sixteenth century when Isma‘il declared Twelver Shi‘ism as the religion of Safavid state. Modern scholarship has indicated that Isma‘il’s inclination to Shi‘ism may reflect the absorption of Shi‘ism into the religious traditions of many Iranian communities, especially those which adhered to a form of Folk Islam.⁴⁷ It seems that in the fifteenth century, “the intermingling of Sufism with Shi‘ism in the light of a re-achieved Islamic unity, in accordance with the attempt to return to a kind of religious pluralism... was a constant factor in Muslim society at that time”.⁴⁸ The Shi‘ite nature of the Kobraiyyeh and Nurbakhshiiyyeh orders is well-attested prior to the Safavid period. And the Safavids themselves had shown Shi‘ite tendencies several generations before they came to power. Kasravi’s claim that the Sufis became Shi‘ite because it was the faith of the people, therefore has no ground. The Sufis were such a major component of pre-Safavid society that it is incorrect to consider them a separate category outside of “the people”. In light of the above, it is difficult to regard the movement by some Sufi orders to a Shi‘ite affiliation as being politically motivated. Yet in fairness to Kasravi it must also be stated that there were some Sunni-based orders that became Shi‘ite-inspired orders, for S.H. Nasr has affirmed that the Ne‘matullahi and Qadiri became Shi‘ite during the Safavid period.⁴⁹

Kasravi offered another example of Sufi lies, caused by their desire to conform with society. He claimed that during Iran’s Constitutional Revolution, Sufis’ other-worldliness was criticised by the people, and therefore the Sufis changed their attitudes and cited sayings of ‘Ali to the effect that it was necessary to become involved in worldly matters.⁵⁰ Indeed, some Sufis were actively involved in political affairs during the Constitutional Revolution, most noteworthy of attention was the Society of Brotherhood, discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, during the Constitutional period, Ne‘matullahi Sufis offered support to the Constitutionalists and even gave refuge to sympathisers.⁵¹ Kasravi’s criticisms of the Sufis on this point are weak because he fails to mention that in the course of the nineteenth century the Iranians as a whole were becoming more educated and aware of concepts such as democracy and constitutionalism. This being the case, it was only natural for Sufis as well to become more engaged in socio-political struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moreover, as a “historian well-versed in history” (to use Khomeini’s description),⁵² Kasravi should also have been aware of Sufis’ increasing socio-political activity resulting from vigorous European imperialism. For example, one can point to the resistance of Shamel

and the Chechens against Russian imperialism during the 1840s–50s, and again by the Naqshbandis in Central Asia during the 1890s, again the Naqshbandis in 1925 against Turkish secular reforms, and the Sufis of the Mahdi movement in Sudan during the 1880s.

In his second major criticism of Sufism, Kasravi wants to argue that the Sufis are idle, and at the same time he castigates those who are active in politics as being motivated merely by social pressure. It would seem that whatever social stance the Sufis adopted would have been subject to Kasravi's criticism, suggesting that he had a pre-conceived conclusion in mind. In addition, his rejection of the Sufi "lies" of performing miracles or supernatural feats was based on his reading of the Qur'an as he refers to the Qur'an which repeatedly states that Mohammad does not perform miracles, as the only miracle is indeed the Qur'an itself. Kasravi is correct in the respect that the Qur'an does not depict the Prophet of Islam as a miracle worker, yet there are several Qur'anic verses which do portray breaks in the laws of nature, demonstrating his selective reading of the text. For example, the Qur'an describes the miracles of other prophets, and also the action of God through Mohammad, such as in *sura* 8:17, which states, "You [Mohammad] did not slay, but God slew them, and when you threw it was not you but God." The Qur'an also speaks of God's direct intervention into this world, thus breaking the laws of nature when he sends down *sakinah* (or tranquility) on the hearts of the faithful (48:4, 48:17, 48:26). A literal reading of the Qur'an (as I.R. Netton has argued in his Qur'anic Creator Paradigm)⁵³ indicates that God does indeed act in the world, and Kasravi's failure to acknowledge this is surprising given that he claimed to be a *hafez*.⁵⁴ But modernity and its rejection of the miraculous persuaded "rationalists" like Kasravi to jettison both miracles and God from the world.

Celibacy and sodomy

The third criticism centres on the Sufi practice, according to Kasravi, of celibacy or not taking a wife.⁵⁵ The sin of not marrying, according to Kasravi, is bad enough, since men who have chosen a single life deprive women of the opportunity to marry, yet worse was the Sufi "practice" of paedophilia and sodomy. He offers examples from Sufi literature such as the famous story of Fakhr al-Din 'Eraqi (d. 1289) who wandered off to India, following a Qalandar youth. Kasravi also inserts the story taken from Jami's *Nafahat al-Ons* of the occasion when Shams-e Tabrizi asked Rumi for his son. Kasravi deplores this as an example of the debauch nature of Sufism, perhaps ignorant of the didactic elements within hagiographic literature. The point, spelt out by Jami in the original text cited by Kasravi, was not that Shams desired Rumi's son, but that it was a test of Rumi's obedience to a spiritual master.⁵⁶ Kasravi's criticisms ignore the possibility that stories taken from hagiographies do not necessarily reflect historical truth, as such literature functions in a variety of ways, one of which is the didactic; an effective method of conveying a teaching is by shocking the reader out of prejudices and

pre-conceived ideas. Such a method can be found in other religious traditions too (e.g. the Zen Buddhist *koan* operates in a similar fashion⁵⁷). Another effective method of education is entertainment which exists in a symbiotic manner with the didactic element of the hagiography. Just as in our own age the cinema functions on the basis of a “suspension of disbelief” so too Sufi hagiographies may have worked in a similar way. Of course for some Muslims hagiographies were perceived in a literal fashion and may even have contained elements of historical truth. Yet Schimmel’s remarks about Persian poetry apply equally well to the genre of the hagiography:

It seems futile, therefore, to look for either a purely mystical or a purely profane interpretation of the poems of Hafiz, Jami or ‘Iraqi – their ambiguity is intended, the oscillation between the two levels is consciously maintained... One cannot derive a mystical system out of Persian or Turkish poetry or see in it an expression of experience to be taken at face value.⁵⁸

Rejection of this world and despising life

With the Sufi rejection of worldly life, Kasravi claimed that the Sufis were in fact contradicting their doctrine of the unity of existence. Moreover, he argued that interiorising such a negative attitude to the world resulted in a certain nonchalance and laziness among Iranians and permitted successive waves of invaders to occupy Iran. Such an argument is of course unsubstantiated and little more than a gross generalisation. Kasravi argues that by the time of the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, Sufism had spread across the Islamic world including Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor⁵⁹ and that this was the reason for the sweeping Mongol victories in the Islamic heartlands. He is quick to blame Sufism for the Iranian defeat, but he remained silent concerning the Mongol defeat at ‘Ayn Jalut in Palestine in 1260 by the Mamluk army from Egypt, where Sufism was also thriving. (During the thirteenth century Cairo had many *khanqahs*⁶⁰ and produced several eminent Sufis who advocated ideas of a *vojudi* nature, including Ibn Farid.⁶¹)

‘Eshq

The application of the word ‘*eshq*, or passionate love, was problematic for the mediaeval theologians because it implies a physical love, which of course is impossible for the incorporeal divinity. Kasravi went beyond the discourses of the theologians concerning ‘*eshq* and focused upon the devotional Sufi practices, such as the *sama‘*, or listening to Sufi music and dancing in ecstasy. In Kasravi’s own words: “They played the lute and flute, stamped their feet, clapped their hands, spun and jumped around in such a way that they foamed at the mouth, became dizzy and fell over.”⁶² Moreover, the *sama‘* was performed by the Sufis not due to

their love for God, but rather “most of them witnessed either a beautiful youth or woman, and danced in memory of him or her”.⁶³ Although there may be some element of truth in Kasravi’s remarks, one should not forget that many Sufis were probably genuine in their devotional activities and also spoke of exercising extreme caution when practising the *samaʿ*. It was frequently the case that the dervishes were advised to perform the *samaʿ* when the common people were not present, at a suitable time and when permission had been given by the spiritual master. One should not forget either the beneficial sociological consequences of the so-called commoners participating in the *samaʿ*. Through a combination of entertainment, devotional practice and ritual performance, the *samaʿ* served as a tool in the integration of society.

The Sufis’ irrationality

In Kasravi’s previous criticisms there is ample “evidence” of Sufi “irrationality” such as the contradictions within the theory of the unity of existence, Sufi lying, Sufi idleness, etc., so that it is not necessary to discuss this last criticism any further.

Kasravi, Gökalp and Iqbal, and the relationship between Sufism and nationalism

Many of Kasravi’s criticisms of Sufism are not so much important for their content, since they had been propagated at an earlier date by other Muslims,⁶⁴ but their significance lies in the whole-hearted rejection of Sufism by a modern reformer, who claimed that there was no difference in the essence and foundation of *Islam* with the reforms he desired and set forth in his *pak dini*.⁶⁵ Such a whole-hearted rejection of Sufism can be found within the Iranian tradition of some Shiʿite clerics and the secular intelligentsia, but Kasravi was a representative of the Iranian modernists who were outside the seminary but still wished to preserve a religious and perhaps an “Islamic” perspective and who at the same time repudiated Iran’s mystical legacy. The influence of modern European rational thought and even positivism helps explain Kasravi’s attitude towards Sufism. For Kasravi, modernism meant the rule of science and reason. It was an acceptance of natural law as opposed to a mediaeval form of occasionalism, and natural laws entailed living in the world, getting married and having children, an appreciation of the divine as something remote about which man can say very little (in contrast to the school of the unity of existence and the ineffable “experiences” of the Sufis). Moreover, the positivism that developed in nineteenth-century Europe argued for the development, progress and survival of the fittest societies and nation-states through science and reason (although Kasravi rejected materialist and Darwinian world-views).

Nationalism was a predominant theme in the writings of Turkish intellectuals writing within the Ottoman empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Of particular interest are the works of Ziya Gökalp because he

provided a framework for reform in which Sufism would play an active and positive role. Gökalp's views on Sufism have been studied in relative detail elsewhere,⁶⁶ so a summary of his views will suffice to provide a contrast with those of Kasravi. Gökalp's main aim was to promote Turkism, perhaps in response to the challenges of the European powers and also from the more aggressive demands of the various nationalities within the Ottoman empire who were voicing their own demands, such as the Christians in the Levant who were seeking independence from Istanbul, and also from Muslims such as the Syrian Kawakibi (1849–1902) who agitated for an Arab Caliphate. Gökalp's solution for the decline of the Ottoman empire was to build national solidarity by emphasising native and "authentic" Turkish culture with appropriate elements of civilisation (which included Islam). He believed that the Turkish people possessed their own form of religion, distinct from that of the "High Islam" of the Ottoman state, and so he promoted the "Turkish" form of Islam. His proposals for Islamic reform include five main points which are linked with Sufism.

First, the form of religion of which Gökalp approved included rituals such as communal prayers because they promoted social solidarity. Moreover, individual ties to society were strengthened through Sufi rituals of a communal nature, such as the *zeker*. Gökalp also discussed "negative" Sufi rituals which were those that assisted in overcoming egoistic inclinations (which of course, have a detrimental effect on society). There are a few individuals, "great heroes", who provide role models in the performance of such negative rituals for the general masses. These heroes spend their time in fasting, renunciation, poverty and respond to humiliation and insult with compassion and kindness. The only hero that Gökalp cites in this context is Ibrahim Adham, one of the celebrated Sufis of the eighth century. Such individuals are not of course the norm, but they serve as models for those who are weak in will, who strengthen their own morale by seeing what miracles an intensified will is capable of performing.

Second, Gökalp's attachment to Sufism as a manifestation of Turkish culture is also apparent in his approval of the mystical poetry of the fourteenth-century poet Yunus Emre who in the words of Schimmel "transformed his Turkish mother tongue into a vehicle for mystical expression; he left Turkey a treasure of his simple, deep-felt, touchingly memorable poems, which are still known today by school children".⁶⁷ Gökalp held that such literature should be promoted not merely because it was written in Turkish rather than Arabic or Persian, but because its recital is "an expression of the aestheticism in the practice of their [the Turkish people] religion".⁶⁸ Linked with this is his appreciation of Jalal al-Din Rumi among his Turkish "heroes".⁶⁹

The third factor that contributed to the usefulness of Sufism for Gökalp was that it was more compatible with "authentic" Turkish culture than the civilisation brought with "High Islam". He saw similarities in the pre-Islamic Turkish sky-god (who did not have the power to punish and whom the Turks loved and regarded as beautiful), with a kind of Islam free from ascetic and fanatic practices, and he associates the poetry of Emre with this kind of Islam which maintains a strong

and sincere piety. Another example of this type of Islam is to be found in the *tekkes*, or Sufi institutions.⁷⁰

Fourth, if Sufism reflects the “authentic” culture of a nation, on occasions it can provide the inspiration to resist the restrictions imposed upon it by “religious and political imperialisms”. Gökalp cites the example of the Toscan Albanians who had dissented from the Muslim community by accepting the Sufism of the Bektashis order.⁷¹

The last reason for Gökalp’s endorsement of Sufism is his opinion that the mystical world-view of Ibn ‘Arabi contained everything that modern Western philosophy had to offer. In other words, Muslims do not have to feel intellectually ashamed and inferior *vis-à-vis* the West. Gökalp argued that Ibn ‘Arabi portrayed three stages of mystical “reality”,⁷² the first of which is where the Sufi regards phenomenal existence as an “idea” or “imaginal”. At the next stage the Sufi realised that these ideas are shaped by the perceiver, as explained in the aphorism of Jonayd: “The colour of the water is the colour of the container.” At the third stage, the mystic perceives and constructs those ideas or perfections which ought to exist; in other words, the mystic is able to comprehend what Ibn ‘Arabi calls the “immutable entities” or in other words, knowledge of things as they really are. The significance of this is that the individual who has reached this stage will know the best way to reform or reconstruct society. These three stages, according to Gökalp, correspond to the philosophical trinity of Berkeley–Kant–Nietzsche in the West. Gökalp’s linkage of Ibn ‘Arabi’s world-view with that of the modern West has been termed an “eccentric interpretation [which] is surely not a dispassionate enquiry into comparative philosophy”.⁷³ Nevertheless, what is significant is his attempt to find positive elements in the Sufi heritage, to built on the foundations of the past, thus by-pass the alienation that the Turks might have felt in endorsing a host of half-understood European philosophical and cultural constructs. Moreover, Gökalp’s understanding of Ibn ‘Arabi’s world-view indicates a greater sensitivity to the subtleties of the doctrine of the Unity of Being than that contained within Kasravi’s works. Gökalp held that anyone who believed Ibn ‘Arabi’s thought was pantheistic was “mistaken”, since the “Absolute One” can never be reached, although humans attempt to “approach” the Absolute One, which causes them to reach a “believed-in god”. And eternal essences are nothing other than the manifestation of the believed-in god.⁷⁴

Gökalp’s vision of a reformed Islam that includes a strong element of Sufism is contained in an article attributed to him in which he proposes a new system for religious institutions within the Ottoman empire. He envisaged a centralised religious institution under the Sheikh al-Islam to administer spiritual affairs, or those matters pertaining to piety, similar in function to the Vatican in Rome. This establishment, called the *Mashikat*, would be responsible for appointments to and administration of *mosques*, *madrasas* and the Sufi *tariqas*. Moreover, specialised schools would be established to provide the staff for these institutions. The *tariqas* were to be a “social institution in accordance with their original aims” and the *tekkes* would be transformed into “genuine educational institutions”.⁷⁵

Thus Sufism was included within Gökalp's view of the Turkish nation, although there is no convincing proof that he did so because of his inclination towards mystical Islam. His main aim was the strengthening of the Turkish nation, and the structures and heritage offered by the Sufis could be utilised to this end.

The Indian context provides another perspective on how Sufism was understood in relation to the nation-state. Of particular interest in this respect are the writings of Mohammad Iqbal (1876–1938), who perceived that the position of Muslims in India was being threatened by a Hindu majority. His *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, published in 1934, addresses the problem of how Muslims could be modern, and in this he rejected Western conceptions of nationalism and the mediaeval form of Sufism. Iqbal disapproved of the nationalism of the West which he believed nurtured ruthless egos and uncontrollable hunger that alienate the individual from himself. He claims

both nationalism and atheistic socialism,⁷⁶ at least in the present state of human adjustments, must draw upon the psychological forces of hate, suspicion, and resentment which tend to impoverish the soul of man and close up his hidden sources of spiritual energy.⁷⁷

Similar results had emerged in the Muslim world as a result of mediaeval mysticism, for it had advocated a “false renunciation” which had duped Muslims to look to Western ideologies for a cure:

No wonder then that the modern Muslim in Turkey, Egypt, and Persia is led to seek fresh sources of energy in the creation of new loyalties, such as patriotism and nationalism which Nietzsche described as “sickness and unreason”, and the “strongest force against culture.”⁷⁸

And he composed the following on Atatürk's “Godless nationalism”: *The morning breeze is still in search of a garden / Ill lodged in Atatürk, the soul of the east is still in search of a body.*⁷⁹ Both mediaeval mysticism and modern nationalism then led to alienation: “neither the technique of mediaeval mysticism nor nationalism nor atheistic socialism can cure the ills of a despairing humanity.”⁸⁰

Iqbal's concept of an authentic nationalism contained two main elements. First he was concerned with the condition of Islam in India, and this led him in 1930 to declare his support for a single state for the diverse Muslims in India, despite their varied languages and cultures. This, he believed, would be the start of a process that would ultimately transcend local nationalism among Muslims and result in the ideal nation; a universal nation of Muslims,⁸¹ the creation of which could be assisted by an assembly of religious scholars “to protect, expand and if necessary to reinterpret the laws of Islam in the light of modern conditions”.⁸²

His writings reveal that he believed certain forms of Sufism were detrimental in the formation of the ideal nation:

Tasawwuf is always the sign of decline of a nation. Greek mysticism, Persian mysticism, Indian mysticism – all are signs of decline of these nations; the same is true of Islamic mysticism... Any philosophy or religious teaching that prevents the blossoming of the human personality is worthless.⁸³

It seems unlikely that Iqbal meant all forms of Sufism in the above quote, as his works identify various schools of mystical Islamic thought. His ambivalence to Sufism was a recurrent theme in his works, and perhaps his clearest treatment of this appears in his *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* in which there is a three-fold classification of Sufism. The first group is “essentially monotheistic and consequentially more semitic in character”, and their main characteristic is “piety, unworldliness and an intense longing for God” which leads such Sufis “not to philosophise but principally to work out a certain ideal of life”. It is action that defines this group.⁸⁴ The second group is identifiable through its “Pantheism”, which holds that the world is a reflection of God’s beauty, the realisation of which the “innate Zoroastrian instinct of the Persian Sufi loved to define as “the Sacred Fire which burns everything other than God”. The “characteristic feature” of this school, then, is of “impersonal absorption”, and it became “wildly pantheistic”.⁸⁵ The third group in contrast to the second posits a difference between man and God, since Reality is Light or Thought, “the very nature of which demands something to be thought or illuminated”.⁸⁶

It is the second school of “Pantheistic Sufism” that comes in for Iqbal’s harshest criticism, and perhaps the most striking example appears in his poem of 1915, *Asrar-e khudi* (“Secrets of the Self”). In this work, Iqbal compares the Arabs to fierce tigers who are victorious over the Persians, or the sheep. The tigers’ nature enables them to conquer the sheep at first, but a cunning sheep convinces them that real honour lies in sacrificing the self and that life is unstable through the exercise of power.⁸⁷ (The triumph of the sheep, paradoxically, could have been an argument for the compatibility of Sufism with nationalism; however, this was surely not the message that Iqbal wished to convey.)

The reason for his dislike of Pantheistic Sufism was that Iqbal believed it opposed the development of the self, which he held to be ultimately finite. The greatest ontological human state for Iqbal was one where individuality was not lost through pantheistic absorption, for this would entail a loss of uniqueness and self-possession. Such a personality would survive under the greatest of trials:

Even the scene of “Universal Destruction” preceding the Day of Judgement cannot affect the perfect calm of a full grown ego: “And there shall be a blast on the trumpet, and all who are in the Heavens and all who are in the Earth shall faint away, *save those in whose case God wills otherwise.*” [39:69].⁸⁸

Iqbal cites approvingly a Persian verse that speaks of Mohammad witnessing the divine Essence and maintaining his consciousness, and this, he says, is “perfect manhood”, a view that “Pantheistic Sufism obviously cannot favour”. Iqbal’s argument focuses upon the nature of the intensity and extensity of infinitude. “Its nature [the Infinite] consists in intensity. The moment we fix our gaze on intensity, we begin to see that the finite ego must be *distinct*, though not *isolated*, from the Infinite.”⁸⁹

Another problem associated with Pantheistic Sufism was that although Iqbal recognised that Sufism in general had a positive element in its encouragement of freethinking (and therefore was in accordance with rationalism), it placed too much emphasis on the *baten*, that is the reality of things, at the expense of the *zahir*, or appearance. He believed that included within the *zahir* sphere was the Islamic imperative of social polity which had been weakened because of Sufi other-worldliness and its preference for the *baten* that had attracted the best minds that the Muslim world had produced. And as a result the Muslim state was left in the hands of “intellectual mediocrities” and the uneducated masses blindly followed the legal schools of Islam.⁹⁰ The Sufi emphasis on the *baten* at the expense of the social polity is best illustrated in the words of one ‘Abd al-Quddus of Gangoh, repeated by Iqbal in *The Reconstruction*: “Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned.”⁹¹

As suggested earlier, Iqbal admitted that there were positive dimensions to Sufism. It has already been noted that he believed Sufism attracted the best minds because of its freethinking and its close affinity to rationalism, attributes that he sought in his reconstruction of Islamic thought. Moreover he speaks of a “higher Sufism in Islam” which is distinguished by a unitive experience in which the finite ego does not efface its own identity “by some sort of absorption into the Infinite Ego; it is rather the Infinite passing into the loving embrace of the finite”.⁹² This “higher Sufism” is actually an endorsement of the position advocated by Ibn ‘Arabi and the *vojudi* school, namely “he/not He”, (compare this with Iqbal’s “*distinct/though not isolated*”, described before). He does not mention Ibn ‘Arabi by name; however, in his work of 1908, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, Iqbal paraphrases the views of al-Jili (d.c. 1408–17) (who he acknowledges was greatly influenced by Ibn ‘Arabi’s teachings), and this summary mirrors the “*distinct/though not isolated*” conclusion. The highest spiritual stage a man can reach is that of the perfect man, whose “Higher Knowledge . . . is not seen by the individual as something separate from and heterogeneous to himself”.⁹³ And Iqbal goes on to state that this experience of the “god-man” is not permanent, for if it had been then a “great moral force would have been lost and society overturned”.

Although Iqbal’s view of Sufism is not completely flawless, (the inclusion of thinkers such as Hafez and Ibn ‘Arabi among the pantheists is somewhat simplistic), his understanding of Sufism is more sophisticated than that of Kasravi.

Sufism does not necessarily have to hinder the advancement of the nation-state, and this was all too clearly argued by Gökalp and Iqbal. The former was

more concerned with Sufi ritual and heritage in providing Turks with a sense of identity and belonging; that is to say, it was an integral and valued element of Turkish culture. Sufism, as a form of spiritual renewal (in a conventional sense), played a significantly lesser role in Gökâlp's writings than in the philosophy and poetry of Iqbal. The reform of Islam and Sufism for Iqbal starts with individual existence, and so the emphasis is upon metaphysics rather than culture. His attempt to distinguish a "true" Sufism as opposed to a "false" Sufism permitted him to criticise many elements of the Sufi heritage and as a result his perspective of Sufism as a whole shares more in common with that of Kasravi than Gökâlp's. Both Iqbal and Kasravi are concerned with the detrimental effects that Sufism has had on society, but Kasravi's criticisms are harsher, and he states that Sufism was also an excuse for those who "opt out" and choose an easy life. Kasravi's arguments are very loose generalisations, however, his text is worthy of note as it demonstrates the existence of a certain trend in Iran during the first half of the twentieth century, in which a re-interpretation of religion is regarded as a pre-requisite to the improvement of Iran. Such a re-interpretation, for Kasravi, involved stripping away many elements that composed Iranian identity and culture, including mystical poetry. If Kasravi's aim in writing *Sufigari* was to persuade the Iranian populace to abandon its mystical heritage then it can be safely said that it was a dismal failure. The populism in *Sufigari* yielded a distorted image of Iranian mystical Islam, which is a major component of Iranian identity, as Kasravi and others have correctly observed.



Figure 3.1 Portrayal of a Sufi on the cover of a Qajar era *Divan-e Hafez*, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (Per. 389).

“SUFISM”

Ahmad Kasravi

Introduction

Many readers know that we have taken a stand and made efforts over the past eleven years, in fighting against all the erroneous paths and ignorance that exist in Iran and other places. Sufism is among the worst of these erroneous paths. It spread a thousand years ago, sinking roots with which we have also engaged in battle. At first we occasionally wrote about Sufism in the discussions in *Payman*¹ and *Parcham*². Then last year we published a booklet of all my speeches, printed under the title *Sufism*. Because the copies of this were few in number, we are printing it again with additions and other changes.

Sufism has been interpreted in the book [*Sufism*], and whatever was worthy of discussion concerning its lack of foundation and its harmfulness has already been outlined. But there are several things that must be presented in this introduction.

1 People say, “The Sufis are a small group and they are scattered here and there, and it is not worthwhile for anyone to bother with them.”

But this a crude opinion because the Sufis are not few in number. Rather there are many. They have organisations now in several Iranian cities including Tehran, Maragheh, Gonabad, Mashhad and Shiraz. Sufis are not just those dervishes with felt hats and hair-plaits, nor are they merely those dirty, polluted masters and those beggars who carry an axe or a begging bowl. There are thousands of others without hats and hair-plaits, and there are dervishes without axes and begging bowls whose minds are blemished with Sufi evil teachings.

Among the state employees and bureaucrats you can find many people who are dervishes, and each one considers himself a follower of this “Mast ‘Ali Shah”³ and that “Bahman ‘Asheq Shah”⁴. Behind office desks are those in charge of people, and these are the kinds of thoughts that have settled in their minds: “This world lasts but a few days. Good and bad will pass. The eminent ones have not raised their heads to bother with the world. (It too will pass, o God.)”

In addition, Sufi evil teachings have existed not just among the Sufis, that is to say, its harm is not only to Sufis. Just as we have described in the book [*Sufism*],

this erroneous path has sunk roots in all directions, and most people are not Sufis yet they are contaminated with its evil teachings even though they do not realise it.

From this perspective there are many books contaminated with these evil teachings. Moreover, the Sufis have passed on thousands of books, in poetry and prose, as a keepsake which are now in the hands of the people, in their homes. Our poets and advisers have all benefited from Sufism. The poets who have followed the “content” regarded the evil teachings of the Sufis as a treasure. They had the same attachment to Sufism as those advisers and leaders. Books on the subject of “morals” in Arabic and Persian have been written; all of them have their basis in Sufism. I’ll say just one thing. This old erroneous path has wound its way in all directions, spreading its poison in the body of the people.

Aside from this, Sufism is a tool in the political world. For years European orientalists and the Ministry of Culture of Iran have joined hands in its circulation. *Memoirs of the Saints*⁵ of Sheikh ‘Attar⁶ has been printed in Europe and sent to Iran. The *Masnawi* of Mowlana⁷, his *ghazals* and other poems have been printed and widely circulated. The Iranian Ministry of Culture holds classes on Sufism in places of learning, and money is poured out annually in printing Sufi books.

These are the things that must not go unseen, and one should not consider that the damage and harm of Sufism is slight.

2 People also have offered a criticism, arguing along the lines, “the knowledge that develops today will make all of these erroneous paths disappear”.

This is another crude opinion. What is knowledge? According to you knowledge includes those fields of science, physics, natural history, astronomy, medicine, mathematics and others like these. Which one of these is it that will make Sufism disappear? Which one of these is it that will stand up in battle with Sufism or other erroneous paths?

We see that in these past forty years, knowledge has increased and advanced in Iran, and despite this, neither Sufism, nor Shi‘ism or any other of the erroneous paths have vanished. They have only weakened. Knowledge has weakened all of these erroneous paths, and they in turn have weakened knowledge. There is a universal rule that when two contrary things oppose each other, they are both weakened.

Now, in the name of dervish-hood and Sufism the humblest among the educated renounced his home and his life and went to the *khanagah*. The humblest person sat for the *chelleh*⁸ and gave himself hardships or took up the horn, walking stick, begging bowl and axe and became [known as] a “wanderer of the world”. Sufism no longer has that power. But when those educated people became aware of the Sufi teachings, they adopted them and absorbed those evil teachings in their minds ([whereas] in the classes that they studied the thing behind the futility and evil of those teachings has not existed). So it is inevitable that their inner feelings (*sehhashi*) will be contaminated, and their will becomes weak. This is the same state of affairs that pertains to the other erroneous paths and is something that we witness now in Iran. It is a state we had to explain in discourses elsewhere.⁹

If knowledge could destroy the root of the erroneous paths it would have been done in Europe. But you see that it has not done this, indeed it could not do this. Knowledge has been current in Europe for more than two hundred years, and it has reached into all corners. In addition, the movements for democracy, socialism, communism and others like these appeared, and each one in its turn has caused some change. In these circumstances they were not able to destroy Christianity, which in its present state is a great erroneous path and mistake. They were only able to weaken it.

Most worthy of our attention is the experience of Russia and communism. The movement appeared with such great depth and turned the whole country upside-down. The communists revealed their enmity to the priests and their establishment, and they rose up in great effort and opposition. Yet after all this, it is now clear that Christianity and other faiths have not vanished from that country, and once again, the state has given ground to the priests and mollahs.

This in itself is worthy of discussion because it is necessary to combat these erroneous paths and cut down the inroads they make and replace them in those areas with truths. The secret of the task is this: truths should replace errors. If not, the errors will never vanish. On this topic too we have presented our opinions elsewhere.¹⁰

Let us put this to one side. Knowledge itself is twinned with another great erroneous path. Knowledge, wherever it is found, exists along with materialism. We held that knowledge can eliminate Sufism. What benefit would there be in a place where materialism replaces [Sufism]? Materialism is not weaker than Sufism; indeed, it is worse in today's world.

Sufism has made people weak, lazy and cowardly and arrests the development of the world. Materialism makes people greedy and cruel; indeed, it turns them into thieves and tricksters and ruins the welfare of life. Moreover, successive wars have erupted in the world's present condition, and cities have been destroyed (as we witness today).

There is an incredible story told by one group that the solution to [the problem] of Sufism will be knowledge (or it is better if we say materialism, which is concomitant with knowledge). Another group, manifesting support for the Sufis, says, “The only thing that can save the world from materialism is Sufism.”

If we want the truth, neither knowledge (or materialism) can be the solution to [the problem] of Sufism, and Sufism too will not be able to obstruct materialism. These are two erroneous paths, and both of them can exist together. Each one can take root in a new place in peoples' minds. A person can be both materialist and Sufi. It is possible that someone may consider life as nothing, and have no care for anyone or anything, and have no concern except for his own enjoyment. And at the same time, the same person may consider the world worthless and ephemeral, and not yearn for its pleasures, and he may withdraw himself, Sufi-like, from any task that requires some effort. This is the condition that we see today in many people.

It is this difficult battle which we have commenced that can destroy both Sufism and materialism and relieve the world from their harmful effects. It is religion that can soothe the people from these erroneous paths. We can say this in a better way. We have opened a highway of life to the world.

I am so surprised that people have not been satisfied with this deep-rooted and effective struggle, and they have found faults and given advise [to the effect] that knowledge will be the cure. I myself don't know what name to give this.

3 For many years Sufism has been praised from Europe. I say “from” Europe and not “in” Europe because they praise it for us. Whatever Europeans say and write, whether in Farsi or in European languages, is for our benefit. They are traps that are set beneath our feet. It is like something bitter that they want a child to eat. A grown up comes and says something like, “Give it to me, I'll eat it. O how sweet it is!”

This is a great crime committed by the Europeans who in their political manoeuvrings have joined hands with the Eastern peoples in these matters. In itself, this is a disgraceful blemish that will remain on the skirt of European history. That very Europe which showed the world all that knowledge and caused all those movements in life. This too is an example of its evil, for it tries to plunge the people of the East further into ignorance. In the history of Europe, in contrast to those bright moments, there will also be these dark ones.

Three years ago, in a European journal that was written in Persian, we see opinions printed in praise of the Sufis. For example, one of the articles discusses Fakhṛ al-Dīn ‘Eraqi and tells the story of how he lost his heart to a child dervish and his journey to India (which we too have presented in the text of the book). It describes this ugly and irrational story and begins with praise, saying:

So, these lazy dervishes, dressed in tatters (whose ignominy is derived from their reputation, and their reputation comes from their ignominy)¹¹, were busy in singing and dancing, and they obtained their daily bread in the dervish path. Today we live in different times. In this rational and mechanical world we are fascinated with other idols. We have another way of life, and we have lost ourselves in this new-world to such an extent that it appears that we have totally forgotten the spiritual strength of the old world. Therefore when we hear the story of the *Qalandar*,¹² perhaps immediately we call them mistaken or mad. But what madness is it that (like these vagrant, lazy, dervishes) discovers spiritual beauty with such clarity and goodness, [and] leaves God's deep imprint in the heart?

All of these are sentences that we read in a European journal. European scholars send these to us as presents. They sing these treacherous nursery rhymes for us. I don't see the need to engage in a discussion about them all. I hope the readers have a look at the story of ‘Eraqi in the book (on page 26)¹³ and then read

all of this twice and think well what this European writer is praising, what things he calls “spiritual meaning” or “imprint of God”.

It is necessary to reply to this writer, “If you speak the truth, why don’t you tell the same things to Europeans? Why don’t you write these things in European languages and spread them among Europeans? Iranians have taken the required share, and more, of Sufism. They have discovered much of that ‘spiritual beauty’ of which you speak, and there no longer remains any unexplored point. If these things are good, wish them for your own people.”

One must not be deceived by their lies. If the Eastern people are deceived by their lies, in addition to the damage that they want to inflict, those who are deceived will become even more abject in European eyes. They will come together and say to each other, “You see how we deceived them!”

If one day those Europeans happen to portray Sufism, dervish-hood and the like to us, they will say, “You still have been unable to stop the begging *Qalandars*. You have been unable to cut the root of Sufism. You are half a desert, you are not worthy of freedom.”

In any case, this kind of clamour from Europe does not arise from well-wishers and the pure in heart. The people in Iran who make the same clamour with them, in writing and publishing books in an attempt to spread Sufism, are those who wish evil on this country. One must not pay them any respect. It is necessary to join hands, and with haste and vigour, and dig up the root of this pollution and error.

Sufism has been mistaken in its very root, and during a thousand years and more it has caused damage and harm to Eastern people. Now it is the time to pull up this root once and for all.

It is necessary to destroy these Sufi institutions in Iran and India. And those parasitic *pirs*¹⁴ and those around them must go in search of work and a profession.

How Sufism appeared

Sufism, like many other things, arose from the philosophy of the classical world (*falsafeh-ye yunan*). The founder, it is said, was Plotinus who was one of the philosophers of Greece or Rome.

Plotinus wrote many works in a philosophical tongue. A summary of them in a simplified way is that whatever exists in the world is just one thing; God exists and other things have become separate from him; the human spirit (*ravan*) has come to this world and has been trapped in matter; it must continually flee from this world and its pleasures and hope for connection with its source or home.

He said that in this world too, if someone leaves himself in ecstasy, he can connect to that source of existence (or it is better if we say “God”). “It is necessary to close the eyes of the head and open the eye of the heart. Then we will see what exists within ourselves, indeed, [that] which is in us.”¹⁵

These following sentences are the words of Plotinus:

All of us are of God (*az khoda*), but we have become separated from him, and we will return to him. The human spirit descended from a world, free and pure. In this world it became trapped in matter and became impure. Therefore any person who does not pander to the desires of the body but takes care of the spirit will be less impure. And the person who wants to escape from this trap must turn aside from the pleasures of this world and engage in abstinence.

These foundational sentences of Sufism, as we will see, are illusory and there is no proof that they are correct. They are things that Plotinus imagined and said, without producing any proof.

The last sentence, where he says, “The human spirit descended from a world, free and pure, and in this world became trapped in matter . . .” is not that far wide of the mark. We can say his meaning is the separation of the spirit from the soul (*jan*), (we also say that too, and several times we have spoken about it). But the first sentence where he says, “We are all of God, we became separate from him and we will return to him,” is very wide of the mark. One must ask, “How can you say this? What proof do you have of this.” Likewise, there are other sentences of his without proof.

He says, “Each person must flee from this world and its pleasures.” One must ask, “So for whose sake are these pleasures?”

[Plotinus] says, “If someone leaves himself in ecstasy, he can connect to God.” One must ask, “How can one leave oneself in ecstasy?” Such a thing, except as an illusion, is impossible. In addition, if someone is of God, then he is of God. So what need is there for leaving oneself in ecstasy?

[Plotinus] says, “Then we will see what exists within ourselves, indeed, that which is in us.” If we analyse this sentence, its meaning is that there is no God, and we ourselves are God. This is something that many Sufis have said:

You are those who seek God. You are God.

He is you, not external to you. He is you.

Why do you seek something not lost?

Why are you searching for something you haven't lost?

But this idea is also nonsense for it ignores the reality of God.

Where is the path that we have taken to God? When have we accepted God's existence? When we ponder and think about this world, we see it cannot exist by itself, and this order and adornment that is apparent is not derived from this world in itself. We see that we are humans and we are greater than all existents of this world, each one of us came unwillingly into this world and we will leave unwillingly. Because of this we know that there is something else behind this world. We know there is a hand outside this world. It made it appear and also makes it move.

“We don’t know what God is or how he is. This we know, that he exists and he is outside this world.”

In any case, when we have seen that this world and these human beings cannot exist by themselves, we remain helpless. We have said that God exists outside this world, so now how can we say, “That God is those very human beings.”

This resembles the trees that we see in a desert, standing in a line next to each other, and a water channel has been dug beneath their roots. When we realise that the existence [of the trees] cannot be due to the trees themselves, we assume that a gardener has planted them and dug the water channel for them, and so we search for the gardener and his dwelling. Then someone among us who has been shown the trees says, “That gardener is this very thing.” Wouldn’t we laugh at his words? Wouldn’t we say that if these trees could exist by themselves what need would we have to believe in the existence of a gardener and go searching for him?

We repeat, Plotinus’ words, like the discourses of other classical philosophers, have been a source of nothing but fancy. Anyway, just as we have said, from the start Plotinus had a number of followers in Greece.

During the first centuries of Islam, when classical knowledge (*danesh-ha-ye yunaniyan*) and philosophy reached the Muslims, this view of Plotinus too reached the East. Here its circulation among Muslims was greater, and it caused a great shock throughout the Islamic lands. When in time reason became weak, many people accepted the discourses of the classical philosophers and followed them. [They considered that] it was fortunate that they had heard that man was one with God! It was fortunate that they recognised themselves as God, and they boasted, “I am God.” This was a cry that was heard among the weak-minded.

In time small groups appeared and *khanaqahs* were established. Plotinus, as is clear from his works, used to talk only about humans and said that only the human spirit had been separated from God. But it was here that the larger field for “the unity of existence” opened up. They made its skirt encompass the four beasts and wild animals, indeed everything. “There is nothing in existence except existence.”

So, the purity or turning away from the pleasures of the world (about which Plotinus spoke) caused people to exchange these pleasures of the world for a life without work, remaining unmarried, and they crept away to a corner and did not bother with the world, or else, they wandered from city to city, in a nonchalant state, which was another cause for the rapid advancement of Sufism.

Also at this point, the tradition of the master and disciple took hold, for in each group there existed a master, and others were in his hands or those of his deputies. Each master would have received the *kherqeh*¹⁶ from another master. In this manner, there were groups of men, and many *selselehs*¹⁷ appeared, with various names. Wearing clothes of dark blue wool because they had turned away from the world, they also shaved their heads.¹⁸

In addition, the Sufi masters claimed that they had reached God. They made extravagant claims and pretended that the chain of events in the world was in their hands. They could improve the fate of someone if they wished, even making

them kings, and they could do the reverse, turning them into nothing. They claimed to know the hidden, the apparent and each person's secrets, and they claimed to be able to speak to the animals, in addition to flying in the air. They called themselves “the friends”, raising themselves to an equal footing with the prophets. Many of them considered themselves superior to the prophets.

In their opinion, religion or the ordinances that the learned establish are for the common people, and the pious are nothing but worshippers of the husk. But Sufism is for the élite who worship the kernel, and they regard others beneath their status.

They named the state of being without work and women (which are among bad practices) “blindness to the world and to its pleasures”, and they lived happily in that state, although it was inevitable (due to their idleness) that they resorted to begging and requested bread and money from people. They did not consider this a disgrace, rather, they called the people, “people of the world”, and they were not slow to describe them with reproach and censure: *May God curse the People of the World, the young and old, all of them.*

They called the bazaar in which they begged every day “Satan's den”, and they reproached the merchants. A Sufi should not work and should refrain from activity in the house and every day life. He should be with others in the *khanaqah*. If someone was inclined to the Sufis he had to give up his own wealth and possessions to the dervishes and become penniless like them.

It is worth reading what they wrote in their books about these kind of people: “He renounced worldly attachments”; “he washed the filth of worldly possessions from his hands”, “don't prostrate to worldly goods”.

In the beginning when Sufism appeared among the Muslims, the people were terrified, especially of the foolish sayings that they heard from some of the Sufis. One such beggar of the Baghdad bazaar said, “there is nothing in my cloak except God,”¹⁹ to that very ruffian of the *khanaqah* who said, “Glory be to me how great is my majesty.”²⁰ These foolish sayings were very troublesome to the Muslims, and they did not hinder any opposition to the Sufis. Thus, Hallaj²¹ was crucified in Baghdad for sayings of this ilk. One of the Turkish kings, Baqra Khan, killed Sufis there.

On the one hand Sufism advocated easiness in life and it accorded with laziness and satisfying one's bodily demands, yet on the other hand many people liked to withdraw from the masses and form a separate group. So Sufism proliferated daily, and gradually the people (with their ears full of the foolish Sufi sayings) lost their fear and no longer tried to molest them. Indeed many people among the wealthy ranks supported them and built *khanaqahs* and established bestowments (*vaqf*) of towns and houses. They donated much money. The Sufis also attempted to Islamicise their origins. Thus some of them traced their *selseleh* to Imam 'Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, and others to the Caliph Abu Bakr.

Until the beginning of thirteenth century, which is the period of the Mongol triumph, Sufism had advanced and built *khanaqahs* in all places, in Iran, India,

Khwarazm, Bokhara, Turkestan, Asia Minor, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and others. As we will see, this was one of the reasons for this Mongol victory.

Subsequently, it became even more widespread during the Mongol era. As a result of the stories that the Mongols had killed millions of people, carried off millions of women and girls, plundered and ruined the whole country, Iranians had a choice. They could either pluck up courage and devote themselves to protection and unity with one another, rise up in a great historical movement, emerge victorious over the enemies and take revenge on them. Alternatively they could close their eyes from everything, entrust their country to the enemies, surrender their lives to merely eating, sleeping and passing time, and they could devote themselves to Sufism or going to the *kharabat*²² for their peace of mind. There were only these two options. Since the Iranians didn't have skilful and zealous leaders they chose the Sufi option (and so to going to the *kharabat* and other practices like this), and it was this that made Sufism grow.

Indeed, the Mongols wished for that, for it was in their interest that Iranians suddenly closed their eyes to the country and its sovereignty and engrossed themselves in Sufism and other such activities. The Mongol period was the spring of these mistaken paths and evil teachings.

It was during and after this Mongol era that many large groups appeared in Iran and other places. Some of them performed amazing things, such as walking in fire and playing with vipers. One group called the *Qalandar* shaved all the hairs from their heads (including their beards and eyebrows) and they carried out other astounding things.

In addition, some of the masters (having their eyes on crowns and thrones), with the assistance of the dervishes, prepared the ground of kingship for themselves. In Iran one of them was Mir Qavam al-Din Mar'ashi (or Mir Bozorg)²³ who in Mazandaran founded the Mar'ashi dynasty. Another was Sheikh Jonayd Safavi²⁴ who rose in the hope [of establishing a dynasty], but he himself and his son Sheikh Haydar²⁵ were killed in their efforts, and in the end the task of founding a dynasty was left for Shah Isma'il,²⁶ the son of Haydar.

The Safavid dynasty emerged from a Sufi movement. Despite this, during the Safavid era Sufism did not thrive very much; indeed, it was towards the end of that dynasty that Sufism, whether in Iran or in other places, began to decay. Day by day its glory and beauty diminished, and until the present day it has declined.

Despite this, in our age there are many Sufis, whether in Iran or in other places, and they have put their own institutions in order. Now in Iran, in Tehran, Shiraz, Maragheh and Gonabad there are masters from India, and we hear the names of Mehr Baba, Shah Khamush and others.

This was a short history of Sufism. One can say that in these 1300 years that have passed since the beginning of Islam there have been several things that have been very influential in Iranian life and that of neighbouring peoples and which have been the source of their misfortune. One of the most influential of them is Sufism.

The point here is that Sufism has inter-twined with every aspect of daily life, and its poison has polluted everything. It has polluted all aspects of life: in the

recognition of the world, daily life and God, nurturing the spirit, wisdom and its pursuit, reading and research, nature and habit, work and business, cultivation of cities and the countryside, house-holding and wedlock.

There is one thing worse than this. The Sufis have made poetry, which has had much currency in Iran, the tool of their task. They have engaged in weaving long verses, and they have poured out their harmful illusions in the form of poetry. In this way they have occupied people's minds.

During these 1000 years great poetry weavers have appeared in Iran among the Sufis. From Sana'i,²⁷ Abu Sa'id,²⁸ 'Attar,²⁹ Mowlavi,³⁰ Owhadi,³¹ Jami,³² Shabestari³³ and others – each one composed much poetry, from *masnavi*, lyric and couplets (to say nothing of the many books that they wrote in prose).

Worse than this is that other poets who have copied the stories [of Sufi poetry], in order to compose a poem, have taken and used the evil teachings of Sufism as their source. They have told the stories of Sufi masters (from Shebli,³⁴ Bayazid,³⁵ Sa'ri,³⁶ Ibrahim Adham³⁷ and others) and have written elaborately in poetry.

The result is that the baseless illusions and poisonous evil teachings of the Sufis were united together so that not only the Sufis and their followers but others too became polluted by them. Today in Iran there are many people who have these evil teachings in their minds even without them understanding or wanting [them], and they are trapped in its persistent poison.

This is what we say: Sufism has been and is one of the causes of the Iranian peoples' misfortunes. You see orientalists who wish evil upon the East, and they make great efforts in maintaining this institution, writing books and making speeches on Sufism. You see that the Iranian Ministry of Culture, which promotes this institution, wishes evil upon the Iranian people and regards Sufism as its cultural source and therefore has engaged in printing books and propagating Sufi words.

The evils attributable to Sufism

As we said previously, in addition to being nothing more than baseless illusions, much harm appeared from Sufism when it spread into every corner of life. For more than a thousand years this mistaken path has found a place for itself among the people, spread into several other countries, formed into different denominations and become entangled in historical events. If we want to speak of its evils (since they should be discussed) and busy ourselves in historical episodes, we would be forced to write such a lengthy book. But we do not have the opportunity for that, and there is no need for such long compositions since our aim is merely to awaken people. Therefore we have summarised the discourses in the present work and will offer only several clear criticisms.

First, as we said, the basis of Sufism is “the oneness of existence” (*vahdat-e vojüd*). They say, “God is that very simple existence” (absolute existence, *vojüd-e motlaq*) that all things possess. As we said, the meaning of this is that there is no God, but we ourselves are God. Yet there are many sayings from [the Sufis] which do not accord with this. Many of their sayings confirm that God exists and we (or our

spirits) are separate from him. This in itself is a criticism that their views are contradictory.

Abu Bakr Razi,³⁸ who is considered one of the eminent Sufis, in *Mersad al-‘ebad*³⁹ said on this topic that “the human spirit has been brought down from the proximity of the Lord of the creatures to the world of bodies, the darkness of the physical elements, the desert of this world,” and he says that occasionally people do not forget this fate but remember their old state of proximity to God, and he composed a story about this (or should we say a fable) which is presented in the following. He said:

In Nishapur Sheikh Mohammad Kufi (God have mercy on him) related that he had found Sheikh ‘Ali Mo‘ezzin who said, ‘I’m reminded that I came from the realm of the Truth’s proximity to this world, and they passed my spirit through the heavens. The inhabitants in each heaven at which I arrived wept over me and said, ‘They sent this wretch from the station of proximity to the world, and they took him from the highest to the lowest, making him journey from the spaciousness of Paradise to the restrictions of the world.’ They sighed in regret at this and pitied me. Then an address from the Almighty reached them, ‘Do you imagine that taking him to that world was to abase him? By God’s glory, it is better for him if, during his life in that world, on one occasion he pours a bucket of water from a well into an old woman’s jar, than your being busy in worship in Paradise for a hundred thousand of your years. You buried your heads under the cloak of *each person rejoicing in what they had*. (30:31) Leave the divine affair to Us because *We taught what they did not know*[2:30].’”⁴⁰

But there have been many others who clearly took up the claim of divinity, indeed they praised everything as God:

*We are the essence of the master of majesty, God, the greatest,
We are the holy essence, above all impurities.
It is we, our essence is manifest in each particle,
Don’t you know we are yet more than the trace of our essence.
I praise myself to myself in each attribute,
Sometimes we are the wine and the beautiful witness, and sometimes the cup.
O heart, don’t consider anything in existence without God’s presence.
We are the essence of the master of majesty, God, the greatest.*

Mehr Baba is one of the famous Sufis in India, and one of his followers wrote a book about him in which appeared many discourses on this topic. He wrote the following story using Mehr Baba’s own words:

One day someone asked Mehr Baba about the understanding of reality.
“O pivot of the universe, you have shaken and severely jolted the

creatures because of your claim to divinity, prophecy, messengership, and truth. Everyone is scared after hearing these words and sentences. What should we do?”

Mehr Baba said, “Say to the pretenders and opponents of mine that I have not said that I am God. But I exclaim that I am God, you are God, he is God, we are God, all of you are God, they are God, my friends are God, my enemies are God, and my opponents are God. Indeed, I too am frightened by their words and I am shocked and surprised to hear that they see themselves as and call themselves servants and creatures, and regard themselves as this very trivial body. I don’t merely call and see myself as God, but I regard all the others too, each one individually as God, and God is also them. There is no difference between me and them.”

If you read the *Masnawi* of Mowla-ye Rumi you will see that sometimes he suddenly becomes a Sufi and opens himself up to that illusory world of the unity of existence:

*Listen to the reed, as it tells its tale
And complains of separation.
“When they cut me from the reed-bed
Men and women have cried out through my flute.”⁴¹*

Sometimes too he forgets this and discusses and composes stories about God in such a way that is believable for Muslims. Not only him but others too have suffered this confusion.

Anyway, the criticisms of “the unity of existence”, according to whatever meaning they derive from it, are as follows:

- 1 These discourses of the Sufis are illusory, and they do not have any proof for the unity of existence. This is an example of the philosophers’ incoherence. One group’s interpretation was that man reaches God, and another group tied him to the animals and wild beasts, not recognising any separation between them.
- 2 This view is not compatible with the true recognition of God (which we have discussed earlier). Is it correct that human beings (who have come unwillingly to this world and leave unwillingly) should be called God?
- 3 People of God or people through God, say whatever you want, why are their eyes covered from pleasures? Why do they trouble themselves so much? Why do they regard this world as contemptible? What is the conclusion of all this? If it is true as you say that man is from God, then sooner or later he will return to Him, then what is the need of all this effort?

If their purpose is to purify man from the pollutants of the soul (such as desire, anger, hatred and others), then this is not the path. The path is recognising the

right meaning of humanity and understanding the truths of life which we have made clear in other places.

Second, idleness and staying in the *khanaqah*, practices that the Sufis have chosen, are among their great sins. The result is sensual indulgence which has brought a curtain down upon the eyes of the wool-wearers, and they have not seen many obvious truths of life.

Everyone knows that in this life one must make an effort in order to obtain a satisfactory amount of food, drink, clothing, bedding and other necessities. Each person in his turn must make an effort and busies himself in work or a skill and co-operates with other people. The person who does not make such an effort but sponges is dishonest with the people and is a sinner. This situation occurs when someone does not make an effort but acquires food, clothing and other necessities from some other means. If someone does not have such a means he must resort to begging and vagrancy, just like the Sufis, and it is clear that his sin will double.

These are matters that everyone can comprehend, but the Sufis have not understood them, and they have adopted idleness and begging. Their boasting of God, their disgrace in begging, each one is worse than the other.

Perhaps people know as much that begging and vagrancy (which are well known because of the Sufis) have been the occupation of worthless, ignoble dervishes. But the truth is that their leaders and masters have also engaged in it. Sheikh Abu Sa‘id Abi ‘l-Khayr, who is accounted as one of their famous leaders, says himself that in the beginning [of his Sufi life] he spent a while too in begging, as these sentences of his show:

For the sake of the dervishes, we started begging because we saw nothing more difficult for ourselves than this. At first, whoever saw us gave us a *dinar*, after a while the charity grew less until it was no more than one-sixth of a *dinar*. Then it decreased further until it was virtually nothing. And the people offered no more than this until finally they didn’t give anything.

Abu Sa‘id had a student, he calls him Bu Sa‘d, and he went to Baghdad and built a *khanaqah* and became famous.⁴² This Abu Sa‘id related that once in Baghdad he [Bu Sa‘d] entertained pilgrims travelling in a caravan from Khorasan to Mecca, and he set out a meal for them from [the fruits of his] begging. In his own words:

A group of Sufis were in a caravan, and some of the merchants and people of this crowd consented and agreed [to set up their tents] . . . I rose and picked up a basket, and set out to beg. Every day, morning and evening, I provided meals, and five times a day I gave the call to prayer and acted as the prayer leader . . . in that way I begged and provided a meal.⁴³

When Abu Sa‘id became a sheikh and established a *khanaqah* in Nishapur, his task each day was merely sending dervishes to this and that wealthy person to ask

for money and other things. He made an enemy and spoke badly of the person who gave nothing, and he made such people fearful. A large book entitled *The Secrets of Unity* has been published which is full of these kind of stories. It is written in this book, “The Sheikh asked a woman to invite the dervishes to dinner.” She said, “I don’t have anything.” He replied, “Go and beg.”

While 20 or 30 fat, greedy, idle men spend their time in a *khanaqah*, this helpless [woman] was forced to go begging. This idleness had another harmful outcome. The Sufis sit [in the *khanaqah*] and weave useless thoughts and imaginings, they sit, sponge and talk rubbish.

*We are the essence of the master of majesty, God, the greatest.
We are the holy essence, above all impurities.*

They sit, sponge and give long sermons to the people.

May God curse the People of the World, the young and old, all of them.

They sit, sponge and spin shameful balderdash.

*How long must I be the taught about my Beloved in the seminary?
Send him to us to relax and play! [Qur’an, 12:12].*

All of the verbal weavings of Mowla-ye Rumi in the *Masnawi* or his numerous *ghazals*, and all the spinning of Sheikh ‘Attar in *The Conference of the Birds*,⁴⁴ or in his other books are all the result of sitting idle and sponging.

In order for it to be understood with what tasks these Sufis spent their days and in what way they occupied the faculties of their minds, we will present a story from *The Secrets of Unity*.

Our Sheikh said, “When we were in Amol, one day I was sitting with Sheikh Abu’l-‘Abbas when two people came and sat in front of him and said, ‘O Sheikh, we have a difference of opinion. One of us says that an eternity of sorrow is more fitting, and the other says that eternal joy is better. Now Sheikh, what is your opinion?’ Abu’l-‘Abbas drew his hand down over his own face⁴⁵ and said, ‘Praise belongs to God, for my station is neither sorrow nor joy, *There is neither morning or evening with your Lord.*’”⁴⁶

See with what futile and useless things they busied themselves. That question of the inquirer and the answer of Abu’l-‘Abbas (or in his own words the son of the butcher), each one is more futile than the other.

Third, that the Sufis did not marry is another of their great sins. God made men for women, and women for men, and he made their numbers equal. So the

unmarried man is the source of misfortune for a woman. And procreation is each person's duty. It is disobedience to God when a man does not marry.

Aside from the Sufis who did not marry, many of them engaged in obscenities. In other words, they engaged in sodomy (or in their words, *shahed-bazi*⁴⁷), which is among the ugliest of sins. It was widespread in the *khanaqah*, and this [was] more abominable since they [tried] to conceal such impurity, and they related it to “love of God”, to which they made a claim. They cited the following: “allegory is a bridge to truth”.

This was the method of the Sufis. They coined a good name for each evil act of theirs. For example, they called idleness “not lowering the mind into the abject world”. They spoke of begging as “asceticism” for crushing the “ego” and selfishness. They called not marrying “covering the eyes from pleasure”, and they invented such terms too for sodomy.

*Those imaginings that are the trap of God's Friends
Are the images of beautiful faces in God's garden.*

In *Nafahat al-Ons*, the name of one of the great Sufis, Sheikh Owhad al-Din Kermani (may God Most High bless him) is mentioned. It states, “In witnessing the Truth he used to turn to manifestations of the upper body,⁴⁸ and he witnessed Absolute Beauty in fixed forms.”

The author wants to say Sheikh Kermani was a homosexual, but he clothes his ugly acts in other garments. He says, “He contemplated the beauty of God in the faces of youths.” See the extent of their rudeness and shamelessness.

In the same book is the following story about Sheikh Hamed:

When he became excited during the *sama'*, he would tear open the shirts of the beardless youths, and dance with his breast upon theirs. When he came to Baghdad, the Caliph who had a handsome son heard this and said, “He is an innovator, and if the unbeliever performs this kind of action while associating with me, I will kill him once the *sama'* is in full swing.” The Sheikh understood [the Caliph's thoughts] through his charismatic power, and said:

*It is easy for me to feel the point of a sword
[It is easy] to lose one's head for the sake of the Friend.
You have come to kill the unbeliever,
Since you are the lord I must be an unbeliever.*

The Caliph and his son placed their heads at the Sheikh's feet, and became his followers.⁴⁹

Fourth, rejection of the world and despising life (which has been a custom of the Sufis, indeed, has been the foundation of their life) is another of their sins.

Why have they poured scorn upon the world? Wasn't it God who created it? Isn't the world the place where we live? I admit that there is evil in the world but it is necessary to make an effort, and as far as possible eradicate that evil, not pour scorn and bad-mouth the world.

The result of the scorn for life that the Sufis (and for that matter, those who frequent the *kharabat*) have is that the Iranian people and neighbouring countries are nonchalant about life, and spend their time in languor and laziness, and they just stare into the future. This nonchalance and weakness has resulted in them becoming captive and controlled by others.

It is surprising to me that from one perspective the Sufis regard existence as one, and the world, whatever is in it, has been separated from God (or rather, God himself), and they have incessantly stated this in their writings:

*The friend discloses himself, un-veiled from behind gates and walls,
Most worthy of being seen.
Was it not Moses who heard “I am God!”⁵⁰
And if not, this murmuring under a tree⁵¹ is nothing at all.*

And from another perspective they pour scorn and reproach on the world. Is it this or that? On the basis of Plotinus' statement, “the human spirit descended from an exalted world and was trapped in matter within this world,” there is some justification in viewing this world with disgust. But with regard to the unity of existence (which is the foundation of eastern Sufism), where is the justification for disgust for this world? Without doubt, their reproaching of the world is the result of the Sufis' idleness and poverty. Since they had nothing, they busied themselves with reproaching and saying evil things. Another aim was to encourage the wealthy and rich to give charity and donations.

Fifth, the accounts of dancing, singing and love with God is another of the evil acts of the Sufis. In this regard, it is said that Plotinus – the founder of Sufism – explained in one of his discourses, “when the human spirit separates from God, it must always desire and like good and beautiful things. It must desire God who is the source of all good and beauty, and it must have love for God in its heart.” His writings contained sayings like this.

This word “love” (*‘eshq*) – it is not known whether or not it is correctly translated – became an excuse in the hands of the Sufis for their amorous talk with God. And in remembrance of him during the *sama'*, they played the lute and flute, stamped their feet, clapped their hands, spun and jumped around in such a way that they foamed at the mouth, became dizzy and fell over. Everywhere, their writings are full of the word “love”:

*Whatever you have, devote it all to love.
I would be an unbeliever if you are hurt in the slightest.
From the dew of love, the earthly body of man became clay
And a hundred afflictions and troubles arose in the world.*

*The tip of the lancet of love cut the vein of the spirit,
A drop fell, and its name was the heart.*⁵²

It is clear that this section cited above was taken from the writings of Plotinus. Although he used the word “love”, his intention was “thinking about God, revering and recalling his name, and performing works at his will.” It is not these kind of futile, sensual practices. For what are these sort of words of love with God worthy? In the words of Plotinus, first it is necessary that one wishes good things, attempts to carry out good deeds and then attains love. The thing that we hear less frequently from the Sufis concerns good deeds. The deeds of the Sufis were those that we have mentioned: idleness, sponging, sodomy, begging, weaving illusions and the like of these.

Anyway, this was an example of the Sufis’ blindness to God. The behaviour of those who have called themselves “gnostics” and “friends of God” towards God has been this rudeness. The truth is that most of them witnessed either a beautiful youth or woman and danced in memory of him or her.

Through ignorance some of them have called God *shahed*⁵³; indeed, they have added the ugly word *harja’i*⁵⁴ to that.

*To whom can this thing be told?
My beloved is the beauty seen everywhere*⁵⁵ *and the one in seclusion.*⁵⁶

This sin would be enough to blacken the Sufis’ faces, even if they had committed no other sin.

In this regard there are disgraceful stories in the books of the Sufis themselves, and we shall present one of them. In *Nafahat al-Ons*, the name “Sheikh Fakhr al-Din Ibrahim, famous as ‘Eraqi, God bless his spirit” is mentioned, and it includes shameful stories about him. As an example, it states:

At the age of seventeen, in the famous theological seminaries of Hamadan, teaching was in progress when one day a group of *Qalandar* arrived. Among them was a handsome boy and the wine of love overcame ‘Eraqi and he was captivated by that boy. As long as the *Qalandar* were in Hamadan, ‘Eraqi was with them. When they departed and several days passed, ‘Eraqi could endure no more, and so he left in search of them. When he caught up with them, he adopted their manners, went with them to India, and enjoyed the association of Sheikh Baha’ al-Din Zakariya. And they say that when the Sheikh prescribed isolation for ‘Eraqi, he recited this *ghazal* after ten days of his *chelleh*, having experienced ecstasy (*vajdi*) and a [when a mystical] state had overcome him:

*First wine that filled the cup
they borrowed from the saqi’s drunken eyes.*

He sang this loudly, and wept. When the People of the *Khanaqah* saw this and regarded it as contrary to the way of the Sheikh (because their method of isolation was nothing other than reciting the *zeker* or controlling the self), they objected about it to the Sheikh. He said, “You are forbidden from this but he is not.” After several days, one of the deputies of the Sheikh passed the *kharabat* and heard the people singing that *ghazal*, accompanied with the lute and the clicking of fingers. He went back to the sheikh and explained the circumstances. The Sheikh asked, “What did you hear, tell me.” When he reached the part in his story when he heard the couplet, “*They are so free with their secret – why then should they blame ‘Eraqi?*” the Sheikh said, “His task is complete!” He got up and went to the door of the cell where ‘Eraqi was in isolation. ‘Eraqi laid his head at the Sheikh’s feet, and with his own hands the Sheikh raised ‘Eraqi’s head from the earth and no longer allowed him to practice isolation, but took off his own *kherqeh*, and put it on him.⁵⁷

Meditate well on this story so that you can understand what meaning the “love” of the Sufis has and from what path it comes.

Sixth, another sin of the Sufis is the hostility that they have shown to reason (*kherad*). Reason is the most precious thing given by God, and each person must recognise it, and it must be the guide in their activities. Those whose actions are irrational have shown their hostility to reason and have busied themselves in voicing their scorn to it:

Love arrived and his intellect became a vagrant.

*Morning came and intellect’s candle became useless.*⁵⁸

The legs of the reasoners are wooden

*And wooden legs are too unstable.*⁵⁹

Love arrived and plundered the intellect.

*O heart this is the good news.*⁶⁰

“When a dervish once asked our Sheikh, ‘O Sheikh, what is intellect?’ he said, ‘Intellect is the god of servitude. With intellect one cannot discover the secrets of lordship because [the intellect] is created, and there is no access for created things to the eternal.’”

In Sufi books, there are many of these kind of sentences: “Since the intellect gets nowhere, commence the [Sufi] travelling and journeying (*sayr va soluk*) and seek [mystical] unveiling and witnessing,” and “since the nail of reason does not untie the knot of the task, turn to love,” and “as love settled in the heart, intelligence was busy with the house.”

With these sentences they wanted to make others understand that they existed in a world greater than reason and its dominion. They existed in a world where the basis of reason had no place. But the truth is that since their business was clearly irrational, inevitably they put reason to one side and made efforts to belittle it.

Sitting idle in the *khanqah*, eating bread derived from the toil of others, begging in the bazaar, not taking a wife and having children, growing a beard, dancing, clapping hands and spinning themselves around have the least [degree of] compatibility with reason, let alone all the other irrational stories about them. Now I will relate one of them to serve as an example.

It was that very Mowlana who said, “Love arrived and human intellect became a vagrant.” In *Nafahat al-Ons* there is the following story about him and his master, Shams-e Tabrizi.

For a period of three months they were sitting for uninterrupted fasting, night and day, and they had not come out of isolation at all. No one had the gall to interrupt their isolation. One day Shams al-Din asked Mowlana for a *shahed*. Mowlana took his wife’s hand, and led her to [Shams. Mowlana] said, “She is the sister of my soul.” [Shams said], “I want a beautiful boy.” In a second he brought his son, Soltan Valad. He said, “He is the son of my soul.” [Shams said] “Now we shall enjoy ourselves if he will give a little wine.” Mowlana went out and filled up and brought back a jar from the Jewish quarter. Shams al-Din said, “I have tested the strength of Mowlana’s obedience. It is greater than whatever they say.”⁶¹

Contemplate well on this story. Two people for three months in isolation, what did they do? The author says “uninterrupted fasting”. Can one spend three months in uninterrupted fasting? How can one reconcile uninterrupted fasting with desiring a woman or a boy and wishing for wine? On this point they say, “the liar is forgetful”.

Is it not dishonourable to give one’s own wife or son to another person? Is dishonour also appropriate in Sufism? What dishonour there is for Mowlana in this story, if it is the truth. If it is not the truth then what ignorance those people had who concocted these things in the name of their leaders and recorded them in books. This Mowlana is that very person whose *Masnavi* has been published time after time and upon which much foolish praise has been lavished. He is that person whose book is considered equal in rank to the Qur’an.⁶² The people who want to know about this type of Sufi disgrace should read Jami’s “Breath of Familiarity” (*Nafahat al-Ons*) or Attar’s “Memoirs of the Saints”.

The thing that I must state at the end of this chapter is that idleness and not taking a wife – which we regard as Sufi sins – have not existed among all [Sufi] orders. First, for a long time a Sufi was not able to engage in work or profession, but he could take a wife. Some of them took wives because it was clear [a Sufi] needs his food and household things, and his children too started begging. Then Sheikh Safi Ardabili and Shah Ne‘matollah Kermani⁶³ recommended their disciples to get a job or profession. Shah Ne‘matollah said, “The friends of God can wear the clothes of workers and professionals too.”

Sufism’s evil conduct with Islam

A great evil of the Sufis that we must present separately is its treatment of Islam. Whether originating in the writings of Plotinus or elsewhere, Sufism is alien to Islam. Not only has it no connection or association with that religion, it is totally contrary to it.

Islam recognises that God exists outside this world, and that there is no and cannot be a connection between him and humans and other creatures. Sufism recognises that very “absolute existence”, and if we investigate their understanding of it we find that humans are all God and there is no other God. There can be no compatibility between these two Gods.

According to the customs of Islam sitting idle, not having a wife or children, begging, dancing in remembrance of God and these kind of activities (which have been the foundation of Sufism) are all inappropriate. Islam aimed to persuade people to adopt a life based on reason and moderation that linked effort and endeavour with well-wishing and purity of heart. Despising the world and abstaining from pleasures (which were a Sufi excuse) are completely alien to the aims of Islam.

Islam promotes the establishment of better living standards, well-being of people and the power of reason. This is why in the Qur’an there is a constant call for people to think, understand and use their reason, and nowhere in the Qur’an can one find the word “love” (*‘eshq*) which is a Sufi idiom.

There is no space here to dispute that Sufism was alien to Islam. But as it will be seen, the Sufis have continually desired to show their compatibility with Islam, and there were two reasons for this. One was to gain security from the molestation by Muslims so that they could live among them. The other was to attract Muslims to them and increase the number of Sufis.

They Islamicised their origin, and each of their orders was traced back to one of the companions of the prophet (from Abu Bakr and Imam ‘Ali Bin Abi Taleb among others), and they pretended that the prophet had two kinds of teachings. One of them which was called the Holy Law (*shari‘at*) was for all people, the other was the Way (*tariqat*) and was only for chosen and select people. This is why that great man established a religion for the people and called it a Holy Law and established the Way for the select and taught it to people like Abu Bakr, ‘Ali and others, and [the Way] reached the Sufis through them.

One day in Tabriz one of the Sufis told me the above account, and he was proud of it. I replied, “Regarding the Sufi, it is enough that they have invented this lie. If I accepted that the prophet of Islam had done such a thing and had two teachings, then why are those two teachings incompatible with each other? When did Abu Bakr and ‘Ali do those things that the Sufis do? When was ‘Ali idle? When did he perform the *chelleh*? When did he boast about “love” with God and engage in dancing to the sounds of a tambourine and flute? When did he refrain from taking a wife? When did he send his followers into the bazaar to beg?” That Sufi had no answer for any of these questions, but fell silent.

What increased this evil of the Sufis was that the deviations they caused in Islam were carried out in the intention of giving Islam a Sufi colouring. Rather than the Sufis being followers of Islam, they made Islam their disciple. If someone wants to write about the activities of the Sufis in this field, it would become a large book. Since I am trying to be brief I will suffice with a few examples.

1 They turned the Qur'an into a tool or a toy, and they gave each of its verses any meaning that they wanted. For example, they made the verse “he is with you wherever you are”⁶⁴ the proof of the unity of existence, whereas the whole of the Qur'an is not compatible with the unity of existence. The God that revealed the Qur'an is very different from the God that the Sufis recognised. That verse states “wherever you may be, God is with you”; it does not say “God is in you,” nor does it say “you are God.”

Sheikh Abu Sa'id understood the verse “the foremost among you with God are the most abstinent” to mean “abstinence is abstinence from the selfishness of the ego”. Then he drew a conclusion saying, “On the basis of this meaning, when you abstain from the selfishness of the ego you reach him.” Abstinence in the Qur'an is abstinence from evil, but this sheikh, at his own pleasure, gave it a Sufi meaning.

Sometimes their attitude to the Qur'an was such that one cannot call it anything but a joke or a game. In *The Secrets of Unity*, [the author] writes:

Bashr Hafi never wore shoes or sandals, and he said that, “The glorious Truth most high said, *God is he who makes for you the earth as a carpet.* [71:19]⁶⁵ The earth is the carpet of the Truth, glorious and most high, and I am not allowed to me to walk on the carpet of God most high in shoes or sandals.” So he walked for the whole of his life with bare feet. Therefore he was called Bashr Hafi [which in Arabic means “the barefoot man”].⁶⁶

The Qur'an says, “God made the earth flat for you.” It says this so it is necessary for me to walk with bare feet. Can this have been anything but a joke or a game? Was the meaning of the Qur'an (which advises people to cleanliness) that people should walk barefoot?

In *Memoirs of the Saints* 'Attar wrote about Bayazid Bastami. It is related that when his mother sent him to school, when he reached the verse in the chapter of *Luqman*, the teacher interpreted the verse, *Show me gratitude and to your parents*, (31:15) in the following way: “God says, ‘Serve me and state your gratitude to me, and serve your mother and father and state your gratitude to them.’” When Bayazid heard this, it had an effect on his heart and he put down his slate and said, “Oh teacher! Please let me go home so I can say speak to my mother.” The teacher told Bayazid to go home. His mother said, “Oh Tayfur! Why have you come here. Have they given you a gift or do you have some other reason?” He said, “No, when I reached the *aya* in the Qur'an when the Truth says there is service to us and service to yours I realised that I cannot do that in two houses.

The meaning of the verse has been revealed to me. Ask my God that I become all yours, or work for my God so that I am all God's.” His mother said, “Go and be God's.” So Bayazid left Bastam and spent thirty years wandering Syria and engaged in ascetic discipline.

Is the meaning of that Qur'anic verse that one should refrain from his work or profession and give up on life? It says, “Serve me and also your mother and father.” Can't someone serve both God and also his parents and also not give up his job or profession? There are many of these stories.

2 Sometimes there are stories in their books in which it is clear with what eyes they have viewed Islam and its founder and how they have considered their standpoint superior. In one of their books is the story of how Jalal al-Din Rumi became a Sufi. It states that one day Jalal al-Din departed from the theological seminary in Konya, mounted a donkey and set off with some students. Shams-e Tabrizi came across him and asked, “Who was greater, Mohammad son of ‘Abdullah or Bayazid Bastami?” Jalal al-Din replied, “What kind of question is that? Mohammad was a prophet, so how can one compare him with Bayazid?” Shams said, “So why did the prophet say, *We did not recognise you as we should have?* And Bayazid Bastami used to say, *Glory be to me how great is my majesty* (“I am God and My affairs are exceedingly great”),⁶⁷ Mowlana was so bewildered that he fell off the donkey and became unconscious. When he regained consciousness he went with Shams to the seminary and stayed in a cell with him for forty days in isolation.

There are many of these kind of stories. They ridiculed the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is one of the commandments of Islam. For example, in *The Memoirs of the Saints* it is written: Rabi'a went to Mecca and she saw the *Ka'ba* had come to meet her in welcome. Rabi'a said, “I want to see the Master of the house. What need do I have of the house?”

In the words of Bayazid, it states that he said: “For a time I circumambulated the house. When I reached the Truth I saw the house was circumambulating me.”

In their books of amazingly foolish sayings they have written about Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir Gilani⁶⁸ who was one of their poles. For example, when someone asked him, “Why don't you go to Mecca?” the Sheikh raised his hand and said, “Look between these two fingers.” His questioner saw the *Ka'ba* in the air, spinning around the Sheikh's head.

3 One of the Sufi acts that we have uncovered in our investigation is that they themselves invent sayings attributed to God and propagated them as “sacred sayings” (*hadith-e qodsī*). For example, *I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known, and so I created the creatures to know me. I wet the clay of Adam with my own hands for forty mornings. My servant! Obey me and I will make you like me.*⁶⁹

There are many of these kind of sentences in the books of the Muslims. But where is their origin? Who heard them from God? If you search for the answer you will get nowhere. What we know is that the Sufis made them up. Because it was those Sufis who believed they were continually with God in secret, in supplication and conversation. Therefore, the meaning of most of these sentences

are Sufi. Apart from this, it can be seen that the Sufis, more than other people, have turned them around in their own fabrications.

“I was a hidden treasure . . .” which is cited by Mowlana and many Sufis in their poetry and books was an excuse for their long winded fabrications.

Abu Bakr Razi in *Mersad al-‘ebad* reflected on *I wet the clay of Adam* and fabricated more than eight pages about it.⁷⁰

Amir Pazwari who composed poetry in Mazandarani, and was not unaware of Sufism, included these two *hadith* in his own poems. He says:

I am the necessary existent, the knowledge of the names.

I was mixed from earth for forty days.

I opened up the knot of “I was a hidden treasure.”

Don’t tell everyone because I am so precious.

It is surprising that the word “hidden” (*makhfi*) in “*I was a hidden treasure*” is a mistake [*Makhfi-an*]. In Arabic one should say “*khafi*”. So it is clear that someone who was not an Arab or did not know Arabic has made up this *hadith*.

These are examples of the Sufis’ treatment of Islam. It is interesting that even with all the distortions which they made in that religion, they were not able to make Sufism conform to Islam, and so a duality came to exist. The duality continued and confusion has remained between Islam and Sufism. When you read their books you will see that sometimes they are absorbed in Sufi imaginings, falling remote from Islam, and sometimes they return, becoming a Muslim “who follows the external form of religion”.⁷¹

A short biography of Abu Sa‘id Abi’l-Khayr was written. When you read this you will see that in one place the Sheikh became a real Sufi.

Our Sheikh said, “On several occasions when we were seeking the Truth, sometimes we would discover him, and sometimes we didn’t find him. Now, however much we seek ourselves, we no longer find anything. We have become ‘everything is he’ because everything is he.”

In another place you will see Sufism is forgotten and the Sheikh was a Muslim who followed the external form and discussed the resurrection, heaven and hell.

Our Sheikh said, “If a ransom was sent from heaven for the sake of Isma‘il, on the day of resurrection a ransom will be sent of behalf of the riffraff of Mohammad’s community.”

*The infidel is brought forth and the Muslim is told: this is your ransom from Hell-fire.*⁷²

The question to be asked is that, on the basis of the understanding that the Sufis have derived, what spiritual meaning can be yielded from the above discussion of heaven and hell? If God is that “simple existence” which exists in everyone and in all things, then does he exist in the Muslim and unbeliever? For what reason

will anyone go to heaven or hell? The person who has been saved from the prison of “multiplicity” will connect to the sea of “unity”, so what is the need to speak of heaven and hell?

It has been repeated in the Sufi books that the Sufi’s station is above “unbelief” and “faith”:

*For the person for whom love is a guide,
Both unbelief and religion are unveilers for him.
Night is like unbelief, and the candle is like faith
When the sun is shining.
Faith said to unbelief:
“Let’s go, because the game is over for us.”*

Sheikh Shabestari⁷³ said:

*If the unbeliever knew what an idol was
He would know that religion is in idol-worshipping.*

In the eyes of Sufism what has been said above is true. That idol too is a fortune from God, and worshipping it is worshipping God. How can such a thing be permissible in Islam which is a religion that shatters idols?

It needs to be said that Sufis were caught between Islam and Sufism. They lived their whole lives in hypocrisy. But they were divided into two groups in this regard. One group did not believe in Islam and it was only for fear of the people that they occasionally pretended to be Muslims. The other group that believed in both Islam and Sufism lived in confusion between these two.

Most of their leaders were in the first group and they considered themselves superior to the founder of Islam. For example, Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir Gilani was known as the “pole” of his time. It is written that space and time were at his command, and the sun asked him permission to appear, and the full moon asked permission to come out. It is clear that someone with such self-boasting and vain talk considers his own rank as far superior to that of the prophet of Islam and others.

The orders that emerged after the Safavid era in Iran have exhibited some form of Shi’ism, and it must be stated that they too are divided into two groups. One group did not believe in Shi’ism but showed an accommodating face to the people. The other group grew strong with Shi’ism, and the illusions of that sect settled in their hearts. Moreover, they were inclined to Sufism too, and so another set of illusions was added upon them, and they lived with this giddiness. The conduct of Abu Sa’id and others with Islam caused some accommodation between Sufism and that religion. They became Shi’ites and have made some adaptations.

The story of Safi ‘Ali Shah⁷⁴ is truly amazing. This man who was considered the “pole” twinned Sufism with ‘Ali Allahi-ism.⁷⁵ Everywhere in his poetry he

praises ‘Ali as God in Sufi terminology. In one place he says:

*How is it that there is unity in a raging ocean?
Waves rise continually from the ocean.
A hidden treasure which was completely unseen
Is revealed from the veil of absence.
Since there is nothing there except him
The essence of things appears from the force of jealousy.
Sometimes the sword strikes in the battlefield
Sometimes it is ready for martyrdom
Sometimes it sleeps on Ahmad’s bed.
Sometimes it rests upon the throne of Imamate.⁷⁶
There is no truth in the kingdom of the Shah’s existence⁷⁷
Except for ‘Ali, the Friend of God.*

This last line of this verse is brought repeatedly. The expression “Friend of God” is suitable in rhetoric, for the poet states God is no other than ‘Ali, and in the tradition of the Shi‘ites he is also called “Friend of God.” This is an example of his confusion.

In that *tarji‘band*, in another place, the poet glorified the story of the ascent:

*In that assembly, in a word,
When the Truth invited Mohammad to that assembly
From the unseen a call came
From the blessing of the court of “Subhani.”⁷⁸
A hand came from the sleeve of the unseen
To lead him there.
He saw a hand take his own
For a pledge to perform God’s will.
He saw a hand that
With two fingers could pull off the door.⁷⁹
Before the creation of world and man
There has been a creator of this palace of existence*

See the degree of this man’s understanding! The ‘Ali-Allahis add another legend to the ascent of the prophet, which is a legend itself.⁸⁰ An invitation is sent to the prophet to feast with God in heaven, and when God reveals his hand from behind a curtain, the prophet witnesses ‘Ali’s hand. That pole of the age believed these groundless legends, and he turned them into poetry with all the Sufi skills.

Why has nobody claimed that from the Sufi viewpoint God is nothing but that simple existence which cannot be a thing that is in the sky or on the earth. Therefore how can witnessing God in heaven be compatible with Sufism?

And from the Sufi viewpoint we are all God, not separate from Him. So how is it that you can only see ‘Ali?

What follows in the poem is more surprising than this:

*Ali, most high, said to the prophet
Your prosperity is in praising Ali,
Since there is no Truth in the Shah's kingdom
Except Ali the Friend of God.*

He says, “God said to the prophet that God is ‘Ali, and there is nothing in the world except him.” It is unknown where the other God was who said this to the Prophet about ‘Ali.

On the one hand these are examples of the confused state of that man’s mind, and on the other hand they are examples of the extent of the lack of understanding of the pole of the age. These were people who said that for years they had endured difficulty and had embellished themselves with certain attributes and trimmed themselves of others and had finally reached an exalted station. They were people whom others had called “unfortunate” and who considered themselves superior to all of them, indeed to the prophets too. That was their boasting and this was an example of their understanding and reason!

Sufism is the source of the spirits’ weakness

People sometimes say, “Sufism should also be discussed from the perspective of its benefit and detriment to the individual, and you are correct in so doing. However, Sufism has provided a path to purify the spirit.” And they continue, “The only criticism that one can make is that the Sufis have been excessive in concentrating upon the spirit.”

But these views are incorrect. This is the good opinion that people have had concerning the Sufis. I cannot say that all Sufis have been bad people, but what I can say is that since Sufism is a crooked path, not only have the Sufis been unable to purify their spirits, they have made them even more polluted.

Even if we close our eyes to all this, and focus upon the Sufis with regard to the purification of the spirit, we will see that when all is said and done, in this field too, they are worse than others. Those who have a good opinion of them and talk about them in this fashion have not read their books and are unaware about their activities and lives.

If I want to discuss the uncleanness and impurity of the Sufis, I would have to write a hundred pages or more. But I will suffice with several examples.

One of the efforts made by the Sufis was a battle with egotism, which they themselves called “the greater jihad”. Egotism is one of the worst human characteristics, and since the Sufis have recognised it as the source of all evil, they were not too far away from the truth. Nevertheless, the result of following the Sufi path was that they did not kill the egotism in themselves, rather, they animated it

further. If you read the stories that the Sufis themselves have written, you will see how their egotism is sometimes revealed through their behaviour and sayings.

For example, one of the ways of the great Sufis was that anytime they heard some [great Sufi] say something they exaggerated this very much and boasted about the speaker even if it was nonsense.

For example, in the *Secrets of Unity*, it is written: “They told our Sheikh, ‘Someone repented and broke the vow of repentance.’ Our Sheikh said, ‘If he had not broken his vow of repentance, he would never be able to repent again.’”

There are many examples of this kind in that book.

In the *Memoirs of the Saints*, there is a conversation between Shaiq Balkhi⁸¹ and Ibrahim Adham:

Shaiq said, “O Ibrahim! What do you do to get your worldly provisions?” He replied, “If something comes along, I give thanks, and if it doesn’t I wait.” Shaiq said, “The dogs of Balkh do the same thing!” Ibrahim said, “So what do you do?” He replied, “If something comes to us we give it away, and if it doesn’t we give thanks.”

Concerning Bayazid it is written:

They said to Bayazid that so and so had gone to Mecca in one night. He said, “Satan too goes from the east to the west in a moment.” They said to him, “So and so walks on water.” He said, “More amazing than that is to realise that fish swim in water and birds fly in the air.”⁸²

Another of their ways has been to reveal to people their amazing acts and to show themselves off. For example, in the *Remembrance of the Saints*, it is written:

A thief had been hung in Baghdad and Jonayd⁸³ went and kissed his feet. They asked him about this and he replied, “May there be a thousand mercies upon him because he was a hero in his task, and so achieved such perfection in his work that he exceeded the bounds in that task.”

It continues:

It is related that one night he was walking along a path with a disciple, and a dog was barking. Jonayd⁸⁴ exclaimed, “Here I am for you, here I am for you!”⁸⁵ The disciple asked, “What do you mean by this?” He replied, “I considered the dog’s noise as the wrath of the Truth most high, and as a reflection of his power. I did not consider the dog. So I answered, ‘Here I am for you.’”

Concerning Sheikh ‘Attar himself, they have written that when the Mongol armies captured Nishapur and he fell prisoner to a Mongol, someone recognised

him and offered a hundred *dinars* if they would set him free. ‘Attar himself did not allow this and said, “Don’t sell me, as I am worth more than this.” Another purchaser was found and offered to buy him for a palace. The Sheikh said, “Accept this, since I am not worth this much.” The Mongol became angry with these words of his and killed him.

There is another group of stories the meaning of which can be nothing other than that which has already been mentioned. Their aim has been to show Sufism as a difficult but very worthwhile endeavour and to show the Sufis themselves in a good light. The story below that serves as an example is from the *Memoirs of the Saints*.

Shebli went to a gathering of Khayr Nassaj.⁸⁶ Khayr sent him to Jonayd. So Shebli went to see Jonayd and said, “They have shown you the jewel of divine knowledge. Either give it to me or sell it to me.” Jonayd replied, “You are not worth the price that I can sell it to you. You will have received it too easily if I give it to you, for you don’t appreciate its value. You must plunge yourself headfirst, like me, into this ocean and you will acquire this jewel through patience and expectancy.” Shebli asked, “What should I do?” Jonayd replied, “Go and sell sulphur for a year.” Shebli did this and when the year had passed Jonayd said to him, “This work gives you a good name, so go and spend a year begging and don’t occupy yourself in anything else.” Shebli did this too, and wandered the whole of Baghdad for a year so that after a while no one gave him anything. Then he returned to Jonayd who said, “Now appreciate your own value: you are worthless in the eyes of the people. So don’t rely on them or pay them any attention.” He continued, “You were a courtier for a while, and you were a governor for a while. Go to that province and ask them to release [you from that office?].” Off he went, and he arrived at each and every door, until he had searched everywhere. But one injustice remained for him. But God did not forgive until he said, “I have the [willing] intention to return that one hundred thousand *diram*.” But still his heart was vexed, and he spent four years in this condition. So he returned to Jonayd who said, “There still remains some regard for reputation in you. Go and beg for another year.” Every day he would beg, and gave everything he acquired to Jonayd, who gave it all to the dervishes and left Shebli hungry in the evening. When the year was completed Jonayd said, “Now I permit you into the companionship of the [Sufi] path on the condition that you become the servant of the companions.” So Shebli served the companions for a year, and then Jonayd said, “O Abu Bakr, now what do you think of yourself?” Shebli replied, “I regard myself as the most wretched of God’s creatures.” Jonayd said, “Now your faith is correct.”

The careful reader considers what abject and meaningless activities the Sufis have stooped to in order to show that Sufism in a very difficult but worthwhile

endeavour and that they have poured water on the fire of selfishness within themselves. In this story there is a clear lie: Shebli, having more than a hundred thousand *dirams*, became a dervish and started begging, in any case whether a lie or true, it is an example of the Sufis' activities or lies, the cause of which can be nothing but selfishness and showing off.

Those who have considered themselves superior to others spent their time in a state of poverty, idleness and meanness, and they were selfishly pleased and content with that. Moreover, they busied themselves in this kind of showing off in order to reveal their superiority to the people.

Another method of the Sufis which can also be considered as nothing but selfishness has been to show an evil or unsightly act that one of them has perpetrated as an act of humility. They have taken responsibility for that evil but have given it another meaning, and they have praised themselves for it. There is a ludicrous episode of this in *Safat al-safa*⁸⁷ which is presented below:

May God prolong his blessing upon the worlds. Sheikh Sadr al-Din (son of Safi al-Din) said that once Sheikh Safi [al-Din Ardabili]⁸⁸ (may his grave be hallowed) set out from Siyavarud to Ardabil, and it was his habit that unlike others, he never took provisions from the *zawiya*⁸⁹ of Sheikh Zahed⁹⁰ (may his grave be hallowed). As chance would have it, at that time Sheikh Zahed knew of these circumstances through the light of friendship of God. He told his followers to prepare generous provisions of bread for Sheikh Safi. They put a huge pile of loaves into the boat even though the distance that would be spent travelling was short, for one loaf would have been sufficient from Siyarvarud to Kalas where he would disembark. When Sheikh Safi al-Din sat in the boat, he was in the kind of mystical state that when experienced by the masters of spiritual travelling, the fire of love overcomes them. And his stomach burnt so much that if he had been given all the food on earth to eat, not one particle of food would have reached his stomach, because it would have been burnt on the way (and there are some whose existence is burnt by this fire) and so his stomach received no food.

*When a particle of the fire of your love sets a heart ablaze
All parts of existence and its non-existence are completely burnt.*

That state was apparent in the Sheikh, and he ate all the provisions and loaves of bread that were in the boat. When they disembarked from the boat, the followers who had accompanied him realised that that very state had overcome the Sheikh. And before he had disembarked they went ahead to a village and house in front of them and arranged for food. In each village they prepared a large quantity of food that was sufficient for a big party. When the Sheikh arrived, they brought him forward to receive all the goods, and they carried on in this way until they reached Ardabil.

So in each place they cooked five or six sheep, and the Sheikh arrived at each place behind the followers and ate everything they prepared until he reached the village of Kalkhoran. When he entered the house there he saw that they had been cooking some bread, so he sat in front of the oven and ate whatever had been cooked until he had completely finished everything. They baked all the dough that had been prepared for those who lived in the house, including the guests and the workers. But the Sheikh ate it all. When his mother (God's blessing upon her) saw what had happened, she understood the Sheikh's state. She killed her big, strong ram, and cut it up into pieces and prepared a large pot of food. The Sheikh ate all of that too. Then the relations of that household who were passing by brought different kinds of food, and he ate all of that. And the neighbours of that house brought food likewise and it too was finished up. Then the news spread around the village and everybody brought some kind of food, and the Sheikh ate so much that he caused himself an injury, yet he was not full even with all this food.

*When in that station the bird of aspiration discovers the nest,
It cares less than a grain about the universe before it.*

When this state appears for the traveller the spiritual guide (*morshed*) must bring him out of it and instruct him with a special *zeker* so that he can leave this state behind and return [to normality]. So when Sheikh Safi al-Din reached that state where he was in danger of dying, he saw the outward appearance of Sheikh Zahed who had come to instruct him in that *zeker* and bring him out of that state and make him stable:

*I am in the tavern. There is a sober wine-bearer
Who can break my state of complete drunkenness with a mouthful.*

And these kind of states appeared for one of the disciples of Sheikh Safi (may his grave be hallowed) in Kalkhoran, and he came out of isolation during the night and entered a large garden in which there were many kinds of herbs. That night he ate all of those herbs, and not a single leaf was left. At dawn the gardener was astonished when he arrived at the garden. Everything in the garden had gone; it had not been burnt away, so where had it gone? The Sheikh heard about this and so he instructed that disciple in that special *zeker* and brought him out of that state. A similar state befell another of the disciples of Sheikh Safi in Ardabil. The Sheikh ordered Selah, his servant, to follow the disciple and arrange bread and food for him. Selah prepared much food, and placed it all before that disciple in the privacy of the courtyard. It was Friday, and so he went to the mosque, and that seeker ate all the food. When he requested more, and found there was nothing left, he went into a garden that was situated before the southern window of a *zawiya*, and in which

there were herbs. He ate all the herbs, and when he noticed the leaves on the tree, he ate all that was edible. Then he returned to his place of isolation, and since there was no possibility of a remedy for him, he could endure no more and he passed away in isolation. In the mosque the Sheikh (may his grave be hallowed) understood through the light of friendship that he had died, and when he returned from the mosque and dismounted his donkey, he said to his servant Selah, “Didn’t I tell you to keep preparing food for that person? Lets go and check his place of isolation.” He took Selah’s hand and led him there. They saw the disciple sitting in a corner and who had hung a document on the wall and green foam was trickling out of his mouth.

The death of the lovers is beautiful

The lover’s soul is a seeker of an excuse.

Up to this point we have copied from *Safat al-Safa*. Undoubtedly the story was that Sheikh Safi revealed such greed on his journey, stopping in several places on his return from Gilan. The Sheikh committed such deeds that were so unbecoming instead of performing humble acts. He said, “Anyone can commit these evils, so there is no cause for reproach.” He presented this selfishness in another way, namely, as one of the Sufi states or even as one of Sufism’s secrets. He made up and told this lie, and some of his followers supported and verified other lies too.

Some of them have been so engrossed in these things that we see in *The Secrets of Unity* two of Abu Sa’id’s children died.⁹¹ The selfish Sheikh did not consider that [fate] was just, as it was not fitting for the elevated status which he had bestowed upon himself. Therefore he explained the reason for his children’s death in a different way. “People of heaven asked us for a reminder, and we sent them two aromatic delicacies until their father arrives.” There are so many of these kind of stories that we cannot count them.

Another example of the weakness of the Sufis’ spirits is their practice of begging and asking for charity. We see from their stories that they did not consider begging an evil, indeed, they regarded the bread (which they had acquired through begging) as beneficial (for begging was one form of asceticism). Their excuse was that the most dangerous of things is the “soul” (*nafs*), and they despised it totally and tried to kill it.

This resulted in the Sufi *pirs* confusing the soul and spirit (or in their own words: *nafs* and *ruh*). They have not made any distinction between the demands of the two. This is because in the human body whatever begs is considered evil and whatever opposes this is called the spirit. It is the spirit that is displeased when someone puts himself before others, makes himself contemptible and desires things. However, the soul or *nafs* has no fear of begging, and they do not consider it as evil.

The Sufis have likened the soul to a dog and have even called it a dog in many places. But it would have been better if they had remembered that dogs are not

shy about begging; indeed, begging is their skill. It is a human, a pure-souled human that cannot live in peace with begging.

Sufis have begged in order to kill their *nafs* (to use their term), so why have they sat doing nothing?! Has it been to kill their *nafs*? Or could living in idleness and looking expectantly at others and engaging in begging and asking for charity have been a source of nothing except an impure and weak soul?

A summary of the hagiography of Abu Sa‘id which they composed is as follows: On the pretext of Sufism, he abstained from engaging in work and a trade and assembled a group of thick-necked dervishes about him. They spent their time in idleness and fabricating foolish stories, and taking edibles from the merchants from the market, they became debtors. And then they went begging from this wealthy person to that wealthy person, and they requested money claiming, “We have taken out a loan.” If someone refused to give them anything they cursed that person to death and spread insults about him. The following story is an example of the works of Abu Sa‘id.

In that time when our Sheikh, Abu Sa‘id, was in Nishapur, Hasan Mo‘addab (who was the Sheikh’s servant) had borrowed something from everyone to spend on the dervishes. When the lenders asked for their money back he said something would be given to them later. One day they all came to the *khanaqah* and the Sheikh told Hasan Mo‘addab to let them in. Hasan lead them into the *khanaqah* and they sat before the Sheikh. A young peddler passed the door of the *khanaqah* and called out “Sweets for sale!” The Sheikh said, “Weigh everything he has.” So all his sweets were weighed and placed in front of the Sheikh for the Sufis to eat. The young peddler asked for money for the sweets. The Sheikh replied, “It will come soon.” The peddler once more asked for his money, but the Sheikh said, “It will come.” A third time he asked for his money, and the Sheikh gave the same reply. The young peddler said, “My master will beat me.” He said this and stood crying. Suddenly someone came to the door of the *khanaqah*, and placed a purse full of gold before the Sheikh and said, “So and so sent me and asked to be remembered in your prayers.” The Sheikh told Hasan Mo‘addab to take the purse and divide the money among the creditors. So Hasan took the gold and divided it between them, and he also gave gold to that young peddler, so that no gold remained. Nothing was left, rather, all things were paid in full. The Sheikh said, “This gold was on account of this young boy’s tears.”⁹²

Readers of this story should contemplate well. They had taken numerous loans from many people and as a result they had eaten well. And instead of meeting the demands of those who came to see him, desiring a return of their loan, Abu Sa‘id was busy with his voracious appetite. He called out to a peddler boy who sold food (sweetmeats) and took everything he had despite having no money. He ate those

goods with the dervishes, and when the boy asked for money he said, “It will come.” Out of fear of a beating from his master, the boy stood crying until someone came and gave the money to the Sheikh. You see that they have produced a “miracle” from this vile conduct which cannot be interpreted as anything but stomach-worship and shamefulness. “Nothing was left, rather, all things were paid in full.” The Sheikh said, “This gold was on account of this young boy’s tears.” He wants to make it known that God had guided the actions of the Sheikh and his followers, and God wanted that money to reach them. But was it necessary to make that young boy cry? See with what clothing they disguise their mean and avaricious appetites! See their rudeness towards God! Were their spirits pure? If they were not pure what things would they have done?

I will give another example of the impurity of the Sufis’ spirits. There is a man called “Mowlana”⁹³ in our times who was a student of Safi ‘Ali Shah (and it is said he is his successor). This man composed a *masnavi* in history called “The World and Adam” which has been published. I will cite a few lines of this poem which is in praise of Timurlang⁹⁴:

*When the flag of Timur, Shah of Gorgan
Became the most famous in the world,
His power extended from the veranda of the universe
And his justice encompassed man and beast*

Someone who has engaged in *chelleh* and traversed “stations” flatters Timur the bloodthirsty 600 years after his death in this example, which has come from the darkness of his soul. He discusses the “justice” of this Timur who ordered the execution of people for disobedience and killed 70,000 in Isfahan and built a minaret from the skulls of those executed in Baghdad. And that justice encompassed man and the beasts!

A person whose spirit is pure must have no trace or flaw of tyranny within him. Here there is a distinction between the spirit and the soul because the spirit craves justice, progress and compassion and is has no trace of tyranny and destruction. So, what an impure spirit that person has who has no fear of Timur’s bloodletting but instead has busied himself in such flattery.

The Sufis have not had the least fear in lying

One of the ugly acts of the Sufis that has polluted their spirits (which we must present as a separate discussion) has been their fearlessness in lying and spinning tales. They did not consider lying wrong because they did not have the slightest fear. It is true that the Sufis have been a store of lies. If I busy myself with the stories and untrue tales, and the innumerable speeches, or their evil boasting, I would be obliged to write hundreds of pages. Instead, I will busy myself with only a single thread of their lies.

If you read Sufi books, you will see that they continuously recount impossible acts (or in their words, “charismatic powers” (*karamat*)) [performed] by their masters and eminent ones. They go so far as to say that the Sufi masters prevailed over the laws of nature and they were even able to subvert them. They were able to engage in acts outside of these laws such as walking on water, talking to animals and plants, being aware of the unseen, transforming earth into gold and rocks into jewels, curing the sick, raising the dead and others like these.

This was something ineffable according to them, and they have written hundreds of these kind of stories. They are unbelievable tales: stories that must be called “outlandish lies” in the words of the common people. I will recount a number of stories as an example.

It has been related that once the company of Sufis in Meyhaneh had gone several days without meat. For more than a week Hasan did not procure any meat. Meanwhile, the group went on desiring meat, though they did not show it openly. One day our Sheikh rose to his feet and went forth with the company of Sufis through the gate that leads to the Marv road. Then they ascended the hill called Za’qal. This hill stands at the edge of the desert of Marv. Mention of it was made earlier on. Whenever a state of contraction came over the Sheikh, this is where he would go. When the Sheikh had ascended the hill, he came to a halt and waited a moment. A gazelle appeared out of the countryside and headed in the direction of the Sheikh and his followers. Coming before the Sheikh, she fell on the ground and rolled over. Tears flowed from the Sheikh’s eyes and he said, “No, not this! Not this!” Meanwhile the gazelle continued to roll on the ground in front of the Sheikh. Then the Sheikh turned to the group and said, “Do you know what this gazelle is saying? She says, ‘I have come to sacrifice myself for the companions, so that you may have peace of mind.’ And I say, ‘No, not this, because you have young ones to tend.’ But she insists.” Then the Sheikh and our companions wept profusely. They let out shouts and ecstatic states were experienced. All the while the gazelle rolled about on the ground. Then the Sheikh gave instructions to Hasan, saying, “Take her to the shop of Sa’id, the butcher, and tell him to slaughter her with a sharp knife in accordance with the sacred custom, and to prepare a meal for the Sufis tonight.” Hasan did as the Sheikh had instructed him and that night the group of Sufis enjoyed the meat of that gazelle.⁹⁵

It is related that one day someone came [to see Bayazid] and asked him about modesty. The Sheikh answered him, and that person became embarrassed. Another person passed by and saw a yellow puddle. He stood still and asked, “O Sheikh! What happened?” He replied, “Someone came to see me and asked a question about modesty. I answered him, but he could not bear my answer, and he became embarrassed.”⁹⁶

Once Rabi'a 'Adwiya decided to perform the *hajj*, and so she went into the desert, but in the middle of the desert [her] donkey died. People said, “We will carry your baggage.” She replied, “You go ahead because I have not come here to be reliant upon you.” So they went ahead and Rabi'a remained alone. And so she prayed, “Oh God! Kings do such things to a helpless, needy woman. You called me your house, but then you killed my donkey halfway there, and left me all alone in the desert.” She had not completed her prayer when the donkey began to twitch and it got up. Rabi'a put her baggage on the donkey and proceeded [on her *hajj*].⁹⁷

It is related that on another occasion Rabi'a went to Mecca, and halfway there she saw the Ka'ba which had come to greet her. Rabi'a said, “I want the Lord of the house! What do I want with the house itself?”⁹⁸

It is related that Ibrahim Adham once sat on the banks of the River Tigris and was sewing a patch on his worn out cloak when his needle fell into the river. Someone asked him, “What has a king found who has lost so much?”⁹⁹ He pointed to the river and said, “Give me my needle.” A thousand fish appeared on the surface of the river and each one had a gold needle in its mouth. Ibrahim said, “I want my needle.” A weak fish appeared with his needle in its mouth and said, “This is the most abject thing that I found left for the King of Balkh. You do not know¹⁰⁰ of the other things.”¹⁰¹

In the *Masnawi*, Rumi tells a story of Bayazid Bastami who sometimes declared in a drunken state *Glory be to me! How great is my majesty!* Once [his] followers took him to task for this. Bayazid said, “If after this I make such a declaration, attack me with knives and kill me.” Once more he made such a declaration and his followers took up their knives and fell upon him madly, but,

*Whoever slashed at the sheikh
Ripped at his own body instead.
Not a mark was found on the body of that master of arts
And those disciples were exhausted, drowning in blood.*¹⁰²

These stories are so disreputable. [But] we don't want to search and find their notorious stories. There are writings that astound anyone who reads them. Several years ago I read a book in Arabic about Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani, several sections of which have remained in my mind. The *Ka'ba* always rotated around the Sheikh's head, the sun came out seeking the smallest things from the Sheikh and the moon arrived to take orders from him. His grandson said, “I saw the moon many times when it was new or full, come before the Sheikh and request something.”

One day the Sheikh was informed that such and such a disciple had died. The Sheikh became angry that 'Azra'il had taken the soul of one of his followers

without asking his permission. In a second he flew up to heaven and stood in front of ‘Azra’il and in anger he kicked out at that glass container full of spirits which was in the hands of ‘Azra’il.¹⁰³ He smashed that glass container, and all the spirits were freed, so that the people who had died on that day came to life again.

Another series of their lies on this topic is that they invented a story for the person who became a king or reached an eminent position. “When he became the disciple of such and such a sheikh, the latter gave the former the kingdom.” In this way they gained unworthy benefit from any opportunity.

Toghral and his brothers (who on several occasions waged war against Soltan Mas‘ud Ghaznavi and others) established a great dynasty. In the books of the Sufis we see that one day they went to Abu Sa‘id, and the sheikh raised his head and said, “We have given Khorasan to Chagri, and Iraq to Toghral”¹⁰⁴ and in was owing to this that they established that dynasty.

This boasting about bestowing the country and coronation by the Sufis has many roots and has become so unparalleled that Hafez-e Shirazi (who wanted to present the *kharabatis* as a group of God seekers among the Sufis, and whatever they said about themselves he also attributed to the *kharabatis* – or in their own words *rendan*¹⁰⁵) also coined a phrase for such a coronation. He says:

The *Qalandar rendan* are at the tavern door
To take and to give kingship’s crown.

This boasting reached an extent that in our own time we see it has been taken advantage of by Shat Mehr Baba. We read in his book that the kingship of Reza Shah Pahlavi and the things he did in Iran were all the result of the Shat Mehr Baba’s concern for Iran when he was in India and the journey that he made to Bushehr. We can cite a few sentences from his book. [The book] is verbose on the “reality and miracles of Shat Mehr Baba”, for example it states:

One of his greatest miracles that is evident, clear, manifest and apparent for everyone (and all the world is reflecting and wondering about its occurrence, but no one is informed about its origin) is the current state and progress of Iran, the disappearance of the Qajars and the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty, and the elevation of his excellency Reza Shah to the Iranian throne. This was the first service that Shat Mehr Baba carried out in this world after [his] connection to God. It was for this purpose that he travelled to the Iranian border (to the port of Bushehr) and then returned [to India]. In 1924 after a whole tour of India, he set off with several of his followers and disciples with the intention of visiting Iran. After arriving in Bushehr, they stayed there several days, they cancelled the rest of their voyage and returned [to India]. The reason and cause of this journey and return are not completely clear, it can only be concluded that the intention was not for journeying and touring, rather, it became clear from an allusion that it was to carry out

a great commission and to effect a complete change and alteration of which he spoke ambiguously. A seed had been planted, the sign and effect of which would soon become clear and apparent. In other words, from that time on in a troubled Iran there occurred dramatic changes in the political, economic and legal conditions. And day by day the state of affairs improved to the extent that we have reached today.

The point to make with regard to these stories is that they are all lies. Of any path that we accept, these have not been among them and could not have been. The events in these stories are all impossibilities.

If we take the path of religion God has created laws for worldly affairs, and there can be nothing outside worldly laws. It is impossible for a dead donkey to be resurrected at the command of another person. It is impossible for the *Kā'ba* to rise from its place and go to meet someone or rotate around someone's head. It is impossible for fish beneath the water to rise to the surface at someone's command, each with a golden needle in its mouth. It is impossible that at the wish of a Sufi a person becomes a king.

God's laws are not a toy that someone can overcome and change to demonstrate his own skill. Whatever they have said about Moses and Jesus and other prophets is also just a lie. Greater than Moses and Jesus was the prophet of Islam, for whenever they asked him for a “miracle” [literally, an impossibility], he showed [them] powerlessness: it is this Qur'an of his that is in our hands.

If we follow the path of history, then we find that these stories exist only in the Sufi books and there is no trace or mention of them in history books. If Rabi'a had resurrected her dead donkey then the fame of her act would have spread everywhere and thousands of people would have hurried to see her and her donkey. Everyone would have been made aware of this and it would have been recorded in history. The same applies to the other stories.

If we look with the eye of wisdom, nothing can occur in the world without a cause, and all events are connected to one another. Reza Shah was a military officer who became Shah as a result of his own efforts and events in Iran and Europe. It is the wish of Shat Mehr Baba that has no existence.

If we follow the path of proof why don't these Sufis reveal those same skills (or charismatic powers) so that there can be no room left for discussion? In our time there are Sufis. One of them should come and resurrect a dead person so that everyone can see. If that dead person should remain alive and walk, everyone would be stupefied. So why doesn't one of them do such a thing? Why doesn't Shat Mehr Baba perform such a “miracle”? But let's leave this to one side. Why doesn't Shat Mehr Baba want India (which is his homeland) to advance? Why doesn't he want it to improve? So why is it always the case that the Sufi masters attribute to themselves the tasks that someone else has performed?

Why did the Sufi masters who knew the “greatest name” and were able to turn mud into gold and stone into jewels resort to begging? Why did they become debtors, and why did they seek loans from this person and that person? We read

in the *Secrets of Unity* that Abu Sa’id asked a rich person to pay his debts and that rich person promised to do so, but he did not fulfil his pledge, and Abu Sa’id became angry and cursed him so that one night his dogs ripped that rich man to pieces. On reading this story I was reminded of another story that I had once read in a book. A servant of God carried wheat to a mill. The owner of the mill had much work and paid the servant of God no attention. The latter became angry and said, “If you don’t grind my wheat before that of the others I will make a curse so that your donkey will be turned into stone.” The mill owner said, “If your place is so near to God why would you turn my donkey to stone? Why didn’t you pray for your wheat to be ground so that there would be no need to come to the mill?”

There is no doubt that those “charismatic powers” are all lies. If we search for the motive of this [we see that] its history is that the Sufis (who ventured down this crooked path and spent years there manifesting a darkness in the soul and mind) claimed a “connection to God” and they pretended that they had reached another world and reached a more exalted station. Since they called this lie [i.e. the place they claimed to have reached] the footstool (*kursi*) they were obliged to claim that they had the power to perform “charismatic powers” and to busy themselves in telling yet another string of lies. They were obliged to invent stories. Each follower considered it proper to recognise his own master’s possession of such an exalted station and the ability to perform “charismatic powers”. And he considered it proper to invent and spread those fabricated stories. The Sufi tradition which was based on lies was guarded by other lies.

From this perspective, these false charismatic powers were tools in the hands of the Sufis who sat idle and continually turned to the wealthy people and they made them fearful or hopeful by saying things like “so and so became king because he gave money to a dervish,” or “the son of so and so died young because he did not give money to a dervish.” These were sharp tools because they made wealthy, superstitious people give money.

These were the motives behind the Sufis inventing those false stories. But more startling than this is that some of the Sufis took a greater step and pretended that displaying “miracles” and “charismatic powers” could occur at the beginning of the Sufi path and at the time when the Sufi traveller was still inexperienced. When he became more advanced and more experienced he did not respect “charismatic powers” and did not consider them worthy for himself. It has been related of Bayazid Bastami that he said, “In the beginning of [my] states God used to show me charismatic powers and signs, but I did not pay attention to them. When God realised this he showed me the path of his gnosis.”

This is another example of the extent to which the Sufi followers busied themselves in showing off. Whenever there is talk of charismatic powers these Sufi people have said they are superior and they gave this excuse. From this perspective, it was a veil with which they covered their own inability, and they offer this excuse if people demanded a “charismatic power”.

We do not want to go on about this. The conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is that the Sufis were men of impure spirits, and this is an example of

their impurity which reached the extent of insolent lying and being rude about God and his laws. People who have a good opinion about the Sufis are unaware of all this.

An amazing thing in the book *The Secrets of Unity* (which is full of the “miracles” of Abu Sa’id and many amazing deeds that have been attributed to him) is that the sheikh understood the secrets in the heart of each person, he flew in the air when he went to Sarkhas¹⁰⁶, he spoke with animals¹⁰⁷ and informed Toghral and his brothers they would become kings. In that book, despite all of this, there is a story of a person who went to see the sheikh and asked for a “charismatic power” which he could see with his eyes. The sheikh was stuck and made an excuse. Since this story is another testimony to the lies of the Sufis, we will present it below:

Master ‘Abd al-Rahman (who taught our Sheikh Abu Sa’id to read) said that when our Sheikh was in Nishapur someone came to see him and said, “I am a stranger in this city. The whole city speaks about you. The people say that there is a man here who performs charismatic powers. Now, show one to me!”

Our Sheikh said, “I was in Amol with Abu ‘l-‘Abbas Qassab when someone – just as is the case with you – came to see him and made this same request and asked him to perform a charismatic power. Sheikh Abu ‘l-‘Abbas replied, ‘But don’t you see what it is that is not a charismatic power? What you see here is the son of a butcher who learned the butcher’s trade from his father. Something was shown to this person [i.e. Abu ‘l-‘Abbas] and he was taken to Baghdad to the spiritual master Shebli, and he went from Baghdad to Mecca, and from Mecca to Medina, and from Medina to Jerusalem. Then they showed him Khezr, and persuaded the latter to accept him. Then he returned here and the people turned to him and they abandoned the taverns, become absolved from evil and repented, and gave away their wealth. From all parts of the world those who had been burnt [by love] come and seek Him through me. What greater charismatic power is there than this?’ Then that man said, ‘O Sheikh! I want to see a charismatic power for myself right now.’ He replied, ‘Look well! Is it not a divine gift that the son of a goat butcher sits in the place of honour among the great and he does not fall to the ground, nor do these walls collapse on him, nor does this house crash down on his head? He has dominion without property or wealth. He eats his daily food and feeds others despite having no means and no work. Is this not a charismatic power?’ Then the Sheikh said, “Oh generous fellow! I’m having the same problem with you as Abu ‘l-‘Abbas had with the person who posed the question.” The man replied, “O Sheikh, I’m asking you to show me a charismatic power, and you keep talking about Sheikh Abu ‘l-‘Abbas.” The Sheikh said, “Whoever belongs entirely to the Bountiful (*Karim*), all his acts are charismatic

powers (*karamat*).” Then he smiled and recited:

*Each wind that blows from Bokhara bears musk,
A jasmine’s scent, or perfume of the rose.
But every man or woman on whom it blows
Says, “This wind must be arriving from Khotan!”
But no! No wind so sweet blows from Khotan
This wind arrives from my beloved’s breast.
To catch sight of you each night I turn towards Yemen.
For you are Canopus, rising over Yemen.
My idol, I strive to conceal your name from men,
To keep your name from the lips of the multitude,
But though I would, or not, with whomever I speak,
Your name is the first word to come from my tongue.*

Then our Sheikh said, “When the Truth purifies the servant and distances him from his lower self, all the doings and sayings of that servant are charismatic powers.” *The blessings of Allah be upon Mohammad and his family, one and all.*¹⁰⁸

Readers of these episodes think well! That man asked for a “charismatic power” and Abu Sa’id told a story and recited poetry in reply. In doing so, just like his own sheikh he made himself appear not lacking. And so he did not respond to the claim of a “charismatic power” and said, “The Truth has made this servant pure...All the actions of this servant have been turned into charismatic powers.”

How the Iranians were vanquished by the Mongols

There is a puzzle in Iranian history that has not been solved until now. We know of the terrible events associated with the Mongols, but the puzzle is how the Iranians were so easily vanquished by them.

To understand the answer it is necessary to remember that Iranians themselves had been war-like and bold people. From ancient times Iran had always maintained an army and fought in wars, and the Iranians were belligerent once they embraced Islam because it prescribed war and effort on each person.

If we focus on Iranians in the final stages of the tenth century and the beginning of the eleventh century, we see that during this period Iranians became very bold and belligerent. It was during this period that the Samanids¹⁰⁹ in Transoxania opposed a large group of Turks and they resisted their attacks and invasions. As Estakhri¹¹⁰ and others have recorded they kept 300,000 horsemen ready and armed at the border. In this period too, Soltan Mahmud Ghaznavi attacked the vast territories of India with his soldiers, and he captured and plundered its cities. Also during this period, the Daylamis and Gilanis poured out of

their mountainous homes and established dynasties, and the Buyids¹¹¹ advanced as far as Baghdad and had the Caliph under their control. With these wars and military struggles these states manifested no friendship or cordiality with one another; indeed, wars broke out among them.

With all these wars and military attention in the country, it is clear that 10,000 men assembled in battle lines in Asia Minor each year. In the wars that occurred annually in spring and summer the Muslims united against the Turks. One year we find that 80,000 men came from Khorasan to Asia Minor for these battles. One should say that Iran was intoxicated and brimming with acts of plunder and bravery.

Estakhri says, “I went to the house of each village chief when I was in Transoxania, and I would see a horse in the stable and a sword hanging from the wall.”

These circumstances prevailed among the Iranians from the beginning of the eleventh century, and when that century passed it continued into the next century. But Iran suffered in the thirteenth century when the Mongols invaded. It is at this point that we are faced with a historical puzzle. We see Chingiz Khan came and spent four years in Transoxania, Khwarazm and Bokhara, plundered the cities, killed the men and carried off the women and did not hold back from committing any oppression against the peoples of those areas. Despite this, the people of Khorasan, Azarbayjan, Iraq, Fars and other places did not budge an inch. It did not occur to a single person to assemble a force and hurry to assist those who had been oppressed or prepare themselves for war with the Mongols, should they come in their direction. Not one out of millions of people displayed such bravery.

Worse than all of this was that Chingiz Khan sent two of his generals by the name of Yama¹¹² and Suta¹¹³ with 30,000 soldiers after Khwarazm Shah.¹¹⁴ They passed the Jayhan River, and the murderers reached Khorasan. One group went through Mazandaran and the other group went through Khavar and Varamin and reached Rayy and Hamadan. At these places they continued the killing and other outrages. Then they went to Azarbayjan to rest for the winter, and then once more they split up to continue the killing and plunder.

The Iranians had neither the courage to wage war and drive the enemy away, nor did they have the wisdom to come out and protect themselves and remain secure and preserve their families from catastrophe. Weak-minded people did foolish things in front of the enemy but were defeated all too quickly and were vanquished.

In all of this only Tabriz among the great Iranian cities remained at peace under the sagacious and brave shadow of Shams al-Din Toghra'i who on the one hand assembled a force and made the city's fortifications strong and on the other hand was not foolish but sent messengers to the Mongols and knocked on the door of peace and friendship. This was the first time that the Mongols saw wise and brave behaviour from the Iranians. As a result of this they accepted Shams al-Din's request and did not occupy Tabriz, and it was saved from the killing and plunder.

Other cities including Marv, Balkh, Nishapur, Rayy and Hamadan suffered greatly. Yama and Sutay returned to their military base via the Caucasus, Georgia and the north of the Caspian Sea after they had completed the task that they had been given.

In the words of Ibn Athir¹¹⁵ in *Kemal al Tavarikh*,¹¹⁶ this was one great heart-wrenching tragedy.

Yes it was a great heart-wrenching tragedy that 30,000 men came from one side of the country, and murderers and plunderers left from the other side. The Iranian people were so weak and helpless that they could not stop them. If they had not been so weak and helpless then not one of those 30,000 would have left Iran alive. It is true that they did not have soldiers experienced in war and they would not have been able to come out in war. But they would have been able to resist them in this neck of land or in that valley and ambush them, attacking and then fleeing. If the people had been motivated and ready for war, then a brave person would have arisen from their ranks and a leader would have appeared from the princes. The point is that the Iranians were not motivated at all: they saw such a bloodthirsty enemy in this country of ours and no one budged an inch to resist him.

We ask from where did this lack of effort and weakness originate? What was the cause of this heartlessness and abjectness? Were not the Iranians those people who had shown their bravery and war mongering in the tenth and eleventh centuries? So how was it that in the thirteenth century we witnessed this helplessness and weakness? What had happened in the course of those 200 years?

Until the present age no one has engaged in a discussion or an investigation of this topic, let alone give an answer to these questions. But we know the answer to them.

During these 200 years some evil and polluted teachings had become widespread in Iran and were spread among the people. They caused them all to banish thoughts of war and manliness from their minds and prevented their inner feelings from functioning. One of those evil teachings was Sufism, another was *Batenism*¹¹⁷ and yet another was *Kharabatism*.¹¹⁸ (We have been dealing with Sufism in this small book, and we have explained *Batenism* and *Kharabatism* too in another place.) It was this ignorance and these evil teachings that made the people of Iran weak and heartless and made the Mongol victory so easy.

It is true, just as the history books say, that the unwise disobedience of Soltan Mohammad Khwarazm Shah brought the Mongols to Iran. His fear and ignorance caused the loss of several hundred thousand experienced soldiers (who would have been able to oppose the Mongols). Al-Nasir li-Din Allah (the Abbasid Caliph) and other eminent people manifested nothing but weakness. They did not get involved, just as it is recorded in the history books. After all this, we ask why the Iranians and the Muslims in other places did not act after the Mongols had committed that butchery in Transoxania? Why didn't they hurry to help their fellow country men? Why didn't they think about their future? Even if you put this aside, what can we say of the story of those 30,000 men? Why didn't

[the Iranians] resist the attacks and killing committed by Yama and Sutay? A people who witnessed the bloodthirsty enemy at close hand should have stood up and rebelled and thought of a solution to the problem. If they were not able to wage war face to face, then they should have taken control of mountain passes or defended the cities behind the defensive walls.

In that age Iran was a bigger country, and there were more people in cities and villages, and so the Iranians warmly supported the Muslims of Iraq, Syria, Egypt and other places. What happened to such a great mass of people that they became vanquished and impotent?

The answer is the same as that we have given previously. When the Mongols came to Iran ideas about the country, war, bravery and these kind of things had disappeared and been forgotten for a long time. Another set of ideas – ranging from the worthlessness of the world, the evils of war, the futility of effort and others like these – had taken their place. Not everyone was a Sufi or a *Kharabati* or a *Batani*, but their evil teachings had found a way into everyone’s heart.

We have a good book from those times that can serve as a useful testimony to our views. It is the travelogue of Ibn Jubayr¹¹⁹ who left Andalus in 578 (1199–1200) and travelled to Mecca via Egypt and by sea, and on his return he saw Iraq, Syria and other places. In his book he gives us good information on the circumstances of the Muslims. In his writings he says there were many Sufis everywhere who spent their time at ease and in comfort. The Sufi evil teachings had become prevalent everywhere and they had turned dervish-hood, abstinence and disregard for the world into a good excuse for showing off. Everywhere preachers persuaded the people to cry. Everywhere there was talk of “love for God” and “ecstasy” and the like. In Baghdad, Ibn Jawzi¹²⁰ who was considered the most eminent preacher there ascended the *minbar* and recited Sufi-like poems and moved the people to tears. Each time he persuaded many people to shave their heads, become dervishes and to choose abstinence. You will not find one passage among all the stories that he wrote in his book where he discusses the protection of the country, war and bravery. Everywhere the Muslims were far from these kinds of thoughts, and the protection of the country, opposition to the enemy and waging war with them are considered the duties of kings and princes and their soldiers. They regarded them as “people of the world” and as contemptible.

To comprehend fully the extent to which these evil teachings of the Sufis and others were influential, and to what extent they distanced thoughts of war and bravery from the minds of the Muslims and even turned away understanding and wisdom, we have another historical story that we will mention.

Yama and Sutay came to one part of the country along with 30,000 men and left from the other side, shedding so much blood and causing ruin. Chingiz Khan did not relent during four years in Transoxania, Khwarazm and Bokhara from killing and plundering, and then he reached Khorasan and advanced to Ghaznah and from there returned to Mongolia with hundreds of thousands of girls and women that he had captured. His sons Aktai and Tulai had committed much murder and plunder in Khorasan, and they destroyed a number of large cities.

In the light of this episode, what should the Iranians and Muslims have done? Shouldn't they have sat down and considered the lessons of the past? What was the cause of these calamities, and what should be done in the future? Shouldn't they have understood that the Mongols would come again, and shouldn't they have thought of a way to prevent this?

But history shows well that they were careless people and they forgot those bloody episodes, and each group was concerned with its own problems. We read of episodes in those times, each one of which is the cause of amazement and sorrow. One of these episodes is the story of the religious seminary (*madrassa*) of al-Mustansir Billah [caliph from 1226–42],¹²¹ and just as we have stated, this is considered an historical story.

As the grandson of al-Nasir li Din Allah, al-Mustansir Billah succeeded him as Caliph, and he began this seminary in Baghdad in the year 1227 (seven years after the retreat of Chingiz Khan). He donated much wealth for the establishment of that seminary. When it was completed in 1234, he opened it with much pomp, and he appointed several hundred jurists and several hundred Sufis there, who could provide the food, drink, clothing and other necessities for livelihood.¹²²

The name of this seminary has been mentioned in many books, and many people consider it as an example of “Islamic civilisation”.¹²³ But if we tell the truth it is an example of the weak-mindedness of the Muslims and the impotence and lack of correct initiative of the Caliph and his men.¹²⁴ If the Muslims had not been blind and weak-minded, then they would not have forgotten the evil intentions of the Mongols or the hundred thousand women and girls who had a miserable existence in Mongolia, and they would have prepared themselves and thought of a plan. Whether jurist or Sufi or whether someone else, instead of doing anything else, they would have been mind-full of the art of war, and the Caliph would have emptied his treasuries to the soldiers and bought armaments and built defences. Seven years had not yet passed since all of that bloodshedding, yet they had already forgotten it. Instead they busied themselves in building a school (or we should say more correctly a nest for making jurists and Sufis), and they inaugurated it with great pomp. It is the best proof that there was no zeal or bravery left, not to mention wisdom and reason (whether in the Caliph or the people), and it served these people right that the Mongols returned, committed murder, set [cities] alight and took prisoners and in the end captured Baghdad and spent forty days in killing.

In Iran we have another historical testimony of the people's weak-mindedness and their bloated minds. This is the *Golestan* (“Rose Garden”) and the poetry of Sa'di. This poet, who lived in the Mongol period and saw all of the sickening tyranny and heard the cries of the oppressed, had such a bloated mind that one can find neither any mention of it, nor can one find the slightest sympathy in him. He does not mention that tyranny in any of his poetry and prose works, and he does not manifest any sympathy. He composed *ghazals*, *qasideh*, told the stories of his friends, flattered the rich and gave stupid advice. In one place he even calls the

year 656/1258 (which was the year of the sacking of Baghdad) his year of pleasure:

*At that period when we had such a good time
656 years had passed since the hegira.*

In all the poetry of this great poet he mentions the Mongols twice. One of them occurs because of the flattery and weakness, and he laments the killing of Musta’sim and the sky sheds tears of blood:

*The sky had the right to shed tears of blood upon the earth
At the death of King Musta’sim, Commander of the Believers.*

It was only Musta’sim’s murder that Sa’di regreted.

The other occasion where he mentions the Mongols is when he puts his jests of a terrible episode into poetry, and in the middle of his insensitivity he comments:

*Put the copper trumpets in that tribe
Just like the killing sword of Baghdad.*

This is from a poet who says elsewhere:

*You who are unconcerned about others’ misery
Are not worthy to be called a human being.*

He says this since his mind was bloated with these things and did not remember that he himself was unconcerned and unaware of the pain and sorrow of his fellow men.

Just as I said, the stories and writings of this poet are yet another historical witness to the circumstances of the Iranians and Muslims of that age.

At this point, the scope of the discussion is widening and we can draw another conclusion from it. Since it was said that human beings need religion, they need a path that leads them forward in life and prevents the kind of suffering [experienced by Iranians under the Mongols]. These Sufis (and likewise, the *Kharabatis*) considered themselves higher than that they should follow religion. You see how they have been the cause for the ruin of hundreds of millions of people, how they have been responsible for the bloodshed of hundreds of thousands of men and women.

Vile men have enjoyed sitting [idle] scorning life, and they have made people cold-hearted and attracted them to a lazy and abject life. They have enjoyed belittling war and manliness, and they have called sitting in the *khanqah*, performing ascetic tasks and other acts like these “the greater jihad” (and they consider [these acts] “disputes with the lower self”). They have enjoyed filling their hearts with their own fabrications, while casting aside any worthy knowledge or belief.

Even in Sufi books, there are stories of the arrival of the Mongols. Each one of the stories is another good witness to these words of ours. For example,

Najm al-Din Razi (who is considered one of the Sufi greats) lived when the Mongols came [to Iran] and fled when he heard the Mongols approaching Rayy. He himself in *Mersad al-'ebad* comments:

When the ferocious conquests of those accursed and godforsaken ones began, this feeble one stayed patiently for almost a year in the lands of Iraq, and in the hope that the morning of salvation might dawn after the sombre night of catastrophe and disaster and that the sun of good fortune might rise again, endured all kinds of severe hardship and tribulation. For I was loath to abandon my children and womenfolk, to part from my friends and dear ones and to leave house and home behind; and neither was it possible to bring forth from those lands all my dependants and following, nor did my heart permit me to expose them to destruction and perdition. Finally, when the catastrophe passed all bounds and the disaster exceeded all limits, when life itself was endangered and the knife cut through to the bone, it became necessary to declare that “*necessity renders permissible the forbidden*”. Obeying the command of *O ye who believe, guard your own souls; he who is astray cannot harm you, if you are rightly guarded*, (5:104) I was compelled to abandon all of my kith and kin; profiting from the adage that “he who has saved his head has truly profited”, and conforming to the principle that “*flight from the unendurable is a custom of the prophets*”, I had to depart and entrust my dear ones to calamity.

*When no disaster threatened, dearly did he cherish him;
But when he saw disaster coming, he left him to his fate.
Know then that in times of trouble
There is none who will stand by you, none!*

One night in the year 618 (1221), this feeble one left his abode in Hamadan with a group of cherished dervishes, and confronting extreme peril set out on the road to Ibril. Soon the news caught up with us that the accursed infidels – may God destroy and abase them! – had reached Hamadan and beleaguered it. The people of the city strove to defend it as best they could, but when their power to resist was exhausted, the infidels triumphed and captured the city. They martyred many men, took captive numerous women and children, and wrought utter destruction. Most of my kinfolk who had been in the city of Rayy were martyred.

*Hail rained down upon my garden;
Not a leaf remained on the rosebush.*¹²⁵

Read this passage well in order to comprehend what the Sufis were like and how they influenced people. This man says that he was patient for one year for the calamity to come to an end. This ignoramus hoped that the Mongols would retreat of their own accord. He saw that in Transoxania, Bokhara, Khwarazm

and Khorasan they did whatever they wanted, killed as many people as they could and then retreated. And the people of Iraq (Rayy and Hamadan) and other places were relieved and released from their fear and terror. He was patient for a year and had this hope, and as a result of his ignorance he did not realise that Iranians had to struggle to remove this calamity. He did not realise that he and others in authority had to come forward and agitate the people and stop them from merely looking after their own families. His thinking did not extend this far.

So you see what abjectness in that he left his own women and children without protection and he fled from Hamadan with several “dervishes” who were his deputies. This little man did not go to Rayy to be with his family whether they were killed or whether they fled.

Worse than this is the excuses they make: “necessity renders permissible the forbidden”. Is this sentence which has been taken from the books of jurisprudence appropriate here? Why couldn’t you take your women and children with you? That verse which comes from the Qur’an [*O you who believe...*] was revealed in an early period of Islam when on becoming a Muslim a person had no concern for his family if they remained idol-worshippers. Where does this verse say anything about entrusting one’s women and children to the enemy, and where does it say anything about escaping?

It was their habit that when they fabricated [their] conceits they quoted sentences from the Qur’an, *hadith*, poetry and other [literary] sources out of context. The following is a good example:

*When no disaster threatened, dearly did he cherish him;
But when he saw disaster coming, he left him to his fate.*

Does this piece of poetry speak in praise or in reproach?

As I have said, this man was one of the eminent Sufis, and this episode is an example of [the behaviour] of one of them. It is a good example because they did not want anything more in life than being freed from the cares of labour and effort, and they would eat food from any source (even [if it came] through begging), and in times of trouble they refused to look at the path ahead and hoped [the troubles] would go away. If they did not then they fled for their lives. This was their way and it is the lowest form of life.

The benefits gained by the Sufis from Mongol rule

If we want to summarise the history of Islam since the Mongol era in just a few sentences we should say [the following]:

Islam stimulated people’s minds, aroused their excitement and united various groups. As a result it attracted a large number of people, and a very powerful

country appeared. But Shi'ism, Batenism, Sufism and Kharabatism were leeches that stuck to the body of that mass of people and country, and they sucked its blood and sapped its strength, transforming it into something useless. It needed testing to know just what it had become. That test was the Mongol episode.

It is to be regretted that the Mongol victory occurred as a result of the spread of these evil teachings, and yet once again these evil teachings (aside from Batenism) increased in circulation and caused even more harm and damage. But [our] subject is Sufism, and as we said, it was in the Mongol era that the largest orders appeared in Iran and other places and the numbers of Sufis increased even more.

It is the misfortune of Iranians that the Mongol era was so long that several volumes must be written to cover it. The weak-mindedness was so common that people praised Chingiz Khan as someone brought by God and caused by God's anger. They had no rancour against the Mongols. Hamdallah Mostawfi¹²⁶ who was one of the wisest men of his time recognised Chingiz as “a master of the command”, and he composed the following about him:

*There is no fleeing the royal fortune;
The king is like the shadow of the Creator.
But it is appropriate for the people and the times
No doubt, that God should send kings.
Sometimes out of the shade of kindness and sometimes out of wrath
God bestows a great king.
If the servants perform good acts
They do so to be saved.
The king gives to them as they deserve,
Because a stranger gives more generously than themselves.
And if the servants change their view
God becomes angry with them.
Through his anger a ruthless king
He sends to that community.
You would think that he had no other task;
A single soul he wishes not to remain.
He remembers nothing but tormenting the people,
There is no enjoyment other than fighting.
Neither country nor village remains [safe] from him,
Because of his activities destruction appears in the world.*

From that period too, we have the travelogue of Ibn Batutta.¹²⁷ He undertook a long journey in the Hejaz, Iraq, Iran, India and other places in the last years of the Mongol era. He saw many Sufis everywhere and had meetings with their *pirs*. From his book it is clear that in the 100 years and more of Mongol rule, Sufism had spread very much.

The truth is that in those circumstances which had befallen the Iranians and the Muslims (when the bloodthirsty enemy was attacking them, killing millions of

men, carrying off hundreds or thousands of women and girls and when a series of kings ruled the country) they should have chosen one of two options. Either they should have agreed with one another and united in a great, historical, self-sacrificing movement, seeking revenge against the Mongols and driving them out of the country. Or they should have rejected thoughts of revenge and bravery but spent their time in soothing their hearts and relieving their grief at the skirts of Sufism and *Kharabatism*. They should have chosen either this or that. The miserable people of Iran were so defiled and did not have worthy leaders or chiefs that they chose the second option, and this was the reason that Sufism and *Kharabatism* spread day by day and the evil teachings increased even more.

Another thing was that the Sufis also sought to benefit from the Mongol advance. They took the opportunity of the people's misfortune and misery to gain advantages. Since this is one of the Sufis' really disgraceful acts I will elaborate on this.

Previously I said that one of the evil Sufi methods was that they sought to derive benefit from various circumstances and events. In other words, when a commander was victorious in war and became king they would attribute that event to themselves and say something like, “When so and so came to kiss the hand of our Sheikh, the Sheikh said, ‘I have given the kingship of such and such a place to you.’” When a king was killed or deposed from the throne they claimed something like, “He was an enemy of the Friends of God, and he did not give any money when our Sheikh asked it of him.” If someone's young son died, or a great harm befell their trade, the Sufis would criticise them and say something like, “He got his punishment because he did not help the dervishes.”

Just as we said, this behaviour was the result of sponging and begging which they thought was acceptable for themselves. In order to acquire more money from the people they had to engage in such repulsive acts.

This behaviour, aside from revealing the Sufis' lies and their arrogance with God, is an example of their despicable habits. The way of manliness when someone's son dies or suffers some other calamity is that acquaintances and friends offer comfort and lighten that person's grief. They don't take the opportunity to criticise that person. Such an act can be nothing other than the way of abject, envious beggars.

Anyway, during the Mongol era too the Sufis acted just like this. Several years before the arrival of the Mongols, Soltan Mohammad Khwarazm Shah drowned Sheikh Majd al-Din Baghdadi¹²⁸ (who was one of the eminent Sufis) in the waters of Khwarazm for the sin of having sexual relations with his mother, Torkan Khatun. When the terrible episode of the Mongols began the Sufis said this was the reason. They claimed, “God sent Chingiz Khan in revenge for the blood of Majd-al-Din.” They added, “When Majd al-Din was killed the waters of God's anger boiled and He sent the Mongols to exact His revenge.”

They also fabricated a myth that they included in their books. Khwarazm Shah was afraid of the consequences of killing Majd al-Din, and so he filled a pot with gold and placed a sword and a shroud on top of it and brought it to Sheikh Najm

al-Din Kobra¹²⁹ who had been Majd al-Din's master. Khwarazm Shah took off his turban and stood at the entrance of the room and asked for forgiveness. He said, “Take this gold if you want the blood price of Majd al-Din, and use this sword to cut off my head if you desire recompense.” The Sheikh replied, “There is no adequate money to cover the blood-price of my child Majd al-Din. Go on your path of kingship and kill me and others too.”

You see the perversity reached a degree that they told the people the Mongol victory was not the result of their weakness, negligence and disunity. The Sufis offered them an alternative way, and they led the people even further astray with these lies.

This is another example of the Sufis' arrogance before God. From whom did God exact the blood price of Majd al-Din through the Mongols? From the women who knew nothing of this and the innocent children of Bokhara, Samarqand, Khwarazm, Marv, Nishabur, Rayy and Hamadan? He ruined several countries for the murder of a single Sufi? This is the meaning of their writings!

We see that in the same Mongol episode the Sufis themselves were killed. Najm al-Din Khwarazmi and Sheikh 'Attar were killed along with others. If the Sufis were so precious before God then how was it that God did not save them? And how was it that God killed all those innocent people because of the murder of a single Sufi, yet did not stop the killing in a single city – either Nishabur or Khwarazm, to defend the Sufis who were alive? How was it that the “charismatic powers” of the Sufis all brought such ruin?

They have also fabricated such lies about Sheikh 'Attar. “When the Mongol soldier cut off 'Attar's head with a sword, the sheikh's body ran about with his head screaming out loud. He ran for a while and then fell to the ground.” It is not known why a person who could perform “miracles” did not demonstrate their use in another way. It is not known what outcome he was aiming for with this miracle.

There is another fable about Majd al-Din in the books of the Sufis. One day Majd al-Din was sitting with the dervishes. When a state of “attraction” overcame him he exclaimed, “We were goose eggs, left at the edge of the river.” When he returned to his master Najm al-Din, he related this, and his master said, “May they be in the river.”¹³⁰ Majd al-Din was afraid when he heard this. One day when the Sheikh arose for the *sama'*, Majd al-Din was cheerful and hurried bare-foot to him and put a pot of full of coals on his head [in repentance] and stood at the doorway. Najm al-Din said, “Since you came this way your religion and faith are sound, but you have disclosed your secret and [the people have] heard. You have also disclosed our secret, and the world will be ruined.” Not much time elapsed before all of these words came true.

In the books of the Sufis there are many of these kind of stories which should be called enigmas. They wanted to make it known that there was a way for them to another world, that they had another language and that they shared secrecy with God. This group of beggars did not refrain from making any boast, nor did

they refrain from their arrogance before God. Anyway, if these stories were truth, then in the words of Najm al-Din, Majd al-Din should be killed because he could not hold his tongue. This was God’s wish. So what crime did Khwarazm Shah commit in killing Majd al-Din? In addition, why would God have been angry and sent the Mongols seeking his revenge?

Aside from this didn’t you say that everything is God? So Khwarazm Shah was also God and carried out an action. God killed God. So where was the room for anger and seeking revenge? I do not know why you do not stick to the result of what you said?

If you meditate on those thoughts of Sufism you reach a point where you consider good and bad, truth and falsity, tyranny and justice and darkness and light as the same. There is no difference between Pharaoh and Moses. You claim:

*When colourlessness became the slave to colour,
Moses waged war with Moses.¹³¹*

In another place, it is related that the really stupid people returned without understanding. “You say: God sent Chingiz Khan to take revenge for the blood of Majd al-Din. What was that for? And what sense does it make?”

There is another story concerning the Sufis’ profit seeking in the times of the Mongols. In 628/1249–50 Jalal al-Din Khwarazm Shah fled from the Mongols in Azarbaijan and left for Kurdistan. They suddenly stormed into his camp so that he was not even able to mount his horse. He could only flee to save his life, but he was killed in the mountains by a Kurd. This was the story’s end of this brave man.

But for many years people did not believe in his murder, and they looked out for his return. The Sufis too hoped to profit from this, and so they wrote in their books, “The Sheikh of Sheikhs – Rokn al-Dowleh ‘Ala al-Dowleh Semnani¹³² – said that one day his master disappeared from the place where he had been sitting. His students were amazed. Suddenly the master re-appeared in the same place and said,

Ever since Soltan Jalal al-Din fled he wore dervish clothing and accepted the apostasy of the “men of God”. He always selected some remote corner of the world, awaiting death and in such and such a cave he bade farewell to life. I went to perform the prayers over him and bury him.”

The truths that can be found in Plotinus’s discourses

The evils of the Sufis are greater in number than those we have discussed in this book. The topics that we find in their books include trust in God, surrender, satisfaction, fear of God, self-sacrifice, patience, annihilation in God and others like these. There is equivocation and much senselessness in each one. Since we do not have the opportunity and we do not see even the need to mention all their evils and senselessness, we will not bother to discuss them.

And the discourses of Plotinus [who was] the founder of Sufism, as we have mentioned, do not have a reliable foundation. However, in his discourses there is a hidden and valuable truth. Man is not composed of this material body and soul alone, and his desires are not merely eating, sleeping, gratifying his desires and contesting with others. Rather, in the human body there is something else the desires of which are compassion for others, doing right to them, supporting justice and truth, desiring the improvement of the world and the comfort of the people. This thing recognises a spirit within itself and always tries to strengthen it.

Plotinus discovered this truth and valued the eminence of humans over all other creatures. But when he attempted to discuss its significance he mixed it with fabricated fancies in the manner of other Greek philosophers and polluted it with the unity of being (*vahdat al-vojud*) and other theories all of which are groundless.

From this perspective, the path that Plotinus revealed for strengthening the spirit was really crooked, and wisdom is disgusted with that path. Why must one close one's eyes to the pleasures of the world? Why must one give oneself futile ascetic disciplines? For whom are the pleasures of the world? Didn't God create this world? Is "passionate love" (*'eshq*) for God appropriate? What meanings can one give to it?

Also, selflessness or going out of the self, Plotinus understood, as the result of ascetic discipline and labour. Is his claim that this state occurred for him four times and that he connected to God nothing but imagination? One must say that Plotinus was deceived by his own fancies. A person cannot leave himself nor can he connect to God.

I repeat, it is true that humans are not merely composed of this material body and soul. It is true that there is something else in humans that has other desires. We have termed this truth – which is really valuable – in the easiest and most basic language "soul and spirit". Plotinus who could not explain this in academic language added a series of groundless fancies to it.

It is also true that each person should be busy in strengthening the spirit. If someone remains in the state of the self the soul has triumphed and will make the spirit weak and idle. It is true that a person should not be self-willed and there may be much need for him to strive in making trimmings and embellishments. The fact is that this task cannot be [achieved] through covering the eyes from the world or giving oneself hardship. Just as we have shown, nothing appears from these things except an adverse conclusion.

The first step in strengthening the spirit is understanding the world and life as it is, recognising God and his greatness and power, and discovering human insignificance and weakness in comparison to him, and keeping in mind and having in one's sights the good results that can come from following the desires of the spirit. The ascetic discipline in which each person should engage include seizing the reigns of lust, anger, revenge, selfishness and others like these which are the dispositions of the soul. And in everything that one does, one should not be tied to deriving one's own pleasure but the pleasure of all.

These are the discourses that we have made with Plotinus, or should I say, with the founder of Sufism. But the Sufis have not even been content with this amount, and as far as possible they have proceeded on their erroneous paths, and we do not find any truth in their discourses. However not all the famous and well-known Sufis have been evil, and sometimes some of them were merely content in sincere purity, and the prevention of lust and selfishness, and so we have no problem with them. But these kind of things have been few, and Sufism, taken all together, has been the source of many great erroneous paths, many poisonous evil teachings and real historical misfortunes.

We did not want to discuss everything in this book (which as far as possible has been written in a simple language for everyone). We did not want to mention the “ravings” and “ecstatic sayings”. We did not want to discuss the *Qalandar* and their behaviour.

Another point that we must make is that Sufism today is not a simple deviation, but it is a tool for seeking profit. In this meaning, the Sufis not only do not understand the truths (and because they do not understand the path they have accepted Sufism and shown their firm support for it), but they also seek profit from this deviation, and this has been the cause that even after understanding [the truths] they have not withheld [their support of Sufism].

You ask, “what profit do they seek?” The answer is that their leaders and their followers live without any trouble or effort. In the words of Abu ’l-’Abbas Qassab, “They have power (*velayat*) without having dominion and wealth, and they eat without having tools or work, and they cause the spreading of dawn’s light.” Now in Iran and India, and in other places, there are several groups of this kind who rule without having a crown or throne, and they take the property [of the people] without giving them any answer, and in each group aside from the “*pir*” they give bread to a number of those around them and they spend their lives in comfort.

But “Sufism” for many of the followers is a refuge. In order to illustrate our purpose it is necessary to sidetrack a little and start a new discussion.

There is no dispute on this point, whether from a psychological perspective or from historical experience, that the spirit will not leave in peace the person who is weak and cannot help his evil act, and his conscience will always criticise him. As a result, this kind of person is always seeking a path that will rescue him from his restlessness. From this perspective, Timur was an oppressor of Sufis with that tyranny and blood thirstiness of his. Samad Khan Maragheh’i was considered a violent Shi’ite because of his shameful, dirty, evil deeds. Timur who shed so much blood of innocent people without a doubt was sometimes introspective and his conscience severely reproached him. He was so pleased when a group of Sufi *pirs*, without questioning him about all of that blood-shedding, recognised him as good and pure when he paid them a visit and offered them donations. And a group of stomach-worshippers sat at his table and called him the propagator of religion. These people poured water on the fire for him. Samad Khan (who killed men who struggled for the independence of their country, cut off tongues and threw in front of dogs, independence seekers with their hands tied and after all of this

served the foreigners in hundreds of despicable ways) was the kind of person that whatever darkness there was within him, without a doubt he sometimes heard the cry of [his] conscience within himself, and it is quite appropriate that a Shi'ite cleric said, “If you had fled to Imam Hosayn, or had gone to perform the pilgrimage (*ziyarat*) all your sins would have been forgiven.”

This is the meaning of “refuge”, and our understanding of it is that profit was sought from Sufism or other deviations that either the elders or the followers enjoyed. For example, we see many of the heads of the embassies that we have studied have dedicated themselves to such and such Shams al-‘Orafa and Bahman ‘Asheq-‘Ali Shah. This is something not without a cause. These men who have control of some of the country’s affairs, pursue nothing but their own benefit, and they exert themselves in a hundred evil acts, in secret and out in the open, just as we have shown. They have great need for Sufism or something similar to it, and it is this that we have witnessed during the past few years. For the sake of one of the deviations that we have criticised, their supporters (as far as they can) first display their solidarity and make a clamour. Then, when they see that they can do nothing and people criticise them, they deny the criticism or else put to one side those parts [that are criticised]. In any case, they are not content for that deviation to vanish and that institution to die.

There is a good example on this point. When the Constitutional Movement started in Iran, and Iranians considered their misfortunes and their origins, the name of the Sufis was mentioned as a reason that had prevented the people from engaging in work and life, holding the world in contempt and writing criticisms of it, and as a result, once again, the Sufi leaders changed their argument and said, “One must be busy with worldly affairs”, and they have pointed to a few sentences they have written in some Arabic books in the name of Imam ‘Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, and they say: “Did not our Master say, ‘Pay attention to your world as though you are going to live forever, and go after your next world as if you are going to die tomorrow.’” They used this excuse that Sufism is not opposed getting involved in worldly affairs, whereas:

First, the foundation of Sufism has been covering one’s eyes from worldly affairs, and enmity with it, and therefore the Sufis have mourned for themselves in this world, and they wore dark blue cloaks and shaved their heads. In those times the donning of dark blue cloaks and the shaving of the head was a sign of deep mourning that mothers performed for dead sons and that sisters performed for killed brothers. The books of the Sufis are full of criticisms of worldly affairs and they always called it a corpse, and they have believed that withdrawing from it is proper for every man of God. On this account they have caused much oppression when they have written that their *pirs* would [promise] to look after the money or the goods that they have taken from others through begging until the next day, and the very same day they would give it to the dervishes and others, and they would let them eat it. This was the extent of their enmity with the world and life.

Second, the basis of Sufism has been the writings of Plotinus, which cannot be linked to Imam ‘Ali Ibn Abi Taleb. These [writings of Plotinus?] are the rule

of the things by which the Sufis have severed the peoples’ tongues. The Sufis themselves did not have a religion. But just as I said, they have gone along with the faith of the people wherever they have been. In Iran they became Shi’ite and linked themselves to Imam ‘Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, and in the Ottoman Empire they were Sunni and they traced their *selseleh* back to the Caliph Abu Bakr.

In any case, this is the effort that they have made in these twenty or thirty years, and I know that first they will protest about our criticisms, and they will go to the government and beg it to stop the propagation of such criticisms. Then they will hide behind a veil and as far as possible make denials or say, “That was not our *selseleh*.” And after all of this they will turn aside from those elements [of Sufism] that have been criticised.

But this is changing one’s position. This is the reason that they do not want to abandon their deviations. This is the reason that these deviations are a shop, and therefore they do not want to leave them, but they want to change colour in accordance with the times.

I have not forgotten that at the start of the Constitutional Movement in Tabriz a preacher approached one of its leaders and said,

Yesterday I went to a party and they did not let me ascend the *minbar*. They said that those admonitions are worthless, one should talk about the Constitution. But preaching is my profession, and if I don’t preach I will go hungry. Therefore I have come so that you can teach me so that I can speak about the Constitution. Then I will be able to ascend the *minbar*.

He said this with complete sincerity.

These Sufis too will say the same thing in those [kind of] circumstances, “Sufism is our profession, it is our sustenance, it is our refuge. Why should we abandon it? Everywhere there is decay, you can say that we should change that over there.”

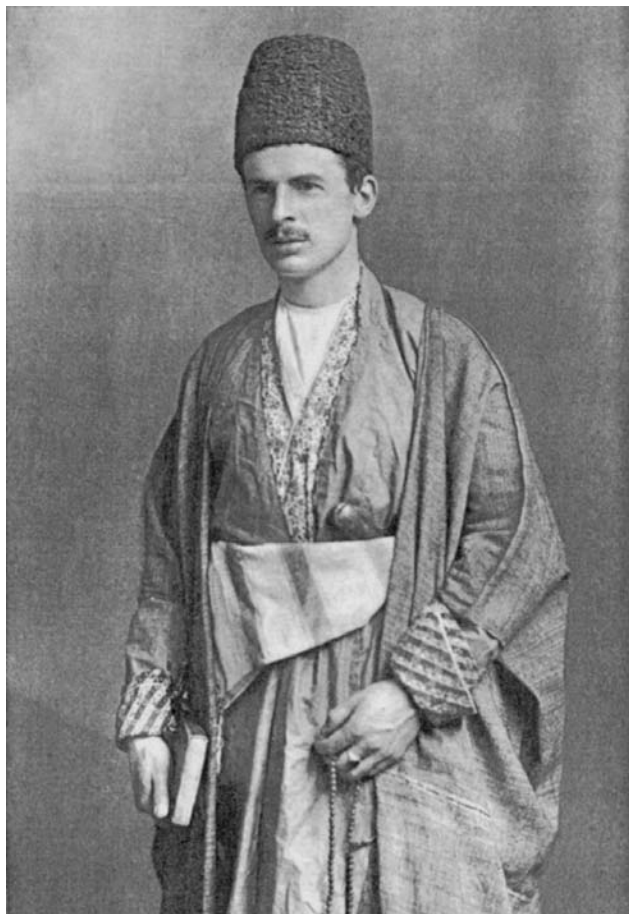


Figure 4.1 E.G. Browne.

“Many of them (orientalists) changed their clothes, and they wanted to pass themselves off as Muslims so that they could further their work... Browne lived in Iran for a year in Persian clothing (Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyat*, p. 150).”

“I knew without a doubt that this orientalist who claims to be a friend of Iran does not desire anything except the misfortune of Iranians (*Ibid.*, p. 153).”

OPPOSITION TO THE ORIENTALISTS

Kasravi's criticisms of E.G. Browne

The year 2006 will witness the centenary of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, an event that remains a topic of great interest to scholars who are assisted in their research by an abundance of printed material. Two sources that appear regularly as references in most histories are those of Edward Granville Browne and Ahmad Kasravi. In 1888 Edward Browne became lecturer of Persian at the University of Cambridge and subsequently became Thomas Adams Professor of Arabic. He was the author of many works including *The Persian Revolution 1905–1909*, which was published in 1910 and has been reprinted on several occasions, the latest being in 1995.¹ This book has been an important source of information, both for Western scholars and also for Iranians,² including Ahmad Kasravi himself in his *History of the Iranian Constitution (Tarikh-e Mashruteh-ye Iran)*.

The histories of Browne and Kasravi share much in common; in particular, both are sympathetic to the Constitutionalists who attempted to end the autocratic tradition of Qajar rule, and both were critical of the attempts by Russia to support the anti-constitutionalist monarch, Mohammad 'Ali Shah. Both were also great champions of Iranian nationalism; indeed, their lives coincide with a period of intense nationalistic fervour. Despite these similarities, Kasravi developed an intense dislike for Browne's other academic works, and this chapter seeks to assess Kasravi's criticisms, offering an opportunity to reflect on the inspiration and motivation of both scholars, which will help to explain the enigma that surrounds one of Iran's most controversial, "iconoclastic" and "outstanding" intellectuals.

Kasravi's appreciation of Browne

The writings of E.G. Browne are not considered in great detail within Kasravi's publications, and although there are scattered references to him in various works, the most comprehensive treatment of Browne appears in a few pages of "On Literature" (*Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*).³ Initially, Kasravi was a great admirer of Browne, especially as he appeared to be a proponent of Iranian independence in the context of the threats posed to its territorial integrity from Russia and the seeming willingness of the British government to leave a weak Iran to fend for itself against its powerful northern neighbour.⁴ Indeed, Kasravi acknowledges

that Browne condemned the policies of the British government in its relations with Iran,⁵ although it is not clear whether he appreciated the full extent of Browne's activities in promoting the cause of Iranian independence. Kasravi also expressed his gratitude to Browne's scholarly activities, in particular, his work *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*,⁶ which was sympathetic to the cause of the Constitutionalists. Moreover, Kasravi notes that Browne manifested support for the continuation of the general aims of the Constitutionalists in his publications about the Russian ultimatum (*The Reign of Terror at Tabriz*),⁷ and he also confesses his debt to Browne by mentioning that he had expressed gratitude to him in the introduction to his *Eighteen Year History of Azarbayjan*.⁸ Kasravi also praised Browne's book on Babism and the events related to that movement.⁹ At one point Kasravi attempted to engage with Browne in an academic exchange, as he noted that Browne had made some 140 errors in an English translation of Ibn Isfandiyar's *Tarikh-e Tabaristan*.¹⁰ Kasravi sent his comments to Browne's colleague Qazvini (on whom see below) hoping that the corrections would be passed on.¹¹

Kasravi's criticisms of Browne

Having lauded Browne's contribution to both scholarship and general concern for the contemporary plight of Iran, Kasravi stated that he suffered much shock when he then saw Browne's *History of Persian Literature*, which he claimed was sent to Iran in 1912.¹² Kasravi must be referring to the first volume of the book which later became a monumental four-volume study. During those days, Kasravi admitted, he did not link such works with the political agenda that he came to associate with them at a later date. He thought that Browne had composed this work simply because of his inclination to Persian poetry and that he had engaged on a futile project. It was only later that Kasravi realised the full extent of the dangers of the propagation of traditional Persian poetry (in particular, the poetry of the Sufis and the Kharabatis).¹³ There were three reasons for Kasravi's dislike of such poetry; the first was the spread of religious innovation and the second was the propagation of immorality, and both of these reasons, claimed Kasravi, were utilised by the Europeans in their attempts to weaken Iran. The third reason was the interiorisation of the Orientalist discourse.

Religious diversity

Religious innovation was detrimental to Iran because it contributed to religious diversity, a general weakness that had plagued the region for many years. (In "Europeanism, Materialism and Religiosity" Kasravi lists the following religious groups to illustrate this diversity: Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, Sunnis, Shi'ites, 'Ali-ullahis, Isma'ilis, Baha'is, Shaykhis, Karimkhanis and Sufis.)¹⁴ The unity of Iran was the subtext underpinning the vast majority of Kasravi's works, and his ideal vision of a united Iran was perhaps a result of the conflicts that he witnessed in his formative years.¹⁵ In particular, Kasravi was a first-hand witness to the

communal violence between the Ne'matis and Haydaris¹⁶ and also to the sectarianism that existed between the Sunnis and Shi'ites of Azarbayjan.¹⁷

Although Browne is not mentioned explicitly by name in the spread of religious innovations, Kasravi's following comments might have been written with Browne's "promotion" of Sufism and even perhaps with Babism in mind:

Most orientalists...have been the political servants of Europe[an governments], and they have continually made efforts to cause mischief among the Eastern peoples and to spread repugnant acts over the whole of the East, and therefore they have always promoted those subjects the result of which has been the spread of religious innovation and the increase in disunity among Eastern peoples... We do not insist that all of these orientalists have been the political servants of Europe, but we are sure that there has been no other purpose in following these subjects than ill-will towards the Eastern peoples and in particular towards Muslims.¹⁸

Immorality in mystical literature

A second reason explaining Kasravi's hostility to Browne's work on Persian literature is that the meaning and morality of so much Sufi and Kharabati literature contradicted what he believed to be rational discourse.¹⁹ For example, the Sufi idea of "everything is He", for Kasravi, implied that evil could not exist, which then renders redundant God's judgement of mankind. Moreover, Kasravi believed that Sufism encouraged debauchery, which became widespread due to the Sufi belief that mystics could see a reflection of God's beauty in young males.

European orientalists such as Browne made deliberate attempts, according to Kasravi, to advance European interests at the expense of those of the Eastern nations by promoting such mystical and immoral literature and by editing and publishing Sufi works. For example, Browne is censured for the publication of 'Attar's *Tadhkirat al-awliya*' in the Gibb Memorial Series²⁰ (and Kasravi asks why the capital for the Gibb Memorial Trust was not used in a more beneficial manner, such as building hospitals or spreading knowledge among eastern peoples.)²¹

Interiorisation of the orientalist discourse

The European orientalists' works, according to Kasravi, were instrumental in convincing Iranians that the writings of Sufis and Kharabatis represented what was best in Iranian culture, and the internalisation of such ideas affected influential Iranian politicians. Kasravi argues that in the 1920s he heard from Mohammad 'Ali Forughi²² the same kind of argument offered by Professor Sadiq²³ (ironically enough, an associate of Browne):

We will not be able to manifest [any] strength or force against others. There is one path open for us which is to make the world listen to our

ancient literature and civilisation and attract respect for ourselves. In Europe they recognise us for Sa'di, Hafez, Khayyam and Firdawsi. We too must give this as much importance as possible.²⁴

This debate concerning the promotion or rejection of certain types of Persian literature predates the influence that European orientalists had on Iranian scholars and politicians (e.g. the debate over the content and merit of Hafez's *ghazals* began even during Hafez's own lifetime in the fourteenth century). It is difficult to ascertain whether the debate concerning Persian poetry and literature and its relation with national identity (a debate which became pronounced after the First World War) was independent of Browne's pioneering work on Persian literature. Certainly Kasravi witnessed a connection, since he commented that after Browne had sent his work to Iran in 1912, a number of literary societies in Iran mushroomed, literary journals were published, books on poetry and biographies of poets were written, youths started to compose their own poetry and in the provinces the graves of poets were covered with domes.²⁵ That there was a national debate about what kind of Persian literature to promote in the nation is clear. Sa'id Nafisi mentions a controversy that erupted within the Democrat Party in the wake of the First World War, in particular between Malik al-Sho'ara Bahar²⁶ and Mirza 'Ali Asghar Khan Taleqani. Taleqani published a series of articles in his newspaper *Zaban-e azad* ("Free Speech") under the title, the "School of Sa'di". In these articles Taleqani argued that traditional Persian poetry had inculcated a "dervish spirit" among Iranians which was the cause of their weakness and backwardness.²⁷ Kasravi believed that Browne had instigated all of this, promoting the interiorisation of such ideas within Iran. Browne was able to do this because of his close connections with men of literature and politics. As mentioned earlier, Kasravi recognised that there was contact between Browne and Forughī,²⁸ and the latter was admonished for promoting Sufism since he was reported to have said that materialism had engulfed Europe and only Sufism could save it. When Forughī made this comment, Kasravi responded by asking whether it was really possible that Europeans would become Sufis and therefore save themselves.²⁹ Kasravi's animosity to Forughī is also attributable to the latter's particular promotion of Sa'di's *Golestan*, Book Five of which discusses love between males. Forughī not only edited a version of the *Golestan* but he also wrote an introduction and was instrumental in having the book published through the Ministry of Culture.³⁰

Kasravi believed that Browne was conscious of the political implications of his actions, and by way of an illustration to show the devious nature of the European orientalists, he offered an analogy of how a poor Jewish merchant, shunned by his fellow merchants, eventually became a millionaire. According to Kasravi's story, one day the poor Jewish merchant came to see the Jewish millionaire, Rothschild, who offered to write him a cheque. However, the poor merchant refused the cheque but said that he spent his days with the other merchants in the customs, and so when Rothschild passed through the customs houses he should greet him

warmly. If Rothschild would do this three times, said the poor Jewish merchant, his troubles would cease. Rothschild acted accordingly, and of course when the rich merchants saw this they all desired the friendship of the poor merchant, and so they started to trade with him. After a few years, the poor Jewish merchant had become a millionaire.³¹ More specific "evidence" of Browne's duplicity was witnessed by Kasravi in his claim that Browne wore Persian-style clothes for a year while he travelled there between 1887 and 1888.³²

Assessment of Kasravi's scholarship

The danger posed to Iran by the European powers is a theme that pre-occupied the minds of many Iranian intellectuals (and for that matter, many individuals in Middle Eastern and Asian territories) from the nineteenth century onwards. Kasravi's warnings are not therefore unique but important if only for the reason that they perpetuated the resistance against the excesses of Europeanisation and Westernisation. This resistance was continued in Iran after Kasravi's death, most notably by Jalal Al-e Ahmad, the author of *Westoxification*³³ and 'Ali Shari'ati.³⁴ Echoes of Kasravi's thought are easily discernible in the writings of Shari'ati who is known to have been impressed with some of the former's arguments concerning the need to reform Iran.³⁵ Yet the writings on the topic of orientalism by Al-e Ahmad and Shari'ati are more sophisticated than those of Kasravi because they are not obsessed with the detrimental effects of both Sufism and most mediaeval Persian literature.

It would be wrong, however, to belittle all of Kasravi's writings, for his history of the Constitutional Revolution and his study of the emergence of the Safavids have been widely acclaimed. Moreover, he should be praised for not advancing the cause of racist nationalism, even though such sentiments were strong in many parts of Europe. The racist ideology was in part attributable to the development in philology during the nineteenth century, in particular the studies associated with Hinduism and Sanskrit. Much of the orientalist discourse of the nineteenth century contrasted the advanced societies of the West and the Aryans with the backward state of the Semites (Arabs and therefore Islam).³⁶ It was accepted that Sanskrit and Persian were linked with European languages, which suggested to some that the original Aryans came from somewhere between India and Western Europe. This provided those scholars who wished to be free from the confines of traditional thought with the opportunity to construct a polarity between the world ordering higher religions, rationalism and modernism with the backwardness and superstitions of less advanced religions.³⁷ Given this perspective it is interesting to note that there were some scholars of Islam and Sufism who have been tempted to link Sufism with the Aryans. For example, in 1867 E.H. Palmer published an abridged version of *Maqсад al-aqsa*, by the thirteenth-century Persian writer 'Aziz Nasafi, generally regarded as a Sufi, and in his introduction to the text Palmer states that in a future work he hopes to prove that "Sufism is really the development of the Primaeval Religion of the Aryan race".³⁸

It is to Kasravi's credit that in his writings on Sufism, Hafez, literature and Islam he never advocated Indo-Aryan supremacy over the Semites and Islam.³⁹ Whether he was informed of the debate occupying the minds of European philologists is unclear, but certainly the seeds of Iranian nationalism and anti-Arab sentiment had gestated among those familiar with Western thought in the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ It is possible that Kasravi did not endorse anti-Arab and pro-Aryan sentiment because if his aim was the promotion of the nation-state of Iran, then advocating ideas that were derogatory of the Arabs would only assist in shattering the fragile mosaic-society that composed Iran. Kasravi would have been well aware of the rumours that the British had intended to detach the Arab speaking, oil-rich province of Khuzestan from Iran and to invest sovereign powers in the local leader, Shaykh Khaz'al of Mohammerah.⁴¹ Moreover, Kasravi seemed to have a genuine regard for Islam and Mohammad (whom he calls the noble Arab)⁴² and believed that his views of a reformed religion, which he termed *pakdini*, was a purified version of Islam.⁴³ Thus for political and religious reasons, criticism of the Arabs was not a feature of Kasravi's world-view. Even if he was not aware of the racist theories underpinning the orientalist discourse outlined earlier, Kasravi was certainly worried about the explicit policies of Britain and other European powers in relation to Iran. His concern was also focused upon the implicit ways of imperialism, namely the activities of those academics who had edited works of Persian mystical literature or else had written biographies of Sufis and commentaries on their writings.

However, despite providing useful historical insights and not being seduced by racist theories that lay embedded within some European scholarship, Kasravi was blinded by his obsession with Sufism to the extent that it influenced his perception of the motives of European orientalists. He was even critical of European orientalists who translated or edited Persian texts of which he approved. For example, he believed that Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh* ("Book of Kings") was beneficial to the course of Iranian history because it promoted Iranian nationalist sentiment, partly through its use of Persian rather than Arabic words. Yet Kasravi had nothing positive to say when he learned that a German orientalist had produced a concordance of the *Shah-nameh*.⁴⁴ His comments are worth repeating here if only to illustrate his utter bemusement at such orientalist work:

During the Ferdowsi [millennial] festival⁴⁵ the Germans brought a book that astounded me. An orientalist had written a concordance of Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh*. (For example, it records how many times the word "from" (*az*) appears throughout the *Shah-nameh*.) The Germans commented: "He laboured for twenty years to finish the book." Why did he engage on such a futile and irrational task? Such a German must be either mad or simple-minded to do such a thing, or else his purpose was to deceive Iranians and cause them to engage in such futile projects. The German government sent such a book to us as a gift! More noteworthy is that on the same day some people came to speak with me and they said

something like: "These Europeans are amazing people. They engage in incredible tasks. Look what they have done! He laboured twenty years for the sake of one book. It is not without reason that they are always ahead and we are behind." I saw in a moment that the seed of the politics [of European imperialism] had grown in their hearts.⁴⁶

Moreover, the gross generalisations that appear in his works such as *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat* (in which Browne is castigated) and his refusal to find benefit in the publication of Sufi or non-mystical classical Persian works invalidate the principle of scholarly research. Indeed, the numerous pamphlets that Kasravi published on Sufism, Hafez and literature and his book-burning festivals present him more as a jingoistic populist and a puritanical bigot than as a serious academic.

E.G. Browne, champion of Iranian nationalism?

Kasravi's harsh opinion of E.G. Browne runs against the general Iranian view which is summarised well in an article on Browne in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* by Kamran Ekbal:

Browne was held in the highest esteem by Persians. Although he had first been disliked in Iran because of his sympathies for the persecuted Babis, he soon evoked gratitude for having taken Persia and its literature as his own and for supporting the Persian people as few others had done... Persians today still remember Browne as one of the great men devoted to their country and its people.⁴⁷

Indeed, there is no indication that Browne ever harboured any ill-will towards Iran; his books, articles, letters and activities indicate a consistent desire for Iran to be free from the imperialist aims of Russia and Britain, and he ardently wished that Iranians should be allowed to establish the kind of political institutions that they themselves desired. This last point was enshrined in the objectives of the Persia Committee which was set up in 1908 (with Browne as vice-chairman) to support the Constitutionists in Iran and to reject the 1907 agreement between Russia and Britain that divided Iran into spheres of influence. The second paragraph of article I of the objectives reads as follows:

Assured of foreign neutrality in the political struggle that is taking place in Persia, and free from the haunting fear of foreign intervention on the pretext of maintaining order, the Persians will, it is felt, be able to work out their own salvation and to endow their country with stable institutions within a reasonable space of time.⁴⁸

Browne's involvement with the promotion of Iranian independence included participating in the Persia Committee, writing letters to Sir Edward Grey

(the British Foreign Minister who endorsed the Anglo-Russian agreement), arranging meetings for Constitutionalist leaders such as Taqizadeh with leading British politicians and, perhaps most significantly, allowing Persians to speak for themselves through his publications, such as *The Persian Revolution* and *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*.⁴⁹

On the basis of these activities and his many publications on Persian literature, one would assume that Browne could have been nothing but a true friend of Iran or else, as Kasravi implies, he deliberately aimed to destabilise Iran by promoting a certain mentality among Iranians through the glorification of certain forms of literature. The following will highlight reasons for Browne's interest in Iran to assess whether Kasravi's criticisms are valid.

Browne and Iranian religions

The reasons for Browne's sympathy for Iran are complex, but seem to have their roots in the period before he was even acquainted with Iran, and perhaps have more to do with his idealism of fighting for a just cause. It is worth noting that when Browne was a youth of 15–16 he became aware of the vulgarities of elements of British opinion in the aftermath of Turkey's defeat in its war with Russia:

the losing side [Turkey] more especially when it continues to struggle gallantly against defeat, always has a claim on our sympathy, and moreover the cant of the anti-Turkish party in England, and the wretched attempts to confound questions of abstract justice with party-politics, disgusted me beyond measure. Ere the close of the war I would have died to save Turkey.⁵⁰

Drawn to the Middle East and Islam, Browne was fascinated further by what he considered to be the "pantheistic" doctrines of the Sufis.⁵¹ While at Cambridge he started to study Persian, and he prepared for examinations which were to include sections from Rumi's *Masnavi* and the *Divan* of Hafez. Browne recalled his attraction to such Persian poetry in the following manner:

As a young doctor at St. Bartholomew's hospital in London, I witnessed much that made me wonder at man's clinging to life... Never before or since have I realised so clearly the immortality, greatness, and virtue of the spirit of man, or the misery of its earthly environment: it seemed to me like a prince in rags, ignorant alike of his birth and his rights, but to whom is reserved a glorious heritage. No wonder, then, that the Pantheistic idealism of the *Masnavi* took hold of me, or that such words... of Hafiz thrilled me to the very soul.⁵²

Browne worked as a medic at St Bartholomew's in London before he went to Iran, and it was during this period that he met Hajji Pirzadeh (d. 1904), an

Iranian who was well-versed in the mystical tradition.⁵³ It has been claimed that Browne became a disciple (*murid*) of Pirzadeh,⁵⁴ although the evidence for this is not conclusive.⁵⁵ It is clear, however, that Pirzadeh did help Browne to study Persian mystical texts, and such literature had a profound impact on him. He was to claim that he was an “ardent admirer of these eloquent mystics, whose spirit has inspired so much of what is best and finest in Persian literature”.⁵⁶ Kasravi was astonished at Browne’s appreciation of Persian literature, in particular Sufi poetry, and realising that the Englishman was a highly intelligent individual, he could not comprehend why he could possibly find any value in Sufi writings. It seems likely, therefore, that Kasravi sought an ulterior motive in Browne’s promotion of Persian literature which, of course, was of a political nature. But for many subsequent, outstanding British orientalists including Browne’s student, R.A. Nicholson, and Nicholson’s student, A.J. Arberry, the moral teachings and universalism of Sufism probably offered an ideal that transcended political motives.⁵⁷ Moreover, the humility advocated by so many of the mystics of Islam perhaps reminded Browne of his own Christian ethical perspective, which is made manifest in his *A Year Amongst the Persians*, when he remarked: “know that I regard myself as the least of God’s servants and the most inconsistent and unworthy of those who profess to take the Lord Jesus as their pattern and exemplar!”⁵⁸

Having become interested in Iran through the study of Persian mystical poetry, Browne then became increasingly fascinated by this country when he learnt about the Babis from Comte de Gobineau’s *Religions and Philosophies in Central Asia*. Moreover, the closer similarity that some Babis saw with Christianity over Islam may also have drawn Browne to this new religion.⁵⁹ In any case, Browne viewed the Babi movement as “one of the most interesting and important events that has occurred since the rise of Christianity and Muhammadanism”⁶⁰, and Gobineau’s view of the parallels between the rise of early Christianity and its persecution with that of Babism may have been one of the reasons for Browne’s investigation of it.⁶¹ Browne’s interest in the Babi movement can be summarised in the following:

the Babi and Baha’i movements have at least proved two things, first, that the Persians, when deeply stirred by spiritual forces, are capable of the utmost heroism and self-devotion; and secondly that Persia is still capable of influencing the world by her thought to a degree equalled by few other countries.⁶²

Kasravi’s claim that orientalists have promoted religious discord among the nations of the east to further imperialist aims seem difficult to substantiate in the context of Browne’s interest in Babism and Baha’i-ism. While it is true that as a young man Browne appeared a committed Christian⁶³ and never attempted to conceal his faith whilst in Iran⁶⁴, it appears that he never pursued any form of missionary activity. Indeed, he offers reasons why these religions should be of interest to academics in the West. First, these religions offer students of religion

a chance to witness the birth of a faith with all of its devotion and heroism. Second, the ethnologist can meditate on the

character of a people [Iranians], who, stigmatized as they often have been seen as selfish, mercenary, avaricious, egotistical, sordid, and cowardly, are yet capable of exhibiting under the influence of a strong religious impulse a degree of devotion, disinterestedness, generosity, unselfishness, nobility, and courage which may be paralleled in history, but can scarcely be surpassed.⁶⁵

Third, Browne admits that knowledge of the Babi movement would be of use to the politician and warns that what Mohammad made of the Arabs, the Bab may yet make of the Persians. Yet Browne's personal interest in Babism transcended the three categories mentioned, and if he was not disingenuous about his fascination with Babism, his interests cannot be associated with a negative form of orientalism.

But to myself . . . the paramount interest thereof lies in this, that here is something, whether wise or unwise, whether tending towards the amelioration of mankind or the reverse, which seemed to many hundreds, if not thousands, of our fellow-creatures worth suffering and dying for, and which, on this ground alone, must be accounted worthy of our most attentive study.⁶⁶

And as mentioned earlier Browne may also have seen parallels in the struggles and self-sacrifice of the Babis with those of the supporters of the Constitutional Movement in the first decade of the twentieth century. His passionate advocacy of the Constitutional Movement and his appreciation of the literature that Constitutionalist supporters produced lend weight to the argument that he cannot be considered as the kind of orientalist who viewed the East or Iran as possessing nothing but an ancient civilisation, although there are some passages in his writings that come dangerously close to essentialising a great Iranian spirit that transcends time and the various "national disasters" (such as the Arabs, Mongols and Turks⁶⁷). One also finds passages in his works which suggest that he could be a little too keen to promote all things Persian. The following is quoted to illustrate this possibility, although it should be taken into consideration that Browne's observation might well contain an element of truth:

I once heard Mr G. Bernard Shaw deliver an address to a branch of the Fabian Society on "The Religion of the Future". In this lecture he said that he was unwilling that the West should any longer be content to clothe itself in what he called "the rags of Oriental systems of religion"; that he wanted a good, healthy Western religion, recognizing the highest type of humanity as the Superman, or, if the term was preferred, as

God; and that, according to this conception, man was ever engaged in “creating God”. As I listened I was greatly struck by the similarity of his language to that employed by the Bahais, and was diverted by the reflection that, strive as he would, this brilliant modern thinker of the West could not evolve a religion which the East had not already formulated.⁶⁸

Browne and the exotic “other”

There are several strands that help to explain Browne’s interest in Iran. First, there is the pantheistic idealism that has been discussed. Second, his occasional idealisation of Iran may be attributable to the rhetoric of a nationalist aiming to drum up support against a foreign policy which he believed was wrong. These two points may well be related, if Amanat’s view that Browne was deeply influenced by the romanticism of the Victorian era is correct.⁶⁹ This legacy of romanticism may have contributed to Browne seeking out the downtrodden, the dissenters, the outcasts and undesirables in Iran, and it may have been the spark in his imagination which then ignited when he became familiar with the non-conformism of Hafez’s poetry, the struggle for self-expression among the Babis and then the Iranian endeavour for freedom from internal tyranny and European imperialism.

Whatever the reasons may be, it is difficult to deny that Browne’s study of Iranian society and literature had never been attempted on such a scale before. His academic works certainly do not reveal a consistently essentialised Islam or Iran, and he was also able to offer some criticisms of the nation that he loved next best to Britain. For example, in his discussion of Naser al-Din Shah, Browne remarked, “his rule has been, on the whole, mild, and comparatively free from the cruelties which mar nearly every page of Persian history”.⁷⁰ Browne also offered some caution, if not criticism of the teachings of the Baha’is:

These [ethical] teachings [of Baha’i-ism] are in themselves admirable, though inferior, in my opinion, both in beauty and simplicity to the teachings of Christ. Moreover, as it seems to me, ethics is only the application to everyday life of religion and metaphysics, and to be effective must be supported by some spiritual sanction; and in the case of Bahaism, with its rather vague doctrines as to the nature and destiny of the soul of man, it is a little difficult to see whence the driving-power to enforce the ethical maxims can be derived.⁷¹

Browne was clearly shocked by some of the Baha’i doctrines with which he became familiar in his encounter with them during his year in Iran. In particular he was disturbed by their understanding of the divine, which he recorded as having its basis in the human imagination. He protested and asserted the “orthodox” Islamic doctrine which balances God’s similarity with utter transcendence and could not refrain from noting; “I listened in consternation, half-frightened at their vehemence, half-disgusted at their doctrines yet withal held spell-bound by their

eloquence.”⁷² If any more evidence is needed of Browne’s recognition that Iran was not an exotic “other”, the fact that he spoke of “Asiatic indifference and apathy” which combined with “European ‘earth-hunger’ and lust of conquest hasten their [the independent Muslim States’] disintegration”⁷³ suggests that he was not prepared to accept all things Iranian indiscriminately.

Browne did not view Iran as an “exotic other”, nor did he romanticise it out of all proportion, nor did he essentialise Iran into a society of peace-loving mystics, reciting poetry from the mediaeval period. This can be witnessed in his interest in the political struggles of the Constitutionalists and, in particular, his attraction to modern Persian literature. He made this clear in 1912 during a lecture to the Persia Society on “The Literature of Persia”, in which he spoke of modern Persian poetry, but was surprised at the reaction among some of the audience who thought there was no modern Persian poetry that was worthy of mention. As a result, Browne was determined to refute this “pernicious error” and the result was a book entitled *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*,⁷⁴ which was composed of two parts: the first listed Persian newspapers and the second offered “specimens of the political and patriotic poetry of modern Persia”. Browne had a favourable opinion of much of this poetry and he used adjectives such as “excellent” to describe it, remarking that it held great interest “from the historical and the literary points of view, and is often equally remarkable for its merit and its originality”.⁷⁵ It is interesting to note that Browne links the “pernicious error” that Persian poetry stopped with the fifteenth-century poet Jami with those who for political reasons desired to represent Asians and Persians as decadent and degenerate.⁷⁶ These twin features, the attacks on British imperialism and the inclusion and praise of radical and socially aware verse in *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*, make criticisms of orientalism difficult to accept.

Yet even if Browne is guilty of idealising Iran, he is surely innocent of the accusations levelled against him by Kasravi. These accusations were made on the basis of Kasravi’s acquaintance with Browne’s publications, yet since the defence of Iran is upheld in many of these works, one can only conclude that Kasravi had only a superficial knowledge of these writings,⁷⁷ or else his obsession with the lack of morality in Sufi and mediaeval Persian literature blinded him to all other considerations. The criticisms that he makes are undermined by contradictions. On the one hand, Kasravi claims that he cannot know the motives of the orientalists: “I cannot be aware about [what is in] the Orientalists’ hearts, and I cannot say that so and so has been well-disposed, or has been ill-disposed on that topic. I know [it is] better to speak about their actions.”⁷⁸ Four pages later in *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyat* he attacks the motives of the orientalists (and mentions Browne) in the Rothschild story.

Kasravi castigated Browne for serving the interests of the British government because he was not prepared to accept any interpretation of the morality provided in Sufi texts or mediaeval Persian literature other than his own rather narrow understanding. In Kasravi’s defence the context in which he was writing surely contributed to his rather polemical works, that is to say, the rather

ignominious role that Britain played in Iran during the nineteenth and then early twentieth centuries which virtually guaranteed the prevention of real political and economic independence. It is this role that has led many Iranians to endorse a conspiracy theory that sees a British hand in all catastrophes that occur in Iran,⁷⁹ and although Kasravi does not completely endorse this theory, his writings on Browne certainly play on this fear.⁸⁰ It is important to note, however, that he was not prepared to blame Browne or Britain for all of the misfortunes that he saw within Iran, for some of them (such as Sufism and other “religious innovations”) predated the emergence of the European powers in the region.

Conclusion

Kasravi criticised Browne and the orientalists on the basis of his “rationalist” perspective, and although he admitted that not all orientalists wished ill on Iran,⁸¹ Browne is specifically condemned for promoting Persian poetry because of its irrational and immoral content.⁸² Reading between the lines and considering the major intellectual arguments of the day it is clear that Kasravi was concerned with the identity of Iran and the detrimental effects that Europeans had on Iran. His writings foreshadow those of Edward Said, who offers a theory of cultural domination that is linked to identity formation. For Kasravi, this cultural domination was established through *explicit* economic control⁸³ and *implicit* cultural hegemony through the promotion of certain forms of literature. The result was, for Kasravi, blind imitation of Europe and support for adopting European lifestyles that contrasted with “traditional” standards. Kasravi quotes in astonishment the famous lines of Taqizadeh, who claimed in the newspaper *Kaveh*, “Iranians must become European in [their] external form and in [their] behaviour, and materially and spiritually.”⁸⁴ Taqizadeh’s advice struck a chord in many Iranians, and Kasravi despaired of the extent of the blind imitation by Iranians of the West:

Today all women and men, young and old have focused on Europe, and in all customs and morals they follow Europeans, from the choice of [their] clothing to eating food, and they boast of socialising with Europeans. Whoever is more aware of [European] customs is considered better and superior to others, and whenever they find a speech by a European they praise it...some shameless individuals have made the advancement in knowledge in the West an excuse for ridiculing Easterners and they have not refrained from taunting [Easterners]. This is an example of the disease of Europeanism.⁸⁵

Such Iranians, according to Kasravi, were more concerned about the opinion of European scholars on mystical and Persian literature than they were in investigating and evaluating the worth of the texts themselves:

A little man approached me and engaged in dispute: “The German [scholar] Goethe has praised Hafez.” I replied, “What have you got to

do with Goethe? Don't you have your own understanding and wisdom? Do you have Hafez's book? Why don't you open it, read it and see what it says? Why don't you think and see whether our criticisms of that poet [i.e. Hafez] are correct or not?" He replied, "Then why did Goethe bestow all that praise [on Hafez]?" I said, "How should I know? Goethe is like all the others. He made stupid speeches. Just like Hafez he was a babbler of nonsense."⁸⁶

Indeed, European views on Iranian literature should not be considered as worth listening to because they are all highly political:

One day I... spoke [with Forughī] at length. He said: "In Europe [people] associate Iran with Sa'di, Hafez, Mawlawi and Khayyam." I replied, "That's not true.⁸⁷ Why don't they associate Iran with its ancient history? Why don't they associate Iran with Shah 'Abbas or Nader Shah?" Isn't it because [of European praise] that we [Iranians] teach all the evil and harmful teachings of Sa'di and others to our children?"⁸⁸

The preservation or (re)-creation of Iranian identity for Kasravi included a rejection of Western imperialism and the promotion of a pure moral order.

What is certain and we have witnessed with our own eyes is that religion, piety, generosity, sympathy for the poor, assistance for the downfallen, contentment and these kind of praiseworthy Eastern morals have declined in currency. In their place irreligiosity, impiety, selfishness, hedonism, greed, narrow-sightedness and quarrelsomeness have become prevalent among youths.⁸⁹

Although for a modern observer Kasravi's tirades against Browne and his sermonising about the appropriate forms of literature appear incredibly dated, it is worthwhile considering that the creation of national identity and the significance of literature were recognised in Europe at the same time.⁹⁰ Indeed, one wonders whether his remarks about burning the books of Hafez and Sa'di were influenced by similar book-burning events in Europe.⁹¹ Kasravi's criticisms of Browne were shaped in this context in conjunction with his own moral predilections concerning the evils of Sufism and its irrational basis. His rationalism and nationalism were so strident that he could not see how Sufi literature could be understood not as historical fact but as mythic and ethical and/or entertaining literature.

From now on we should revert to the correct meaning of literature and remove the root of futile talk from Iran. From now on we should establish love for Iran as [literature's] perfection, and we should regard the enemies of Iran with nothing but hatred and derision... From now on we should never praise Alexander [the Great], Chingiz [Khan] or

Timur, and never contaminate the language in remembrance of Mahmud and Ayaz, and Layla and Majnun... From now on the poets too should compose poetry on nothing except the subject [of Iran's glory] and they should hope for nothing except for the dignity of Iran. O God! Make Iran victorious in this path!⁹²

His commitment to telling the truth (as he saw it) resulted in his rejection of fiction in general, which he categorised as a form of telling lies. This, however, was not unique to Kasravi, as the imperative to tell the truth was an ideological necessity that can be witnessed in other writers during the first half of the twentieth century in Iran, in which to be an intellectual it was essential to be socially engaged for the advancement of the nation.⁹³ If Kasravi can be applauded for anything it is that he asked brave and probing questions. Although he was not the first to raise issue with Europeanisation and orientalism, he certainly contributed to the self-reflexive attitude of Iranians concerning the West and Iranian culture in the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, although his thoughts on these questions have been rejected and sometimes ridiculed, his pamphlets and writings at least provided some kind of ground from which subsequent intellectuals were able to build their critiques of the West and the reconstruction of Iranian identity. It is fortunate that, in spite of Kasravi's rebukes of E.G. Browne, most Iranians continue to hold the latter in high esteem,⁹⁴ and his writings are still used by scholars who are aware of the dangers of orientalism with which Kasravi fought so earnestly.



Figure 5.1 The Tomb of Hafez in Shiraz.

“From 1290 (1911–12), a revolution took place in Iran in the fields of poetry and literature... books were published... societies were established in the cities... roads were named after the poets... domes were erected over the tombs of the poets in the provinces (Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyat*, pp. 28–9).”

HOSTILITY TO HAFEZ

Kasravi's views of Persian poetry

The revolution in modern Persian literature

European influence upon Iran during the nineteenth century extended beyond the presence of missionaries, diplomats and medical doctors. A more powerful catalyst of change was the abundance of ideas that was contained in printed books, ranging from biographies of important monarchs and rulers, history, medicine, technology and literature that was designed to entertain the reader. The Iranian students who had been sent to Europe were among the first to acquaint themselves with such writings, and in the course of the nineteenth century increasing numbers within Iran had access to Western literature and social sciences through Persian translations.¹ Increasing knowledge of Europe and its public institutions contributed to the movement for socio-political reform which was expressed in diverse literary forms. In the years running up to the granting of the Constitution a new form of poetry became widespread in Iran, namely political poetry (much of which was patriotic) that had no real precedent in Iran.² Such poems appeared in the plethora of newspapers that were printed during this period, and many were composed in the traditional form of the *ghazal* (the usual theme of which had been love) yet contained many new political terms and words that were borrowed from European languages. Some critics, including Sa'īd Nafisi, complained of the lack of style and good taste in such poems by none other than Bahar.³ Although Nafisi does not elaborate on his criticism, most likely it seemed bizarre to him that within a single distich Bahar could combine traditional idioms such as *serr-e zolf* (the mystery of the ringlet) with the modern idea of *majles-e shura* (consultative assembly).⁴ Yet the poets had no choice but to adopt the new vocabulary in an attempt to appeal to a newly educated class and at the same time utilise a literary form that was familiar for the masses if they were to attract followers to their cause. Thus, the poets were forced to reject much of the poetic tradition of Iran, as "neither the phlegmatic Qajar court poetry nor the aloof mystic poems of the period could provide the proper response", for the poet now had to

excite a large audience that was mostly illiterate or semi-literate, which listened to his poetry read by others or sung by folk-singers and

revolutionary bards. He had, therefore, to speak to them with simplicity and clarity in order to touch the chords of their heart.⁵

The "phlegmatic Qajar court poetry" referred to was characterised by extremely elaborate sentences that contained several sub-clauses, a mixture of Persian and Arabic grammar and a penchant for infrequently used Arabic words.⁶ In the domain of prose writing too, the habit of writing in an obscure fashion had been considered an artistic merit, and as Meskoob has observed, this was particularly the case for religious scholars, and even those in the early twentieth century who had abandoned the seminary and had become respected men of letters, such as Taqizadeh and Mohammad Qazvini, could not free themselves from the "tyranny of Arabic language and vocabulary".⁷ The newspapers and "night letters" (*shahb-nameh*) of the Constitutional period (which contained both poetry and prose) would not have permitted such verbosity, for the limited space of the press necessitated a clear and concise prose that was free from the flattery and obscure words and phrases beloved by the men of letters who were attached to the court.

The new poetry of the Constitutional period caused a convergence among reformists that Persian literature had to be changed, to make it more politically and socially appropriate and meaningful, yet it also resulted in a divergence of opinion about the means to achieve this end. The conservative group (*kohne parast*) "sought salvation in a return to the simpler pre-Mongolian styles which they tried to link up with, taking Firdausi, Nizami and Sa'di as their examples".⁸ For the modernists (*motajaddidun*) the solution was in "a complete departure from all classical tradition, whose rhetorical prescriptions and laws they considered to be so much dead weight preventing the poet from letting his thoughts soar untrammelled".⁹ As we have seen, in the period after the First World War the conflict erupted over "the hitherto untouchable and invincible hero of classical Persian literature", ¹⁰ namely, Sa'di: this was the episode mentioned in chapter five involving Bahar and Mirza 'Ali Asghar Khan Taleqani who published his criticisms of the traditionalists under his articles entitled "The School of Sa'di". Yet as we shall see, the classification of "reformists" into two groups is a little simplistic, especially when the opinions of Ahmad Kasravi are taken into account, since he held a favourable opinion of Ferdowsi but rejected the verses of Sa'di as immoral.

What united the reforming poets and writers was the rejection of "art for art's sake", which had been the single most important distinction for Iranian poets of the sixteenth century.¹¹ In contrast to the idea of art for art's sake is the opinion that art has to be for the benefit of society (writers in Iran during the first half of the twentieth century as diverse as Kasravi, Hedayat, Arani and Forughī all believed that their writings were for the benefit of society).

Poetry was not the only form of literature that was affected by Western literature, as the short story, or novella, became a popular means for socially committed writers to convey their message. In 1921 Jamalzadeh published his

short story, *Farsi Shekar Ast* ("Persian is Sugar"), which was revolutionary in its form, and which continued the trend of Persianism, as the story criticises the Arabic-Persian spoken by the mollahs and the Franco-Persian of the Europeanised youths. The story is important for popularising fiction as a means to convey a message; yet despite the potential benefits of this medium, Kasravi was to criticise fiction as little more than a "lie".

By the time that Kasravi commenced his movement to reform Iran, especially through his writings on literature and in particular on poetry, the acrimonious debate about the desired forms of Persian literature had been simmering for several generations. This debate assumed national proportions, as Kasravi claimed, literary associations sprang up all over the country at the same time that Browne sent his *Literary History of Persia* to Iran. All kinds of books related to poetry and composers were published, and domes were erected over the tombs of poets.¹² It is difficult to substantiate whether this activity was instigated (directly or indirectly) by Browne, but it is clear that literary associations began to appear "more frequently" during the Constitutional period.¹³ One circle in the post-Constitutional period was the *Jargeh-ye Daneshkadeh*¹⁴ that was established in 1916–17 by Rashid Yasami,¹⁵ Sa'īd Nafisi and 'Abbas Iqbal.¹⁶ A year later it was taken over by Bahar who changed its name to the *Anjoman-e daneshkadeh*, and "its purposes were to discuss new and timely subjects using traditional forms of poetry and prose and to encourage respect for great literary works of the past".¹⁷ The *Anjoman-e daneshkadeh* was succeeded by the *Anjoman-e adabi-ye Iran* in 1920, which was guided by H. Vahid Dastgerdi;¹⁸ it received official recognition from the Ministry of Education; meetings were held once a week within the Ministry of Culture in Tehran and branches were established in Hamadan, Isfahan and Shiraz.¹⁹ When foreign scholars came to Tehran they were invited to the gatherings, and on several occasions Taymurtash, the Minister of Court, entertained them in his own house.²⁰ The aim of the society, according to Nafisi, was to promote literature and to engage in research and analysis of the works and lives of the great poets. In this respect, the society's aims resemble the perspective of Bahar, who was the champion of modernism, but also venerated the old masters, such as Ferdowsi and Sa'di. Such a position also coincided with the Iranism that was promoted by the Iranian state, especially with the rise to power of Reza Khan. It is worth remembering Kasravi's claim that Mohammad 'Ali Forughī said that it was in the interests of Iran to promote its great poets, including Hafez, Sa'di, Khayyam and Ferdowsi, in order to earn the respect of Europeans.²¹ However, it is unlikely that the motives of the men of letters were the same as Reza Shah in promoting Persianism (as distinct from Iranian nationalism); for the literati, the message of the great poets was meritorious because it improved the human condition. As Nafisi says:

There must be a noble purpose in art which gives people inspiration and there must [also] be a lesson in it that moves the viewer, listener or reader to higher sentiments, and improves him from his present condition.

It [must] show good in a better light and bad in a worse light so that people are inclined to good and flee from bad. The artist must raise the level of people's thought with his art, and [he must] deliver [his] noble, sacred purpose in the simplest and clearest way.²²

Reza Shah's promotion of Persianism which was linked with Ferdowsi, Hafez and Sa'di and which broke with the language employed by the Qajar court, on the other hand, may have had more to do with his desire to distance himself from "the old and decadent 'Persia' of the Qajars".²³ This Persianism was a break with the recent past that had caused Iran to putrefy, and it was also a re-discovery of the great Iran of ancient times which was a superpower of the known world. Reza Shah's Persianism was a nationalism that was directed simultaneously outwards and inwards; the former is shown in 1935 by the demand that foreign nations henceforth refer to the country as Iran rather than Persia, while the latter became clear in a number of measures, for example, in education within secondary schools local dialects were avoided and geography emphasised the unity of the nation.²⁴ The Persian language itself became the focal point for Reza Shah's nationalism, and to this end the Persian Language Academy was created in 1935 (upon Forughî's recommendation) "to protect, promote and advance the Persian language, to coin scientific words and expel foreign ones from this language".²⁵ The creation of this institution is another example of the movement away from the Persian of the Qajar court, and indeed, the reform of Persian was supported by many intellectuals including Kasravi and Hedayat. The "purification" of Persian from Arabic, Turkish and other languages meant that words and terms had to be invented and re-discovered, that is to say, it re-enforced one of the trends of modern Persian poetry that glorified Iran's pre-Islamic past. The romantic nationalism of the period expressed by the poets

was embarrassed by ordinary people and their ways, and self-conscious of what Europeans might think of "us" because of "them", but it blew its trumps about Cyrus, Darius, Anushirvan, and the "Aryan race". It was thus both Europeanist and anti-imperialist, both self-glorifying and self-denigrating.²⁶

Kasravi's speech at the *Anjoman-e Adabi*

The Persianism that became so rampant during the reign of Reza Shah had many advocates, and Kasravi was one of its proponents to which his opening remarks at a public address before the *anjoman-e adabi* in 1935 testifies:

We have stood up, ready to be counted and we have said, "God is with us." What is our aim? The victory of Iran and the exaltation of Iranians. God is a witness that we have no other aim than this.²⁷

Kasravi had been invited to address the *Anjoman-e adabi*, because he had caused a stir with some articles that he had written in *Payman* during 1934–5 in which he had criticised traditional Persian poetry. These articles may have been a reaction to the events surrounding the celebrations of the Ferdowsi millennium. Kasravi himself states:

I don't know if you remember in 1934 when the Ferdowsi millennium was established... how many poems were printed in the newspapers and monthly journals, how many societies were set up in Tehran and other places under the name "literary society", what speeches were written in the newspapers, and what books were published. Various traps had been left beneath the feet of youths.²⁸

In his articles on poetry Kasravi had enraged much of the educated establishment with his view that Hafez was a source of disgrace. Sa'īd Nafisi responded with an article entitled "Hafez is not a source of disgrace" in which he did not mention Kasravi by name but alluded to him as among the "nouveau-riches, fledgling Johnny-come-latelies".²⁹ Jazayeri has called Nafisi's response "an emotional reaction, rather than a critical discussion",³⁰ however, what is clear in Nafisi's rejoinder to Kasravi is the view of Hafez as a man, who has hopes, desires, and needs, who dances when he is happy but who does not have all the answers to life's perennial problems; he does not know his origin or what will happen after death. But this, Nafisi argues, is no reason to call Hafez a source of disgrace, yet at the same time, neither does it explain why Hafez should be considered a great poet.

Nevertheless, Kasravi was given the opportunity to present his opinions on Persian poetry in general to the literary establishment at the *anjoman-e adabi*, and among those who attended the lecture were prince Mohammad Hashem Mirza Afsar (who had been the parliamentary representative for Sabzevar and one of the leading Democrats)³¹ and Sheikh al-Molk Owrang who was also a Parliamentary deputy who had Sufi sympathies.³²

The first part of the speech is an attempt to define the meaning of literature. Kasravi states that literature is an argument (*sokhan*) that cannot be considered independent from its manner or nature (*chegunagi*).³³ Sometimes the argument is simple, but when it is adorned and when there is ingenuity in the writing, we call it "literature".³⁴ For Kasravi, one of the requirements of literature is that it has to have a meaning that depends upon events in the real world.³⁵ Meanings and therefore literature cannot be imaginary, as Kasravi complains of poets who suppose that composing poetry and literature is a profession and they busy themselves with something that has not yet occurred in the world. Since they considered poetry a profession, the poets attached themselves to wealthy patrons and were forced to write verses full of flattery, and in this way "they blackened the face of bravery and freedom".³⁶ He bemoans the present circumstances when many Iranian youths consider themselves attached to a certain poetic circle and they return home at night, sit in a corner of a room and compose a poem without

there being any need for such work and without there being any meaning in the poem. Such “poets” simply wear out their minds.

At the end of his introduction, Kasravi adds the criterion by which literature can be judged as beneficial or not. He cites a *ghazal* by a Constitutional period poet (unknown to Kasravi but later identified as Sami‘i)³⁷ in which the author belittles the clichés beloved by Iranian poets and seeks a refuge in the topic of nationalism.

The stall has opened, sometimes on the mountain and the desert,
 Joy has increased in the tree garden and in the flower garden.
Ghazals have been recited, sometimes about the tulip and rose,
 Puns have been made, sometimes about the cypress and the lily.
 Comparisons have been made, sometimes between a face and the sun,
 A hair has been considered, sometimes like a hedge-rose.
 We have been greedy in seeking pleasure and rebellious against the
 wheel [of fate]
 That has stones within a sling.
 How long will such a drunk remain intoxicated?
 One of them must open his eyes!
 Look at the rose garden (*golestani*),
 Which is a perfect birthplace and motherland.
 The real nation takes precedence in being loved
 Since it is always our home.
 Which is this nation of Iran about whose monuments
 So many masterpieces (*shahnameh*) have been written?
 How miserable and unfortunate we are,
 We who have forgotten all about this beloved.
 We don’t even have as much love for this rose-garden (*golshan*)
 As a kiln keeper has for his kiln.

From his introduction, Kasravi’s limitations as a literary critic are all too apparent. Literature reaches beyond the regurgitation of real events, as the human imagination has the capacity to contemplate “unreal” situations, feelings and possibilities in an attempt to derive meaning. Nafisi’s definition of art (cited above) is more flexible, although it does not explain why some poetry is considered timeless and why such poetry remains so for several hundred or thousands of years and may then fall from favour.

Following his introduction, Kasravi proceeds to offer four examples of the “futile” verses that appear every day in the newspapers.³⁸ His analysis is limited, first, because this method takes the verse out of its context and, second, because he understands the words by their literal rather than their symbolic meaning. In the verse, *If you sip from one or two glasses of wine/The beggar of the city becomes the fortunate king*, he takes wine as an intoxicating drink which is bad (not because of the Islamic prohibition but because of the findings of modern medicine) rather

than as a metaphor for love. He considers the verse, *If you cut off my legs at the knees/Willingly I will return to you, begging*, dangerous because it is possible to seduce Iranian girls through such words, and also because he dislikes those who make themselves subservient to others. Exaggeration and hyperbole was clearly not a literary device that Kasravi favoured. The verse, *Pass the tomb of Mahmud/See how the name Ayaz is still on his lips*, is criticised because it is “outdated” since it employs the lovers Mahmud and Ayaz,³⁹ who were frequently used by Persian poets, yet for Kasravi repetition is not worthy in literature. The verse, *Oh Layla! Shame on you, you slept in the arms of the friend/Majnun is loyal, a vagrant in the mountains, fields and the wilderness*,⁴⁰ is condemned by Kasravi because he imagines that the poet believed Layli and Majnun are still alive, and he claims that there are hundreds of brave individuals and heroes from Iran who could have been used as the subject of such poetry. Kasravi then calls for the audience to obstruct the youths of Iran from writing such verses; indeed, he calls on the Iranian state to take action:

People know that a thousand years ago poetry wasn't widespread like this in Iran. Today in Asia, Iran occupies the place that Italy has in Europe, and today the Iranian standard spreads its shadow across the whole of Asia. Can you deny that world events effect each other? The reason why a people that has become weak and on whom misfortune has fallen is, in fact, the futile and irrational acts which appear among them. I do not deny that the present state (*dowlat*) has made Iran powerful and I hope that this power will increase from day to day. But one must not forget the state too will not obtain a positive result from its efforts when there is a great number of people who are decrepit (*farsudeh*) and good for nothing (*bi-kareh*).⁴¹

Having completed what he calls his discussion of literature from a “literary perspective”, Kasravi then proceeds to analyse poetry by applying it to what he terms the rules for life (*a'yin-e zendegani*) and what his audience describe as a social perspective.⁴² In fact, this section is Kasravi's main concern, for the rest of his presentation is composed of a brief description of beneficial poetry, followed by a very selective, whistle-stop tour of the history of Persian poetry.

Kasravi's first attempt to define what is good poetry is too wide in its scope to offer any meaning, for he argues that something is only good when it is considered so on all accounts. However, the scope is then narrowed by his view that good poetry is that which promotes good habits (*neku-khu'i*), Iranism (*Irangari*) and Islam (*Moslemani*). This last point is somewhat intriguing, especially when previously in his speech he opposed the consumption of wine, not because Islam has forbidden it, but because contemporary medicine has discredited the value that wine was thought to have.⁴³ He condemns the modern poets who write verses with regard only to metre and rhyme and the subject matter of which is “trivial”, for they never pay attention to good habits, Iranism and Islam, rather they consider these three as restrictions in their poetry.

The argument then turns to a historical overview of Persian poets, commencing with Ferdowsi, whom Kasravi applauds from a literary and social perspective. "From the perspective of good habits it is enough that I say that in all of his works this man has motivated Iranians to bravery, pride and heroism, in short, we have no criticisms of this great poet."⁴⁴ Kasravi then quickly passes to Naser Khosrow and Sana'i Ghazvini whom he describes as writers whose works should be lauded. However, from this point, Kasravi launches into an attack on a string of poets, including Anvari,⁴⁵ Mokhtari Qazvini,⁴⁶ Qatran,⁴⁷ Hatefi,⁴⁸ Shater Jalal (a poet whom Kasravi claims was famous during the reign of Shah Tahmasb),⁴⁹ Sadeq Molla Rajab from the Qajar period, and from his own era he condemns the verse of Iraj Mirza⁵⁰ and Adib al-Mamalek.⁵¹ The reasons for his dislike of these poets is their flattery, gnostic tendencies, praise of tyrants, bacchanalia and sodomy. (The only poet who is praised in this section of his speech is Nesim-e Shomal.⁵²) In the course of his presentation, Kasravi asks his audience on several occasions whether it is appropriate that such works should be cast into the fire.

It is interesting that Kasravi refrained from attacking the major figures of Persian poetry in his address; there is no mention of Sa'di, Rumi or Hafez, who would all feature predominantly in his later works (such as *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*). Perhaps this omission was Kasravi's attempt at placating the wrath that had already been kindled about his views of Hafez. However, his attempt at compromise (by attacking poets of a lesser stature) failed miserably because his criticism of the subject matter of Persian poetry as outlined in his speech (gnosticism, wine, sodomy, flattery etc.) was an implicit condemnation of the past masters.

The ramifications of Kasravi's speech before the *Anjoman-e adabi* were not insignificant, as Forughi, the prime minister, and Hekmat, the minister of culture, took steps that they must have thought would limit the harmful influence of Kasravi's views. Forughi banned the publication of the second half of Kasravi's speech (the first half had been published in *Payman*). Kasravi then went to see Forughi, who claimed that Europeans recognise Iran for its poets. In reply, Kasravi countered by referring to book five of Sa'di's *Golestan* (which discusses love) and said that such evil teachings that were taught in schools was the reason that Europeans did not associate Iran with figures like Shah 'Abbas and Nader Shah. Although Forughi claimed that several years previously it had been recommended that book five should not be taught in schools, Kasravi responded that no one was aware of such an order. But Forughi ended the discussion with his warning, "He who wants to take up a fight with Sa'di and Hafez must have great strength!"⁵³

Kasravi also disputed with Hekmat who had asked why he had written derogatory things about Hafez. Kasravi replied that the criticism had come from someone else. (Kasravi had published a letter in *Payman* from a sympathiser who claimed that he did not understand the meaning of Hafez's *ghazals*.) Kasravi went further and challenged Hekmat to explain the meaning behind Hafez's praise of wine and the futility of effort and endeavour. Kasravi claims that Hekmat could not reply but merely said, "These were outstanding individuals, and we don't have

the intelligence to understand their arguments.” Kasravi’s response (recollected several years later) reflects his lack of respect for such figures of authority, as he stated, “This answer is really nonsense,” as a good argument is formed in such a manner that it can be easily comprehended. Nevertheless, Hekmat was not intimidated by Kasravi and replied that he would only accept Kasravi’s appointment as a professor at Tehran University if he recanted on these views. (The Iranian parliament had just passed a law which would have enabled Kasravi to take up university employment.) However, Kasravi was a man of principle, and he refused to take back his opinion.⁵⁴

Kasravi and the controversy over Hafez

The Background

Hafez lingers like a spectre in Kasravi’s speech to the *anjoman-e adabi* because of his absence. Yet, from the 1920s through to the early 1940s there was a dramatic surge in academic studies associated with Hafez, with new critical editions of Hafez’s collected *ghazals* being published in 1927 by Seyyed ‘Abd al-Rahim Khalkhali (which was based on a manuscript written thirty-five years after the poet’s death),⁵⁵ in 1936 by Pezhman⁵⁶ and in 1941 by Qazvini and Ghani who produced a widely enlarged version.⁵⁷ Moreover, there were a number of critical essays about Hafez (mentioned in Chapter 2), the most important of which included articles and contributions by ‘Abd al-Hosayn Hazhir (1921),⁵⁸ Forughī (1937), Mahmud Human (1938),⁵⁹ Mo‘in (1940), Hekmat (1941), Nafisi (1942) and Mas‘ud Farzad (1942).⁶⁰ In addition, the study of Hafez’s *ghazals* was carried out within academic institutions; for example, Badi‘ al-Zaman Foruzanfar lectured on several *ghazals* in the Department of Literature of Tehran University (fortunately the text of one of these lectures has been published, and this lecture reveals Foruzanfar’s view that Hafez was essentially a Sufi poet).⁶¹

The interest in Hafez during this period is also reflected in the re-building and renovation of the structures within Hafez’s tomb complex in Shiraz.⁶² This was commenced in 1931 by the governor of Fars, Dabir-e Azam, Mr Faraj-Allah Bahrami (who was also the president of the Shiraz branch of the *anjoman-e adabi*).⁶³ However, the renovations of the complex gathered momentum in 1935 once Hekmat assumed the position of Minister of Culture, for as a native of Fars, he wanted a complete renovation of Hafez’s tomb (*aram-gah*) and repairs to the gardens surrounding it.⁶⁴ (One wonders whether Kasravi’s statement about building “domes over the tombs of the poets” was a reflection about this period rather than that associated with Browne sending his book to Iran.)

Although the scholarly works on the topic of Hafez (mentioned earlier) were all favourably inclined to Hafez’s poetry (whether from a literary, mystical or nationalistic perspective), there has always been a degree of suspicion and distaste for Hafez’s *ghazals* even in the poet’s own lifetime. One of these criticisms concerns the form of the *ghazal* itself, which had developed out of the *qasideh* which was

a formal ode in which the topic of love serves as a preliminary to panegyric. The *ghazal* emerged as an independent poetic genre in the twelfth century, but it preserved its topic of love intact.⁶⁵ Aside from this rule of having a single thematic content, the *ghazal* is also identifiable because it usually consists of between seven to nine distichs, has rhyme within the distichs of the opening verse and mentions the poet's name (usually in the closing verse). While Hafez adhered to most of these rules, it seems that in his own lifetime he was accused by Shah Shoja' (who came to power in 1357) of the innovation of composing *ghazals* that had "multi-sided aspects: no one motive, he complained, inspired it, it was on one moment mystical, at another erotic and bacchanalian, now serious and spiritual, and again flippant and worldly, or worse".⁶⁶ (And such criticisms were echoed in the famous expression of the eighteenth-century English populariser of Hafez, William Jones, who coined the phrase "oriental pearls at random strung".⁶⁷)

Scholarship has recognised various meanings within Hafez's *ghazals*, and although it is not possible to analyse them all here, it is useful to remember that the traditional theme of the *ghazal* was love, and Hafez manipulated this theme in such a way that he was able to reflect on its different aspects, for example, the hypocrisy of some in professing devotion, the "truth" of others in their attempts to win the attention of the beloved and the ways and manners of the "true" lovers that appeared unconventional and shocking. And it was probably the contents of the latter *ghazals* that resulted in the refusal of some of his contemporaries to accept that Hafez was a true believer in Islam. Indeed, it seems that he was accused of heresy for the distich, *If Muhammadanism be that which Hafiz holds/Alas if there should be a tomorrow after today*.⁶⁸ The disquiet concerning Hafez's verses reached the extent that his opponents objected to his burial "in the Muslim equivalent of consecrated ground".⁶⁹

The criticisms that Hafez's *ghazals* provoked in his lifetime continued into the Safavid period, as a work entitled *Latifeh-ye Ghaybiyeh* (written by Mohammad Darabi, contemporary with Shah 'Abbas II (r. 1642–66)) enumerates some of the criticisms levelled against Hafez and then attempts to refute them. The criticisms are that some verses are meaningless, others are secular and profane, and that one can find support for Sunni doctrine.⁷⁰ This work was lithographed in Tehran in 1886–7, which suggests that both the refutations of Hafez's *ghazals* and the need to answer them remained an important concern.

A stinging rejection of Hafez's *ghazals* appeared in a Persian *masnavi*, some thirty years later in 1915, but from the Indian sub-continent, written by Mohammad Iqbal. In the first edition of his *Asrar-e Khodi* he states: *Beware of Hafiz the drinker/His cup is full of the poison of death*.⁷¹ Iqbal proceeds to castigate Hafez for praising wine as a remedy for the horror of the resurrection and whose Islam appears in the guise of an unbeliever. Interestingly the expression "the beloved's eyelashes make holes in his faith" suggests that Iqbal may have classified Hafez as one of the pantheist Persian mystics (as discussed in Chapter 3). Hafez is also vilified for idle "chit-chat", and he is also described as a sheep who gives "weakness the name of strength", and his "musical instrument leads the nation

astray", so "Go independent of the congregation of Hafez/Beware of sheep and beware."⁷²

Much of the validity of the criticism directed at Hafez depends of course on the interpretation of his verses and the understanding of the words that he employed: is the wine metaphorical or does it refer to the earthly Shiraz wine, and is it the divine beloved with whom Hafez is so enamoured, or is it the handsome wine-bearer, or is it his patron? It is this very ambiguity in Hafez's *ghazals* that perhaps explains their abiding popularity in Iran (and elsewhere for that matter). (In his consideration of why some literary works remain "classics" David Tracey has argued that such texts help "found or form a particular culture. On more explicitly hermeneutic grounds, classics are those texts that bear an excess and permanence of meaning, yet always resist definitive interpretation".⁷³ Indicative of this is the amount of ink that has been spilt on the topic of Hafez's *ghazals*.)

The ambiguity that scholars have found within Hafez's *ghazals* is partly attributable to his reluctance to associate himself with any one group and his criticism of most of the power-brokers in his time. Thus one can find disparaging remarks about Sufis,⁷⁴ jurists,⁷⁵ kings,⁷⁶ and law-enforcers⁷⁷ within Hafez's *ghazals*, while (most of the time) he is happy to transcend formal affiliations, hypocrisy and any restrictions on his life-style. This has led many scholars to recognise the significance of the term *rend* in Hafez's work, which has been translated as "inspired libertine".⁷⁸ Because the *rend* attempts to transcend hypocrisy to lead an authentic life, it is easy for most Persians to establish a private bond with Hafez. In the words of Shayegan, "Every Persian finds in him a part of himself, discovers in him an unexplored niche in his own memory, a fragrant recollection from the interior garden of which he is the unique guardian."⁷⁹ While this is obviously an exaggeration (to which Kasravi and his like testify), there can be no doubting the popularity of Hafez. It may well be the very ambiguity of these verses that contribute to the "excess and permanence of meaning", and it may have something to do with Hafez's freedom of spirit, and his refusal to submit to figures of authority that enable the Persians to realise that Hafez's grievance is also theirs; Hafez articulates the pains and sufferings of generations of Persians but also offers hope (as Nafisi indicates).

Kasravi's criticisms

Hafez, in fact, was a *kharabati*. We have always considered him a *kharabati*. His *kharabtiism* was not due to belief. Rather it was the result of his mind being full of several contrary sets of ideas, and he was left bereft of faith. It is for this reason that he was inclined towards *kharabatism*, for it conforms most to having no faith.⁸⁰

This is Kasravi's most succinct attempt to define Hafez's views, and to assess the validity of these comments it is necessary to appreciate what he understood by the term *kharabati*. Kasravi admits that this is a term that he has invented,⁸¹ and

he attributes this world-view to 'Omar Khayyam and to Hafez. He elaborates on the meaning of *kharabati* in some depth in his work "What does Hafez Say?" and typically, he makes rather bold claims concerning the emergence of the *kharabatis* in Iran, which as will be shown leave much scope for discussion and criticism.

For Kasravi, *kharabatis* were individuals who considered the world meaningless and futile. It was impossible to understand the world's purpose (if there was one), and therefore, the *kharabatis* even criticised its creator. Since there was no means to know any truth about the world, the *kharabatis* belittled reason and intellect, and they regarded those who attempted to improve their circumstances with pity or scorn. The only path to happiness was hedonism, especially in wine-drinking and singing and dancing about the beloved, and this is the philosophy that Kasravi attributed to Hafez and Khayyam.⁸²

Kasravi argued that the *kharabatis* became widespread in Iran in the wake of the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century, when Mongol rule paid no particular respect to Islamic tradition. This meant that the *kharabatis* were free to indulge in drinking wine, whereas previously they had to be cautious not to offend the Islamic sentiments of the rulers and the religious authorities. In fact, Kasravi argues that the Mongols were content to give the *kharabatis* free reign in propagating their fatalist philosophy that encouraged lethargy and hedonism. This was because such a philosophy did not encourage Iranians to rise up against the cruelty and terror that the Mongols perpetrated. However, the *kharabatis* did have opponents, including the Sufis, and the conflict between the two groups, according to Kasravi, is reflected in much of Hafez's poetry.⁸³

The conflict between these two was initially the result of the Sufis' respect for Islamic purity laws and their respect for the prohibition to refrain from drinking wine. Therefore, they condemned the practices of the *kharabatis* who responded in kind by castigating their critics and also by mimicking some of the Sufi institutions; the *kharabatis* substituted the *khanaqah* with their taverns, or *kharabeh*,⁸⁴ and the Sufi *pir* with their own Magian wine-bearers. Moreover, the similarity between the Sufis' love for God and the possibility of witnessing God through a *shahed* was matched by the *kharabatis*, who instead spoke of drinking wine in the name of love and in remembrance of their own *shahed*. Kasravi claimed that in spite of this conflict between the two groups, a degree of compatibility developed between them, and for this reason some Sufis believed that *kharabatism* was a station that they themselves had to traverse in their quest for perfection.

The depiction that Kasravi offers of the *kharabatis* as a significant social group that adopted Sufi trappings and yet broke with the Sufis bears a vague resemblance to certain individuals and the groups that appeared during the mediaeval period. For example, the Malamatis (People of Blame), who emerged largely in Khorasan, were ascetics who were concerned to conceal their piety and avoid ostentatious pride in their spiritual achievements. There were some Malamatis, according to Hojwiri (d. 1071), who abandoned the *shari'a* and committed irreligious acts to incur blame by which they could overcome their pride.⁸⁵ However, although the Malamatis might seem to have been an antinomian group of

individuals that caused offence to some pious Muslims, they held a completely different religious view to Kasravi's *kharabatis*; they believed in God and in a world in which there was purpose. Another group of individuals that resembled the mainstream dimension of Sufism were the *javanmardan* (often translated as chivalrous young men). *Javanmardi* (chivalry) was by the eleventh century one of the stations that a Sufi had to pass on his journey to God, and by the twelfth century, *javanmardi* organisations had sprung up throughout Asia Minor, Iran and adjacent regions, and their rituals and beliefs were similar to those of the Sufi orders.⁸⁶ However, the *javanmardan* could not commit themselves completely to the Sufi way,⁸⁷ and one wonders whether it is such groups of young men that are described by Ibn Battuta on his travels in Turkey and Iran.⁸⁸ However, the mediaeval literature indicates that the *javanmardan*, like the *Malamatis*, were devout Muslims who had a deep belief in God and His purpose in creation, and this conflicts with Kasravi's view of the *kharabatis*.

Despite this there may be a link between Kasravi's *kharabatis* and *javanmardi* because the latter have been associated with hoodlums called the '*ayyar*. In the tenth and eleventh centuries the '*ayyarun* were gangs of self-appointed law-enforcers who sometimes engaged in acts of extortion and plunder.⁸⁹ By the twelfth century, Ibn Jawzi links the '*ayyarun* with the semi-Sufi *javanmardi* associations but portrays them as charlatans who take peoples' property.⁹⁰ One wonders whether *javanmardi* groups or '*ayyarun* degenerated from their more "lofty" ideals and engaged in such acts of extortion and frequented the *kharabat* where the outcasts and marginalised might have congregated.

Another type of individual that is associated with the *kharabat* is the *rend* (translated in English as rake, ruffian, pious rogue, brigand, libertine, lout and debauchee).⁹¹ Kasravi would have been aware of Hafez's use of the word *rend* (especially as it featured predominantly in the interpretation of Hafez's *ghazals* in Mahmud Human's 1938 study, see Note 92). For Human, Hafez understood a *rend* as the individual who did not accept any established belief or creed and who committed acts that were contrary to the *shari'a*.⁹² In well-known mediaeval Persian histories, the word was used to describe groups of thugs or mercenary gangsters, and in Hafez's time in Shiraz there were urban militias of *runud* (the plural form of *rend*), who followed a "mafioso code and tended to ignore many of the rules of the *shari'a* such as the prohibition on drinking.⁹³ This being the case, it is possible that Kasravi was referring to the *rend* by the term *kharabati*. This possibility is strengthened by the similarity between such urban militias with groups of the '*ayyarun*. However, to attribute to these groups the (irreligious) world-view that Kasravi bestows upon them (that this world is meaningless and futile) is problematic because so little is actually known about them. Moreover, Kasravi's text suggests that such groups were a major influence in Iranian society, perhaps as great as that of the Sufis themselves, when there is no evidence that this was indeed the case.

Kasravi's claim concerning the significance of the *kharabati* conflict with the Sufis is reduced to nothing by those scholars who have claimed that the Hafezian

rend was a trope, the main function of which was to highlight hypocrisy in society (whether that of the ascetic, Sufi, jurisprudent or judge). In the words of Yarshater,

Hafez's attacks on the pretenders of virtues is not limited to witty or derisive barbs; he employs a stratagem far more effective than merely satirizing them. To humiliate and embarrass self-righteous hypocrites, he takes the dregs and derelicts of society and enthrones them as paragons of virtue, even as *pirs* or saintly Sufi leaders. These are the *rend* "debauchee", the *qalandar* "dissolute hoodlum" the *pir-e meyforush* "wine selling *pir*".⁹⁴

While Kasravi portrays the *kharabati* (or *rend*) as a person who does not know the purpose of the world and who enjoys wine and song, he failed to give adequate attention to the socio-political message in the Hafezian *rend's* criticisms of the establishment. It is ironic that the Hafezian *rend* is just as individualistic, antinomian and iconoclastic as Kasravi was in his lifetime. The politically subversive nature of Hafez's *ghazals* was lost on Kasravi who focused more on both the moral issues including the bacchanalia and gazing at young boys and theological questions such as the criticisms of God. The contradiction between Kasravi's Hafez who enjoined the reader to lethargy, hedonism and resigning oneself to fate and the Hafez who condemned the powerful but hypocritical figures in society is glaringly obvious. Hafez was a public figure and his tongue was, perhaps, felt to be as sharp as any sword, and highlighting this dimension of Hafez's *ghazals* (despite it being a "hagiographic approach"⁹⁵) could have provided early twentieth-century Iranians with a national hero, indeed, one whose bravery paralleled that of Kasravi in his own criticisms of the avaricious classes among the ulema and élite of Reza Shah's Iran.⁹⁶

Kasravi's classification of Hafez as fundamentally a *kharabati* led him to reject the belief that has been held by many Iranians that Hafez's *ghazals* should be understood mystically,⁹⁷ as he claimed that Hafez's poetry is "full of criticisms of the Sufis"⁹⁸. He was aware that there were some who rejected his theories about the conflict between the *kharabatis* and the Sufis and that Hafez was a Sufi who wrote *ghazals* that were critical of the hypocritical Sufis.⁹⁹ Indeed, Kasravi was familiar with the argument that words such as wine, love, *kharabat* and *shahed* were understood in a mystical manner, a feature to which he points in *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, with reference to the poetry of Shaykh Mahmud Shabestari. Reference has been made above to the parallels between the *kharabatis* and the Sufis, and the similarities caused much confusion between the two. For this reason, in his *Golshan-e Raz*, Shabestari explained the meaning of these technical terms, for example: *Wine, candle and the shahed have the same meaning/for he is disclosed in each form*, and *The kharabat is the nest of the bird of the soul/the kharabat is the place of no station*.¹⁰⁰ Kasravi rejects the interpretation that Hafez was a Sufi and claims that sometimes one can discover Sufi ideas in his *ghazals*, but he composed such verses

purely for his own benefit. He states curtly, "Hafez was not a Sufi, he was a *kharabati*."¹⁰¹ To some extent Kasravi should be applauded for not limiting Hafez to the mystical interpretation; however, his refusal to see any other possibility except for his being a *kharabati* is a view that is just as blinkered as the opinion that Hafez wrote only mystical *ghazals*.

Kasravi credits Hafez with having written Sufi verses, yet he does not limit the poet to this, as he lists the various influences upon his thought, which all found expression in his *ghazals*: the Qur'an, Greek philosophy, Iranian history, astrology, fatalism and, of course, *kharabatism*. The refusal by Kasravi to limit Hafez to a single interpretation is a line that has been followed by many scholars in recent years (indeed, it is now recognised that Hafez was very much influenced by the social conditions of his times and that perhaps many of his *ghazals* can be understood primarily as eulogies and as serving a political function – a point that Kasravi too makes, although he condemns those poets who engage in flattery to earn a living). However, for Kasravi the range in Hafez's *ghazals* suggested confusion, as he was not prepared to permit a more "human" poet, who might have certain Sufi sympathies at one point in his life, agnostic tendencies at another time, and who might have written poetry to express his joys at life's pleasures.

The methodology that Kasravi employed to promote his idea that Hafez was a *kharabati* and not a Sufi betrays his amateur approach towards literary studies. As mentioned earlier, advances had been made in Iran between the 1920s and 40s in the study of Hafez, as several critical editions and scholarly articles had been published, which if Kasravi had been familiar with them could have helped him in his analysis of Hafez's *ghazals*. The limitations of "What does Hafez Say" are all too apparent when it is compared with the works of his contemporaries such as Human's contribution to Hafezology, which also bears the title "What does Hafez Say?"

Human's work is 163 pages in length, and it is divided into two parts: the first of which deals with poetry in general, while the second focuses upon Hafez. Within the second section there is a sub-section entitled, "What does Hafez Say?" that succinctly expresses in two distichs what he believes to be Hafez's main teaching: *Oh heart! Go and drink wine, live the life of a libertine (rend) and refrain from hypocrisy/It will be a surprise for me if you teach a better way than this* and *Be a lover ('asheq), because one day the world will end/and you will not have understood the purpose of existence*.¹⁰² Human then proceeds to investigate the possible meanings of the important words, or the technical terms, in each of these two distichs. So, for example, Human lists the various possibilities to explain the purpose (*maqsud*) of the phrase "Go and drink wine": it could be the purification of the lower soul and coming close to the Truth; a second possibility is that it is a means to become unaware (*bikhabari*); another understanding is that it results in becoming liberated from doubt and confusion; it may also result in the scorning of intelligence, knowledge and asceticism; and finally, the purpose may be to distance oneself from sorrow. He cites verses from Hafez and Khayyam to illustrate these

interpretations, before progressing on to an examination of the purpose of the expression "lead the life of a libertine", and he lists thirty-nine distichs in which the word libertine appears in Hafez's *ghazals*. Human proceeds in this fashion (to interpret Hafez through Hafez) to establish the meanings behind the two distichs, although his method is not perfect (citing distichs in which the same technical terms appear has the disadvantage of isolating the technical terms from their immediate contexts, thus potentially missing their significance and meaning within the *ghazal* as a whole). Despite being more thorough and scholarly in his presentation of elements of Hafez's work than Kasravi, Human should not be considered an uncritical admirer of Hafez. He concludes that "the meaning of most distichs of a single *ghazal* from Hafez apparently are not related to one another, moreover, finding the principle intention and purpose of each *ghazal* is not an easy task".¹⁰³ Kasravi would certainly have agreed with these views, although he would probably have added a few choice adjectives, such as "Stupid Hafez!"¹⁰⁴ or "Hafez the criminal!"¹⁰⁵ or "Hafez, speaker of balderdash!"¹⁰⁶ Moreover, Human was cautious enough to appreciate that the collection of Hafez's *ghazals* (*divan-e Hafez*) as it has been handed down through the years is incomplete (*nāqes*) and unordered (*bi-tarbiyah*), and one cannot understand Hafez (*shenasa'i-ye Hafez*) through them.¹⁰⁷ That is to say, it is extremely difficult (although attempts have been made)¹⁰⁸ to classify the *ghazals* on a chronological basis that may offer some insight into the possibility that Hafez's world-view may have developed and changed (something that Kasravi does not even consider). Moreover, as an extension from Human's conclusion, the *ghazals* may not necessarily reflect Hafez's own personal world-views (especially when it is considered that some *ghazals* could have been written to pander to a local magnate or that some may have been written as a mental exercise).

Kasravi's weakness as a literary critic manifests itself in his remarks about the only whole *ghazal* that he cites in "What does Hafez Say?" In fact, this *ghazal* may not even have been written by Hafez, as it does not appear in the critical editions that were published by Khalkhali and Qazvini and Ghani in the 1920s–40s. The problem of identifying whether a particular Hafez *ghazal* is genuine has been noted by several scholars,¹⁰⁹ and Kasravi could have been expected to select a *ghazal* for analysis that had received a "seal of approval" from Khalkhali or Qazvini. (Indeed, in 1962 Sa'id Nafisi published the complete works of Owahdi Isfahani (famous as Maraghi)¹¹⁰ (1274–1338) in which the same *ghazal* appears under his name rather than under Hafez's.¹¹¹ Nafisi adds that some of the verses in Owahdi's *ghazals* were so good that they were attributed to Hafez, and people just accepted this.¹¹²)

Even if Kasravi is forgiven on this point, it is still possible to assess his criticism of the *ghazal* in "What does Hafez Say?" His main argument is that poets were so concerned with perfecting the rhyme of the *ghazal* that the distichs as a whole were incoherent. In other words, the subject changed from verse to verse, whereas the *ghazal* by tradition was supposed to have been limited to a single or at best just a few related subjects. In order to weigh Kasravi's argument, the *ghazal* is

presented below, with its distichs numbered:

- 1 No one has a place in our heart except for the friend
Give the two worlds to the enemy, for the friend is all we need.
- 2 If our wheat-coloured friend desired half a barley-grain,
In our eyes both worlds would be worth [just] a single lentil.
- 3 Do you remember when you were with others all the time?
Oh, I could not breathe without recalling you!
- 4 You are like a candle and the people follow in front of and behind you.
No! I can't describe you well. There is no front or back for a candle.
- 5 The person who turns away from you because [he is afraid] of the
sword is negligent.
Doesn't the fly truly understand the pleasure of tasting sugar?
- 6 I remember when I yearned to see many [different] things.
But when I saw you I had no wish but to witness you.
- 7 Even if the people are afraid of the night-patrols
I am in such a state that the night patrol cannot distinguish
me from my shadow.
- 8 Your alley was flooded with my tears [that were] like an ocean, and I am
scared that once more
These worthless rivals will float to the surface, like straw.
- 9 Oh Hafez! This path is not for the legs of [this] lame carcass of yours.
So take a rest that no dust will be churned up by this horse.

Kasravi claimed that in order to construct a *ghazal*, the poet would make a list of the rhyming words (in the *ghazal* cited above he lists, for example, *kas* (no one), *adas* (lentil), *nafas* (breath)) which then leaves the train of thought in the *ghazal* at the mercy of the rhyming scheme; in other words, the meaning of the distichs have no real relation to one another.¹¹³ However, Kasravi's argument is extremely weak, and it is an easy task to construct links between the distichs and, indeed, to read the *ghazal* as a unified whole. In fact, the *ghazal* in question conforms to the views of G.M. Wickens who, in his "focal theory", argued that the distichs share a focal point. "They come together in the same way that the spokes on a wheel converge at the hub."¹¹⁴ (Although the unity of the *ghazal* appears to be quite apparent, it would be hasty to assume that poet is actually referring to love (divine or earthly), for as Meisami has indicated, the allegory or imagery in Hafez's *ghazals* "serves as a background against which to treat a more specific aspect of the suppliant-goal relationship, that of poet and patron"¹¹⁵.)

The topic of the cited *ghazal* falls within the traditional subject matter of love. The first three distichs describe the yearning of the subject for the beloved, which causes the former to transcend all worldly distractions. The fourth distich turns to the beauty of the beloved who is described as a candle, the light of which attracts people from all directions. (This brings to mind the Sufi imagery of the moth diving into the flame of the candle; however, to read the poem only in

such a mystical fashion would be to deprive it of its “excess of meaning”). Distichs five and six describe the pain and pleasure of love, which is a typical theme in love poetry (which has its Sufi parallel in the *qabz o bast*, that is, depression and elation, the various moods that the lover experiences, which are influenced by the presence or absence of the beloved). It seems that Kasravi was particularly perplexed by the fifth distich for he returns to it twice in *Hafez Cheh Mi-guyad*. The humble fly is such a persistent creature that it keeps returning to the sugar bowl despite the numerous attempts that may be made to get rid of it. It stands in contrast to the weak efforts made by some humans to gain access to their sweetheart, who may run away at the slightest hint of trouble or danger. The sixth distich also returns to the theme of the first, namely the attention and devotion that is focused solely upon the beloved. The seventh continues in the same vein, as the lover has no concerns for what others, such as the night patrol, may think about his love. The only concern that the lover has is with potential rivals (distich eight) who might attract the attention of the beloved. Viewed with an understanding of the common theme of the beloved being a reluctant male figure, the *ghazal*’s meaning becomes apparent. As Yarshater has observed,

the love...[for the reluctant male lover] – even though accepted in poetry – is not condoned by the Law, hence the indifference or acerbity of the beloved, the scandal of revealed love (*rosva’i*), the advice of nay-sayers and dispensers of wisdom against such love, the oppressive hindrance of the beloved’s warden or chaperon (*raqib*), and the poet’s burning envy of the other admirers and lovers of the beloved.¹¹⁶

The flaws in Kasravi’s criticisms are all too apparent, as for example, he calls the eighth distich “immeasurably weak and foolish, and it is clear that was only for rhyming the word *khas* (straw)”. However, in the light of Yarshater’s comments it is clear that the meaning been skillfully crafted; the lover has become so besotted and frustrated by those “worthless chaperones” (*raqiban*) that he cries floods of tears, thereby bringing attention to himself and causing the *raqiban* to re-appear. The word *raqib* has been translated by Yarshater as “chaperon” but it also has the meaning of a rival, yet whatever way *raqib* is translated, the verse still makes perfect sense.

The other distich that Kasravi mentions is the second, which he argues is weak because the poet was caused to use the word *adas* (lentil) in the rhyme. However, the second distich repeats the message of the first, but the poet re-enforces its meaning by utilising the Persian literary devise of *mura’at al-nazir*, combining the three items of a similar kind (wheat, barley, lentil) within a single distich. Moreover, one wonders whether the poet is alluding to the actual identity of the beloved in this fashion (if it is to be given an “earthly” reading), after all, the beloved’s skin tone is described as wheaty (*gandom-gun*) and one wonders whether

the name of the beloved is in some way associated with *adas* or *jaw* (barley). The name of the beloved is

frequently... mentioned in the body of the poem... It also happens that the poet dispenses with naming the patron explicitly, designating him only by his title... or by some epithet clear enough to contemporary audiences, but less easy for us to decipher.¹¹⁷

Such cautious remarks about the problems that contemporary readers face in comprehending the “real” meaning of the poem stand in contrast to Kasravi’s curt comments that the verse is meaningless.

In the final distich of the *ghazal* (the *maqtaʿ*), the name of the poet is often revealed, which not only provides the poem with a signature but also gives “an elegant conclusion for which a separate motif could be chosen, and which need not be particularly connected to the subject matter of the poem”.¹¹⁸ In the cited *ghazal*, the poet is able to distance himself from the poem by referring to himself and claiming that this path of love (whether gnostic or earthly) demands too much of his lame carcass. Such a conclusion in itself warns the reader that the main theme of the *ghazal* does not necessarily reflect the concern of the author; as some have indicated, *ghazals* were written for a variety of reasons (entertainment, panegyric, mystical devotion, earthly love and poetic competition).¹¹⁹

In the final section of “What does Hafez say?” Kasravi offers another *ghazal* for analysis, although his citation includes only seven distichs of the thirteen contained in Khalkhali’s edition (number 10) and in Qazvini’s edition (number 5). Kasravi’s purpose in inserting this *ghazal* is to reveal the loose connections between the verses. Remarkably, he does not even cite the *matlaʿ*, the opening distich, in which, according to Kasravi, the poet decides the rhyme of the *ghazal*, neither does he give the final distich in which Hafez’s name is mentioned. Kasravi commences with the second distich:

We are shipwrecked. Rise up and blow o favourable wind!

Perhaps then I shall see once more the friend.

Yesterday, the nightingale sang sweetly in a party of roses and wine,

“Bring the morning wine! Wake up you intoxicated ones.”

O miracle-maker! In gratitude for safety,

One day seek out the begging dervish.

The comfort of the worlds is in the explanation of these two phrases:

Be generous with friends and be civil with enemies.

They didn’t let us into the alley of good-reputation

If you don’t approve [of us], you [will have to] change fate.

Look! Alexander’s mirror is the *jam-e Jam*.

When it is shown to you, you will see the circumstances of King Darius.¹²⁰

Don't be arrogant, for you, like a candle, with jealousy will burn
The sweetheart, in whose hand the hard stone becomes wax.

Kasravi's comments are limited to criticisms concerning the shifting of images (shipwrecks, wine-parties, helping dervishes, offering advice, the *jam-e jam*, etc). While it is true that Hafez bombards the reader with a variety of pictures, the coherence of the *ghazal* does become more apparent on applying Wicken's "focal theory". The main message in the *ghazal* is that the human condition is such that there is a lack about which man is aware (even though the actual identity of this lack remains a mystery) and therefore man is ever seeking a return to a golden age when everything was perfect. Despite this lack, man should be grateful for what is given to him (life, security and good wine), and he should lead a good life by being kind and generous, for to be otherwise will bring its own form of chastisement. For those seeking a mystical interpretation, it is worth bearing in mind Schimmel's observation of how Jalal al-Din Rumi saw "how the fragile boat of human existence is shattered when the wave *Alast*, the sudden reminiscence of the primordial covenant, reaches the soul".¹²¹ This primordial covenant "is mentioned frequently under the rubric of the 'banquet of *alast*', the festive meal",¹²² and therefore Hafez's mention of a party of wine and roses makes complete sense.

The distich that discusses *jam-e Jam* is somewhat problematic, although a solution may be found by comparing Kasravi's version with that of the other critical editions. Khalkhali's version reads *jam-e mey* (chalice of wine) (rather than *jam-e Jam*) which in the context of the poem makes better sense, for by drinking wine one is able to experience the happiness of kings, perhaps filling the lack that one feels. Moreover, the reading "chalice of wine" offers an explanation as to why Hafez has not been permitted into the "alley of good-reputation", for within Hafez's own lifetime the prohibition on wine-drinking was, at times, strictly enforced. In effect, Hafez enjoins his readers to enjoy life as much as possible. It is worthwhile to present the penultimate and final distichs of Khalkhali's edition (which Kasravi omits) in order to reveal the message of the *ghazal*:

The Persian speaking Turks are life givers,
Saqi! Give the good news to the *rends* of Fars.
Hafez! Don't put on this wine-stained *kherqeh*.
O pure sheikh! Forgive us.

The "Persian speaking Turks" were the *saqis*, the wine-bearers who were generally slaves, for as Yarshater remarks,

the best types [of *saqis*] were reputed to come from [Turkestan]. They were noted for both their good appearance and their bravery as soldiers...at their best, such slaves were excellent soldiers and fine horsemen, played a musical instrument, were refined in their manners and proved delightful companions.¹²³

It is not surprising, then, that Hafez describes these “Persian speaking Turks” as life givers. His desire for the companionship of such *sagis* and his desire to eat, drink and be merry leads him to reject the *kherqeh*, which stained with wine, epitomises the hypocrisy of the Sufis (as opposed to the begging dervish). Moreover, realising that his life-style may be considered less than pious by some, Hafez begs to be excused by the “pure” Sufi sheikh.

Aside from his consideration of these two ghazals in “What Does Hafez Say?” Kasravi “analyses” two complete *ghazals* in his chapter on Hafez in *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*. Both of these *ghazals* are included within Khalkhali’s edition of the *Divan-e Hafez*, (numbers 19 and 103), so at least on this occasion his comments apply to *ghazals* that were written by Hafez.

- 1 That night of destiny¹²⁴ which the people of seclusion say is tonight
O Lord! From which constellation comes the effect of this fortune?
- 2 So that the hands of the unworthy do not touch your ringlets
Each heart in the circle is busy with the recitation “O Lord, O Lord”.
- 3 I am dead in your chin-dimple¹²⁵ (*chah-e zanakhdan*) and from all
around
Hundreds of thousands of souls are beneath the collar of [your]
double chin.
- 4 See the radiance of the perspiration on his cheek, when the warm face of
the sun
Is jealous of that bead of sweat, each day of his is night.¹²⁶
- 5 Within the retinue that was saddled upon the zephyr wind.
I spoke with Solomon: “I am mounted on an ant.”¹²⁷
- 6 My brave cavalier, the moon is the mirror reflecting his face,
The crown of the exalted sun is the earth for the hooves of his
mount.
- 7 The water of life drops from the beak of eloquence,
The crow of my pen, [caws] “In the name of God”, what an
inspiration!.
- 8 I don’t want to abandon the friend¹²⁸ and the chalice of wine
Ascetics forgive me, for this is my religion.
- 9 He who fires an arrow at my heart with a wink of an eye,
And with a smile beneath his lips, sustains Hafez’s soul.

There is little in Kasravi’s analysis of the *ghazal* cited above except for his paraphrasing of each distich and his comments that the poet was conditioned by the rhyme. However, the *ghazal* manifests unity through its working of the traditional theme of expressing love. The beloved is so beautiful that the poet declares that in his/her creation there must have been some beneficial workings of the heavens to determine such beauty. Even the Sufis have to busy themselves with reciting their ritual *zeker* to avoid the temptation of devoting their attentions to the beloved. The poet claims that the beloved attracts so many admirers and even the sun is

jealous of his/her radiance. Everything else pales into insignificance before the beloved, as the lover is like an ant compared with the Solomon of the beloved, and the sun and moon too serve the beloved in their own ways. The seventh distich seems slightly strange, and it would function better had it been positioned at the very end of the *ghazal*, as a *maqtaʿ* (indeed, in the editions of Khanlari and Qazvini and Ghani, this distich does appear as the *maqtaʿ*). The eighth and ninth distich state that the poet will remain devoted to the beloved, for he is helpless to resist the charms of the beloved. He asks the ascetics (perhaps the Sufis of the first two distichs?) to forgive him, for the beloved and wine are his religion. The *ghazal* can be read in a mystical or a secular fashion, and it is even possible that Hafez may have addressed it to a patron or someone at court. Moreover, the boast of the seventh *distich* (or Khalkhali's *maqtaʿ*) suggests that Hafez might have composed the *ghazal* purely for his own enjoyment. What is clear, however, is that Hafez has produced a *ghazal* the distichs of which lead effortlessly into the central hub.¹²⁹ Kasravi may have been correct that Hafez assembled a list of rhyming words, but even if the poet did this, he was able to fashion them into a coherent message without contradictions.

Kasravi's complaint with the second *ghazal* in *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat* is that it offers a melange of meanings, ranging from Kharabati (distichs 1, 2, 3,) to Sufi (distichs 5, 7, 8, 9, 10), to the praise of love (4) to meaningless nonsense due to a desire to use a certain word in the rhyme scheme (distich 6).¹³⁰

- 1 When you gaze at the mystery of *jam-e Jam*
You can see the earth of the tavern is collyrium for the eyes.
- 2 Begging at the door of the tavern is a wonderful elixir,
If you do this, the earth turns into gold.
- 3 Beneath the azure sky don't be without wine and music
Because sadness is expelled from the heart with this melody.
- 4 March resolutely in the station of love
Because you will profit much if you make this journey.
- 5 Come on! The treatment of tasting the presence (*zawq-e hozur*) and order
of affairs (*nazm-e omur*)
Is possible for the people of witnessing (*aht-e nazar*) through the
grace of bestowal.
- 6 When the earth of your intention removes its veil (*neqab*),
Its service is like a breeze of magic.
- 7 [If] you do not leave the mansion of nature
How can you pass down the alley of truth (*ku-ye haqiqat*)?¹³¹
- 8 The beauty of the friend has no veil [or]¹³² adjoining covering,
Let the dust of the road settle so that you can see.
- 9 O heart! If through the light of ascetic practice you become aware,
You will abandon the veil like smiling women.

- 10 But if you want to be a follower of the beloved and of the chalice of
 wine
 Don't think that you can do anything else [than this].
- 11 If you listen to this splendid advise, Hafez,
 You will be able to walk along the royal way (*be-shahrah-e tariqat*).¹³³

In a comment that typifies his opinion of this *ghazal*, Kasravi says,

See how the strength of the rhyme grabs the poet and drags him from pillar to post. See how the strength of the rhyme throws the poet out of the tavern and drags him to the *khanaqah*, and makes him turn to his ascetic discipline.¹³⁴

While it is true that it is easy to read a literal meaning into Hafez's *ghazals* (that is to say, he speaks non-metaphorically of wine from grapes and taverns), in this *ghazal* it makes more sense to read Kasravi's "*kharabat*" distichs (numbers 1–3) and the non-Sufi distichs (4, 6) in an '*erfani*' fashion.

“WHAT DOES HAFEZ SAY?”¹

Ahmad Kasravi

In the name of the pure Creator

For years now European orientalist who are political tools have praised Hafez and his poetry. This praise, which is nothing than a political device, has been the origin of the mistaken path [taken] by a great many Iranians, who imagined it was right to have recourse to Hafez's book. Since Hafez's works are confused, nonsensical, and a single meaning cannot be found in them, people troubled themselves to know his intention, and this has been the origin of difficulty for many people, for they themselves have been deceived and they have also deceived others.

I am writing this as a remedy to that difficulty and to prevent those troubles.

What do the poets understand of poetry?

Just as readers know, we are not opposed to poetry, and we don't say that there should be no poetry. Our argument is that [composing] poetry in itself is not the purpose [of poetry]. Poetry is [a form of speech] and a speech is a follower of need. We say that if someone has something to say, he can say it in poetry or he can say it in prose. We have no complaint with him.

Our complaint is with someone who doesn't have a topic in his speech, but in the name of poetry he busies himself in making this speech. We say this is idle talk. We say that if someone has been a lover then he composes *ghazals*. But it is unwise for someone with a tranquil heart to lie and speak about love and compose love *ghazals*.

Poetry is like a house. A house is for living, and wherever there is a need [to live somewhere] there is a house. It is unwise if someone builds a house in a desert or on top of a mountain where no one lives.

This discourse is simple and easy [to understand]. Anyway, the poets have not understood this, and they fancied that poetry should have a single, separate purpose, without them being tied to any requirement. They composed much poetry, including *ghazals*, *qasideh*, *qat'eh*, single verses and quatrains, they boasted to themselves, imagining this was a profitable skill or profession. There is a person

in Tehran that I saw one day in a party, and he complained to the people and said, “I have composed 50,000 poems for the country.”

This has been the method of the poets, and Hafez had this very same method. He too believed that poetry had a purpose, separate [from expressing a need], and so he spent his whole life reciting poetry and composing *ghazals*. Many times, people have searched to find Hafez’s intention from his *ghazals*. It is necessary to say, “his intention was only composing the *ghazals*, and he imagined this to be a skill and profession, and he had no other intention.”

How did the poets compose *ghazals*?

Just as the readers know, poets in Iran give more importance to the rhyme in composing the *ghazal* than in anything else. Therefore when the poet wants to compose a *ghazal*, he decides on its rhyme (or it is better if I say the words that rhyme with the *qafieh*), and he writes them as a list under each other or next to each other. For example, *kas, bas, adas, nafas, pas, magas, havas, ‘asas, khas, faras, sepas* and he thinks of a sentence for each one and produces a poem, and in this way constructs a *ghazal*. In truth, the train of thought is in the hands of the rhyming scheme, and the poet has no choice but to follow it.

Hafez too was a follower of such a method, and we will produce a poem of his as proof of this.

- 1 No-one has a place in our heart except for the friend.
Give the two worlds to the enemy, for the friend is all we need.
- 2 If our wheat-coloured friend desired half a barley-grain,
In our eyes both worlds would be worth [just] a single lentil.
- 3 Do you remember when you were with others all the time?
Oh, I could not breathe without recalling you.
- 4 You are like a candle and the people follow in front of and behind you.
No! I can’t describe you well! There is no front or back for a candle.
- 5 The person who turns away from you because [he is afraid] of the sword
is negligent.
Doesn’t the fly truly understand the pleasure of tasting sugar?
- 6 I remember when I yearned to see many [different] things,
But when I saw you I had no wish but to witness you.
- 7 Even if the people are afraid of the night-patrols,
I am in such a state that the night patrol cannot distinguish me from
my shadow.
- 8 Your alley was flooded with my tears, [that were] like an ocean, and I am
scared that once more
These worthless rivals will float to the surface, like straw.
- 9 O Hafez! This path is not for the legs of [this] lame carcass of yours.
So take a rest so that no dust will be churned up by this horse.

When you consider this *ghazal*, each verse is different from the subject matter [that preceded it], and the connection of the verses is only through the rhyme. Therefore, many of these verses have a bad meaning, and it is clear that the intention of the poet was only to use the rhyme and did not pay much attention to the meaning of the sentences.

For example, the second verse has a very weak meaning, and without a doubt the intention was nothing other than using the word *adas* (lentil). In the same way, many of the other verses especially the eighth is immeasurably weak and foolish, and it is clear that it was only for rhyming the word *khas* (straw).

I wish readers would put aside that good opinion of Hafez and forget the name “tongue of the unseen” and other foolish praises that they have heard of this poet. They should weigh each one of these verses with a clear mind and try to see what confused meanings come from each one. In order to appreciate this point easily, it is better that each verse is turned into prose and then analysed.

Most of Hafez’s *ghazals* (although I don’t say each one of them) are of the kind where the poet’s intention has been to compose a *ghazal*. In this too he followed the customary method of the poets, [namely] in first writing out the rhymes and constructing sentences for each one and then constructing a couplet. For this reason most of that poetry has no meaning, and it is clear that [the poetry] has been composed merely with the consideration of the rhyming word.

For example, consider this verse:

*With the resolution of repentance I cast a spell, and I look for a divine omen (estakhareh).
Repentance-shattering Spring dawned, so what can I do?*²

Is a divination (*estakhareh*) required for repentance? What have repentance and divination got to do with one another? *Estakhareh* is when someone consults God through the Qur’an, *tasbeih* beads or something else about whether he should or should not do such and such an act, and this is the belief of the common Muslims.

From the words “repentance” and “*estakhareh*” one must acknowledge that Hafez was a Muslim and that he realised wine-drinking was a sin. But consider well whether a Muslim should engage in divination for repentance for drinking wine? Does it mean that a Muslim should consult God about whether he should be repentant for drinking wine? It can be argued that the poet’s intention was only in making the rhyme, and his aim was solely to use the word *estakhareh* and put it into the *ghazal*.

*If one night I speak of repentance
Rinse my mouth with wine from the impurity of such a thing.*

Previously the poet was a Muslim and spoke of repentance and *estakhareh*. But here he has spoken a terrible insult against Islam. If the word repentance comes to my tongue, my mouth will be unclean and so I will clean it by rinsing it with wine. Here too, he only wants to use the word *gharareh* (rinse) and make it rhyme, and it is for this purpose only that such contents are so base.

What did Hafez know?

In Iran during Hafez’s lifetime several kinds of knowledge and awareness (both good and bad) were current and we can list them below:

- 1 the Qur’an, its interpretation and Islamic commands;
- 2 classical philosophy (*falsafeh-ye yunan*) and old and new weavings of philosophers;
- 3 Sufism and the endless evil teachings of the Sufis;
- 4 *Kharabatism* and the poisonous evil teachings of the polluted;
- 5 the struggle between the *Kharabatis* and the Sufis (we shall explain this);
- 6 the history of Iran and its legends (including the stories of Khosraw, Alexander, the *jam-e Jam* and others);
- 7 astrology and astronomy;
- 8 fatalism and the evil teachings of the fatalists.

Hafez was aware of all of these and one must say that they blocked his understanding and wisdom and confounded his mind. Just as we have said many times, generally in the adoption of contrary and inappropriate ideas one’s wisdom is obstructed and one’s mind is confused. The understanding of whoever accepts in his mind the sayings of the *Kharabatis*, the evil teachings of the Sufis and the Islamic commands must either be so strong that he can rule over these three which conflict with each other, or without a doubt, his understanding and wisdom will be confused among them, and slowly he will become useless. In particular, Hafez drank wine, and in this he was not careful enough, for this was another cause of his brainwashing.

It is better for people who say Hafez did not drink wine, and that his meaning of wine and the tavern was something else, to read his poetry and understand his lying. In many places the poet declares that his meaning was that very wine which is made from grapes and is red in colour:

*What would happen if you and I drink a few glasses of wine?
Wine from the blood of grapes, not from your blood.*³

*The light of our eyes is the beauty of the daughter of the grape.
Although she is within a translucent veil and a grape skin*⁴

*That bitter wine which the Sufi calls “the mother of impurities”
Is more lawful and delicious to us than the kiss of a maiden.*⁵

Anyway, Hafez sought to use all of this knowledge in composing poetry, and his sole purpose was composing the *ghazal*, and in this task, just as we have described, he first wrote out the rhyming words and then by constructing sentences, he turned it into poetry. Sometimes he used the Qur’an and its expressions in this task:

*Recite a verse (ayati) from the beloved’s cheek.
It is the explanation of stations (maqamat) and the unveiling of the unveiler
(kashf-e kashshaf)!⁶*

And sometimes he used the classical philosophy:

*After this there is no doubt for me concerning the single substance (jawhar-e fard)
Because your mouth is sweet proof (khush estedlal) of this point.*⁷

Sometimes he used the Sufis' fabrications:

*My body's dust is the veil of the soul's face
Oh how wonderful when the veil is torn aside from this face!*⁸

Sometimes he turned to *Kharabatism* and became very bold:

*Speak of the minstrel and wine, and seek less the secret of time (dahr)
For no one has revealed or unties the wisdom of this architect!*⁹

Sometimes he got involved in the struggle with the Sufi lovers whom he scolded:

*It is not expedient that the secret should be divulged from behind the curtain
But in the gathering of the vagrants (majles-e rendan) there is no news that is not
(spoken).*¹⁰

Sometimes he used Iranian legends:

*Take the cup with courtesy, because it is made
From the skull of Jamshid, Bahman and Qobad.*¹¹

Sometimes he sought assistance from the astrologers and their myths:

*Seize the tress of the beautiful moon-faced one, but do not speak of it.
Because felicity and misfortune are derived from Venus and Saturn.*¹²

Sometimes he engaged in fatalism and became quite extreme:

*Since God has determined my fate for the tavern
In the meantime tell me what is my sin that I should be punished.*

Aside from giving praise, [recounting] the story of the rose and the nightingale, wine and sodomy (*badeh va sadeh*) and others like these, sometimes too, all of a sudden he would speak [unrelated] nonsense.

In brief, the intention of Hafez was constructing rhyme and composing *ghazals*, it was not making a discourse and expressing meaning. Therefore you see a couplet on a different topic in his *ghazals*, and no connection can be seen in it [with the other couplets]. The person who wants to make a speech and deliver his meaning must pay attention to the connections between the expressions and not

say unconnected things. But since Hafez’s intention was something else, he did not pay too much attention, and he should not have done this. For example why does he say,

*Oh wind! If you pass the shore of the Aras River
Kiss the earth of that river-bed, and render your breath musky.*¹³

It is not the case that Hafez was attached to the Aras River or, in truth, even remembered it. The Aras River is in Azarbayjan, and Hafez had only heard of its name and had no affection for it. His purpose was merely to use the word “Aras” in a *ghazal* whose rhyme was “as.”

So, just as we have said, Hafez was aware of the commands of Islam, *Kharabatism*, Sufism and classical philosophy, and all four are contrary to one another. He did not have a firm attachment to any one of them, and so at any moment he would pay attention to one of them and make sentences from them, and so his discourses are disjointed and contradictory.

Hafez, in fact, was a *Kharabati*. We have always considered him a *kharabati*. His *kharabatism* was not due to belief. Rather, it was the result of his mind being full of several contrary sets of ideas; he was left bereft of faith. It is for this reason that he was inclined towards *kharabatism*, for it conforms most to having no faith.

Anyway, the purpose is that people who desire to search and know what Hafez said have given themselves a futile task that is full of difficulty. For just as we have said, first, Hafez was not concerned with making a [coherent] speech. Second, Hafez was not firmly attached to any belief, for if he had wanted to make say something then there would be no result in his words.

The story of Hafez is that of a man who practised writing like a machine, and it is for this reason that he wrote each sentence that came to his mind, one after the other, and so, for example, I have such a page, and I want to relate several of its sentences: “Your work has been very difficult. A friend is a person who takes the hand of a friend. Having no money is a terrible thing. Manuchehr is a good boy.” The person who writes like a machine writes such sentences on the page, and it is inappropriate that someone should want to discover the meanings in these sentences and say that the intention of this writer was such and such.

What did the *Kharabatis* say?

The *Kharabatis* were a group who considered this world as futile and worthless, and they made many criticisms of its creation and its creator:

*Oh foolish one! This moulded earth is naught,
And this ninth heaven is naught.*¹⁴
*The world and its affairs are all nothing,
A thousand times I have verified this.*¹⁵

They described this world as worth little and they held it in contempt:

*All the products of this world of being are nothing.
Bring wine! The causes of the world are also nothing.*¹⁶

They said that a person would get nowhere through seeking and the secret of this world could not be known:

*No one has access to the secrets behind the curtain
No soul is aware of its arrangement.*¹⁷

They considered wisdom and understanding as abject and valueless:

*If there is no benefit to you from [drinking] wine, this should be sufficient for you:
It makes you unaware of reason's whisperings for a while.*¹⁸

They said that whatever has been said about this world is nothing but a lie and a myth:

*Those who were known for discernment and courtesies
Served as candles for the companions in unveiling the smallest of things.
But they never showed a path out of this dark night.
They told a fable and were dreaming.*¹⁹

They said that life was nothing but a dream and an illusion that comes and passes:

*The states of the world and the origin of this life
Are dreams, imaginary, lies, and sighs.*²⁰

They criticised the creator and asked: “Why did he create all these people and then destroy them Isn’t this what a potter does? He makes a pot and then smashes it to pieces.”

*The composition of the cup that is intermixed,
The intoxicated allows not the smashing of it!
So many beautiful faces, feet, palms and hands,
Moulded with love and smashed in wrath.*²¹

They said that it is unknown whether there is a beginning or an end for this world and we don’t know where we came from and where we will go:

*For a while is our coming and going in the world,
Unknown for it is the beginning and end.
No one can tell us the truth of this meaning:
From whence is our coming to where is our going?*²²

*It is unknown why in the pleasure-house of the earth
The painter of beginning without end decorated me so.*²³

From these sayings of theirs, they drew the [following] conclusion. It was pointless in this world to use one's intellect and reason, and it was pointless to think of the past and the future and in addition nothing could come of busy-ing oneself in effort. It is better neither to be sorrowful about the past or future nor take care of anything but to remain happy. If it was not possible to attain one's own pleasure [through effort], it could be obtained through wine. They said: “A life is no more than a single breath in which [we now] exist. We must treasure it. Moreover, we should be happy and intoxicated, and spend our time [listening to the music] of the lute and tambourine in the *kharabat* (tavern).” They continued: “This world has existed in this way for countless centuries and humans have come and gone continuously, and we will depart too after a while”:

*Since no-one can guarantee tomorrow,
At least make this melancholy heart happy.
Drink wine under the moonlight. Oh moon!
The moon will shine for many evenings, but will not find us [here].*²⁴

*Sit [and drink] wine, for this is Mahmud's right.
And listen to the lute, for this is David's melody.
Don't think anymore of what has not come and what has gone.
Be happy because this is the purpose of existence.*²⁵

*You can control the wind if you empty your heart.
In a moment even Solomon's empire will vanish.
Yesterday the old wine-seller, may he be remembered well,
Said: “Drink wine and forget the sadness of your heart.”*

This was how these people regarded wine. However, they went to extremes and praised it too much. They made it their most precious thing, and they spoke nonsense about it:

*When I am dead, wash me in wine,
Recite prayers over me with the wine and the cup.
If you want to find me on the Day of Gathering
You will find me in the earth of the tavern.*²⁶

*How fortunate the drunken vagrant (rend-e mast) who renounced this world and the next
And had no sorrow, great or small.*

*O Spring rain-cloud! Make the vine succulent.
If the raindrop can become wine, then why can't it become a jewel?*²⁷

In this way, they considered themselves faultless, and if anyone criticised them, they claimed [an attachment to] fatalism and said God made us in this fashion. God desired this for us:

*Events have been determined even before this.
The pen has been unconcerned with good and bad.
To you it allocated your fate, whatever it may be,
And so our sorrow and our effort are futile.²⁸*

*They did not allow us to enter the alley of good-reputation.
If you don't like it, then you must change fate.²⁹*

*Leave me alone oh ascetic, and don't criticise those who suffer.
For they gave us nothing but this gift on the Day of Alast.*

Sometimes too, they engaged in humourous discussions and jokes and said: “When God created us from clay, he mixed that clay with wine, and therefore we have given our heart to wine, and we cannot give it up.”

*Since my body was mixed with wine in eternity without beginning
Ask the prosecutor why I should give up wine.³⁰*

Since most of them were people who were hungry and were louts who did not seek work and they themselves and their family were left hungry, in their own words they “pawned their cloaks and documents” and drank wine. In reply to the people who found fault with this lack of endeavour they clutched at fate (*gesmat*) and said:

*Listen to this point for it will free you from sorrow:
You will drink blood if you seek the sustenance that has not been provided.³¹*

*We are not ashamed of poverty and resignation.
Say to the king that daily sustenance is determined.³²*

And when these people came across the religiously minded people and the conversation which turned to the other world and the recompense, they resorted to ridicule and said: “God has wished that we drink wine, so why should he give recompense?”

*Each sin that we commit is not without his command.
So what is the reason for the burning on the day of Resurrection?*

Or they cleverly adopted another argument and said: “From the sins and good works of others what profit or harm will come to God that he gives recompense to us and reward to others?”

*Come! The beauty of this world is not diminished
With your kind of asceticism, and my kind of infidelity.³³*

These are the arguments of *Kharabatism* that we have taken from Khayyam, Hafez and others. At first glance these arguments appear authoritative and attractive. For this reason many people have been deceived by them.

But it must be said [the arguments] are absurd. In truth, there are two strands to these arguments. One is that this world is futile, and that we know nothing of its beginning and end. The other is that we should not engage in any effort but spend our time in intoxication and pleasure.

It must be said that first, this world is a well-adorned and up-right creation, and this is clear with just one look or glance that a wise and able creator created it and that an order operates in it (since we have discussed this topic in other places we will not busy ourselves with it here). Second, if it is supposed that this world is futile, its meaning will not be that we should not bother with any effort but merely engage ourselves in pleasure and intoxication.

People who do not think of the past and future will not find any peace of mind or pleasure in life, and their fate will be nothing other than falling into the hands of foreigners. People must think of the past and future of this world, futile or not, and adopt a path wisely for living in it.

If a wise man is thrown into a dark prison he must think how to live there and how to lighten the difficulties that he faces there. At no time should he say that since there is no beloved here I will think no more and try no more, so I will lie down and sleep. The premise, which they have chosen, is a mistake, and the conclusion that they have drawn from it is more mistaken. Another of their mistakes is fatalism, and they have composed all of those verses about it.

Sufism in Mongol times

We said that one of Hafez's topics for discussion was the struggle between the Sufis and the *Kharabatis*. In order to make this clear we need to present an introduction to the history and to the behaviour of the Sufis.

Once Islam triumphed over Iran, one of its effects on Iranians was the increase in feelings of bravery and militarism. Iranians themselves were a war-like people, and Islam too made war and manliness a duty for everyone. From this perspective in the first centuries of Islam in Iran this feeling was very strong. [But] if someone searches into Iranian history in the ninth and tenth centuries, he will see that the Samanid dynasty was founded in Transoxania, and it was continually at war and in conflict with the Turks, and in the words of Estakhri, there were always 300,000 horsemen ready on the border. It was Estakhri who wrote: “In each of the houses of the farmers that I visited, a sword was hanging from the wall, and I saw a horse saddled in the stable. Everyone was ready for war.” On the other side of Iran, the brave men of Daylam descended from their mountains and established the basis for rulership in each corner, and the Buyid dynasty advanced as far as Baghdad and took the Caliphate under control. After everything, Soltan Mahmud Ghaznavi advanced to India, ambushed cities and took the spoils of war. Anyway, groups of Iranian warmongers who had remained idle

raised the standard and hurried to join the Muslim war with the Turks of Asia Minor.

In one year we find that 80,000 people joined the war from Khorasan alone. See the extent of this feeling for war. See how the zeal (of these people) increased and how they were intoxicated.

We see this until the beginning of the eleventh century. But when we reach the beginning of the thirteenth century, suddenly we see it is turned upside-down. Suddenly we find that there is an absence of zeal and manliness in Iran, because during this period Chingiz Khan came to Transoxania and spent four years in killing, and during this time there was no resistance [against the Mongols] in Iran. In this period Yama and Sutay, two Mongol generals, with 30,000 horsemen passed the Jayhun River, and the killers passed through Khorasan and came to Mazandaran, Iraq, Azarbayjan and Qafqaz. They killed people, plundered cities and they joined their military base in the north of the Caspian Sea. Alas! What was the reason for this reluctance among the masses of people?

This in itself is a puzzle. During those 200 years from the eleventh century to the thirteenth century, why did the Iranians change in this way? What happened to the Iranian people in those two centuries?

No one has investigated this topic, and no one can give an answer to this question. But we know the answer. In those centuries in Iran, several evil teachings became widespread, and as a result, war mongering and manliness surrendered their place to carelessness and apathy. One of those evil teachings was Sufism, another was Batenism, and another was *Kharabatism*.

We know that a number of people have not believed [this] and will say: “Have evil teachings persuaded the people to become apathetic?” We say: “Don’t you know that the origin of all human tasks is the mind, and the mind, too, is the follower of the thoughts that are in it.” Can a *Kharabati* (who considers this world as nothing and absurd and says that one should not be concerned with the past and future) hope to be zealous and make a sacrifice for the people and the country? Can a Sufi (who makes no distinction between justice and tyranny, darkness and light, straight and crooked and in that melancholic world imagines that the blood-thirsty Mongols are “God”) hope to take up the sword and hurry off in warfare?

In addition, not one of the Batenis, or the followers of Hasan Sabbah,³⁴ came to kill Hulagu³⁵ or any other Mongol general or even put fear in them during the Mongol period, [even though] they killed thousands of Iranians with the dagger. That [policy of] assassination³⁶ too was nothing other than a kind of base madness.

Anyway, there is no doubt that the essence of the weakness and helplessness of the Iranians *vis-à-vis* the Mongols was these three evil teachings. This is one of the hidden secrets of Iranian history that must be discussed at length and in public, but here we do not have the opportunity for that, so we will be satisfied with these few sentences.

In the period of the Mongol victory, Batenism lost its brightness and splendour because the Batenis had fought with the Mongols and the Mongols were not

content to leave them alone. But Sufism and *Kharabatism*, more than before, found more room to maneuver because the Mongols were not opposed to the existence of different religious denominations. One can suppose that because the Mongols did not see their benefit in [such] opposition, they considered the circulation of these evil teachings as a basis of their own strength – whatever the case, in the Mongol period, both Sufism and *Kharabatism* increased and flourished and both advanced very much.

The Sufis adopted a really unpleasant method, which was to seek benefit from events through lies. For example, if some brave general became a king, they made up a lie and said that when that person had come to see our Shaykh, our Shaykh said, “We bestowed kingship on this person,” or if someone died or was injured they said, “Since he had caused our Shaykh to suffer, God has punished him.” This was a method of theirs. The truth is that they ate the bread from others, for they frightened the people with these lies, and they made them give them abundant supplies of food.

This is one [example] of unchivalrous behaviour that all parasites and beggars share. I have not forgotten that one of my acquaintances, in years gone by, had a young son who suddenly passed away, and a Seyyed of his neighbourhood instead of coming to see and comfort him and lessen his grief, unchivalrously sent a message. “Since you have not looked after the Seyyeds, look what happens!” On many occasions my acquaintance told me this with a heart full of pain, showing his misery.

From this kind of behaviour of the Sufis you can discover their inner [character] and find out what evil consequence those unfounded teachings have had and how they have blackened their hearts.

Yes, in the Mongol period too, even though the Sufis knew that their path and method was the cause of the peoples’ misfortune, and they lamented silently due to the heart-wrenching fate of the masses, they resorted to profit seeking, and when Soltan Mohammad Khwarazmshah killed Majd al-Din, one of their shaykhs, they turned it into a story and said: “God sent the Mongols in revenge for the blood of Majd al-Din Baghdadi.” They raised this cry and cooled the peoples’ hearts [from anger towards the Mongols]. [This was] a misfortune for the people, and [the Sufis] invented such a lie to further their own cause. When Khwarazmshah killed Majd al-Din he felt sorry, and in order to beg forgiveness he went to his master (*ostad*), Abu Bakr Khwarazmi, and took with him much gold. Abu Bakr did not accept it and said: “There is no gold that can cover the blood-price of my son Majd al-Din. You too will lose your head for his blood-price, and my head and others’ too.” [In addition], they invented a miracle for Shaykh ‘Attar who, weak and infirm, was killed in Nishapur, and they said: “When the Mongols killed the Shaykh, that headless body ran for 9000 feet, and then fell down.”

With these shameful lies [the Sufis] advanced their interests. It promoted both the Mongol victory and Sufism. Because of the loss and injury which the Iranians had suffered, they fell into enemy hands. So either they should have sacrificed

themselves and defeated [the Mongols] with bravery worthy of the enemy or else they should have taken themselves, eyes covered from the manly zeal to the retreats of Sufism or *Kharabatism*.

How the *Kharabatis* appeared

The entry of the Mongols into Iran had made the *Kharabati* aim easy [to achieve]. Because, until that time, making and selling wine was specific to the Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians. But they did not do this in the city, they chose somewhere outside the city, in ruins where they both sold wine and played the lute and tambourine, and if a *Kharabati* wanted (in their words, to wet the lips and listen to the lute and tambourine), he would have to go outside of the city. Anyway, he was afraid of the Muslims, and if someone made [wine] in his own house sometimes he would be caught by the *Mohtaseb* who would smash the wine jar, and sometimes his head, and often there were other problems. But when the Mongols came to Iran, they gave freedom to all religious denominations and to all acts, and those punishments were abolished, selling wine was allowed, taverns were opened in the city and the loud sound of the lute, tambourine and flute was heard. The Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians who had spent many long years in harm and suffering from the Muslims supported the Mongols who viewed the Muslims with contempt. They were rude [to the Muslims] and started to criticise and belittle [them]. In fact, they no longer had any fear in insulting and criticising the Muslims. For it was very good that the out-spoken, fearless *Kharabatis* gathered in their taverns and got drunk and listened to useless things which included criticisms for the creator and his creation, and they insulted the Muslims and emptied their heart of spite. It was this that enabled them to increase the amount of pleasure for the *Kharabati* vagrants (*rendan*).

Because of this, it was advantageous to the Mongols that the oppressed and afflicted Iranians busied themselves with wine, the lute and the tambourine, and forgot that oppression and affliction, and did not think of seeking revenge, in particular, that wine-drinking and love was twinned with the zeal-numbing, evil teachings (such as the evil teachings of the *Kharabatis*), [it was like the situation when] blood pours from a wound and zeal and manliness become weak.

It was very advantageous to the Mongols that one group advised the people and said, “Forget the past and don’t think about the future, and try to be happy.” They said, “Whatever comes into a man’s head is from God.” They added, “There is no profit in endeavour and effort.” This was the best assistance for the Mongols who had gathered more than a million soldiers. The Mongols (who had shed so much blood in Iran and had taken all those girls captive and then conquered the country and placed the yoke of obedience around the necks of the unfortunate people) wanted Iranians to forget the past, not to recall the bloodshed, not to mention those girls, not to think of the future, not to wish for freedom and not to interfere in anything but entrust even trifling things to the Mongols, and they would spend their time in the tavern in pleasure. [The Mongols] wanted

Iranians to see all events as coming from God, and the afflictions that they had suffered as part of their fate, and they wanted them to forget about taking revenge on Chingiz and Hulagu.

How pleasant it was for the Mongols when they heard that there was an Iranian poet who said:

*Know the enmity between the enemy and friend is from God
Because he controls the hearts of them both.*

How pleasant it was when they heard one wise man, commenting on the killing of the people, say:

*Blood, impurity, and a handful of veins and skin,
You would not think what an affliction it is.*

How pleasant when they heard this madness, namely, the Sufis who said, “God sent Chingiz Khan in recompense for the blood of Shaykh Majd al-Din Baghdadi,” or when they heard that those mad people are “*arefs*” and have the eyes to see a king, for they recognise the king in any clothing. Therefore they considered the murdering Mongols “God,” and when one of their *pirs* saw a Mongol his melancholy disappeared, and he said: “Did you come here in these clothes thinking that I would not recognise you?”

Whether Sufis, *Kharabatis*, poets, *arefs*, whatever they said was to their advantage. I do not know whether the Mongols understood this, and due to their understanding and insight they gave ground to the Sufis and *Kharabatis*, and because of this they increased their rudeness and bravery, or whether because they had no partisanship, more opportunities fell to the Sufis and the *Kharabatis*.

Whatever the truth, the heart-wrenching story is amazing because when the foreigners came to the country, and caused it ruin and suffering, the skillful and brave people should have stood up and driven away the despair from the people and incited their bravery. But at that very same time the Sufis and *Kharabatis* found a great opportunity for themselves and made efforts in the manner we have described.

So, the shaykh in the *khanaqah* gathered around himself parasitical and pitiless dervishes, and with those dirty beards and those tatty dervish cloaks, they stamped their feet and clapped their hands, and with a hundred arrogant cries they recited:

*This ecstasy of our sama‘ is not metaphorical,
This dance that we perform is not a game.
Say to those unaware: “Oh, unaware one!
Don’t talk so long about stupid things”*

So the vagrant of the taverns (*rend-e kharabat*) got up and started a brawl, shouting:

*Saqi! Our cup has been lit up by the light of wine.
Minstrel! Say that the affairs of the world are at our desire.
We have seen the reflection of the friend's cheek in the cup.
Oh unaware one! We always have the pleasure of drinking.*

In this way they spent their time without any vexation, and they poured out their evil, poisonous teachings. It is amazing that they did not get on together but were embroiled in a series of conflicts, which we want to describe here.

The conflict between the Sufis and the *Kharabatis*

This conflict between the Sufis and the *Kharabatis* is one of the episodes most worthy to be told, and since it has not been written anywhere, we will present it through the poetry of the *Kharabatis*. Since a large portion of Hafez's poetry is on this topic, we will present it here.

One should know that because of all their impurities, the Sufis made pretences to abstinence and purity, and so from the perspective of Islamic belief, they considered wine, the lute and the tambourine *haram*. They had no alternative but to oppose the *Kharabatis* and were unrelenting in their criticism of them. As a result the *Kharabatis* opposed the Sufis, and in the Mongol period a group gathered and flourished, and did not desist from evil-speaking and verbosity with the Sufis, and they composed poetry criticising them:

*Say to the two-faced, kherqeh-clad, hypocritical ascetic
That the arm pretending to abstinence is long, and the sleeve is short.
You wear the kherqeh to gain the favour of the people,
You lead the servants of God away from the path through hypocrisy.³⁷*

The Sufis criticised them, and in reply [the *Kharabatis*] too resorted to [the doctrine of] fatalism and said “God created us as *Kharabatis*. What can we do?”

*Oh pure Sufi, don't obstruct me from wine, because the All-Wise
In pre-eternity purified our clay with wine.
I didn't come to the tavern from the mosque of my own [volition]
From the day of pre-eternity this was already pre-determined.³⁸*

Or they sat and asked themselves, “Why are their acts better than ours?”

*I fear that there will be no advantage on Judgement day.
The halal bread of the shaykh is earned through our haram “water” (ab-e haram).³⁹*

*The ascetic has the sherbet of Kawsar, and the ‘aref has the begging cup.
What is the will of the creator between them?*⁴⁰

They said, “This un-hypocritical wine-drinking of ours is better than the ascetic hypocrisy of the Sufis.”

*Drink wine because there is no hypocrisy in it
It is better than selling asceticism in which appears the face of hypocrisy.*⁴¹

They said, “Even the Sufis drink, but [they do it] in private.”

*Smash the jar! The Sufi does not know its worth.
The home-made stuff is just like a crimson ruby [wine].*⁴²

If you read the poetry of Hafez and other *Kharabatis* [you will see] it is full of criticisms of Sufism. One must say that the Sufis have been punished for their shameless acts by those more shameful, [and this controversy reached the extent] that it became an open conflict because the *Kharabatis* did something astonishing. The first thing was only a joke and something ridiculous, but gradually it became serious, and I will describe it because this episode is so astounding.

The *Kharabatis* replied to the Sufis in the conflict that existed between them. They wanted to be a step ahead of the Sufis and so they established the *kharabat* or tavern (which was the place for the sons of the Magians who collected the cups, the intoxicated, gamblers, the lute and tambourine players) as the equivalent of the [Sufi] *khanaqah*. They said, “Here too is a place for traversing the stations (*tay-ye maqamat*).” And they turned to the Sufis and said, “Who are you that [you consider] us as worthless? What do you have there [in the *khanaqah*] that we don’t have here [in the *kharabat*]?”

The Sufis said, “We have gathered here seeking God.” The *Kharabatis* replied, “Is God only found in the *khanaqah*? May one not seek him in the tavern? We too seek him in the tavern.”

*Ascetic come straight to the Kharabat. Don’t be afraid!
Fear in this path is danger. Don’t be afraid!
He who fears him does not come to us.
Hidden from you, he is in our tavern. Don’t be afraid.*

*In the Kharabat of the Moghan I see the light of God,
More amazing is that I see such a light in such a place.*⁴³

*Each person seeks the friend, whether sober or drunk
Everywhere is the house of love, whether mosque or synagogue.*⁴⁴

Just as the Sufis spoke of “love for God” so too did the *Kharabatis* who said, “We drink wine in the name of that very love.”

*We have seen the reflection of the friend's cheek in the cup
Oh uninformed one! We always have the pleasure of drinking.*

Just as the Sufis were shameless on the topic of that very love and called their *shahed-bazis* “love for God”, [the *Kharabatis*] did not lag behind the Sufis in that shamefulfulness:

*Friends! Don't criticise Hafez for looking at beauty (nazar bazi)
For I consider him one of the lovers of God.⁴⁵*

They said, “We know what the Sufis know, but we should not reveal it”:

*It is not expedient that the secret should be divulged from behind the curtain,
But in the gathering of the vagrants, (majles-e rendan) there is no news that is
not [spoken].⁴⁶*

*Ask the secret within the curtain from the intoxicated vagrants
For this is not the state of the ascetic of lofty stations.⁴⁷*

The Sufis had a *pir* for each *khanagah*. [The *Kharabatis*] called them derisively, “the Magian, wine-selling *pir*” with that wine-stained, dirty beard, and they have also called them “our *pir*.” They said, “This [*pir*] knows a number of secrets about God and he teaches us”:

*What difference is there if our guide was the pir of the Magians
There is not one soul for whom there is not an intimate secret about God.⁴⁸*

So they fabricated advice from the words of that very wine-selling *pir* (the one whose beard they would touch and at whom they would laugh each day, the one upon whose head and shoulders they would jump in an intoxicated state). And they propagated this advice:

*The first words of the wine-selling pir is this:
Abstain from the companionship of the impure.⁴⁹*

The Sufis said: “We try to kill the ‘ego’ in ourselves, and we die to ourselves in order to reach God.” They [the *Kharabatis*] have said: “The way to this is drinking wine. You have suffered for years to get rid of your ‘ego’. But since we drown the cup in one go, all at once we have become unconscious of the ego and have become selfless.”

*In the ocean of we-ness and I-ness, I have fallen for the friend.
[Drink] wine and be free in the happiness of we-ness and I-ness.⁵⁰*

*When from the goblet of selflessness you drink a cup of wine
Don't boast of “I-ness” through [your] selflessness.⁵¹*

The Sufis claimed that even though they were poor and hungry, they bestowed crowns upon kings and that they could make a king of whomever they wished, or they could take away his power to rule. The *Kharabatis* too have attributed this claim in flattery to themselves: “These uncouth beggars who gather in the taverns, each one (even if he makes a king out of a beggar, sells and drinks wine), has an eminent place before God, and they bestow crowns upon kings.”

*With the beggars in the tavern, the wayfarer of the path
Is courteous if he is aware of the secret of God.*

*At the entrance of the tavern are the vagrant Qalandar (rendan-e Qalandar)
Who give and take the crown of kingship.⁵²*

*Earth beneath the head and foot on the tip of Pleiades.
Look at the hand of power, and the office of the possessor of rank.⁵³*

Since the men were idle and had no shame, they spent their time in this flattery/ridicule and silliness, and sometimes, too, they played a game: one of them who had been a Sufi, and who after years in the *khanagah*, had not reached a “station” after [his] suffering and asceticism, and he thought that he would go to the *Kharabat*, and here “traverse the stations” (*tay-ye maqamat*). For this reason he came to the entrance of the *Kharabat* and knocked on the door, but the *Kharabatis* would not open the door for him, or they would say, “Your cloak is unclean, go and wash it and come back.”

*Clean [your cloak] and then [return] to the hospitable Kharabat
Because this Magian monastery will not be polluted by you!*

They had many of these kinds of games and jokes, and more surprising than all of this is that this shows the compatibility of the *Kharabatis* with the Sufis, for just as we have said, first it was a joke and a game, and gradually it took a different turn when most of the Sufis themselves too engaged in it.

This has been another task for the Sufis, each one of them boasted about vagrancy (*rendi*) (which was contrary to Sufism) and [each one of them] used the name *Kharabat* and spoke about drinking wine. This became another “station” that each Sufi had to traverse. Most of the Sufis who came after Hafez adopted and repeated his speeches (which were contrary to them). Hatef Isfahani⁵⁴ and ‘Esmat Bokhari⁵⁵ and others have spoken about the gift of sharing good judgement of speech (*sokhan-i sanji*). From this perspective one can understand the extent of their understanding and wisdom.

The inappropriate explanations that they offer

Just as we said, one of the topics from which Hafez sought benefit in his writings was this conflict between Sufism and *Kharabatism*, and many of his poems are on

this topic. This conflict arose at the beginning of the Mongol period, and it was something worthy of attention for idle poets and *Kharabati* foolish talk, for without a doubt, they have composed many poems on this topic (some of them are included in the biographies, but since I did not have any at hand, I could not see them). So Hafez followed this topic most, and he has given it a [certain] colour.

Just as we said, this conflict at first was [no more than a] ridicule and a joke, and in Hafez's poems a joking tone is clear:

*What difference is there if our guide was the pir of the Magians?
There is not one soul for whom there is not an intimate secret about God.*⁵⁶

The guide, according to the Sufis, was a man who was wise, aware and had undergone ascetic practices, and he had a large base. This was in contrast to the ignorant, wine-selling Magian *pir* whose job was among the most despicable. [Hafez] describes [this] and says “there is no difference. There is not one person for whom there are no secrets about God,” and it is clear that this can be nothing but a joke.

The people who are unaware of this topic of the conflict between Sufism and *Kharabatism*, and of the surprising episode that we have explained, have not understood the meaning of these lines in Hafez's poetry, and they say things such as: “Hafez battled with hypocritical Sufis and ascetics,” and they considered this as one of Hafez's skills. But one must say that this is a mistake.

I heard a story in my childhood which I must write here. Before the Constitutional period in Iran, pass-words (*nam-e shab*) were common. One night a group of singers and musicians were going to a wedding, and at the end of the evening when they were returning home, they didn't have the pass-word, and they had forgotten that they needed to know the pass-word to proceed. And so, when they reached the place where the sentinel cried from the distance “Who is coming? . . . Pass-word?” their leader thought of a plan and said to the musicians: “Play [your instruments] and sing at the same time ‘*Ardabil is the place of delight and joy*,’” which was a song that they used to sing in those days in Tabriz. The purpose of the leader was to please the sentinel and to go past without [giving] the pass-word. But the pass-word was indeed “Ardabil.” Therefore the sentinel believed that they knew the pass-word, and they had just given it in this manner. For this reason he shouted harshly: “The person who gives the pass-word should not play the tambourine. Say ‘Ardabil’.”

Now, one should say the very same thing to Hafez: “Mr Hafez! You should not be hypocritical in making speeches. There is no call for all this nonsense, all this meaningless praise of wine, all these words about sodomy, all this noise about fatalism or all of these lessons about intoxication and apathy.”

Indeed, Hafez criticised the hypocritical Sufis, but he himself called the people to fatalism, inviting them to intoxication and vagrancy (*rendi*). He invited them to sodomy and dishonour, all of which were worse than following the hypocritical Sufis. Stupid Hafez is rude to God in several places, which is the worst of sins.

A really horrible habit has become apparent among the Iranians, namely that when someone is praised or criticised, they deceive themselves about that person. We have experienced this in the episode concerning Ferdowsi, when in 1934 a congress in his name opened in Tehran and a great tumult about him arose. One person made Ferdowsi a general, saying that he had been aware of the prevailing military sciences and that he made a war plan in the episode of the war of the “seven places between Iran and Turan” (*haft khwan*) in the *Shah nameh*. Another made a speech in which he turned Ferdowsi into a medical doctor. Another person claimed he was a master of pedagogics and wrote about “teaching and instruction from the perspective of Ferdowsi.” Another called the *Shah nameh* the “Persian Qur’an” and said, “One can discover everything in it.” These people are not those who make up lies, but they have deceived themselves because of the spirit’s weakness. This is an illness that has been found among these masses.

In criticism too, [we find] it is the very same thing. Whoever thinks [someone] is evil attributes all kinds of evils to that person. Several years ago when they arrested Asghar Borujerdi, people went to see him, and when they returned they said, “It is clear from his eyes that he is a sinner (*jani*). When I saw him I realised that he was guilty and that he had committed these crimes.” They wrote the same thing too in the newspapers, whereas it was only a month previously that the crime was known and the police were hunting the guilty person. So, Asghar Borujerdi wandered around Maydan-e Sepeh each day, and the police were searching for the criminal, and I don’t know why these people who recognise criminals didn’t recognise him then?! Asghar’s eyes were just like the eyes of others from Borujerd, and there is no special meaning that can be derived from them.

This is an example of the helplessness of these masses. They cannot discover truths because the spirit and wisdom have become so weak, and because of this they are deceived and deceive themselves. All of that praise that they heap on Hafez! And when I got a copy of his book, I read it and saw that most of his poetry was completely meaningless.

For example, derive a meaning from this poem below:

*Yesterday I saw the angels knocking on the door of the tavern
They kneaded the clay of Adam and moulded [it] to a cup.*⁵⁷

What does the poet want to say? There is one meaning, that the *Kharabati* poets have repeated many times, that at the time that they shaped the clay and wanted to mould Adam’s body, they poured a little wine too on to it, and for this reason that love of wine remains in our heart, the children of Adam. Hafez too wants to say this. But he has turned the meaning upside-down and says: “They mixed the clay of Adam and moulded that too to the goblet (*paymaneh*)” – which is the vessel of wine, not the wine itself. It is a poem without meaning, but ask the Hafez-worshippers and see what meaning they give to this.

I have explained the story of the “*pir may forush*.” Just like the Sufis, each group [of *Kharabatis*] had a *pir*, and in ridicule and jest they made the tavern the same

kind of place as the [Sufi] *khanagah*. And the [*Kharabatis*] said: “We too have a *pir* here,” and they pushed the *Magian may forush* forward and called him their *pir*, and several times each day they would laugh at his beard and jump on his shoulders. But [now] people come and say that his [i.e. Hafez’s] meaning of *pir may forush* is the Commander of the Faithful, since they recognised him as their guide (*morshid*).

Not one of them asks: Oh witless one! ‘Ali is one thing and the name of the *pir may forush* is another. If it is true that Hafez called Imam ‘Ali Ibn Abi Taleb the *pir may forush* then this sin of his is sufficient.

The poet himself made his meaning clear. He says, there is nothing wrong if we take the *pir moghan* as a guide. Why, because he too has some secrets of God in his head. Just as we said, these arguments were in ridicule, but in any case you see that the poet apologised that they had taken a *pir may forush* as a guide. If the intention was ‘Ali, then oh ignoramous, what was the point of this apology?

Many times we have seen people, cheeks full of wind, reciting these poems of Hafez:

*We see the light of God in the tavern of the Moghan,
More amazing is that I see such a light in such a place.*⁵⁸

They recite this and take pleasure, and they pretend that Hafez made it understood in an ‘*erfani*’ meaning in this context. And he understood and took pleasure in it. One day I asked someone: “What is the meaning of this poem?” He said: “Why? Isn’t the meaning of this poem obvious?” I said: “No, its not obvious. The tavern of the Moghan, a place for wine, is very dirty and base, a Magian *pir*, with a beard and cloak stained with wine, selling wine, and deceitful and debauch children give goblets of wine to this and that person, a group of louts and merciless individuals have gathered there, and in his own words Hafez pawned [his] cloak and book and drank wine, and when they became intoxicated they composed useless verse, they cursed each other and they jumped around in an amusing fashion. This was the tavern of the Moghan in which the poet of Shiraz saw the light of God in that world of intoxication. This is the meaning of that poem.” He said: “No sir! It has another mystical meaning.” I said: “Tell me.” He was stuck and remained silent. It is not only this poem, and it is not only the poetry of Hafez. In everything it is in the same way that when you ask they cannot give you an answer. For an experiment, ask what the meaning is of Hafez’s conjecturing and all of his images?! Ask and you will see why they are stuck [for an answer].

Hafez’s stupidities reach the extent that he says:

*Don’t look with contempt at this benefactor of the wretched and weak,
Because the wayside beggar has the highest place by the throne of glory.*⁵⁹

Ponder well upon the second hemistich of this poem. What does it mean? Who is the wayside beggar? They are those dirty, shameful individuals who you see every day in the street leaning against the wall.⁶⁰ This one is naked, another has

wounded his fore-arm or shin with a brand (*dagh*), and another has placed in front of himself a child, half-clothed, with a trembling body and tearful eyes. A group of effortless, bad-habited individuals who have not sought employment have aroused the sympathy of peoples' hearts despite these bad habits, and they take a few pennies from them. Hafez, the speaker of nonsense, praises them and says, “Because the wayside beggar has the highest place by the throne of glory.” This is the extent of the stupidity of the philosopher of Shiraz. Now, if you question the supporters of Hafez, you will see that they have not paid attention to the meaning of this poem even though they might have read it a hundred times. Those with blind hearts have read it with great pleasure only because it is a poem of Hafez, but they have not understood the meaning.

A list of Hafez's evil teachings

Just as we said Hafez's main purpose was composing *ghazals* and constructing rhymes, it was not making arguments and making [his] meaning understood. It is this method that most of the poets adopted, especially in composing *ghazals*, and therefore you cannot see a connection in their verses. There is a story about someone who had a fur over his shoulders in summer time, and he was asked, “What is this? Why do you wear a fur in the summer time?” He replied that in the credit store there was no cloak, and since he had no money he had to purchase something on credit, and the fur was the only thing that the store had. For this reason he was content with it.

This is the story of the poets. Since it was necessary for them to use such and such a word in the rhyme they had no choice but to say whatever fitted the rhyme, in particular, Hafez, who had no special allegiance, said whatever came before him. He neither refrained from contradicting himself nor was he afraid of babbling; he neither was a follower of religion nor was he bothered with self-esteem.

Just as we said, Hafez spoke on several topics, most of which had no relationship with the other. For this reason if you read his poems, sometimes he is a *Kharabati*, sometimes a Sufi, sometimes a Muslim, sometimes he is a poet who composes flattering verses, sometimes he is a lover. One cannot even understand what his short discourses are about. Sometimes, since he finds nothing to say, he suddenly jumps in and says whatever he wants:

The person who turns away from you because of your sword is negligent.

Doesn't the fly truly understand the pleasure [in tasting] sugar?

*Your alley was flooded with my tears [that were] like an ocean, and I am scared that once
more*

These worthless rivals will float to the surface, like straw.

What is the meaning of this? Why must someone live his life with these stupid, useless arguments?

This is the worst method of the fortune that [can] come from [making] speeches that the poets have used. A speech is a power that is God-given, and it can offer great fortune. It can pour out knowledge and make thousands of people learned, it can explain truths, and it can lead thousands of misguided people on to the [right] path, it can offer advice, it can give counsel, it can incite the helpless masses and finally it can be the source of money and food. One can get each kind of fortune from making speeches. The worst kind of all of these is when someone wants to make a rhyme. He does this by making a list of several words, places each one in a poem and constructs a *ghazal* or a small poem. This is nothing more than an irrational game.

This is harmful because it sacrifices meaning to words. If Hafez had built bricks in place of this kind of poetry making, he would have found more value before the truth, because those bricks would have been of some value, whereas there is no value in these arguments of his. Aside from mixing many evil teachings in his arguments, he did much harm too.

Hafez, the criminal, not stopping with that, wasted his life and spent it in composing foolish talk; he even included an element of poisonous evil teachings in his argument. He left them as a keepsake, and they made millions of people empty-minded and polluted, just like Hafez himself. The harm in Hafez's poetry, more than anything else, is in this way, and I will produce a list of those evil teachings here.

(1) Nonsensical, limitless praise of wine. For what was all of this praise of wine? I do not say that wine is evil. But this is not the place to discuss [the topic of] the evil of wine. I ask what is its good? Isn't all of this praise about wine nothing but foolish weavings. One derives a little pleasure if a small amount of wine is drunk, but it causes giddiness and delirious ravings when more is drunk, and it causes vomiting and uncleanness if even more is drunk. Where is the good in such a thing? That praise which Hafez and others have heaped upon wine (they have pretended that wine unties knotted secrets and makes known the unfathomable) is nothing but nonsense. Each person has a duty to recognise Hafez as a mad babbler of nonsense just because of his poems:

*Come saqi! Give me that fire-water of the elect
So that I can find freedom from sorrow.*

*Faridun the attribute of Kaveh's banner
I hold up the jam-e Jam in allegiance.*

*Come saqi! Listen to this [lesson taught] by wine.
One draught of wine is better than the crown of a king.*

One can believe that 90 per cent of the Iranian wine-drinkers have been deceived by these poems of Hafez and others. I don't know what the supporters of Hafez say about these ignorant saying of his or what excuses they make.

(2) He made many criticisms of the world. There was a group of individuals who did not seek employment for themselves nor did they put their house or the tools of life into any order, and consequently they remained without any share of life's pleasures, and for this reason they spoke out seeking revenge and criticised the world.

*The product of the creator of creatures and the world is nothing more than this.
Bring wine because the causes of the world are nothing more than this.*⁶¹

*The world and tasks of the world are all nothing.
A thousand times I have verified this.*⁶²

*Don't seek righteousness for the vow has weakened because of the world.
This old woman is the bride of a thousand bridegrooms.*⁶³

If Hafez had profited from wisdom he would have known that he could not live in this world without a job or profession. He would have known that sitting in tavern corners and composing absurdities, and staring at this king and that minister, would make a prison of the world for himself, and for this reason he would have adopted a trade or profession, and he would not have needed to criticise the world.

The more [he makes] these criticisms of the world [he shows] he has not understood the meaning of the world and life and has offered unconvincing arguments. But these very unconvincing arguments have penetrated into [peoples'] hearts and it has led [their] thoughts [astray] and weakened their resolution. Today one of the reasons for the lethargy of the Iranians is these arguments. According to them, they do not attribute that worth to the world that they should engage in effort and hard labour. They desire this much from the world that they acquire food and clothing from whatever path there is and carry on living.

(3) He encouraged people to lethargy, laziness, baseness, indeed to begging and shamefulness:

*I am the slave to [that person's] will, who beneath the blue heaven
Is free from all the coloured entrapments.*⁶⁴

*What would happen to the world if we were poor?
Poverty is much better than kingship.*

*Don't look with contempt at this benefactor of the wretched and weak
Because the wayside beggar has the highest place by the throne of glory.*⁶⁵

(4) He repeatedly advocated fatalism:

*Be satisfied with what is given and don't frown
Because free choice has not been bestowed upon you or me.*

*Oh wise man, if suffering or comfort come,
Don't be attached to anything else because God does these things [to us].*⁶⁶

You may say they forced Hafez to teach people fatalism and he made these irrational evil teachings stick in [their] hearts, and for this you find very few *ghazals* of his that do not have these evil teachings. When the poet wants to speak about fatalism he reveals such animation that you would say that he wants the inheritance of his father from the people. This topic [of fatalism] is another example of the ignorance and non-comprehension of Hafez and others like him. A man with a blind heart saw with his eyes that each person who is busy in work derives some profit [from that work] and lives happily, and each person who passes his life (just like him), idle and shameless, remains poor, and therefore does not pull himself together but continually says that there is no free-will for us. You bloodsucker seeking sustenance that has not been provided!

(5) He criticises reason (*kherad*) which is the most precious gift from God, considering it worthless:

*I made an analogy and gave advice that in the path of love,
Reason is like a dewdrop that leaves a trace upon the ocean.*⁶⁷

*Don't scare us with the prohibition of reason. Bring wine!
That watchman has no work in our lands.*⁶⁸

According to Hafez one of the benefits of wine was that it gave humans some time away from the whisperings of reason.

*If there is nothing for you from wine, it is enough that you
Remain unaware of the whisperings of reason.*⁶⁹

Hafez supposes that there is no truth in the world and no profit is derived from reason, and he adopts one path for a life unlivd:

*Forgive the conflict of the seventy-two nations
They did not see the reality of the path, and so they invented fables.*⁷⁰

According to Hafez, these various sects (which are the consequence of reason not being used) are the result of the non-existence of any reality.

(6) He criticises God:

*Our shaykh said: "There was no error in [God's] pen."
Blessed be his pure sight, error concealing.*⁷¹

Hafez sits in an abject state in a corner of a tavern and criticises God. [Yet he praises] Shah Yahya⁷² who is considered among the most cowardly commanders of Iran during the Mozaffar dynasty,⁷³ and all of these rulers were blood thirsty, cowardly and breakers of [their] promises and truces. The father blinded the son, the son killed the father, and brother waged war against the brother. But Shah Yahya was the worst and most cowardly among them all, and it could be said that he was the origin of that dynasty's decline more than all of these [others]. Yet Hafez praises such an unworthy commander and says:

*It is necessary and proper to honour your soul and wisdom,
Your favours upon the creatures and places [are] abundant and perfect.*⁷⁴

But with regard to the great creator he is arrogant and makes criticisms. They say, “Hafez was a philosopher, the philosophers reveal the imperfections of creation.” We say, “The philosopher shows his own faults, because he praises the ‘duty’ of one Shah Yahya for a few dinars,” and he says:

*On the day of Azal, a black drop from your pen
Fell onto the moon's face, which became the solution to all problems.*⁷⁵

*When the sun saw that black mole it said to the heart
“I wish I were that fortunate servant.”*⁷⁶

A philosopher would not show such ignorance.

These are the deficiencies in Hafez's *divan*, not taking into account that he boasted shamelessly of playing with young men and not taking into account that he composed the most eloquent poetry about Sufism, *Kharabatism* and other vain thoughts and caused them to take root in [peoples'] hearts.

Why is Hafez praised so much?

I know that people will say that if Hafez's poetry is so absurd and damaging then why have so many people praised him and continue to praise him? Why do the Europeans value him so much?

We reply: Why do you bother with what others value and praise. Judge with your own understanding and reason. God bestowed you with understanding and reason so that you could distinguish between good and evil. Others may say whatever they say. But if you are seeking after truths, you must consider and understand for yourselves. Hafez's poetry is either completely meaningless or else it contains injurious meanings. In the thousand or so *ghazals* that Hafez composed, perhaps you will not find [more than] ten verses that possess a wise meaning. I repeat: Hafez was concerned with nothing but making rhymes.

So that it is well-understood that this poet composed nonsense I shall consider and discuss the verses of one of his *ghazals*. He says:

*We are shipwrecked. Rise up and blow o favourable wind!
Perhaps then I shall see once more the friend.*⁷⁷

Here the poet's ship is ruined (or he is sitting in a ship) and he wishes for a favourable wind. But then suddenly he turns [to another point] and says:

*Yesterday the nightingale sang sweetly in a party of roses and wine
“Bring the morning wine! Wake up you intoxicated ones!”*⁷⁸

Yesterday in a party where roses and wine were present, the nightingale had also come, and it sings in Arabic, saying: “Bring the morning's wine! Wake up, even you, intoxicated ones!” That same nightingale was also intoxicated for it could not distinguish the night from the dawn and sought the evening's wine for breakfast.

“I recite poetry and seek the meaning from God.” Then, following this, he turns and says:

*O maker of miracles (karamat)! In gratitude for safety!
One day seek out the begging dervish.*⁷⁹

The ship is forgotten, the party of roses and wine is forgotten, and he sends a message to the possessor of miracles (whose identity is unknown) that one day he should seek out the dervish and the helpless. Following that he turns [to another topic] and says:

*The comfort of the worlds is in the explanation of these two phrases:
Be generous with friends and be civil with enemies.*⁸⁰

Here, Mr Poet offers counsel and says, “In order to secure tranquility in the worlds it is sufficient that you be gentlemanly with friends and that you help enemies. There is no need to sow, to reap, to weave, to chafe, to sow, to build or engage in other tasks.”

*They didn't let us into the alley of good reputation.
If you don't approve [of us] you [will have to] change fate.*⁸¹

They did not let Mr Hafez into the alley of good-reputation; he who sat idle, drank wine, composed nonsense, ate the bread procured through the hard work of others and did not take control of [his] freedom to choose. For example, if Hafez wanted to go and engage [himself] in a trade, or in lending and borrowing,

or if he took some land to plant [crops], his feet would have become paralysed and he would not have been able to do anything.

*Look! Alexander's mirror is the jam-e Jam
When it is shown to you, you will see the circumstances of King Darius.*⁸²

Alexander used to look into that mirror about which you have heard (you could see everything, far and near, in it). It was that very wine-chalice, and when you look [into it] the states of King Daryush (who lived several thousand years ago) will be shown to you. When this helpless poet saw nothing, all of a sudden he began to speak nonsense.

*Don't be arrogant, for you, like a candle, with jealousy will burn
The sweetheart in whose hand the hard stone becomes wax.*⁸³

This verse is such nonsense, and I don't know what meaning to make of it or what to write. “Don't be arrogant, because if you are, because of your jealousy you will burn like a candle the sweetheart in whose hand the hard stone becomes wax.” Consider whether or not you can yield a meaning from this!

The truth is that Hafez did not intend any meaning from these [verses]. Rather, he wrote the rhyme: *ashnara, shekara, binavara, madara, qazara, dara, khara* and others like these, and he wanted to place each one of them in a couplet, and this is all.

From these few verses which we have copied here there is only one meaning, only one meaning can be understood, and that is what Hafez says: These evils that I perpetrate and the bad reputation I have acquired are not my volition (*ekhtiyari nist*): “They did not allow me into the alley of good-reputation.” Consider how mistaken and harmful this statement is. Consider that if all the evil-doers in the world offered this as an excuse: for example, Asghar Borujerdi (who killed children and drank their blood), Sayf al-Qalam Shirazi (who poisoned and killed women), Samad Khan Maraghehi, Chingiz Khan, Timurlang, if each one offered this as an excuse, what state would the world be in? If this philosophy of Hafez were correct, then what would all of the effort [performed in the name of cultivation] be for? What meaning would these laws and judgements have? If one night a thief came to his house and stole his goblet and wine jar, or if a tyrant stopped him in the street and slapped him across the face, he would have cried out loud for justice. He would never have said that this thief or this tyrant was compelled [in their actions]. He would never have said, “If you don't like it you have to change fate.” These are examples of the verses of the Philosopher of Shiraz. Reflect on and consider these [verses].

I don't want to count all of Hafez's evils, but I have shown him just as he was. Consider his words and think to what extent one man can be so worthless that he turns himself into a dog for [the sake of] weaving verses and rhymes and says:

*I will not hunt for a morsel of flesh from any bone
That my teeth will be inflicted with a hundred thousand wounds.*

Think well on this verse to fathom the worthlessness of the speaker. From one perspective the poet shows the difficulty in his own life, the result of which meant that he made no effort and so he wasted his life in composing *ghazals* and passed his time with much trouble. From another perspective he turns himself into a dog, just for the sake of the subject (*mazmun*) and for composing the couplet. Look at the nonsense of the poet from this perspective: his tooth suffers a hundred thousand wounds from digging a bone. How can one tooth suffer a hundred thousand wounds?

So, who are the people that praise Hafez? One group of them are the biographers who have spoken nonsense, just like Hafez, and have considered that kind of poetry (the sole aim of which is composing rhyme) as an art. Their praise of Hafez is just like when gamblers sit down and praise a skillful and clever gambler. These poets were a group who derived pleasure from freeing themselves from life's duties and the efforts that one needs to make. They sat themselves down, composed speeches, wove rhymes and cursed anyone they pleased. They praised whomever they wanted, and they spoke about wine and sodomy, sometimes they offered philosophical advice, and sometimes just like the vagrants (*rendan*) they taught their evil teachings. They did not need anything and they vaunted [themselves] on the heavens, and there they engaged in supplication and begging. They said whatever they wanted. They did not refrain from being rude and impolite to God, and they spent their time with this speech-making and satisfying desires, and they ate the bread derived from the hard work of others, and in spite of all of this they are eminent and high-ranking people, and they have been called "poets," "men of letters" and "philosophers."

This praise that they have steeped on Hafez and Sa'di, more than anything, has been to advance their own interests, and more noteworthy of attention are the phrases that they have used: "King of the realms of speech, commentator on the bazaar of literature." What are the realms of speech? And what is the meaning of the bazaar of literature?

Another group is composed of European orientalisists. These are people who wish ill for the East, and they want all Easterners to be just like Hafez, that is, to be satisfied with a corner in the tavern and spend time in drinking wine and sodomy. They open the world and its wealth to the greedy ones of Europe and America. They want Easterners to be followers of Hafez and Khayyam and to consider effort and endeavour as futile. They want Easterners, at the command of the tavern-dwellers, to consider the world as nothing and empty and to value the present moment instead of considering the past and future. They want to make machines for themselves all the time, and to make soldiers, pilots and paratroopers from the ranks of the youth, but the Easterners like Hafez, Khayyam and Sa'di do nothing but engage in making speeches and composing rhyme. The men and women [of the West] join hands if an enemy appears before them, and they shake the world from East to West. But the Easterners cling to the skirts of forbearance and say something like:

*Patience and success, both are old friends.
Victory's moment arrives through patience.*⁸⁴

Or they hang the sin around God's neck and say something like:

*If suffering or comfort come your way, O wise one,
Don't distinguish between them, as they come from God.*⁸⁵

It is not only Hafez and his *Divan*. These orientalists praise whatever can cause backwardness (ranging from the *divans* of Hafez, Khayyam, Sa'di, Mawlavi, Sufism, *Kharabatism*, other different denominations, snake worship, cow worship, Yogism, Rawzah-Khwaneh and others like these). And they attempt to popularise these because they serve in the place of several million European soldiers. That *Divan* of Hafez alone serves as one million of their soldiers.

This method of theirs resembles the story of those fishermen who did not want to trouble themselves by catching the fish, one by one. They wanted to do something so that they could get the fish by the hundreds or thousands in one go. For this reason they poured poison into the water, which the fish drank, making them stupefied, and so the fishermen reeled the fish in and piled them on top of each other.

Why not make the masses [of the East] sick and backward with evil teachings and to make millions and hundreds of millions wretched and under the control [of the West] when it is possible to do so?

We have come to the people who among the Iranians of today have tied the weight of Hafez, Sa'di and other poets around their necks, and they continually print their books, compose commentaries and offer praise. There are two groups among them:

The first group is those who co-operate with the orientalists and they knowingly strive to ruin the people.

Why do they do this? Is there someone who also strives to ruin the people? Can such individuals be found in the world? The truth is unbelievable! But alas, such individuals have been found in the East. Alas, they [try to] do such things. For the sake of eating well, sleeping well, self-gratification, sitting in fashionable cars and reading useless monthly journals, they have become the tools of the foreigners' politics and they submit to such cowardly work.

The other group, unknowingly, have been deceived by them. When they see that the names of Hafez and Khayyam have been praised in European books (and because of this Mr Forughî, Mr Mohammad Qazvini and Dr Ghani and others like them print their *divans* and write commentaries on them), they fall for these tricks and imagine that in truth Hafez, Sa'di, Mawlavi, Khayyam and others like them were great men. In truth, the Europeans regard this as valuable, and therefore they continue in their attachment to such poetry and offer it unlimited support.

A group of them have been busy in writing biographies, and [these people] are poets themselves, and their capital is nothing but weaving rhymes. Because of this they support Hafez, Sa'di and the others. They are content in the ignorance of the ruin of a section in society, but they are discontent when their futile capital disappears.

These are the people who praise Hafez. Is it possible to put a value on this praise? Can one close one's eyes to the cause of all of this? The best proof of the worthlessness of this praise of theirs is that you to compare it with our authoritative proofs. [The best proof is that] they do not listen or pay attention [to our proofs], but instead they show their low and ill-nature in making ugly and uncultured speeches, and some of them who want to reply [to us] offer such weak and hollow responses that one feels sorry for their wretchedness and one sees no way out but to remain silent.

For example, we enumerate the evil teachings of the poet – from praise for wine, insistence on fatalism, considering the world as worthless, discussions of sodomy and other [evil teachings] like these, each one is a great sin and is the cause of great harm to the people. We consider his poetry as evidence. One of them answered [us] and said, “You have criticised Hafez with regard to society. Hafez was not a society (*ejtema*’i); he himself says I am not a society. He is a poet.” One is dumbstruck when [one hears] such worthless words. When one considers, one sees that truly they are so wretched that they destroy our God-given strength and there is no remedy except to remain silent. It is just like when you attack a city or village with canons, tanks and aeroplanes, and you see that the people there come to face you with tree-branches, so that there is no alternative but to refrain from action and be peaceful.

CONCLUSION

Ahmad Kasravi's life coincided with one of the most turbulent periods of Iranian history, when political, religious, societal and educational change occurred at an unprecedented rate. In an attempt to modernise Iran, many politicians and intellectuals desired to mould Iran into a dynamic, rational, motivated and forward thinking nation. Inevitably, the means to achieve this differed; Kasravi desired to eliminate much of the Iranian mystical and literary heritage, whereas other intellectuals did not consider this heritage as inherently inimical with the creation of a modern nation-state. In fact the range of opinions indicates that the debate about the role of Sufism and mystical literature was indeed a major issue. The responses to Sufism ranged from support and sympathy, from, for example, those in the circle of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Tehran, to suspicion and dislike by secular intellectuals such as Taqi Arani (who assumed that enthusiasm for mysticism would disappear with the onward march towards socialism) and outright hostility from Shi'ite clerics such as Allameh Borqei. One factor that unites all of these individuals was their desire to see a strong and free Iran (which may account for the distaste among some Iranians, including Kasravi and Borqei, for "agents" of imperialist forces, such as E.G. Browne). Although some strove for higher goals (such as the universalism inherent within the ideal of creating an Islamic or Marxist *ummah*), for most the desire for an independent Iran begged the question of what it actually meant to be Iranian, and part of the debate was centred on Persian literature. The wide variety of responses to Sufism and Hafez suggests that to understand Kasravi's response it is necessary to look at other factors, besides the socio-political conditions, such as important features and events in his personal life. It has not been possible to investigate Kasravi's personal life in this study, and it is hoped that further research will shed light on this topic.

Kasravi's anti-Sufism, however, does reveal an interesting dimension of intellectual thought in Iran during the period before 1945. The attempt to modernise Iran through a "rational" discourse that demystified religion may be regarded as one of the elements in the modernising project that was spearheaded by Reza Shah (and in this respect this work supports the view that the modernisation programme was not driven solely by Reza Shah). The atmosphere of modern Iran had resulted in the Sufis reforming themselves, typified in the way that the

Anjoman-e Okhovvat structured and organised itself, and one wonders as to the extent to which such Sufi reforms were a response to Kasravi's polemics.¹ Certainly the reforms of the *Anjoman-e Okhovvat* pre-date Kasravi's writings, so such forms of Sufism at best would have supported the modernising tendencies. However, the issue is not so much whether the Iranian Sufis reformed themselves as a result of Kasravi's writing but as to whether the Iranian "advisors" in society, and the masses in general, transformed their way of thinking (for this, according to Kasravi, was the real and most virulent danger).

Kasravi's demystification of religion was undertaken by his appeal to reason (*kherad*), yet his works are littered with weak arguments that are not based on scholarly research. One may sympathise with the aim to create a strong Iran, and one may understand that this aim was, in part, a response to the desperate political and economic conditions of the time, but Kasravi's writings on Sufism and literature were framed not on reason but on prejudice and clearly selective readings of mediaeval texts. His criticisms of Sufism might have fared better had he concentrated on his apophatic preferences, but even here, had he pursued this line in a scholarly fashion, he would have reached an impasse: how can a completely transcendent, infinite God create the finite world? To create involves some kind of connection with creation, and to permit this in itself is an admission that God may commune with his creation, and this leads to the possibility of mystical experience. Of course, this is an ancient problem that Aristotle attempted to solve with his theory of the unmoved mover, and Islamic theologians and philosophers elaborated on this issue in various ways. For the Islamic philosophers, the cosmos consisted of a number of celestial intellects, with the transcendent God at the outermost level. Even Ghazali, despite his rejection of Islamic philosophy, adopted this hierarchy of cosmic intellectual entities in his discussion of *al-muta'* as an intermediary between God and creation. With Kasravi's rejection of the mediaeval cosmology, and the hierarchy of emanations or intellects, God and man are left completely separated. Yet Kasravi was clearly satisfied with this situation, and it enabled him to cut away at the superstitions and irrational beliefs and practices that he found in modern Iran and in its literature. However, his criticisms of Sufi beliefs betray a lack of research and knowledge of the finer details of the school of Sufism that espoused *vahdat al-vojud*. Although he skirted profound theological arguments, it is unfortunate that he never attempted to enter into them in any great detail. It may be the case that Kasravi felt that his readership restricted him from delving into more serious theological debates. However, it may also be true that the absence of reasoned, intellectual discussions was also due to a fanatical and paranoid dislike of mysticism.

Kasravi's blinkered views of Sufism and Hafez, ironically, have some merit, for his critique of those individuals who limited Hafez to a single interpretation were well-founded. (It is of interest that a response to Kasravi's work on Hafez was published by Ibrahim Monakkah, entitled "The Key of Explanation (or the Key to Hafez's Language) – An Answer to Kasravi,"² in which the author's main point is that Hafez was a mystic.) However, Kasravi's refusal to contemplate the

possibility that a poet (or an intellectual) may change or develop a certain way of looking at the world, or that a poet may not be as committed to a certain world view, certainly restricts a comprehensive understanding of Hafez's work. (Hafezology, in particular in the twentieth century is a fascinating topic that deserves much more attention. The range of opinions expressed on Hafez's *ghazals* has been quite diverse, typified in the writings of Ahmad Shamlu, 'Ali Dashti and more recently by 'Ali Khamene'i.) Kasravi's perspective on the necessity of being committed to a single perspective was not unique in his lifetime, but his view on Hafez and Sufi literature too betrays a seriousness and, perhaps, the lack of a sense of humour. Although the kind of Sufi hagiographies that Kasravi cites most likely had some historical basis, their didactic methods worked through warmth, exaggeration, hyperbole and other literary devices. Kasravi, as a man of reason, wanted facts and nothing else. He could not see how mystical literature could provide solace, inspiration, joy and laughter, since literature for him should only be produced when there was a pressing need. Since God was remote and intangible, there was absolutely no need for mystical literature.

Kasravi's aim of creating a strong and unified Iran on the basis of "pure reason" resulted in him shedding a skin that contributed to the sense of identity that is claimed by many of Iran's diverse ethnic groups. The Persian works of Rumi and Hafez are enjoyed by Azaris, Arabs, Kurds and other linguistic groups, and Kasravi's rejection of such literature, epitomised in his book-burning rituals, was ironically tantamount to peeling away this Persian connection between the various ethnic groups that shared this melting pot of myths. This was understood by Kasravi's contemporary in the Ottoman world, as Ziya Gökalp had aimed to unify and galvanise the Turkish nation by employing useful elements of Islam and Sufism. Perhaps the main reason that Kasravi was ultimately unsuccessful in his attempts to purify Iran from the "detrimental effects" of Sufism and Hafez was due to the fact that Iran was still a society that was deeply attached to traditional forms of religious practice, which included elements of Sufi practice and belief. Why else would Shi'ite clerics such as Khomeini and Tabataba'i have held such a strong attachment to *'erfan* and why else would so many leading secular intellectuals (Hedayat and Arani) have written works that were critical of the Sufi tradition?

Sufism, for its adherents, was and remains in a personal, ineffable and unverifiable realm, and consequently there are an infinite number of understandings and interpretations. As a result, criticisms of Sufism can be deflected; the veracity of mystical experience cannot be negated because it is unverifiable. If it is the practices and some of the beliefs that are criticised, this in itself does not mean that the "reality" of mystical experience of the divine is untrue. Although the kind of questions that Kasravi asked of the mystical tradition and the nature of his criticism may be questioned, his writings are an important contribution and a good example of the changing nature of Iran in the first half of the twentieth century. Kasravi was prepared to challenge virtually everything because of his

CONCLUSION

commitment to the primacy of reason. It is through reason that humans can reach the most sacred truths (which he believed were found in Islam). His endorsement of reason led him to challenge many of the most deeply engrained beliefs and customs, and as such he was a forerunner for the establishment of greater public space or a civil society.

NOTES

1 THE BACKGROUND

- 1 For the execution of Hallaj (d. 922), see Loius Massingnon (translated, edited and abridged by Herbert Mason) *Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr* (Princeton, NJ: University Press, 1994), pp. 157–290.
- 2 For ‘Ayn al-Qozat’s own defence see A.J. Arberry’s translation of *Shakwa al-gharib ‘an al-awtan*, published as *A Martyr’s Apology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969).
- 3 A. Knysh, *Ibn ‘Arabi and the Later Islamic Tradition: Making of a Polemical Image, in Medieval Islam* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1999), p. 90.
- 4 See A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1792–1939* (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), p. 225.
- 5 H. Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p. 3.
- 6 See Matthijs van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).
- 7 Khomeini’s views on the Islamic mystical tradition will be examined in Chapter 2.
- 8 Although he was critical of some aspects of Sufism, Shari’ati’s writings still betray a certain mystical influence, in respect of both terminology and concepts. See his *Hajj* (Bedford, OH: Free Islamic Literature, 1977). For a commentary on *Hajj* see Steven R. Benson, “Islam and Social Change in the Writings of ‘Ali Shari’ati: His *Hajj* as a Mystical Handbook for Revolutionaries”, *Muslim World*, 81 (1991), pp. 9–26.
- 9 The works of ‘Abd al-Karim Sorush, the well-known Iranian intellectual, manifest a deep sympathy towards Sufism, evidenced in his *Qabz va Bast-e Te’urik-e Shari’at* (“The Theoretic Contraction and Expansion of the Shari’a”) (a discussion of which appears in J. Cooper, “The Limits of the Sacred: The Epistemology of ‘Abd al-Karim Sorush” in J. Cooper, R. Nettle and M. Mahmoud (eds), *Islam and Modernity: Muslim Intellectuals Respond* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1998) and in his edition of Rumi’s *Masnavi*.
- 10 Ayatollah Motahari (called the “chief ideologue of the Islamic Revolution” by Hamid Dabashi in *Theology of Discontent* (New York University Press, 1993) claimed that the “gnostic view have [*sic*] had a deeper influence on the public than Philosophical ideas on account of their poetic delicacy, and warmth and beauty. The influence of Mowlavi, Hafiz and Sa’di is found in every home”. (*The Perfect Man*, translated by Dr Alaedin Pazargadi (Tehran: Daneshgah-e ‘Allameh Tabataba’i, no date), p. 73).
- 11 See for example, F. de Jong and B. Radtke (eds), *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries Of Controversy and Polemics* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).
- 12 E. Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis: The Defence, Re-thinking and Rejection of Sufism in the Modern World* (Richmond, VA: Curzon Press, 1999).
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- 14 Vanessa Martin described Kasravi as “an outstanding intellectual figure of his time”, in her *Creating an Islamic State* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2000), p. 104.

- 15 Imam Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, translated by Hamid Algar (London: Kegan Paul International, 1985), p. 425.
- 16 Ahmad Kasravi, *Ẓāban-e Pak* ("The Pure Language"), (Tehran: 1943).
- 17 Ahmad Kasravi, *Khaharan va dokhtaran-e ma* ("Our Sisters and Daughters"), (Tehran: 1323/1944–5).
- 18 Kasravi wrote many historical works (on topics both ancient and modern) but he is perhaps most well known for his *Tārikh-e Mashrutīyeh-ye Iran* ("History of Constitutional Revolution"), (Tehran: 1940–3).
- 19 Kasravi's works on religion include *Dar Pīramun-e Islam* and *Shi'ehgari*, both of which have been translated by M.R. Ghanoonparvar as *On Islam and Shi'ism* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1990).
- 20 See the observations of Hamid Dabashi in his *Theology of Discontent* (New York: University Press, 1993), pp. 45–6, 95.
- 21 See Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), pp. 7–10.
- 22 Khomeini, *Kashf al-Asrar* (Tehran: 1943).
- 23 Mohammad Ali Jazayery, "Ahmad Kasravi and the Controversy over Persian Poetry: 1. Kasravi's Analysis of Persian Poetry", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 4 (1973), pp. 190–203, and "Ahmad Kasravi and the Controversy over Persian Poetry: 2. The Debate on Persian Poetry Between Kasravi and His Opponents", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 13 (1981), pp. 311–27.
- 24 This article was published in Ahmad Kasravi's *On Islam and Shi'ism*, pp. 1–53.
- 25 Ervand Abrahamian's "Kasravi: The Integrative Nationalist of Iran" in E. Kedourie and S. Haim (eds), *Towards a Modern Iran* (London: Frank Cass, 1980).
- 26 Amin Banani, "Ahmad Kasravi and the 'Purification' of Persian", in Ivo Banac, John C. Adkerman and Roman Szporluk (eds), *Nation and Ideology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 463–79.
- 27 PhD dissertation, Princeton University (1966).
- 28 MLitt thesis, Durham University (1968).
- 29 Iraj Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran* (Bethesda: Ibex publishers, 2003).
- 30 See Note 17.
- 31 H. Asil, *Sayri dar andisheh-ye siyasi-ye Kasravi* (Tehran: 1977).
- 32 'A. Dastghayb, *Naqd-e Asar-e Kasravi* (Tehran: 1978).
- 33 *Iran-nameh*, XX, 2–3 (Spring Summer, 2002). This volume includes articles in Persian by Homa Katouzian, Mohammad Tavakoli Targhi, M.R. Ghanoonparvar, Farzin Vahdat, Asghar Fathi, Faridoun Farrokh and Mehrzad Boroujerdi.
- 34 See Ahmad Kasravi, *Payman*, compiled by I. Marvi (Tehran: Entesharat-e Ferdowsi, 1381/2002–3). Microfilm copies of *Payman* and *Parcham* are available from the Middle East section of the Joseph Regenstein Library at the University of Chicago.
- 35 Published by Entesharat-e Forugh in Germany, 2001 (second edition).
- 36 Ahmad Kasravi, *Ẓendegani-ye man* (Tehran: 1944–5), p. 41.
- 37 Ibid., p. 41.
- 38 For the significance of book translations in Iran, see Chapter 6. Kasravi reports the episode surrounding the appearance of Haley's Comet in Iran, and see his introduction to European literature in *Ẓendegani-ye man*, pp. 43–4.
- 39 Kasravi, *Ẓendegani-ye man*, p. 104.
- 40 Sa'id Nafisi, *Khaterat-e siyasi, adabi, javani*, 'Ali-Reza E'tesam (ed.) (Tehran, 2002–3), p. 184.
- 41 My thanks to Professor Majd al-Din Keyvani who told me about this idiom. An appropriate English equivalent would be "fools rush in where angels fear to tread".
- 42 Kasravi was married four times. His first wife who was his second cousin bore him two children (Hamideh and Nafiseh). Kasravi and his second wife 'Azizeh had three children (Jalal, Behzad and Zahra). While still married to 'Azizeh, Kasravi married

- Fatimeh and they had three children (Farrokhzad, Mahin and Khojasteh). Kasravi had one more wife, but they had no children. 'Azizeh separated from Kasravi (although there was never an official divorce) and Fatimeh also left Kasravi shortly after the birth of her third child. (My thanks are extended to Amir Kojoory (the son of Zahra Kasravi) who supplied me with this information.)
- 43 See I. Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran*, p. 170.
 - 44 H. Katouzian, "Kasravi va adabiyat", *Iran Nameh*, XX, 2–3 (2002), p. 174.
 - 45 Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Pansad Saleh-ye Khuzestan* (Tehran: 1933–4).
 - 46 Ahmad Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Hijdah Saleh-ye Azarbayjan* (Tehran: 1934–41).
 - 47 M.A. Jazayery, "Kasravi, Iconoclastic Thinker", in Ahmad Kasravi (ed.), *On Islam and Shi'ism* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1990), p. 5. As a journalist who was the editor of the newspaper *Payman*, Kasravi was prolific. *Payman* was published from 1933 and ceased publication in 1942. He was then the editor of a daily newspaper called *Parcham*, the first issue of which was 23 January 1942 and which ceased publication on December 8. He continued publishing his views through a series of publications that he himself edited. See Jazayery, "Kasravi, Iconoclastic Thinker of the Twentieth Century", in *On Islam*, p. 6.
 - 48 On the *Azadegan*, see Jazayery, "Kasravi, Iconoclastic Thinker", pp. 6–14.
 - 49 S. Nafisi, *Dar Piramun-e Roman* (Tehran: 1943–4), p. 4.
 - 50 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
 - 51 Abrahamian, "Kasravi: The Integrative Nationalist", p. 123.
 - 52 *Ibid.*
 - 53 *Sokhan*, cited in N. Pakdaman, (see Note 35) pp. 235–6.

2 OPINIONS OF SUFISM IN IRAN, 1850–1950

- 1 Sufism has been overlooked by scholars of twentieth-century Iran. A glaring example is found in Hamid Algar's article "Religious Forces in Twentieth Century Iran" in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 7 (1991), pp. 732–64, in which there is no mention at all of Sufism.
- 2 'Abd al-Hosayn Zarrinkub, *Donbaleh-ye jostaju dar tasavvof-e Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1369/1990), p. 349.
- 3 Kasravi, *Sufism*, pp. 74–83 in this book.
- 4 Sa'id Nafisi in A. Barq, "Ta'lifat-e Safi'alishah," *Indo-Iranica*, VII, pp. 7–8, cited in Matthijs van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, p. 213.
- 5 These include, for example, Vafa 'Ali Shah (d. 1918) and Munes 'Ali Shah (d. 1953). See L. Lewisohn, "An Introduction to modern Persian Sufism, Part I", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61, 3, (1998), pp. 467–8.
- 6 See K. Babayan, "Sufis, Dervishes and Mullahs," in C. Melville (ed.), *Safavid Persia: Pembroke Papers 4* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), pp. 130–1.
- 7 See for example, A. Newman, "Sufism and anti-Sufism in Safavid Iran," in *Iran*, XXXVII (1999), pp. 95–108.
- 8 Safi 'Ali Shah, *Resaleh-ye Mizan al-Ma'rafah*, in *'Erfan al-haqq* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Safi 'Ali Shah, 1378/1999–2000), originally published in 1306/1927–8), p. 251. See also *Asrar al-ma'aref*, in *'Erfan al-haqq*, pp. 224–5.
- 9 H. Algar, "Religious Forces, 18th and 19th Century," in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 7 (1991), p. 723.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 723 citing Richard Gramlich "Pol und Scheich im heutigen Derwischtum der Schia", p. 175.
- 11 Safi 'Ali Shah, *'Erfan al-haqq*, p. 83. Originally published in 1297/1918–19.
- 12 Abdulaziz Sachedina, *The Just Ruler in Shi'ite Islam* (Oxford: University Press, 1988), p. 225.

- 13 Cited in Yann Richard, "Shar'at Sangalaji: A Reformist Theologian of the Ridā Shāh Period," translated by Kathryn Arjomand, in S. Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 169.
- 14 See the introduction by I. Afshar in his introduction to *Khaterat va Asnad-e Zahir al-Dowleh* (Tehran: Entesharat-e zarrin, 1367/1988), p. xl.
- 15 This episode is told by I. Afshar in his introduction to *Khaterat*, p. xl, who traces it back to Nazm al-Dawleh (one of Safi 'Ali Shah's disciples). The story is also told in more detail by M. Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh-ha-ye tariqeh-ye Ne'matollahiyyeh dar Iran* ("History of Ne'matollahi Orders in Iran"), (Tehran: Entesharat-e Maktab-e 'erfan-e Iran, no date), p. 320. The episode is also reported by I. Safa'i, *Rahbaran-e Mashruteh* ("Leaders of the Constitution"), (Tehran: 1363/1984–5), pp. 137–8.
- 16 Mahmud Taqizadieh Davari, *Socio-political Philosophy in the Works of Murtaza Mutahhari (1920–1979)*, (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 1996), p. 20.
- 17 N. Chahardahi, *Selseleh-ha-ye Sufiyyeh-ye Iran*, (Tehran: Entesharat-e Batunak, 1360/1981–2), p. 143.
- 18 See F. Kazemzadeh, "Iranian Relations with Russia and the Soviet Union to 1921," *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 7, (1991), p. 714.
- 19 An example for a failed concession that was awarded to a European is the Tobacco Concession, which was given by Naser al-Din Shah to an Englishman named Major Talbot. Talbot acquired a fifty-year monopoly for the distribution and export of tobacco in exchange for a personal gift to the Shah of £25,000, an annual rent of £15,000 to the state, and a 25% share of the profits for Iran (see E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 73).
- 20 Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785–1906* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), p. 107.
- 21 In *Religion and State in Iran* (p. 134), Algar provides an example of what I term folk Shi'ism in his discussion of the events surrounding a cow that on being led past the tomb of a descendant of an Imam halted twice while its owner was trying to pull it on to the slaughter house. The tradition has it that the tomb of the Imamzadeh is a location of sanctuary. When the owner of the cow attempted to pull his cow away for a third time he was struck down dead by the power of the dead saint. Subsequently, the cow's hairs were considered sacred and even the British consul donated a candelabra to the shrine.
- 22 Treatise written by Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azim 'Emad al-'Ulama' Khalkhali, translated by Hamid Dabashi, "On the Meaning of Constitutional Monarchy and its Benefits" (1907) in S.A. Arjomand (ed.), *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1988), p. 343.
- 23 M. Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh-ha*, p. 271. I am grateful to Dr Nile Green for supplying this information. L. Lewisohn also states that Nur 'Ali Shah II (d. 1918) of the Gonabadi Ne'matollahi order wrote a treatise which lauded the virtues of smoking opium. See L. Lewisohn, "An introduction to the history of modern Persian Sufism, Part I", p. 451.
- 24 It is the tradition that the Qur'an, as God's sacred word, should not be translated into the vernacular of non-Arabs, but one wonders whether the rendition into Persian was considered a threat by the clerics as it would open up the text to many people who would now comprehend the meaning behind their rote memorisation of the verses.
- 25 See the introduction to Safi 'Ali Shah, *Divan-e Safi 'Ali Shah* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Safi 'Ali Shah, 1379/2000–1), pp. 22–3.
- 26 The difference is somewhat arbitrary, however, especially as there were individuals such as Safi 'Ali Shah who straddled both categories.
- 27 See J. Cooper, "The Intellectual Milieu of Safawid Persia" in F. Daftary (ed.), *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 151–2.

- 28 S.H. Nasr, "Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Islamic Philosophy", in E. Bosworth and C. Hillenbrand (eds), *Qajar Iran* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1983), p. 191.
- 29 Ibid., p. 190.
- 30 Yann Richard, "Sharī'at Sangalajī", p. 162.
- 31 Cited from Khomeini's Lectures on *Surat al-Fatiha*, delivered in 1979 and which appear in *Imam Khomeini, Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations*, translated by Hamid Algar (London: Kegan Paul International, 1985), p. 424.
- 32 Franklin Lewis, *Rumi, Past and Present, East and West* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), p. 555.
- 33 H. Algar, "Imam Khomeini, 1902–1962" in Burke and Lapidus (eds), *Islam, Politics and Social Movements* (University of California Press, 1988), p. 269.
- 34 E.G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (first published by A & C Black in 1893), (reprinted by Cambridge: University Press, 1923), pp. 147–8.
- 35 His *Haqiqat al-'erfan* does not give any publishing details; however, the text mentions the removal of Premier Mosaddeq from office, which occurred in 1953 (p. 63). The Library of Congress lists the book with the date "195?."
- 36 His other works include *Al-taftish dar maslak-e sufi va dervish: rahnama-ye gomshodegan (dar bayan-e 'aqa'yed-e orafa va morshedan)*, ("The Search on the Sufi and Dervish Way: The Guide for the Lost (Explaining the Beliefs of the Gnostics and the Spiritual Elders'")) and *Eshq va Asheqi* ("Love and Being in Love") both of which were published in the 1950s according to the Library of Congress Catalogue.
- 37 Borqei, *Haqiqat al-'erfan*, p. 12. In the course of the text, Borqei cites and discusses numerous *hadith* from the Imams and verses from the Qur'an. To his credit, he is careful to list his sources and gives the *isnad* for the *hadiths*. His care for such detail stands him in contrast to Kasravi who rarely cited his sources, and even in his footnotes to texts such as *Sufigari*, sources were not given.
- 38 Ibid., p. 2.
- 39 Ibid., p. v.
- 40 H. Algar, "Imam Khomeini, 1902–1962: The Pre-Revolutionary Years," p. 286, n. 37. This book was published in Arabic with a Persian translation by one of Khomeini's students, one Sayyid Fihri: see *Mesbah al-Hedaya ila al-Khalifa wa 'l-Wilaya* (Tehran: Payam-e Azadi, 1982).
- 41 Khomeini, *Mesbah al-Hedayat*, p. 209.
- 42 Ibid., p. 207.
- 43 Ibid., p. 210.
- 44 Baqer Moin, *Independent*, Monday 5 June 1989. Moin's source for such a claim is a former student of Khomeini, Mehdi Ha'eri Yazdi (who was the son of Ayatollah Ha'eri). See B. Moin, *Khomeini* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), p. 51.
- 45 Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), p. 39.
- 46 See M. Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West* (Syracuse, NY: University Press, 1996) p. 88.
- 47 Yann Richard, "Sharī'at Sangalajī", p. 160.
- 48 Mahmud Taqizadīh Davari, *Socio-political Philosophy in the Works of Murtaza Mutahhari (1920–1979)*, p. 34.
- 49 For the background to this event see Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent* (New York University Press, 1993), pp. 273–84.
- 50 Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *Kernel of the Kernel: Concerning the Wayfaring and Spiritual Journey of the People of Intellect* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003), p. 72.
- 51 Tabataba'i's practice of bibliomancy is mentioned by Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, pp. 282–7.
- 52 Tabataba'i, *Kernel of the Kernel*, p. 109.
- 53 Ibid., p. 37.
- 54 See E. Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, pp. 68–74. See also N. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism* (University of California Press, 1983), p. 8.

- 55 For Akhundzadeh's views on Rumi see I. Parsinejad, *Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadeh and Literary Criticism* (Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 1988), pp. 60–9.
- 56 Taken from Kermani's epilogue to his book *Nameh-ye Basta*, which he wrote in 1896. Cited in I. Parsinejad, "Mirzā Āqā Khān Kermānī: An Iranian Literary Critic," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, No. 37 (1989) (Tokyo), p. 151.
- 57 See his views in his *Siyahat-nameh-ye Ibrahim Big*, cited throughout I. Parsinejad, "Zeyn ol-'Abedin Marāgheh'i: The Iranian Literary Critic," *Area and Culture Studies*, 44 (1992) (Tokyo: Tokyo University for Foreign Languages), pp. 67–82.
- 58 Cited in I. Parsinejad, "Zeyn ol-'Abedin Marāgheh'i," p. 71.
- 59 Cited in I. Parsinejad, *Annals of Japan Association for Middle Eastern Studies*, 2 (1987), p. 306.
- 60 Cited in I. Parsinejad, "Zeyn ol-'Abedin Marāgheh'i", p. 73.
- 61 See E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, pp. 77–9.
- 62 Ibid., p. 78. On the Ne'mati order (the Ne'matollahis) see the section on The Sufis of this chapter.
- 63 Ibid., p. 79.
- 64 Cited in M. Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution* (Oxford: University Press, 1991), p. 65.
- 65 For Bahar (1886–1951) see M.B. Loraine, "Bahār, Mohammad Taqī Malek al-Šo'arā' " in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, in which he is described as a poet, scholar, journalist, politician and historian.
- 66 Sa'id Nafisi, *Khaterat-e siyasi, adabi, javani*, pp. 308–9. See also M.A.H. Katouzian, "Risheh-ha-ye Sa'di Koshi" in *Iran Shenasi*, XIV, 3 (2002), p. 512.
- 67 Sa'id Nafisi, *Khaterat-e siyasi, adabi, javani*, p. 310.
- 68 This book has been analysed by J.E. Knörzer, in *Ali Dashti's Prison Days* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1994).
- 69 Ibid., p. 142.
- 70 Ibid., p. 83.
- 71 Ibid., p. 82.
- 72 Dashti cited by J.E. Knörzer, in *Ali Dashti's Prison Days*, p. 97.
- 73 *Kolliyyat-e Shams-e Tabrizi*, (ed.), B. Foruzanfar, which includes an article, *Sayri dar Divan-e Shams*, by 'Ali Dashti (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1336/1957–8).
- 74 J.E. Knörzer, *Ali Dashti's Prison Days*, p. 25. Dashti was to compose a work that was critical of Sufism in the 1960s although this work falls beyond the scope of our discussion. See his *Pardeh-ye Pendar* (Tehran: Ettela'at, 1974). In this work he described the anti-rational, superstitious and obscurantist manifestations of Sufism. Subsequently he portrayed a more positive dimension of Sufism in *Dar Diyar-e Sufiyan* (Tehran: Javidan, 1983). See J. E. Knörzner, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, entry on "Dašti, 'Alī".
- 75 H. Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), p. 23.
- 76 S. Hedayat, *Taraneh-ha-ye Khayyam* ("Melodies of Khayyam"), (Tehran: 1934), p. 32.
- 77 *Seh qatreh-ye khun* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1311/1932). An English translation of this work was published by J.W. Clinton in *Literary Review*, 18, 1 (Fall 1974), pp. 38–52.
- 78 The argument has been made that "the specifically anti-Islamic touch in this story" is the Arabic teacher, "since the Arabs and Arabic language were often associated with Islam and counterposed to Iranian nationalism in the literature of this period." See A.R. Navabpour, *A Study of Recent Persian Prose Literature with Special Reference to the Social Background* (PhD thesis, Durham University, 1981), p. 151.
- 79 The theme of suicide re-appears frequently in Hedayat's writings. The following remarks in *Taraneh-ha-ye Khayyam* were written one year after he completed his story about Mirza Hosayn 'Ali, and perhaps they foreshadow his own suicide:

One should know that although Khayyam believed from the bottom of his heart in happiness, his happiness was always twinned with the thought of

nothingness and non-existence. From this perspective Khayyam's philosophical meaning in the outer dimension is an invitation to happiness but in truth, the rose and nightingale, the pitchers of wine, ripe fields and his sensuous images are no more than ornamentation, just as someone who wants to kill himself busies himself in ordering and ornamenting his room before his death.

(Hedayat, *Tāraneh-ha-ye Khayyam*, p. 37)

- 80 For Hedayat's complicated relations with the Tudeh Party see H. Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat*, pp. 160–77.
- 81 Abrahamian, "Kasravi: The Integrative Nationalist", p. 115.
- 82 Ibid., p. 116.
- 83 Taqi Arani, "'*Erfan va Osul-e Madi*'", in *Neveshteh-ha-ye 'elmi, falsafi va ejtema'i* (Scientific, philosophic and sociological writings) (Florence, Italy: Mazdak, no date). In this book, Sufism is not the sole concern of Arani, rather it is a whole range of mystical thinking which includes the mysticism of Plato, Ancient India, China, Iran and also the mysticism in Christianity and in modern Europe. Those passages on Sufism represent a small portion of this work.
- 84 Ibid., p. 58.
- 85 Ibid., p. 23.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Ibid., p. 34.
- 88 Ibid., p. 22.
- 89 Ibid., p. 30.
- 90 Ibid., p. 4.
- 91 Ibid., pp. 34–5.
- 92 Ibid., p. 58.
- 93 Interview with Dr Mojtaba'i, head of the Sufi section at the Institute for the Great Islamic Encyclopaedia in Tehran (August, 2003). However, it has been claimed that Forughī was a pupil of Mohammad Hakimiyan (d. 1948) whose spiritual genealogy links him to Safi 'Ali Shah. See Matthijs van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, citing Chahardahi, *Sayri dar tasavvof-e Iran* (1982–3), p. 149. The leanings of some intellectuals to Sufism has been mentioned by Ehsan Tabari, who claimed that during Reza Shah's rule they frequented the *khanagahs* along with state officials, and both paid great tribute to the dervishes and their teachings. See A.R. Navabpour, *A Study of Recent Persian Prose Literature with Special Reference to the Social Background*, p. 148.
- 94 Mohammad 'Ali Forughī, *Ẓobdeh-ye Hafez* (Tehran: 1316/1937).
- 95 'Ali Asghar Hekamt, *Dars az Divan-e Hafez* (Tehran: 1320/1941).
- 96 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, *Jami: Motuzammini tahqiqat dar tarikh-e ahval va asar-e manzum va mansur-e khatam al-sho'ara Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman Jami* (Tehran: 1942), 'Abd al-Rahman Iami.
- 97 Browne, *Az Sa'di ta Jami*, translated by Hekmat (Tehran: 1947–8).
- 98 Abd-al-Hosein Zarrinkub, "Forūzānfar", in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 99 Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar, *Kholaseh-ye Masnavi*. For more on Foruzanfar see Franklin Lewis, *Rumi, Past and Present, East and West*, pp. 554–7.
- 100 Rudaki, *Ahval va 'ashi'ar-e 'Abu Abdallah Ja'far Ibn Mohammad Rudaki Samarqandi* (Tehran, 1930).
- 101 Kashani, *Roba'iyat-e Baba Afzal Kashani* (Tehran, 1933).
- 102 'Altar, *Jostaju dar ahval va asar-e Farid al-Din Attar Nishaburi* (Tehran, 1941).
- 103 Hafez, *Dar Piramun-e ash'ar va ahval-e Hafez* (Tehran: Iqbal, 1321).
- 104 S. Razazadeh-Shafaq, *Tarikh-e adabiyat-e Iran* (Tehran: Entesharat-e daneshgah, 1320/1940).
- 105 Ibid., p. 296.

- 106 S. Razazadeh-Shafaq, *Tarikh-e adabiyyat-e Iran* (Tehran: Entesharat-e daneshgah, 1320/1940), p. 296.
- 107 Ibid., p. 333. Rezaazadeh's views on Hafez have been translated by A.J. Arberry in *Fifty Poems of Hafiz* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1993), pp. 14–18.
- 108 Mohammad Mo'in, *Hafez-e Shirin Sokhan*, (Tehran: 1940) p. 23.
- 109 Ibid., p. 22.
- 110 Ibid., p. 18.
- 111 Ibid., p. 641.
- 112 M. Qazvani, *Bahs dar asar va afkar va ahwal-e Hafez*, I (Tehran: 1321/1942).
- 113 This conversation is also recorded by A.J. Arberry in *Fifty Poems of Hafez*, pp. 18–22.
- 114 'Abd al-Hosayn Zarrinkub, *Jostaju dar tasavvof-e Iran*, (Tehran: Chapkhaneh-ye Sepehr, 1367/1988–9) p. 375.
- 115 Zarrinkub, *Arzesh-e Miras-e Sufiyeh*, (Tehran: Chapkhaneh-ye Sepehr, 1369/1990–1) pp. 261–2.
- 116 J. Morier, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isfahan* (London: 1828, reprint 1897, Lawrence and Bullen Ltd).
- 117 See the comments of M.A. Jamalzadeh in his introduction to the Persian translation: *Hajji Baba-ye Isfahan* (Tehran: 1344/1965–6), p. viii.
- 118 J. Morier, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isfahan*, p. 61.
- 119 Lady Sheil, *Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia* (London: John Murray, 1856).
- 120 Ibid., pp. 192–3. The author lists the following groupings of Sufis in Iran: "Ajem, Khaksar, Niāmet-oollāhee, Zehabee, Jellālee, Kemberree, Dehree", p. 194.
- 121 Ibid., pp. 152–3, 193.
- 122 C.J. Wills, *Persia As It Is* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1887), p. 96.
- 123 Ibid., p. 95.
- 124 Percy Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia, or Eight Years in Iran* (London: John Murray, 1902), p. 197.
- 125 As Sykes himself points out, this prophecy was recognised in its time as worthless since Naser al-Din's son succeeded him, becoming Mozaffar al-Din Shah.
- 126 Percy Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia*, p. 149.
- 127 E.G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*.
- 128 Ibid., pp. 197–8.
- 129 Ibid., p. 312. On page 80 of the same work, Browne mentions that the cities of Zanzan and Kerman suffer particularly from the number of beggars, although the poverty of the mendicant classes was greater in Kerman.
- 130 For a discussion of the activities, membership and context of this society, see Talinn Grigor, "Recultivating "Good Taste": The Early Pahlavi Modernists and Their Society for National Heritage", *Iranian Studies*, 37, 1 (March 2004), pp. 17–45.
- 131 Cited in H. Bahr al-'Olumi, *Karnameh-e Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli* (Tehran: 1355/1976/2535), p. 53.
- 132 Ibid., p. 39.
- 133 See J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry* (Richmond, VA: Curzon Press, 1997), p. 9.
- 134 F. Vahdat speaks of two approaches to modernity, namely the "positivist" aspect which emphasises categories such as technology and efficient bureaucracy, and the "cultural" aspect which focuses more on the democratic facets of modern civilisation (*God and Juggernaut*, Syracuse, NY: University Press, 2002 p. xvi). Under Reza Shah's rule it is widely acknowledged that the second aspect was severely neglected, while the first aspect improved with increasing centralisation (settlement and disarming of tribes) and the influence of the state in fields such as education, justice, and religion.
- 135 It is accepted that Reza Shah was hostile to Shi'ism, and his rule saw the introduction of numerous policies that belittled Shi'ite influence. These include the establishment of Tehran University with a faculty of theology (a rival to the Shi'ite seminaries), the

- unveiling of women, conscription to the armed forces in 1925 (no exemptions for religious students), reform of the judiciary in 1926 which eroded the power of the clerics' *shar'* courts, the law of uniformity on dress and encouraging Western-style apparel, the supervision by the Ministry of Education of examinations of clerics and the licensing of teachers in 1928. For Reza Shah and the clergy see M. Faghfoory, "The Ulama-State Relations in Iran: 1921–1941", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 19 (1987), pp. 413–32.
- 136 The publications worthy of mention are Matthijs van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, and Leonard Lewisohn "An introduction to the history of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I", and "An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 62, 1, (1999), 36–59. These works were extremely useful for their analysis, information and bibliographical details.
- 137 Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, p. 266. By the turn of the nineteenth century the Ne'matollahi order had split in to several sub-orders, each one recognising their own leader as the Pole. In the first half of the nineteenth century there had been splits, which produced the Kawsariyyeh Ne'matollahi branch and the Shamsiyyeh branch. The main branch, recognising Mast 'Ali Shah (d. 1837) as the Pole, split into further sub-groups in the late nineteenth century. Information on the history of the other Sufi orders in Iran, such as the Khaksar, and the Zahabiya can be found in Lewisohn's articles.
- 138 Criticism among the fledging Iranian newspapers was largely censored, see N. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution* (Yale University Press, 1981), pp. 64–5.
- 139 Safi 'Ali Shah, *Resaleh-ye Mizan al-Ma'rafeh*, p. 258.
- 140 Ibid. This idealised vision of security in Iran does not correspond with the description of the travels of Edward Browne in *A Year Amongst the Persians*.
- 141 Safa'i, *Rahbaran-e Mashruteh*, p. 137. See also Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, p. 258.
- 142 To accept that the Sufis were responding to modernity in their attempts to overcome hierarchical social structures societies is somewhat problematic, however, given the universal claims of Sufism.
- 143 However, it is difficult to assess the claims of critics such as Kasravi, who made generalisations to the effect that Sufis sought to influence the rulers of the time for their own benefit, which denied the validity of their "spiritual" message.
- 144 Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, p. 316.
- 145 Ibid., p. 306. In *Rahbaran-e Mashruteh*, (p. 138), Safa'i also claims that the prototype of this society was created by Safi 'Ali Shah and operated secretly.
- 146 These names (or titles) include Zahir al-Dowleh, Mostafa Salara, Nazem al-Dowleh, Yamin al-Mamalek, Nazm-e Lashgar, Mirza Mohammad 'Ali Khan Nusrat al-Sultan, Mirza 'Ali Akbar Khan Sorush, Mirza Baqir Khan Safa Manesh, Mirza 'Abd al-Wahhab Jawhari and 'Ali Reza Saba (Mokhtar al-Molk).
- 147 Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, pp. 328–9.
- 148 F. Azimi, "Entezam," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, VIII, p. 461.
- 149 Matthijs van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, p. 131.
- 150 This work was finished in 1310, and several sections were published, but it was not until 1938 that the whole work was published by the Society of Brotherhood in two volumes.
- 151 See speech by Marzban in Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, p. 310.
- 152 See Afshar, *Khaterat*, p. 73.
- 153 For the significance of chairs and tables rather than sitting on a carpet during a religious meeting see R. Matin, M. Woodward and D. Atmaja, *Defenders of Reason in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997), p. 162.
- 154 See Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, p. 304.
- 155 Safi 'Ali Shah, *Asrar al-Ma'rafeh*, p. 211. Safi also criticises those who dispense with traditional Sufi masters and believe that reading Rumi or Hafez will turn them into

- gnostics and they will experience mystical states and compose their own poetry. See Ibid., p. 210. Criticisms of other types of corrupt sheikhs and dervishes appear in page 197.
- 156 Safi 'Ali Shah, *'Erfaṇ al-haqq*, pp. 102–3.
- 157 See Afshar, *Khaterat*, p. 73.
- 158 See the photographs in Afshar, *Khaterat*.
- 159 During the reign of Naser al-Din Shah a concession for a lottery was given to Mirza Malkam Khan. For various reasons the concession was rescinded.
- 160 The term used by L. Lewisohn, "An introduction to the history of modern Persian Sufism, Part I", p. 456.
- 161 On another occasion the Society held a musical concert to raise funds for victims burnt in a fire in Tehran bazaar. See Safa'i, *Rahbaran-e Mashruteh*, p. 143.
- 162 This photograph is reproduced in Iraj Afshar, at the very end of his introduction to the book.
- 163 Badr al-Moluk Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light: Women's Emancipation in Iran*, translated by F.R.C. Bagley (New York: Exposition Press, 1977), pp. 31–2.
- 164 Ibid., p. 32.
- 165 F. Milani, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1992), pp. 46–73.
- 166 Afshar, *Khaterat*, p. 49.
- 167 E.G. Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia: Partly Based on the Manuscript Work of Mirza Muhammad Ali Khan "Tarbiyat" of Tabriz* (Cambridge: University Press, 1914), p. 134.
- 168 Ibid., p. 118.
- 169 Matthijs van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, p. 103.
- 170 Soltan 'Ali Shahis, Zahabis, etc.
- 171 See Matthijs van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, p. 93.
- 172 Ibid., pp. 106–7.
- 173 Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, p. 266.
- 174 Ibid., p. 281.
- 175 Ibid., p. 282.
- 176 For Safi on *vahdat-e wujud* see Safi 'Ali Shah, *'Erfaṇ al-haqq*, pp. 112, 120.
- 177 A reference to Jalal al-Din Rumi's famous work, the *Masnavi*.
- 178 A reference to Ibn al-'Arabi's famous work, *Fusus al-Hikam* ("The Bezels of Wisdom").
- 179 Safi 'Ali Shah, *Asrar al-ma'rafet*, pp. 197–8.
- 180 Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, p. 326, see also Afshar, *Khaterat*, pp. 43–4.
- 181 Cited in Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, p. 326.
- 182 Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, p. 327.
- 183 Ibid., pp. 326–7. On the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Society, Amin al-Molk Marzban delivered a speech to the Society in which he said that members made their own instruments. He made this comment in the context of criticisms from "ignorant people" who have claimed that the Society has encouraged laziness. One wonders if he was responding to Kasravi's criticisms of Sufism. Marzban's speech is reproduced by Afshar, *Khaterat*, pp. 53–60.
- 184 Afshar, *Khaterat*, p. 30.
- 185 Safa'i, *Rahbaran-e Mashruteh*, p. 139.
- 186 The whole constitution is reproduced in Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selseleh*, pp. 331–3.
- 187 See M. Van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, p. 107.
- 188 Safa'i, *Rahbaran-e Mashruteh*, pp. 145–6.
- 189 Mirza 'Ali Khan Zahir al-Dawleh, *Majmu'eh-ye ash'ar* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Vahid, 1363/1984), pp. 319–20.
- 190 Mirza 'Ali Khan Zahir al-Dowleh, *Majmu'eh-ye ash'ar*, pp. 268–9.

- 191 Ahmad Kasravi, cited in A. Fathi, "Kasravi cheh mi-guyad," *Iran-nameh*, p. 269.
- 192 I. Afshar's introduction to *Khaterat*, p. 80, cited in M. van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, p. 107.
- 193 These include the publication of Pand Saleh in 1939 (written by the leader of the order, Saleh 'Ali Shah) in which the mystical content is noticeable for its absence. Indeed, one scholar has commented that "there is little in it that could distinguish these Sufis from other Iranian Shi'ites" (van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, p. 90). Another point of interest in relation to the Soltan'alishahis during the 1930s is the conflict surrounding a renegade Soltan'alishahi Sufi, Keyvan Qazvini, who rejected the inherited nature of the Qutbship within the order. For Keyvani, see van den Bos, *Mystic Regime*, pp. 81–6.
- 194 For the links between Reza Shah and the Soltan'alishahis, see van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, pp. 88–9. These links are described by Sufis of the order, so they should be treated with caution. The source used by van den Bos also claimed that Kasravi was a professor at Tehran University; however, Kasravi never taught at Tehran University and was never made a professor (*ibid.*, p. 83, n. 55).
- 195 J.T.P. de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry* (Richmond, VA: Curzon Press, 1997), p. 2.

3 SCOURGE OF THE SUFIS: KASRAVI'S REJECTION OF PERSIAN MYSTICISM

- 1 It is of note that a minority faction of the Democrat Party, led by Kasravi, was expelled for opposing the regional demands on the central authorities (see E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 113; see also Kasravi, *Zendegani-ye man*, 86–96). Kasravi wrote his first work "Azari: Or the ancient language of Azarbayjan" in the aftermath of Khiyabani's revolt, "to prove that Azeri, the original Aryan tongue of his native province, had been destroyed by the Turkic invasions. He concluded that the existing foreign-imposed Turkish dialect should be replaced now by Persian, the state language". E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 125.
- 2 E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 119.
- 3 I. Parsinejad, *Literary Criticism in Iran*, p. 169.
- 4 A. Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921* (London: Longman, 2003), p. 30. Related to the issue of Khuzestan, it is worth noting that Kasravi's second book, "Five Hundred Year History of Khuzistan" "tried to show the harmful consequences of tribal and religious conflicts in the southwestern regions", E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 125.
- 5 E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 154, citing Kasravi, "The Case for the Defence of the Accused", *Parcham*, 16 August 1942.
- 6 Cited in E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 123.
- 7 E. Abrahamian, "Kasravi: The Integrative Nationalist", p. 122.
- 8 Kasravi, *Farhang chist*, in *Panj Maqaleh* (Köln: Entesharat-e Mehr, 1372/1993), p. 244. *Farhang chist* in this edition is a pamphlet of forty-one pages and was first published in 1943–4.
- 9 Communal tension was exploited by Mohammad 'Ali Shah during the struggles over the constitution. He attempted to weaken his opponents by reviving old conflicts between Shaykhis and Motashar'is in Tabriz, Karimkhanis and Motashar'is in Kerman, Muslims and Zoroastrians in Yazd, Persians and Azaris in Tehran, Haydaris and Ne'matis in Qazvin, Shustar, Shiraz and Ardabil. See E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 89.
- 10 Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-ye Iran*, pp. 196–7.
- 11 Cited in Kasravi, *Iran-nameh*, pp. 343–4, originally found in Kasravi's *Zendegani-ye man*, p. 11.

- 12 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Islam*, pp. 103–4.
- 13 Ibid., p. 62.
- 14 Ibid., p. 96.
- 15 Ibid., p. 91.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 72, 85, 108–13.
- 17 Ibid., p. 107.
- 18 For Kasravi on *pak-dini* see *On Islam*, pp. 108–15.
- 19 Kasravi, *On Islam*, p. 113.
- 20 See Kasravi's *Shi'ehgari*.
- 21 See I. Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran*, pp. 101–6.
- 22 H. Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat*, pp. 172–3.
- 23 Cited in I. Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran*, p. 189.
- 24 Y. Dhaka', *Farhang-e Kasravi* (Tehran: Tahuri, 1336/1957).
- 25 It is interesting to note that this version was published in the "Series of Persian Historical Texts", a series which had been established by E.G. Browne, who was known in Britain and Iran as a strong advocate of Iranian independence. See A.J. Arberry, *Oriental Essays* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 203.
- 26 Kasravi, *Sufigari*, p. 315.
- 27 It is worth noting that in *Dar Piramun-e She'r* ("About Poetry") Kasravi says that as a result of his criticisms of the Sufis in *She'r dar Iran* ("Poetry in Iran"), someone had written to him claiming that the Sufis were offended by Kasravi's writings. This person, who was not a Sufi but had connections with them and who liked Sufism, claimed that the Sufis could offer a cure for greed and worldly desire with which Kasravi was always fighting. In reply, Kasravi said that he understood Sufism in two ways. The Sufi of which he approved put others ahead of himself and sought benefit for others before seeking gain for himself. The detrimental kind of Sufi was one who believed in *vahdat-e vojüd* and who played music and danced and engaged in sodomy. See Kasravi, *She'r va sha'eri*, (Tehran: ket a b forushi-ye Tahuri, 1335), p. 42.
- 28 Mehr Baba found a large following all over South Asia between 1939 and 1949. See W. Donkin, *The Wayfarers: An Account of the Work of Meher Baba with the God-Intoxicated, and also with Advanced Souls, Sadhus, and the Poor* (San Francisco, CA 1969; reprinted., Myrtle Beach, SC, 1985).
- 29 Kasravi, *Sufigari*, pp. 255–7.
- 30 On opposition to *vahdat-e vojüd*, see A. Knysh, *Ibn Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition* and F. de Jong and B. Radtke (eds), *Islamic Mysticism Contested*.
- 31 In 1979 the Egyptian Parliament banned the publication of Ibn 'Arabi's works.
- 32 F. Rahman, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), p. 85.
- 33 Ibid., p. 89.
- 34 See for example the works of W. Chittick, including *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1989), *The Self-Disclosure of God* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1998) and *Imaginal Worlds* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1994).
- 35 Qur'an, 15:29.
- 36 Qur'an, 42:11.
- 37 This triplicity is composed of the subject, object and the relationship between them.
- 38 Cited in V. Hoffman, *Sufism, Mystics and Saints in Modern Egypt* (University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p. 237.
- 39 For Kasravi's second criticism of Sufism, see Kasravi, *Sufigari*, pp. 258–60.
- 40 See for example, 'Aziz Nasafi, a thirteenth-century Persian Sufi, who stated that one type of "Perfect Man" earned his own living through his own means and fled from the wealth of tyrants and kings. See L. Ridgeon *Aziz Nasafi* (Richmond, VA: Curzon Press, 1998), p. 127.

- 41 Kasravi, *Sufigari*, p. 290.
- 42 Ibid., pp. 290–1.
- 43 Ibid., p. 285.
- 44 See L. Lewisohn, “An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part II”, pp. 40–1.
- 45 Kasravi, *Sufigari*, p. 318.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 See H. Roemer, “The Safavid Period”, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 6, pp. 189–209.
- 48 B.S. Amoretti, “Religion in the Timurid and Safavid Periods”, *The Cambridge History of Iran* (1986), 6, p. 616.
- 49 S.H. Nasr, “Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safavid Period”, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 6 (1986), pp. 657, 663.
- 50 Kasravi, *Sufigari*, p. 317.
- 51 L. Lewisohn, “An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I”, p. 457.
- 52 Imam Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, translated by Hamid Algar (London: KPI, 1985), p. 425.
- 53 I.R. Netton, *Allah Transcendent* (1989, reprint Curzon Press, 1994) pp. 22–5. The Qur’anic Creator Paradigm consists of four elements. First God creates *ex nihilo*. Second, He acts definitely in historical time. Third, He guides His people in such time. Fourth, He can in some way be known indirectly by His creation.
- 54 Kasravi, *Zendegani-ye man*, p. 43.
- 55 For Kasravi’s third criticism, see Kasravi, *Sufigari*, pp. 260–1.
- 56 Ibid., p. 265.
- 57 The *koan* was made a subject of systematic study in Japan, and in a similar way, dervishes were advised to read the works of Sufi masters. There is a superficial similarity between the *koan* of the Zen master and the *shathiyat* of the Sufis, in that they both appear to be incomprehensible, enigmatic statements beyond the realms of rational discourse. However, it is more useful to compare the *koan* with Sufi hagiographies since both were used for educational purposes, and students would reflect on them in a sober mood. See C. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985), pp. 138–9.
- 58 A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press 1975), p. 288.
- 59 Kasravi, *Sufigari*, p. 252.
- 60 See C. Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1993), who mentions the large *khanaqah* built in Cairo by Saladin, pp. 184, 196. The Ayyubids, who ruled Egypt during this period, were keen to promote both orthodox religion, but at the same time they were responsible for several *khanaqahs*, revealing a certain sympathy for Sufism. Equally interesting are the comments of Ibn Battuta (1304–54), who writing after the defeat of the Mongols stated about Cairo:

The convents [*khanaqahs*] are numerous . . . and the amirs in Cairo vie with one another in building them. Each convent in Cairo is affected to the use of a separate congregation of poor brethren, most of whom are Persians, men of good education and adepts in the “way” of Sufism.
 (The Travels of Ibn Battuta, Vol. I. Translated H.A.R. Gibb (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1993), pp. 43–4)
- 61 See Th.E. Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint* (University of South Carolina Press, 1994).
- 62 Kasravi, *Sufigari*, p. 263.
- 63 Ibid.

- 64 See the anti-Sufi sentiment expressed by Moqaddas Ardabili (one of the leading theologians of the Safavid period) who wrote:

Some of the philosophers like Ibn 'Arabi and Shaykh 'Aziz Nasafi and 'Abdorrazaq Kashani have propagated unbelief and heresy, believe in the Unity of Existence and claim that every extant thing is God. Almighty is God, far beyond what heretics claim. One should know also that the cause for their stubborn sedition was that they busied themselves in the study of books by philosophers, and when they had gleaned information from the words of Plato and his followers, out of grossest error they adopted the enormities of his slogans, and in order to disguise their plagiarism of the heinous essays and ideas of philosophers, dressed them in another guise and called the result "Unity of Being".

The above quote is cited in Shahrokh Meskoob, *Iranian Nationality and the Persian Language* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 1992), p. 182. Moqaddas Ardabili's work is *Hadiqat al-Shi'a* ("The Garden of Shi'a").

- 65 See Kasravi, *On Islam*, p. 113.
- 66 See E.L. Daniel, "Theology and Mysticism in the Writings of Ziya Gökalp", *Muslim World*, 67 (1977), pp. 175–84. See also E. Sirriyah, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, pp. 112–24.
- 67 A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 329.
- 68 Gökalp writing in 1923. This article as well as many others can be found in N. Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1959), p. 108.
- 69 See Daniel, "The Theology and Mysticism in the Writings of Ziya Gökalp", p. 176. Describing Rumi as "Turkish" is somewhat controversial, as Persians claim him as their own, for the vast majority of his work is written in Persian. However, the Turks argue that the Sufi works were all composed while he was in Turkey, where he died and was buried.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid., p. 65, Gökalp writing in 1923.
- 72 Gökalp's original text is found in Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, pp. 50–5. He wrote this article in 1911.
- 73 Sirriyeh, *Sufis and Anti-Sufis*, p. 117.
- 74 Berkes, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, p. 54.
- 75 Ibid., p. 209, Gökalp writing in 1916–17.
- 76 By this term, Iqbal was referring to the beliefs of Jawaharlal Nehru.
- 77 M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 178.
- 78 Ibid., pp. 177–8.
- 79 Cited in R. Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim Mind* (Delhi: Penguin Paperbacks, 1986), p. 63.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 It seems to me that God is slowly bringing home to us the truth that Islam is neither Nationalism nor Imperialism but a League of Nations which recognizes artificial boundaries and racial distinctions for facility of reference only, and not for restricting the social horizon of its members.
(Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, pp. 151–2)
- 82 Iqbal's speech in 1930 at the All India Muslim League. Cited in Malik (ed.), *Iqbal*, (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 94.
- 83 Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim Mind*, p. 59.

- 84 Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (London: Luzac & Co. 1908), p. 112.
- 85 Ibid., pp. 113–14.
- 86 Ibid., pp. 120–1.
- 87 See the analysis of E. Sirriyeh, *Sufi and Anti-Sufis*, pp. 127–31.
- 88 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 111. Iqbal's italics.
- 89 Ibid., p. 112. Iqbal's italics.
- 90 Ibid., p. 143.
- 91 Ibid., p. 118.
- 92 Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 104.
- 93 Iqbal, *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, p. 170.

4 “SUFISM”

- 1 *Payman* was the monthly journal begun by Kasravi in December 1933.
- 2 *Parcham* was the daily newspaper, edited by Kasravi; the first issue of which was on 23 January 1942 and ceased publication on 8 December. Kasravi subsequently continued publishing his views through a variety of publications that he edited. See Jazayeri, “Kasravi, Iconoclastic Thinker of Twentieth Century Iran,” p. 6.
- 3 A name which has mystical overtones. *Mast* being the Persian for drunk and intoxicated.
- 4 Likewise, this name has mystical overtones, as the word *Asheq* means the person who is a lover.
- 5 *Memoirs of the Saints* is a well-known Sufi text that has been rendered into English in an abridged form, see *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat al-Auliya'*, translated A.J. Arberry (London/New York, Arkana, 1990).
- 6 Kasravi adds in his text “the third of the late Gibb”. It is likely that Kasravi made an error here in that the *Memoirs of the Saints* was edited and translated by R.A. Nicholson and was the third volume to appear in the Persian Historical Texts series, published in London by Luzac in 1905–7, under the title *Tadhkiratu 'l-awliya* (Memoirs of the Saints).
- 7 The *Masnawi* of Mowlana is of course the famous six volumes of didactic Sufi Persian verse composed by Jalal al-Din Rumi. This has been translated into English by R.A. Nicholson, as *The Mathnawi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi* (London: Gibb Memorial Series, 1925–40).
- 8 The *chelleh* is a Sufi practice of remaining in isolation for a period of forty days for prayer and spiritual contemplation.
- 9 Kasravi's footnote. He does not state where he discusses this topic.
- 10 Kasravi does not state where he expresses these opinions.
- 11 The Persian reads: *nangeshan az nam va nameshan az nang*, which reflects Hafez's statement “*az nang cheh gu'i ke mara nam z-nang ast, vaz nam cheh porsī ke mara nang z-nam ast*”. (What do you say about ignomy, for me reputation comes from ignominy; and what do you say about reputation, because for me ignomy comes from reputation.) The Persian text is found in Arberry, *Fifty Poems of Hafiz* (Richmond, VA: Curzon press, 1993), p. 45.
- 12 The Qalandar were a group of antinomian Sufis who had a reputation for shocking behaviour, including wearing green clothing (sometimes very little clothing at all), who shaved their heads and eyebrows, and wandered from place to place, having no fixed abode. For the Qalandar see A. Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends* (Salt Lake City, 1994).
- 13 Kasravi is probably referring to the first edition of *Sufigari*, which does not include this introduction. The story of 'Iraqi appears on pp. 81–2 of this translation.
- 14 The *pir* is another name for the Sufi leader, guide or sheikh.

- 15 Kasravi states that these sentences have been taken from the book *The Course of Philosophy in Europe*. This is presumably the work of Mohammad 'Ali Forughi. Kasravi does not give the page number or the edition of the book.
- 16 The *kherqeh* is the Sufi cloak.
- 17 The *selseleh* is the chain of initiation, usually stretching back through a series of famous and celebrated Sufi masters to Mohammad.
- 18 A typical practice of the Qalandar Sufis.
- 19 This is the ecstatic expression commonly associated with Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (d. 815–16).
- 20 This is the ecstatic expression commonly associated with Bayazid Bastami (d. 874).
- 21 Reference to Hallaj, executed in 922, and famous for his exclamation "I am the Truth".
- 22 The *kharabat* a Persian term refers to places of ill-repute such as taverns, brothels, gaming houses. Kasravi associates the *kharabat* with the mediaeval Persian poets Khayyam and Hafez (see Chapter 6).
- 23 Mir Qavam al-Din Mar'ashi (or Mir Bozorg) was a member of the Sheikhiyya order of Shi'ite Sufis and established a Shi'ite state – known as the Mar'ashi dynasty in northern Iran in 1359. It was short lived and was conquered by Timur in 1391.
- 24 Sheikh Jonayd Safavi emerged as leader of the Safavid Sufi order in the second half of the fifteenth century, and he died in 1460. For the Safavids, see R. Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids* (Cambridge: University Press, 1980).
- 25 Sheikh Haydar was the son of Shaykh Jonayd who also inherited the leadership of the Safavid movement. He died in 1488.
- 26 Shah Isma'il, one of Haydar's sons, established the Safavid state in Iran when he was coronate in 1501.
- 27 Sana'i (d. 1131) is generally acknowledged as one of the founders of Persian Sufi poetry. For his work see De Bruijn, *Of Piety and Poetry* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983).
- 28 For the hagiography of Abu Sa'id see *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, translated by J. O'Kane (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1992).
- 29 'Attar (d.c. 1220) was the author of numerous mystical poetic works. The most famous in English is *Manteg al-Tayr*, translated as *The Speech of the Birds*, by P. Avery (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1998). See also Note 5.
- 30 Mowlavi, also known as Jalal al-Din Rumi. See Note 7.
- 31 Owjadi (d. 1337), as far as I know, there have been no English translations of his mystical verse. He was initiated into the mystical tradition by Owhad al-Din Kermani (criticised later in the text by Kasravi). Owjadi is famous in Iran for his *masnavi* entitled *Jam-e jam*, S. Nafisi (ed.), *Kolliyyat-e Owjadi-ye Isfahani ma'ruf ba-Maraghi* (Tehran: 1961).
- 32 Jami (1414–92) was another great mystical poet who also composed works in prose, referred to and cited in Kasravi's text (e.g. *Nafahat al-Ons*). Jami's works have not been rendered adequately into English.
- 33 Shabestari (d.c. 1320) was the author of "The Rose Garden of Mystery" (*Golshan-e Raz*) which portrayed the perfection of man through the path of gnosis. See L. Lewisohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity* (Richmond, VA: Curzon, 1995).
- 34 Shebli (d. 945) is famous for his paradoxical statements and also for the use of imagery that become commonplace in later Persian poetry. He is also associated with Hallaj. On his execution, the masses threw stones whereas Shebli cast a rose at him. See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1975).
- 35 Bayazid Bastami (d. 874) was probably the first Sufi to describe his mystical experience of the divine in a fashion that resembles Mohammad's own "Night Ascent" through the heavens to God. He is also famous for his ecstatic statement, "Glory be to me, how great is my majesty." For accounts of the Ascent of Bayazid Bastami, given in two Sufi mediaeval texts, see R.C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London: Athlone Press, 1960), pp. 198–218.

- 36 It is claimed that Sa'ri al-Saqati (d.c. 867) was the first to discuss the mystical states (*ahval*), or mystical experiences of the Sufis, and he also spoke of the mutual love between God and man. He was the uncle of the great Sufi master Jonayd (d. 910).
- 37 Ibrahim Adham (d. 776 or 790) is described as having a radical aversion to the world and its inhabitants. He is a model of Islamic ascetic practice and seems to have gathered a considerable following.
- 38 [Najm al-Din] Abu Bakr Razi, also known as Najm al-Din Dayah (1177–1256), was a member of the Kobrawiyyah order and wrote several important mystical treatises including an esoteric commentary of the Qur'an, a work he took over from his master, Najm al-Din Kobra. He is most famous, however, for his book *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, translated by Hamid Algar (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1983).
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid., pp. 130–1.
- 41 The famous opening to Rumi's *Masnavi*.
- 42 O'Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, p. 544.
- 43 Ibid., p. 544.
- 44 See Note 28.
- 45 J. O'Kane has explained that this action is a customary gesture a person makes when he has recited a final prayer and brings an assembly to a close. O' Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, p. 606, n. 70.
- 46 Ibid., p. 123.
- 47 *Shahed-bazi*, as Jazayery states, is a Persian word for homosexuality and refers to male homosexuality only, in particular, the role played by the male who penetrates his partner. In "Ahmad Kasravi and the Controversy Over Persian Poetry," p. 198, n. 1.
- 48 Kasravi's text reads *Mazaher-e sadri*. Jami's text (ed. 'Abedi) reads "he witnessed the absolute beauty of the Truth – may he be glorified – in created, sensual manifestations," *Nafahat al-Ons*, p. 588.
- 49 This story with slight variations is found in Jami, p. 588.
- 50 A reference to the Qur'an 27:9.
- 51 The fire (of the burning bush) is referred to in Qur'an 27:7.
- 52 'Attar, *Divan*, edited by T. Tafazzoli (Tehran: Bongah-e tarjomeh va nashr-e ketab, 1967), p. 493.
- 53 See Note 46. A *shahed* is a person who gives witness to the beauty of God.
- 54 *Harja'i* literally means everywhere. From the perspective of *vahdat-e vojud*, it means that God can be witnessed in all existence.
- 55 Literally *shahed-e harja'i*.
- 56 Literally *Gusheh-neshan*.
- 57 Jami, p. 599–600.
- 58 Rumi, *Masnavi*, IV: 2109. Kasravi's text has the first line beginning with *'eshq* ("love"), however, the standard texts begin with *nuql* ("sweet"). Nicholson translates the first line as: "The Dessert came: his reason became distraught."
- 59 Rumi, *Masnavi*, I: 2128.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Kasravi's text is again corrupt, as instead of wife (*haram*), the text reads *j.r.m.* which makes no sense at all. Again I have relied on 'Abedi's text, *Nafahat al-Ons*, p. 467.
- 62 A reference to Jami's famous words: "Whoever recites the Mathnawi in the morning and evening, for him Hellfire be forbidden! The spiritual Mathnawi of Mawlana is the Qur'an in Persian tongue." Cited in Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun* (London and The Hague: East-West Publications, 1980), p. 367.
- 63 Shah Ne'matollah Kermani (1331–1431).
- 64 Qur'an 57:4.

- 65 The word translated here as carpet is the Arabic *besat(an)*, and this verse is rendered in the following way by other translators: "Allah has made the earth a vast expanse for you" (Fakhry), and Pickthall translates *besat(an)* as a "wide expanse". I have translated the word as carpet to make it more comprehensible in the context of the story.
- 66 O' Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, p. 85.
- 67 See A. Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 68–71.
- 68 For Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadir Gilani see A. Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*, pp. 179–92.
- 69 This *hadith* is not found in the famous collections of *hadith*. However, it was very popular among the Sufis, being cited frequently by the likes of 'Ayn al-Qozat, Ibn 'Arabi and 'Aziz Nasafi.
- 70 In Algar's translation *The Paths of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, this discussion extends from pp. 94–109.
- 71 Kasravi's speechmarks.
- 72 O' Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, p. 488.
- 73 For Shabestari see Note 33.
- 74 Following the death of the leader of the Ne'matollahi leader Rahmat 'Ali Shah in 1861, the Ne'matollahis were split when two of his disciples refused to follow Monavvar 'Ali Shah. One of these disciples, Safi 'Ali Shah (d. 1898) established a *khanagah* in Tehran, where he had a considerable number of followers who recognised him as the "pole" of the Ne'matollahi order and also claimed he had performed *karamat*. He was prodigious in his literary endeavours and has been called "the greatest Ni'matollahi – if not Persian Sufi – poet of the nineteenth century" (see Lewisohn, "An Introduction to the History of Modern Persian Sufism, Part I", p. 453).
- 75 See Ziba Mir Husseni. "Faith, Ritual and Culture among the Ahl-i haqq", in P. Kreyenbroek and C. Allison (eds), *Kurdish Culture and Identity* (London: Zed Press, 1996).
- 76 These lines starting with "Sometimes" all refer to 'Ali, who in the Islamic tradition is known as a brave soldier and who was also prepared to lay down his life as a martyr for Mohammad. This is often understood with reference to the story of his sleeping in Mohammad's bed in Mecca on the night Mohammad escaped the wrath of the Meccans by leaving for Medina. The Meccans believed that it was Mohammad in the bed, whereas it was 'Ali, who knowingly took part in this deception to give Mohammad a headstart from his adversaries.
- 77 Shah is one of the names used typically by Shi'ites for 'Ali.
- 78 "Glory be to me," the phrase used by Bayazid and an expression understood as reflecting the "Glory be to him" of the Qur'an 17:1.
- 79 During the battle of Khandaq, 'Ali is reported to have pulled the door of the city walls away from its hinges and then used the door as a shield.
- 80 Mohammad's night ascent has been discussed from a number of viewpoints by Muslims themselves, in particular, whether or not it was physical or spiritual. For an academic perspective of the non-believer see the article by J.R. Porter, "Muhammad's Journey to Heaven," *Numen*, XXI (1974), pp. 64–80.
- 81 Shaiq Balkhi (d. 809) was one of the first Sufis to discuss the mystical states experienced by mystics.
- 82 For a similar version of this see O' Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, p. 307.
- 83 Jonayd (d. 910) is one of the most celebrated Sufi masters. For his life, doctrines and translation of his writings see A. Abdel-Qadir, *The Life, Personality and Writings of Al-Junayd* (London: Luzac, 1976).
- 84 Al-Sarraj attributes this utterance to Abu al-Husayn al-Nuri, see C. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1985), p. 100.
- 85 A phrase usually expressed when the Muslim approaches the Ka'ba on performing the *hajj*.
- 86 Khayr Nassaj (d. 934) was a famous Sufi from Baghdad.

- 87 Ibn Bazzaz, *Safat al-safa*, ed. Gholam Reza Tabataba'i Majd (Tabriz: 1994), in the first chapter, seventh section (Entesharats Zaryab), pp. 136–19 in the Persian text.
- 88 Sheikh Safi [al-Din Ardabili] (1252–1334) is regarded as the founder of the Safavi Sufi order.
- 89 A *zawiya* was a smaller version of the *khanagah*, where the Sufis gathered and performed their communal rituals and ascetic discipline.
- 90 Sheikh Zahed (otherwise known as Taj al-Din Ibrahim al-Kordi al-Sanjani), was the head of the Zahediyeh Sufi order which was based at Lahijan, in the north of Iran. His most famous student was Safi al-Din who married Sheikh Zahed's daughter. Sheikh Zahed lived between 1252 and 1307.
- 91 O' Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, p. 299.
- 92 Ibid., pp. 180–1.
- 93 For the identity of this individual see Homayuni, *Tarikh-e selsela-ha-ye Tariqeh-ye Ne'matollahiyya dar Iran*, p. 335. This "Mowlana" was Hadi Mowlavi Gilani, otherwise known as Vafa 'Ali. Homayuni also states that he was trained by Safi 'Ali Shah.
- 94 Known in the West as Tamerlane, Timur siezed power in 1370 and ruled for the next thirty years. His reign is generally regarded as one in which there was much terror and bloodshed, caused by the ruthless ruler.
- 95 From O' Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, pp. 286–7.
- 96 From 'Attar's *Tadhkirat al-awliya*', p. 180.
- 97 Ibid., p. 75.
- 98 Ibid., p. 75.
- 99 For Ibrahim Adham see Note 37.
- 100 Kasravi text has this verb in the negative, whereas editions of 'Attar's text place the verb in the positive.
- 101 From 'Attar's *Tadhkirat al-awliya*', p. 126.
- 102 Rumi, *Masnawi*, IV: 2128–9.
- 103 Suyuti comments on the tradition,

God seizes the souls [of the dead] and puts them in lamps of chrysolite and sapphire, then sets them in the middle of the Garden. And when night comes the souls are returned to them [i.e. to the bodies] and they continue like that until dawn, when their souls are returned to the place where they were.
- Cited in Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and the Resurrection* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1981), p. 53.
- 104 Abu Sa'id claimed that he had bestowed the kingship of Khorasan (i.e. Eastern Iran) upon Chagri and Iraq (western Iran) upon Toghral. See O' Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, p. 255. For Ibrahim Inal, younger brother of Sultan Toghral, and Abu Sa'id's predictions see *ibid.*, pp. 205–6.
- 105 Kasravi adds a brief footnote here (one that typifies his use of footnotes): "On this point, see the book 'What does Hafez Say'."
- 106 Sarkhas was a city on the shores of the Caspian.
- 107 See the story above of Abu Sa'id speaking with the gazelle.
- 108 O' Kane, *The Secrets of God's Mystical Oneness*, pp. 424–5.
- 109 As the Caliphate in Baghdad lost its power, more regional autonomy developed to the extent that principalities sprung up. A good example of this was in eastern Iran, where the Samanid rulers established themselves over much of the region, and they made Bokhara their capital. They ruled between 819 and 1005.
- 110 Estakhri was a tenth-century traveller whose only surviving work is called *Ketab al-masalek va'l-mamalek*, in which there are descriptions of the circumstances of Fars and Khorasan. See O.G. Bolshavok, "Estakhri", in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

- 111 The Buyid dynasty stretched across south and western parts of Iran from the middle of the tenth century to the middle of the eleventh century.
- 112 Yama is also called Yeme and Jebe. See *The History of the World-Conqueror* of 'Ata-Malik Juvaini, translated by J.A. Boyle (Manchester University Press, 1958), 1, p. 142, n. 1.
- 113 Sutay is called Sübetei in Juvaini's work, *ibid.*, p. 143.
- 114 Khwarazm Shah referred to in the text is Soltan Mohammad, otherwise known as Khwarazm Shah 'Ala' al-Din Mohammad II, who ruled in Khwarazm (the region north-east of the Caspian), who was hopeful of establishing himself as the successor of the Seljuk protectors of the Caliph in Baghdad.
- 115 Ibn Athir (1160–1233) was a historian and is an important source of the history of Iran and adjacent areas from the Samanid to the Mongol period. He wrote much about Iran in his *al-Kāmil fī'l-tārīkh*. See D.S. Richards, "Ebn al-Atir" (Beirut: Dar Sadir, 1965–7) in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 116 This is the title that Kasravi gives.
- 117 The Batenis are usually associated with the Isma'ilis, a group that recognises seven Imams, as opposed to the twelve. A distinguishing feature of the Batenis was its esoteric and allegorical interpretation of sacred scripture.
- 118 See Chapter 6 of this book.
- 119 Ibn Jubayr (1145–1217) was a Spanish Muslim who visited Mecca, Medina and Baghdad. His Arabic text has been translated into English, see the translation by R.J.C. Broadhurst, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952).
- 120 Ibn Jawzi (d. 1201) was a Hanbali cleric and a staunch opponent of much of the Sufi tradition. See, for example, his *Talbis Iblis*, translated D.S. Margoliouth as "The Devil's Delusion", *Islamic Culture*, IX (January 1938), pp. 108–18; X (April 1938), pp. 235–40; XI (July 1938), pp. 352–64; XII (October 1938), pp. 447–56.
- 121 See C. Hillenbrand, "Mustansir", in *Encyclopedia Islamica* (second edition). The seminary is known as the Mustansiriyya.
- 122 The event was described by Ibn al-Fuwati who stated that while the Caliph watched:

the deputy vizier came to the college [the Mustansiriyya] with all the governors, chamberlains, qadis, teachers, religious notables, controllers of the household, Sufis, preachers, Koran readers, poets, and foreign merchants. Each of the four orthodox schools then chose sixty-two representatives, Muhi al-Din ibn Fadlan and Rashid al-Din al-Faraghani were chosen as professors for the Shafiis and the Hanafis respectively, and two assistant professors were chosen for the Hanbalis and Malikis. Each of the professors was presented with a black gown and a blue mantle, as well as a riding mule and complete equipment... while each of the assistant professors was presented with a heavy tunic and a red turban. Presents were also given to four Koran reciters from each of the four schools, and to the foremen, laborers, courtiers, and library assistants. Then a banquet was prepared in the courtyard of the College, and the tables loaded with all kinds of food and drink. After the company had feasted, further presents were distributed among the teachers, controllers of the household, Koran reciters, poets, and foreign merchants, and poems were recited in honor of the occasion. Next, accommodation in the building was allotted to the four schools... and the chambers and other lodging apartments were also allotted to their occupants. Sufficient allowance for their upkeep was made in accordance with the provisions of the founder.

(Cited in J. Bloom and S. Blair, *Islam: A Thousand Years of Faith and Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), pp. 121–2)

- 123 C. Hillenbrand has referred to the works of Islamic scholars who have discussed this seminary. Ibid.
 124 An alternative view has been given by C. Hillenbrand who states:

It may well be that al-Mustansir intended this building to be an instrument for continuing the policies initiated by al-Nasir, and to create under the caliphal banner some kind of unity amongst the Muslims whose territories bordered his own

(Ibid.)

- 125 Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, pp. 41–2.
 126 For Hamd Allah Mustawfi (1281–1339) see B. Spuler, “Mustawfi”, in *Encyclopedia Islamica* (second edition).
 127 The famous traveller who journeyed throughout Arabia, Turkey and Iran (d. 1368 or 1377).
 128 Majd al-Din Baghdadi was drowned in 1219.
 129 For Najm al-Din Kobra and the Kobrawiyya Order see M.I. Waley, “Najm al-Din Kubra and the Central Asian School of Sufism (The Kubrawiyyah)” in S.H. Nasr (ed.), *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations* (London: SCM, 1991), pp. 80–104.
 130 According to the ninth/fifteenth-century hagiographical compendium, ‘Abd al-Rahman Jami’s *Nafahat al-Ons*, Baghdadi once boasted to his followers as follows:

I used to be an egg on the edge of the river, and Najm al-Din (Kobra) was a hen who took me under the wing of his training. Now I have emerged from the egg and become like a duck; I enter the water while my Sheikh still stands on the bank.

Kobra, who came to know of this arrogant metaphor through the intuitive light of his sanctity, uttered the imprecation, “May he die in the river!” Penitent and ashamed, Baghdadi abased himself before Kobra, who duly forgave him, but prophesied that Baghdadi would still die in the river and that all of Khwarazm would ultimately follow him to destruction (Jami, pp. 425–6).

- 131 Rumi, *Masnawi*, I: 2467. Colourlessness refers to the divine essence, while colour refers to God’s creation.
 132 A famous fourteenth-century Sufi of the Kobrawiyyeh order.

5 OPPOSITION TO THE ORIENTALISTS: KASRAVI’S CRITICISMS OF E.G. BROWNE

- 1 Edward.G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution 1905–1909* (Washington, DC: Mage, 1995).
- 2 This includes Nazem al-Islam in *his History of the Awakening of the Persians*, see Abbas Amanat, “Edward Browne and *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*”, in E.G. Browne (ed.), *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*.
- 3 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat* (Tehran: 1378/1999–2000, first published 1944–5), pp. 28, 150–4.
- 4 It was argued by some that support of the Iranian Constitutionalist Movement, promoted by Browne, would only serve to weaken the British position in India by encouraging nationalist and independence movements. See *The Times* 5 January 1911, cited in Bonakdarian, “Selected Correspondence of E.G. Browne and Contemporary Reviews of the Persian Revolution 1905–1909”, in E.G. Browne (ed.), *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (repr. 1995).
- 5 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, p. 152.
- 6 It is not clear whether Kasravi had access to the English original, but even if he did not, he would surely have been familiar with a Persian abridgement which appeared

- in 1910 in *Iran-e Naw*, a paper sympathetic to the Constitutionalists. See Bonakdarian, "Selected Correspondence of E.G. Browne", p. lvi-lviii.
- 7 E.G. Browne, *The Reign of Terror at Tabriz: England's Responsibility* (London, 1912). This is a pamphlet of no more than fifteen pages but one which also includes rather gruesome pictures of the pro-Constitutionalists who were hanged by the Russians and their supporters. The front cover states that the pamphlet was compiled for the use of the Persia Committee.
 - 8 Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Hijdah Saleh-e Azarbayjan*.
 - 9 Browne's first works on Babism appeared in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* XXI (1889), "The Bábís of Persia. I: Sketch of their History and Personal Experiences amongst them", pp. 485–526, and "The Bábís of Persia II: Their Literature and Doctrines", pp. 881–1009. See also his later publication, *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge: 1918). For all this, see Kasravi, *Dar Pīramun-e Adabīyyat*, p. 152.
 - 10 See E.G. Browne, *An Abridged Translation of the History of Tabaristan* (London and Leyden: 1905).
 - 11 See Iraj Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 2003), p. 168.
 - 12 Kasravi, *Dar Pīramun-e Adabīyyat*, p. 28.
 - 13 See Kasravi's arguments in *Hafez cheh mi-guyad*. (Tehran: 1943–4), pp. 12–18.
 - 14 Taken from the text *Porsesh va pasokh* (Tehran: 1325), reproduced in *Iran-nameh* XX (2002), p. 320.
 - 15 Kasravi was not the only Iranian of his generation to be vexed about the lack of unity within Iran. Another example expressing this concern is found in the writings of Hosayn Kazemzadeh, who published the newspaper *Iranshahr* from Berlin between 1922 and 1927. In an article on "Religion and Nationality" in *Iranshahr*, the author wrote, "the problem of communalism is so serious that whenever an Iranian traveling abroad is asked his nationality, he will give his locality – not the proud name of his country". Cited in E. Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, p. 123.

As a nationalist, Kasravi was not a great theoretician, and Abrahamian has remarked that he did not compose a single detailed, analytical work on the topic of nationalism in which the structures that shape perceptions of the nation, such as political will and consent, language, culture and origins could have been discussed. Instead, there are comments scattered throughout his oeuvre such as the following, which appears to endorse a nationalism based on self-determination:

Nationalism is when twenty million people who live in a single country make an agreement among themselves to co-operate and support one another in [all] circumstances. If someone from Kerman or from Khuzestan is injured, then the people from Azarbayjan and Gilan and all the others should assist him. And if a problem arises in Khorasan, then the people of Mazandaran, Gilan and all the others should rush to help. Everyone should see this country as his own house, and they should join hands and attempt to make it flourish.

(Kasravi, *Farhang chist*, in *Panj maqaleh* (Cologne Entesharat-e Mehr: 1372/1993), p. 244. *Farhang chist* in this edition is a pamphlet of forty-one pages and was first published in 1943–4)

- 16 Kasravi, *Tarikh-e Mashruteh-ye Iran*, pp. 196–7.
- 17 Cited in *Iran-nameh*, pp. 343–4, originally found in Kasravi's *Zendegani-ye man*, p. 11.
- 18 Kasravi, writing in *Payman*, (no date or number) in the volume prepared by Marvi (the book is entitled *Payman*, (Tehran: 1381/2002–3)) from the first year of publication in 1933, p. 415. In this context of promoting religious innovations, Kasravi mentions Massignon and the orientalist who praise Khayyam.

- 19 In the second chapter of *Sufigari* (Tehran: 1943–4) Kasravi lists six criticisms of the Sufis. The sixth is the Sufis’ “disregard” for reason:

Sitting idle in the *khanaqah*, eating bread derived from the toil of others, begging in the bazaar, not taking a wife and having children, growing a beard, dancing, clapping hands and spinning themselves around have the least [degree of] compatibility with reason, let alone all the other irrational stories about them.
- 20 Kasravi appears to be mistaken here. Indeed, there was a publication of ‘Attar’s *Memoirs of the Saints* (*Tazkirat al-awliya*) but this book was not edited by Browne but by R.A. Nicholson. It is likely that Kasravi meant Dawlatshah’s *Tazkirat al-sho’ara* which was edited by Browne and published in 1901 under the title of *The Tadhkiratu ‘sh-Shu’ara* (“Memoirs of the Poets”) of *Dawlatshah bin Alā’u ‘Dawla Bakhtishāh al-Ghāzi of Samarqand*. This was the first volume of the Persian Historical Texts (the two volumes that made up ‘Attar’s works formed volumes 3 and 5).
- 21 Arberry suggests that Browne was extremely charitable: “For his liberality knew no bounds, and the number of Orientals alone who, deserving or undeserving, were the recipients of his charity is hard to estimate.” *Oriental Essays* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 194.
- 22 For Forughī, see Ibrahim Safa’i, *Rahbaran-e Mashruteh (dawra-ye dovom)*, (Tehran: second edition, 1363/1984–5), pp. 539–79.
- 23 Professor Isa Sadiq taught with Browne at Cambridge and was the author of several books including *Modern Persia and her Educational System* (1931), *Tarikh-e Farhang-e Iran* (Tehran: Daneshgah-e Tehran 1957) and *Tarikh-e Farhang-e Urupa* (Tehran: Daneshgah-e Tehran 1957).
- 24 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, p. 28.
- 25 Ibid., pp. 28–9. It seems that Kasravi himself was included in these literary associations, as Sa’id Nafisi mentions that Kasravi attended his literary gatherings. Kasravi suddenly broke the association with Nafisi, claiming that he only used to attend these sessions to borrow Nafisi’s books. Nafisi claims that Kasravi behaved in the same way with Bahar (see Note 26). See Sa’id Nafisi, *Khataerat-e siyasi, adabi, javani*, pp. 186–7.
- 26 For Bahar (1886–1951), see M.B. Loraine, “Bahār, Mohammad Taqi Malek al-Šo’arā” “in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, in which he is described as a poet, scholar, journalist, politician and historian.
- 27 Sa’id Nafisi, *Khataerat-e siyasi*, p. 308–9. See also M.A.H. Katouzian, “Risheh-ha-ye Sa’di Koshi” in *Iran Shenasi*, XIV 3 (2002), p. 512.
- 28 Kasravi claimed that an assistant was sent from Tehran to Browne in Britain: “I knew he had a close relationship with Forughī and his helpers, and they sent Mirza Mohammad Khan Qazvini from Tehran to help Browne.” See Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, p. 153. Mirza Mohammad Khan Qazvini had researched Samarqandi’s *Chahar Maqaleh*. A revised translation with notes by Browne, and based on Qazvini’s research, was published by Browne in 1921. See Arberry, *Oriental Essays*, p. 176.
- 29 Kasravi, *Farhang ast ya nirang?* In *Panj Maqaleh*, p. 282, *Farhang ast ya nirang?* was first published in 1944–5.
- 30 Forughī was particularly attached to Sa’di’s writings and edited his *Golestan*, his *Bustan* and his poetry, and editions of these works have been printed on numerous occasions. His efforts were supported by ‘Ali Asghar Hekmat (the minister of education) who wanted to celebrate the 700th anniversary of Sa’di’s *Golestan*, but Kasravi states he was not able to celebrate this anniversary to the degree that he wished because of the opposition from Kasravi and his supporters (see Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, p. 31). However, the conference did go ahead and an impressive number of scholars attended, and the papers were published in a special issue of *Majalleh-ye ta’lim va*

- tarbiyat*. My thanks are to John Gurney who clarified this point. See also H. Katouzian, "Risheh-ha-ye Sa'di Koshi", *Iran Shenasi*, XIV, 3 (2002), p. 512.
- 31 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, p. 154.
 - 32 Ibid., p. 150. John Gurney in private correspondence has questioned from where Kasravi got this information. In the second edition to Browne's *A Year Amongst the Persians*, there is a studio photograph of Browne in Persian clothing, but this photograph was taken by Palmer Clarke, and it might well be the case that the photograph was taken in England. Browne does mention (in *ibid.*, p. 605) that he wore Persian clothing on one occasion (during the ceremonies of Moharram) in Iran, but as Dr Gurney points out, the fact that Browne felt the need to say this indicates that it was an unusual occurrence. Browne also remarks on the strictness of the Shi'ites in not permitting non-Muslims to visit the interior of mosques, as opposed to the Sunnis. See *ibid.*, p. 106.
 - 33 See Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Gharbzadegi* [*Weststruckness*], translated from the Persian by John Green and Ahmad Alizadeh (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1997).
 - 34 Much of Shari'ati's work has been translated into English, and several articles and speeches appear on <http://www.shariati.net>. See in particular "Man and Islam" and "Reflections of Humanity".
 - 35 See Ali Rahnama, *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ali Shari'ati* (London: 1998), pp. 6–10.
 - 36 Ibid., p. 206.
 - 37 On the Aryan migration myth into India see Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 30–5.
 - 38 E.H. Palmer, *Oriental Mysticism* (London: Octagon Press, 1974, first published 1867), p. xi.
 - 39 From the late nineteenth century onwards there was greater interest in Iran's pre-Islamic heritage. This was partly attributable to the success of Henry Rawlinson who deciphered the cuneiform Old-Persian, making historical research that much more easy. Famous scholars who were interested in pre-Islamic Iran included Ibrahim Pur Davud (1885–1969), Abu 'l-Qasim 'Aref (see Sorour Soroudi, "Poet and Revolution: Part II" *Iranian Studies*, XII, 3–4 (Summer–Autumn 1979), pp. 239–73), Bahar and Sadeq Hedayat.
 - 40 See the anti-Arab sentiments of the nineteenth-century literary critic Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani in Iraj Parsinejad, "Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani: An Iranian Literary Critic", pp. 163–7.
 - 41 See A. Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921* (London: Longman, Pearson Education, 2003), p. 30.
 - 42 See Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Islam*, pp. 61–2.
 - 43 Ibid., p. 111.
 - 44 This scholar whom Kasravi does not name was Fritz Wolff and the book is *Glossar zu Firdosis Shahname* (Berlin: Gedruckt in der Reichsdruckerei, 1935).
 - 45 In 1935 a series of events were held in various cities in Iran to celebrate the passing of 1,000 years since Ferdowsi composed the *Shah-nameh*.
 - 46 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, pp. 155–6.
 - 47 Kamran Ekbal, "Browne and the Persian Constitutional Movement" in "Browne, Edward Granville" *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
 - 48 Cited in Mansour Bonakdarian, "The Persia Committee and the Constitutional Revolution in Iran", in *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 18, 2 (1991) p. 191.
 - 49 E.G. Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*.
 - 50 E.G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 8. Abbas Amanat has drawn parallels between Lord Byron and Edward Browne as champions of victimised minorities: in Byron's case it was for the Christian Greeks, and for Browne it was for the Turks, the Babis, the Iranian Constitutionalists and Irish nationalists. Browne's interest in the Babis

is intriguing given his own interest in “Pantheistic idealism” and the similarity expressed by some Babis with Sufi doctrine. (See Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* pp. 355–6 and Amanat, “Edward Browne and *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*,” p. xiii).

51 Browne states,

It was with Sufis like Abu Yazid of Bistam, and al-Junayd (also, according to Jami, a Persian) that, in the latter part of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth centuries of our era, the pantheistic element first makes its definite appearance... in short, with these men, whom the Sufis reckoned amongst their greatest teachers, a very thoroughgoing pantheism is superadded to the quietism of the older mystics... It was certainly the Persian Sufis who went to the greatest lengths in developing the pantheistic aspect of Sufism...

(*A Literary History of Persia*, I, pp. 427–8)

52 E.G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, pp. 16–17. Browne’s understanding of Rumi’s *Masnawi* as pantheistic must be qualified with reference to the general perspective of this Persian poet’s literary works, such as his *Divan-e Shams*, in which there are verses that portray God as incomparable. See for example no. 900 in *Divan-e Shams*, B. Foruzanfar (ed.) (Tehran: Daneshgah-e Tehran, 1957–66).

53 Pirzadeh was himself a Sufi disciple of Hajji Mirza Safa (d. 1866) who had many followers in Iran as well as in Ottoman territories. See H. Farman-Farmaian’s *English Introduction to Safar Nama-yi Hajji Muhammad Ali Pirzadeh* (Tehran: University of Tehran, 1963), p. 3

54 See L. Lewisohn, “An introduction to the history of modern Persian Sufism, Part II”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 62, 1 (1999), p. 55, n. 148.

55 In the Persian introduction to *Safar Nameh-ye Hajji Mohammad Ali Pirzadeh*, Iraj Afshar has included some letters written by Browne to Pirzadeh. In these letters, Browne indeed does refer to Pirzadeh as “the pir of the wayfarers of the path”, and “that treasury of secrets of reality” and “perfect guide” (p. xxxviii), and “guide of the wayfarers” and “pole of those who profess unity”, p. xlv. He is also keen to use the adjective “dervish-like” in a positive fashion (pp. xliii–xliv), and he also refers to Pirzadeh as being like his own father (p. xliii). Pirzadeh himself describes Browne as having a very keen interest in learning Persian, and studying mysticism, and so the young Englishman would visit him every afternoon and evening. However, it seems that Browne was not a Muslim or a Sufi because Pirzadeh who gave Browne the nickname “Manifestation of ‘Ali” remarked that it was to be hoped that through the blessing of the name Mazhar-e ‘Ali, he would come to the correct road, the straight path of the nation of Islam (*sirat-e mustaqim-e mellat-e islam*) and the Mohammadan religion (*din-e Mohammadi*), (p. 318). What can be conclusively inferred, however, is Browne’s ardent interest in Persian Sufism, and it appears unlikely that Kasravi was aware of Browne’s relations with Pirzadeh.

56 See Browne’s introduction to *A Traveller’s Narrative*, (Cambridge University Press, 1891), p. X. It is also worth noting Browne’s comments in *A Year Amongst the Persians* when he remarks that chapter 17:8 of the Qur’an (which he translates as “And thou didst not slay them, but God slew them; and thou didst not shoot when thou didst shoot, but God shot”) “serves the Persian Sufis as a foundation-stone for their pantheistic doctrines” (p. 135).

57 In *A Year Amongst the Persians*, Browne stated that mysticism appears in all lands, as it is the “eternal cry of the human soul for rest; the insatiable longing of a being wherein infinite ideals are fettered and cramped by a miserable actuality”. He also describes it as “wonderfully uniform” (p. 136). Later on in the same work (p. 445) he remarks, “In a well-known aphorism... it is said that ‘the ways unto God are as many as the number of

souls of the children of men. Every religion is surely an expression, more or less clear and complete, of some aspect of a great central Truth which itself transcends expression."

The relationship between the study of Sufi texts and Christian spirituality has been alluded to by Hamid Algar when he claimed,

Corbin was certainly not alone among modern Orientalists in experiencing a confluence of spiritual and scholarly interests. E.G. Browne, R. A. Nicholson, and A. J. Arberry all seem to have been restored to a belief in Anglican Christianity by the study of Sufi texts, and Louis Massignon spoke of being a "spiritualist guest" in the Islamic world.

See "The Study of Islam: The Work of Henry Corbin", *Religious Studies Review*, 1980, pp. 85–91. My thanks are due to Matthijs van den Bos who drew my attention to this article.

- 58 E.G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 538.
- 59 Ibid., p. 444. Browne makes the point however that the Babis would adapt their conversation to those with whom they are speaking. He states that with Muslims they would speak of the coming Mahdi, and with Christians they would speak of the return of Christ (probably Browne is referring to the Babi belief that the Babi was the prophet or one who will come, as is foretold in the Gospel of John and in the Qur'ān). See "The Babis of Persia II", p. 882. This Babi practice bears some resemblance to the traditional Shi'ite practice of dissimulation (*taqiya*).
- 60 Cited in H.M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith* (London: George Ronald, 1970), p. 49.
- 61 Ibid., p. 61.
- 62 Browne in his introduction to *Kutab-i Nuqtatu'l Kaf* (Leiden: Brill, 1910), cited in Balyuzi, p. 88.
- 63 For a period the young Browne had been influenced by his uncle who demonstrated some traits of Christian puritanical non-conformism. See Amanat, "Edward Browne and *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*", p. xii.
- 64 For example, Browne comments that when a Babi in Taft asked him if he was a Christian, he answered openly that he was. See "The Babis of Persia, I" p. 501.
- 65 Browne's Introduction, *A Traveller's narrative written to illustrate the episode of the Bab* (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), p. ix.
- 66 Ibid., p. ix.
- 67 These sentiments of Browne were published in an article sent to *The Manchester Guardian*, 18 January 1909, cited in M. Bonakdarian, "Edward G. Browne and the Constitutional Struggle", *Iranian Studies*, 26 (1993), p. 21.
- 68 E.G. Browne, Introduction to *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*, p. xxii.
- 69 A. Amanat, "Edward Browne and *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*", p. xi.
- 70 E.G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 110. Another example of Browne's criticisms of Iran is found in his opinion of Persian poetry during the Safavid period (1501–1722), when he remarked that not a single poet of merit emerged during this time when "learning, culture, poetry and mysticism completely deserted Persia", see E.G. Browne, *Literary History of Persia*, IV, p. 26. This view has been challenged recently, see L. Lewisohn, "Sufism and the School of Isfahan", in L. Lewisohn and D. Morgan (eds), *The Heritage of Sufism: Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501–1750)*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), p. 64.
- 71 Browne, Introduction to *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*, p. xxi.
- 72 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. 538.
- 73 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, II, p. x.
- 74 Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*.
- 75 Ibid., pp. xiv–xv.

- 76 See also Browne's remarks in *A Year Among the Persians* (p. 129) where he praises the verses of Qa'ani (d. 1854).
- 77 One might also conjecture that Kasravi's English was not adequate enough to read all of the literature produced by Browne. However, M. Ghanoonparvar has claimed that Kasravi was "knowledgeable" in English. See the translator's foreword to *On Islam*, p. viii.
- 78 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyat*, p. 150.
- 79 One element of the conspiracy theory prevalent in Iran sees a British hand in all malevolent events that occur there. One contentious example of this may be observed in the observation offered by many Iranians that the British brought the mollahs to power in the revolution in 1978. The conspiracy theory, however, is often lampooned, as in Iraj Pezeshkzad's *My Uncle Napoleon* (first published in Persian in the early 1970's, translated by Dick Davis, Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2000). For conspiracy theories in Iran see the entry in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* by Ahmad Ashraf.
- 80 Katouzian has argued that Kasravi did not blame the British for all of Iran's misfortunes. It was Kasravi's hatred of classical Persian poetry that caused him to detest the academic writings of academics such as Browne. See M.A.H. Katouzian, "Kasravi va adabiyat", in *Iran-nameh*, XX, 2-3 (Spring-Summer 2002), p. 176.
- 81 See for example, Kasravi, *Dar piramun-e kherad*, in *Panj Maqaleh* (Köln: Intisharat-e Mehr, 1372/1993), p. 305. *Dar piramun-e kherad* was originally published in 1943/4.
- 82 See Kasravi, *Farhang chist*, p. 263.
- 83 Many Europeans and Americans believe that their factory-owners and investors must set in motion their numerous, huge machines, and they spin, weave and manufacture in the hope of amassing money perpetually. And they pour out [goods], and the people of backward Eastern countries, ranging from India, Iran, China and Arabia continually buy their produce, and in so doing line the pockets [of the Europeans and Americans]. For this reason the governments of Europe and America consider it their right to control one of the Eastern countries and open a market for its own factories' produce. It is an excuse that they have for laying their hands on Eastern countries. One should say only this: "They trade through force and murder."
- (Kasravi, *Dar piramun-e kherad*, p. 323)
- 84 Kasravi, *Porsesh va Pasokh*, cited in *Iran-nameh*, p. 319.
- 85 Kasravi, *Ayin*, p. 47. Cited in Mohammad Tavakoli Targhi, "Tajaddod-e Ekhtera'i, tamaddon-e 'ariyati va enqelab-i ruhani" ("Inventing Modernity, Borrowing Modernity and Spiritual Revolution") in *Iran-nameh*, p. 223.
- 86 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyat*, pp. 154-5. For Goethe on Hafez see *West-Östlicher Divan*, edited and annotated by Ernest Beutler in collaboration with Hans Heinrich Schaefer (Leipzig: Dieterichsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1943).
- 87 It is not exactly clear what Kasravi means here. He may be referring to the idea that Europeans imagine Iranians to be weak and wretched.
- 88 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyat*, p. 130.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Literary criticism had emerged in Britain as an academic subject in the late nineteenth century and the Newbolt report of 1921 stated that literature could serve to "form a new element of national unity, linking together the mental life of all classes". (Cited in Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 10). Moreover, in the 1930s F.R. Leavis of the school of *New Critics* attempted to promote mature poetry that cultivated an authentic life and in the process relegated classic poets such as John Milton to a minor status.

- 91 Kasravi, *Dar piramun-e adabiyyat*, p. 138.
- 92 Kasravi, *She'r va sha'eri*, p. 115.
- 93 See A. Fathi, "Kasravi's Views on Writers and Journalists: A Study in the Sociology of Modernization", in *Iranian Studies*, XIX, 2 (Spring 1986), pp. 167–82.
- 94 An interesting exception is found in Borqa'i's *Haqiqat al-'erfan*, in which there is a vague association between Browne and the colonialists (*este'mar*) who wish that the Iranian nation follows Sufism, that the people go to the *khanaqah*, publish books that encourage ecstasy and *sama'* and encourage minorities (such as Sufis) to entrust the strength and powers of the nation to them, so that Iranians become engulfed in disunity and religious infighting, while they plunder the wealth of the nation (pp. 63–4). His comments on Browne are continued on pages 223–4.

6 HOSTILITY TO HAFEZ: KASRAVI'S VIEWS OF PERSIAN POETRY

- 1 European literature was available not only to Iranians who travelled abroad, but it was at the disposal of those who had benefited from the educational reforms that occurred in Iran during the same period. These reforms included the opening of the *Dar al-Fonun* in Tehran, a college for secular learning, and which was instrumental in the translation of books that were written in European languages. As Sa'id Nafisi observes, "The influence of the European literature opened the path for our writers", *Khaterat*, p. 410. The treatises of Descartes, August Comte, David Hume, John Locke, John Stuart Mill and Jean-Jacques Rousseau were apparent in the writings of reformist thinkers such as Akhundzadeh, Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, Malkam Khan and 'Abd al-Rahman Talebof. See I. Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran*, pp. 26–7. In addition see Iraj Afshar, "Book Translations as a Cultural Activity in Iran 1806–1896", *Iran*, XLI (2003), pp. 279–90. See also E.G. Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: University Press, 1914), pp. 154–66, in which there is a list of works published in Iran by the *Dar al-Fonun*. In this list, there is a category of "miscellaneous works, translated and original" which contains 83 works.
- 2 See S. Nafisi, *Khaterat*, pp. 432–35.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 433.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 S. Soroudi, "Poet and Revolution", *Iranian Studies*, XII, 1–2 (1979), pp. 8–10.
- 6 For an example of such prose writing, see the passage written by Shaykh Mohammad Hosayn Na'ini (even though it was written in the twentieth century, a good indication of the strength of the legacy of this form of literature), which is cited by S. Meskoob, *Iranian Nationalism and the Persian Language*, pp. 151–3.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 153.
- 8 Věra Kubičková, "Literary Life in the Years 1921–1941" in Jan Rypka (ed.), *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1968), pp. 379–80.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Katousian, *Sadeq Hedayat*, p. 8.
- 11 Nafisi, *Khaterat*, pp. 424–7.
- 12 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, pp. 28–9.
- 13 W.L. Hanaway, Jr, "Anjoman: III Literary", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 14 *Ibid.* Nafisi says that its name was *Jargeh-ye daneshvari* (*Khaterat*, p. 370).
- 15 Rashid Yasami (1896–1951) was a historian at the University of Tehran and was also a poet (see his *Montakhabat-e asha'ar* (Tehran: 1312/1933)).
- 16 'Abbas Iqbal Ashtiyani (1896–1956) was a scholar whose works include *Kolliyat-e 'Obayd Zakkani* (Tehran: 1321/1942), and he also worked on medieval Sufism (see his edition (with the assistance of Mohammad Qazvini) of *Shadd al-izar* by Jonayd

- Shirazi) in addition to writing on more contemporary Iranian figures such as Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir and on other aspects of modern Iranian history such as his Mission of General Gardanne.
- 17 Hanaway, "Anjoman: III Literary".
 - 18 Hasan Vahid Dastgerdi was a scholar who edited much of the poetry of Nezami (1140–1202) during the 1930s including his *Layli va Majnun*, *Haft Paykar* and *Khosrow va Shirin*. He also edited the *divan* of the eleventh-century poet, Baba Taher in 1927.
 - 19 Nafisi, *Khaterat*, p. 419. Hanaway, "Anjoman: III Literary".
 - 20 Taymurtash was also associated with the *Anjoman-e daneshkadeh*, see Nafisi, *Khaterat*, p. 389.
 - 21 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, p. 28.
 - 22 Nafisi, *Khaterat*, p. 426.
 - 23 Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921*, p. 66.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, p. 62.
 - 25 Iraj Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran*, p. 235.
 - 26 H. Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat*, p. 69.
 - 27 The whole of Kasravi's speech is reproduced in *She'r va sha'eri*, ("Poetry and Poets"), pp. 95–116.
 - 28 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, p. 51.
 - 29 The opening paragraph of Nafisi's article is translated by Mohammad Ali Jazayery in "Ahmad Kasravi and the Controversy over Persian Poetry", p. 313. Nafisi's article was published in *Mehr*, "Hafez mayeh-ye rosva'i nist", 3 (1935), pp. 234–8.
 - 30 Mohammad Ali Jazayery in "Ahmad Kasravi and the Controversy over Persian Poetry", p. 313.
 - 31 Nafisi, *Khaterat*, p. 371.
 - 32 See Matthijs van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*, p. 74.
 - 33 Kasravi, *She'r va sha'eri*, p. 97.
 - 34 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
 - 35 *Ibid.*, pp. 98–9.
 - 36 *Ibid.*
 - 37 Hosayn Sami'i (famous as *Adib al-Soltaneh*) was born in 1874 and worked in the Foreign Ministry (1934–5) and held many important posts, including his tenure as Iran's ambassador to Afghanistan (1940–1). In 1946–7 he became the Senator for Gilan, and he passed away in 1953–4. He has been called "one of the just, successful and intellectual individuals of the Constitutional period." See Dr Baqer Aqeli, *Sharh-e hal-e rjal-e siyasi va nezami-ye mo'aser-e Iran*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Nashr-e goftar, 1380 (2001–2)), pp. 825–8. It is ironic that Sami'i was one of the first Presidents of the *Anjoman-e Adabi* (see Nafisi, *Khaterat*, p. 422). Sami'i was also a poet of some reputation, and his works have been collected and published.
 - 38 *Ibid.*, pp. 101–2.
 - 39 Mahmud (of Ghazna) and his Turkish slave, Ayaz, have been utilised by Persian poets to portray absolute love. Although Ayaz was the slave, he won the heart of his master with such devotion and obedience that "their roles, as it were, became reversed: lover and beloved cannot be separated; they seem to be mirror images of each other." See A. Schimmel, *A Two-Coloured Brocade: The Imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 130–1.
 - 40 Layla and Majnun are another couple that portray love and devotion to each other, see Schimmel, *A Two-Coloured Brocade*, pp. 131–5.
 - 41 Kasravi, *She'r va sha'eri*, p. 103.
 - 42 *Ibid.*, p. 104.
 - 43 *Ibid.*, p. 101.
 - 44 *Ibid.*, p. 105.

- 45 Anvari was a twelfth-century Persian poet who was made laureate of the Seljuk court by Soltan Sanjar. Jami declared that Anvari was 1 of the 3 or 4 prophets of Persian poetry. See de Bruijn's article, "Anvari", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 46 Mokhtari was a twelfth-century poet, see his *Divan-e 'Osman Mokhtari*, edited by Jalal al-Din Homa'i (Tehran: 1962).
- 47 Qatran (1009–72) was a eulogist of various potentates of Azarbayjan and Arran.
- 48 'Abdollah Hatefi was a Persian poet who died in 1521. He is famous for his five major works, which includes *Layla va Majnun* and the *Timur-nameh* (or *Zafarnameh*) mentioned by Kasravi. See Michele Bernardini's article "Hatefi", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 49 In private correspondence, Professor Majd al-Din Keyvani has suggested that there was no such poet. Rather, Kasravi might have been referring to the love poetry of Mohtasham-e Kashani, whose seven sections in his *Divan* is entitled "Jalaliyya", being the love songs of the poet about a beautiful young man from Isfahan. The poet wrote sixty-four *ghazals*, this figure being equal to the numerical value given to the Arabic letters that form *Jalal*.
- 50 Iraj Mirza (1874–1925) was a Qajar prince who was the poet laureate of prince Mozaffar al-Din in Tabriz. He seems to have been sympathetic to the Constitutionalists in their struggles with the Shah, became more atheist, was bisexual and promoted women's rights. See S. Soroudi, "Poet and Revolution, Part I", pp. 18–24.
- 51 Adib al-Mamalek (also known as Amiri) was the editor of a pro-Constitutionalist newspaper called *Adab*. For examples of his poetry see Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*, pp. 300–1; S. Soroudi, "Poetry and Revolution: Part I", p. 7.
- 52 Nesim-e Shomal (Ashraf al-Din Hosayni) (1871–1934) established a paper which was called *Nesim-e Shomal* (the north breeze), a reference to the Russian Revolution, in which he promoted the interests of the masses. He called on people to unite and fight injustice, but he was deeply religious and awaited the return of the Hidden Imam. See S. Soroudi, "Poet and Revolution, Part I", pp. 31–6. For an example of his poetry see E.G. Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*, pp. 179–99.
- 53 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyat*, pp. 139–40.
- 54 Ibid., pp. 157–8.
- 55 'Abd al-Rahim khalkhali, *Divan-e Hafez* (Tehran: 1927).
- 56 This *divan* also included a glossary of difficult words, a complete index and a biography of Hafez.
- 57 Mohammad Qazvini and Qasem Ghani (eds), *Divan-e Khwajah Shams al-din Mohammad Hafez Shirazi* (Tehran: Chapkhaneh-ye majles, 1320/1941).
- 58 'Abd al-Hosayn Hazhir, *Hafez Tashrih* (Tehran: Majles, 1921). Hazhir suffered the same fate as Kasravi, being assassinated by the Feda'iyān-e Islam in 1949. He had been the Shah's Minister of Court.
- 59 Mahmud Human, *Hafez cheh mi-guyad* ("What does Hafez Say?") (Tehran: Sherkat-e ketabforushi-ye adab, 1317/1938). The title is same as that given by Kasravi to his own work on Hafez. Mo'in (p. 805) claims that Kasravi's work was a rejoinder to Human's, although given that Kasravi had said much on the subject before then, it seems unlikely that his ideas changed much, although it might be the case that Kasravi did decide to publish a lengthier version of his views in a single booklet, namely his *Hafez cheh mi-guyad*.
- 60 Ma'sud Farzad, *Chand nemuneh az matn-e dorost-e Hafez* ("Several examples from the correct text of Hafez").
- 61 The lecture is found in *Majmu'eh-ye maqalat va Ash'ar Ostad Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar*, edited by 'Enayat-Allah Mahidi (Tehran: Dehkhoda, 1351), pp. 167–213. In this lecture (several of which were delivered in 1319/1940) Foruzanfar focuses upon just one *ghazal* (no. 467 in Khalkhali's edition), and he analyses each of the distichs in turn by

investigating the meaning of the words. He ends his discussion, saying

on this topic that we have discussed, we have shown the Sufi belief (*'aqideh-ye sufīyeh*), in short, that one must surrender oneself to whatever happens, and one must be indifferent to calamities. [In fact] one should understand them as simply beneficial and being in one's interest, for one will become happy in this way. We will have a bitter life if we are not affected by individual acts and each unpalatable event, and our plans too will get nowhere. It is a shame for a noble human to be sorrowful and become a slave to circumstances, and for his existence to be at the mercy of the times. This is Hafez's meaning, and he says: Disavow yourself of free-will and entrust your affairs to the Truth, and make contentment your calling. Then you will see that you have a happy disposition and no kind of pessimism or darkness exist in your spirit or your thoughts.

(p. 213)

His view that Hafez was essentially a Sufi can be seen in the following comment when he says, "Sufism, especially Mawlawi, 'Attar and Hafez understood perfection as having real sight and witnessing (*nazar va shohud-e vaqē'i*), and they believed that realities become manifest," p. 187.

- 62 The tomb complex has been added to on several occasions. Of note is the embellishment carried out under the instruction of Karim Khan Zand (d. 1779), who contributed a slab of alabaster as a tomb-stone. The tomb is much venerated by Persians, and Hafez's grave is surrounded by the graves of others who seek the blessing offered by the poet, who said, "*Seek a blessing when you pass our tomb/for it shall become a place of pilgrimage for the libertines (rend-an) of the world.*" See E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, III, (Cambridge: University Press, 1920), p. 311. Within the same work (on the previous page) there is also a photograph of Hafez's tomb.
- 63 See Mo'in, *Hafez-e Shirin Sokhan*, p. 652. Bahrami was a close collaborator of Reza Khan in 1922 in his function as private secretary when he was minister of war. As a literary figure, he wrote under the pen-name of F. Barzigar (see H. Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 108). He was also the governor of several provinces, including Khorasan until 1934 when he was dismissed. He was later governor of Isfahan between 1943 and 1944.
- 64 Ibid., pp. 652–8. See also Kuros Kamali Sarvestani, "Hafez: xiv. Hafez's Tomb", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 65 See Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 237–98.
- 66 See E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, III, p. 281.
- 67 See A.J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958), p. 333.
- 68 Cited by Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, III, p. 281.
- 69 Ibid., p. 316.
- 70 Ibid., pp. 300–1.
- 71 It is interesting to note that Iqbal removed these verses from the subsequent edition of *Asrar-e Khodi*. See Yaseen Noorani, "Islamic Modernity and the Desiring Self: Muhammad Iqbal and the Poetics of Narcissism", Iran, XXXVIII (2000), pp. 123–35.
- 72 For the quotes from Iqbal see *ibid*.
- 73 David Tracey, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 12.
- 74 *The Sufi hath made display of his virtues and begun his blandishments/He hath inaugurated his schemings with the juggling heavens./O gracefully-moving partridge who walkest with so pretty an*

- air/Be not deceived because of the cat of the ascetic hath said its prayers. (Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, III, p. 280).
- 75 Yesterday the faqih of the madrasa was drunk and gave this fatwa/wine is forbidden but better (to enrich oneself by) waqf money. (J.C. Bürgel, "Ambiguity: A Study in the Use of Religious Terminology in the Poetry of Hafez", p. 27). Should the Imam of the community ask, tell him Hafiz made the ablution with wine. (Bürgel, "Ambiguity", p. 21).
 - 76 The king of Hormus did not see me, yet showed me a hundred favours without a word (of praise on my part) / The king of Yazd saw me, and I praised him, but he gave me nothing. / Such is the conduct of kings: be thou not vexed Hafiz (Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, III, p. 290).
 - 77 Drink not wine to the strains of the harp, for the mohtaseb is alert. (Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, III, p. 277). Don't tell the mohtaseb my faults / For he too, is continually, like me, in search of wine. (Schimmel, "Hafez and his Contemporaries", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 6 (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 934).
 - 78 See Daryush Shayegan, "The Visionary Topography of Hafiz", in *The Green Sea of Heaven*, translated by Elizabeth T. Gray, Jr (Oregon: White Cloud, 1995), p. 16.
 - 79 Ibid. Such sentiments are found among many Iranians; for example, Ayatollah Motahhari commented, "The influence of Mowlavi, Hafiz and Sa'di is found in every home." The reason for this was their "poetic delicacy, warmth and beauty". See his *Perfect Man*, translated by Dr Alaedin Pazargadi (Tehran: Foreign Department of Bonyad Be'that, no date), p. 73.
 - 80 Translation, p. 5. (Chapter 3).
 - 81 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*, p. 63.
 - 82 Human, *Hafez cheh mi-guyad*, chapter 3.
 - 83 See Kasravi's chapter 7 of *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyyat*.
 - 84 *Kharabeh* (pl. *kharabat*), which is derived from the Arabic (*kharaba* – to break; *kharab* – broken, destroyed), was a location that was usually situated outside the city or town where un-Islamic activities would take place (e.g. drinking wine).
 - 85 Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjub of al-Hujwiri*, translated by R.A. Nicholson (London: Luzac and Co., 1911), pp. 62–9.
 - 86 See the two treatises on *fotovvat* (the Arabic term and used also in Persian for *javanmardi*) by Abu Hafs 'Omar Suhreverdi in M. Sarraf (ed.), *Rasa'el-e Javanmardan* (Tehran: L'institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1973).
 - 87 M. Hodgson claims these groups existed because there were some who did not want to be permanently tied to a Sufi order. See Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago, IL: University Press, 1974), p. 131.
 - 88 Ibn Battuta, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, translated H.A.R. Gibb (Cambridge: University Press), II, pp. 420–1.
 - 89 See C. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids* (Edinburgh: University Press, 1963), pp. 167–8.
 - 90 Ibn Jawzi, *Talbis Iblis*, translated by D.S. Margoliouth as "The Devil's Delusion", *Islamic Culture* (October 1938), p. 449.
 - 91 See F. Lewis, "Hafez and Rendi", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
 - 92 Human, *Hafez cheh mi-guyad*, pp. 93–7.
 - 93 F. Lewis, "Hafez and Rendi", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
 - 94 E. Yarshater, "Hafez: i. An Overview", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
 - 95 It is worth citing the words of Baha'-al-Din Khorramshahi on this topic:

Thanks to the lingering spirit of romanticism, and its image of the ideal poet as a revolutionary free spirit in constant clash with the reactionary elements around him, there has been much anachronistic debate on whether Hafez was a time-server or a sharp-witted saboteur who used his remarkable powers of irony to dupe his gullible medieval patrons and charm the modern intelligent reader. The shortcomings of this ultimately hagiographic approach, which first creates an ideal of a poet and then

attempts to find lines of poetry or apocryphal anecdotes to buttress the idealised image, need little elaboration.

From the article "Hafez: ii. Hafez's Life and Times", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.

- 96 For examples of Kasravi's criticisms of the ulema see his *Shi'ehgari*.
- 97 Ibid., p. 18.
- 98 Human, *Hafez cheh mi-guyad*, p. 14.
- 99 Ibid., p. 17.
- 100 Kasravi, *Dar Pīramun-e Adabīyyat*, p. 117.
- 101 Ibid., p. 118.
- 102 Human's section entitled "What does Hafez Say" runs between pages 58 and 127 in *Hafez cheh mi-guyad*.
- 103 Ibid., p. 133.
- 104 Kasravi, *Hafez cheh mi-guyad*, p. 17.
- 105 Ibid., p. 20.
- 106 Ibid., p. 19.
- 107 Human, *Hafez cheh mi-guyad*, p. 159.
- 108 Human himself offers 42 *ghazals* at the end of his book to reveal the changes in Hafez's life.
- 109 Schimmel, citing the Timurid author Sharaf al-Din Marvanid, has noted that the difficulty in establishing a definitive *divan-e Hafez* is evident in that only 100 years after his death it was recognised that his works had "become prey to the plundering fingers of a handful of fools". Schimmel, "Hafez and his contemporaries," p. 937. And Morteza Motahhari has observed that "the usual Divan of Hafiz which was printed in Iran or Bombay and [was] possessed by many families . . . contain[ed] about twice as much as what is now considered to be reliably Hafiz". (Motahhari, p. 7-8).
- 110 See Dj Khaleghi-Motlagh, "Awhadī Marāḡa'ī" in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 111 Sa'id Nafisi (ed.), *Kolliyat-e Owḡadī Isfahānī ma'ruf be Maraghī* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1340/1962), pp. 235-6.
- 112 Ibid., s. shast o seh.
- 113 Kasravi's argument is similar to the "string of pearls" theory in which the couplets are "thought to be independent entities brought together in a haphazard manner; a manner, however, that imparts to the string of the *bait* [couplet] a special aesthetic value both to the individual *bait*s and to *bait* clusters". Iraj Bashiri, "Hafiz and the Sufic Ghazal", *Studies in Islam* (January 1979), p. 62.
- 114 Ibid.
- 115 Julie Scott Meisami, "Allegorical Techniques in the Ghazals of Hafez", *Edebiyat*, 4 (1979), p. 31.
- 116 E. Yarshater, "Hafez: i. An Overview", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 117 Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Court Poetry*, p. 274, citing R. Lescot, "Essai d'une chronologie de l'oeuvre de Hafiz", *Bulletin d'Études Orientales*, 10 (1944), pp. 59-60.
- 118 J.T.P. de Bruin, "Hafez: iii. Hafez's Poetic Style", *Encyclopedia Iranica*.
- 119 See Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Court Poetry*, p. 242.
- 120 A literal translation of *jam-e Jam* is Jam's chalice. Ferdowsi's *Shah-nameh* recounts how one of the pre-Islamic kings, Jamshid, owned a goblet in which he was able to see the events that occurred on earth. Schimmel adds,

This vessel often served later poets as a metaphor for the wine cup through which one can reach a knowledge that is not disclosed to sober people . . . Mystically inclined writers, however, discovered in this goblet a symbol of esoteric knowledge.

(*A Two-Coloured Brocade*, p. 109)

In the distich in Hafez *ghazal*, the linkage of Alexander with King Darius has been made by Dr Khalil Khatib Rahbar in his *Divan-e Hafez Shirazi* (Tehran: Entesharat Safi' alishah, 1377/1998–9), p. 9. He states that according to Aristotle, a mirror had been attached to the top of the lighthouse at Alexandria so that the movements of the ships in the sea could be kept under surveillance. So the meaning of the distich is that one should look well at the chalice of wine which is Alexander's mirror for it can show you the condition of the country of King Darius.

121 Schimmel, *A Two-Coloured Brocade*, p. 206.

122 Ibid., p. 57.

123 E. Yarshater, "The Theme of Wine-Drinking and the Concept of the Beloved in Early Persian Poetry", *Studia Islamica*, XIII (1960–1), p. 49.

124 The Night of Destiny is a reference to the 97:1–5 of the Qur'an, for it is on this night that the angels and the Spirit descend to accomplish all commands.

125 In Persian poetry the chin-dimple is associated with a well, which may be filled with the water of life, or as Schimmel comments "the enamoured poet could also compare his narrow heart to the well that encloses the beautiful Yusuf, who will manifest himself someday". A. Schimmel, *A Two-Coloured Brocade*, p. 65.

126 In Khalkhali's edition the verse reads *har ruzesh tab ast*, (there is a fever for each day of his) whereas Kasravi's text reads *har ruzesh shab ast* (every day of his is night).

127 In this couplet Hafez pairs Solomon with an ant, which as all those who are versed in the Qur'an will recognise as a reference to *sura* 27:18. Schimmel states,

According to legend a tiny ant once complained to the mighty king that the horses of his soldiers were disturbing the ants' colonies, and Solomon heeded the insect's complaint. This juxtaposition of highest power and grandeur with infinitesimal smallness and insignificance offered the poets wonderful possibilities for hyperbolic statements about their own unworthiness and the ruler's, or the beloved's glorious position.

(*A Two-Coloured Brocade*, p. 75)

128 Khalkhali's text has a word that Kasravi's text omits. The former reads *Man na-khaham kard tark-e la'l yar* (I don't want to abandon the ruby of the beloved). The word *la'l* was used to denote the lips of the beloved and of course to wine. See Schimmel, *A Two-Coloured Brocade*, pp. 157–60.

129 The exact order of the distichs that Hafez wrote might cause some disagreement. Khalkhali and Qazvini and Ghani's editions give the following order: 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 4, 9, 6, 8.

130 Kasravi's analysis appears in *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyat*, pp. 96–9.

131 Khalkhali's version reads *ku-ye tariqat* (alley of the way).

132 Kasravi's text omits this "or" (*va*), which is included in Khalkhali's version.

133 Khalkhali's version reads "the kingly path of the truth" (*be-shahrah-e haqiqat*).

134 Kasravi, *Dar Piramun-e Adabiyat*, p. 98.

7 "WHAT DOES HAFEZ SAY?"

- 1 This is a translation of the third edition of the text. I have attempted to be as literal as possible, but on limited occasions (due to the difficulty of Persian idioms and Kasravi's expressions) I have resorted to paraphrase. A few sentences have been paraphrased to make the English more reader-friendly. The citations are mainly from Hafez, and I have given the number of the *ghazal* that appears in Khanlari's edition and occasionally in Wilberforce's English translation. Kasravi also quotes from Khayyam, and I have cited these verses from Hedayat's edition, entitled *Taraneh-ha-ye*

- Khayyam* unless otherwise stated. There are verses without reference in this translation (needless to say that Kasravi offers no help in this regard), and it seems likely that he was using one of Bombay editions of Hafez, which are well known for including many verses that scholars do not accept as originating with Hafez.
- 2 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 342, Wilberforce, no. 369).
 - 3 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 25).
 - 4 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 65, Wilberforce, no. 54). Khanlari's text reads "zajaji", while Kasravi's reads "niqab".
 - 5 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 5, Wilberforce, no. 54).
 - 6 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 985).
 - 7 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 69, Wilberforce, no. 56).
 - 8 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 334, Wilberforce, no. 385).
 - 9 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 3, Wilberforce, no. 8).
 - 10 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 74, Wilberforce, no. 103).
 - 11 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 97, Wilberforce, no. 199).
 - 12 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 46, Wilberforce, no. 47).
 - 13 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 261, Wilberforce, no. 310).
 - 14 Khayyam (Hedayat, no. 101).
 - 15 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 292).
 - 16 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 75).
 - 17 Khayyam. This verse is found in E.H. Whinfield's compilation that is entitled *The Quatrains of Omar Khayyam* (London: Octagon Press, 1980), p. 33.
 - 18 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 112).
 - 19 Khayyam. This quatrain is included in E.H. Whinfield's compilation, p. 141.
 - 20 Khayyam (Hedayat, no. 109).
 - 21 Khayyam (Hedayat, no. 44).
 - 22 Khayyam (Hedayat, no. 10).
 - 23 Khayyam (Hedayat, no. 1).
 - 24 Khayyam (Hedayat, no. 112).
 - 25 Khayyam (Hedayat, no. 134).
 - 26 Khayyam (Hedayat, no. 79).
 - 27 "Why can't it become a jewel?" Schimmel has remarked that "the transformation of the raindrop into a pearl [jewel] is, for the Sufis, a fine description of the mystical path: one must first leave home, for in its original ocean a pearl is nothing but a water bubble". See *A Two-Coloured Brocade*, p. 204.
 - 28 Khayyam (Hedayat, no. 26).
 - 29 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 5).
 - 30 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 472).
 - 31 Ibid.
 - 32 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 40).
 - 33 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 467).
 - 34 Hasan Sabbah (d. 1124) was an Isma'ili who succeeded in promoting the interests of the Nezari Isma'ilis in Iran to the extent that he captured the fortress at Alamut. He continued to resist Seljuk rule in the region, but the fortunes of the Isma'ilis suffered under the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century.
 - 35 Hulagu was the grandson of Chingiz Khan and founder of the Il-Khan dynasty that ruled Iran. He lived between 1215 and 1265.
 - 36 The "policy of assassination" may be a reference to the Isma'ili practice of targeting important individuals. The most well known of such assassinations was that of the Seljuk vizier, Nezam al-Molk, in 1092.
 - 37 Source not available.
 - 38 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 107).

- 39 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 11). According to Steingass Persian English dictionary *mun-e halal* is an idiom for devotion, *ab-e haram* means wine.
- 40 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 22).
- 41 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 25).
- 42 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 464).
- 43 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 349). Khanlari's text reads "In 'ajab bin ke cheh nuri z koja binam". Kasravi's reads "In 'ajabtar ke . . ."
- 44 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 78).
- 45 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 349). Khanlari's text reads "I consider him among your lovers".
- 46 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 74).
- 47 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 7).
- 48 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 70).
- 49 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 239).
- 50 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 470).
- 51 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 469).
- 52 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 479).
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Hatf Isfahani was an eighteenth-century poet who rejected the so-called Indian style (*sabk-e Hendi*) and favoured a return to the style of early Persian poetry. He was a poet who wrote *ghazals*, modelled on the poetry of Sa'di and Hafez. See "Hātef, Sayyed Ahmad Eshahāni" in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
- 55 Bokhari (d. 1425) was a poet who also wrote *ghazals* and *qasideh*.
- 56 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 70).
- 57 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 179).
- 58 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 349).
- 59 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 117).
- 60 It is worthwhile to note the comments of Donald N. Wilber who writing in the context of mystical organisations in Iran and about the conditions of Iran in the 1920s commented: "Masses of beggars, including the blind, the mutilated, and the sick congregated at every promising spot, such as the entrances to the bazaar, mosques, ministries, and the houses of the rich." See his *Riza Shah Pahlavi: The Resurrection and Reconstruction of Iran, 1878–1944* (New York: Exposition Press, 1975), p. 23.
- 61 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 75).
- 62 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 292).
- 63 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 37).
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 117).
- 66 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 181).
- 67 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 462).
- 68 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 73).
- 69 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 112).
- 70 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 179).
- 71 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 101).
- 72 Shah Yahya reigned between 1387 and 1391 over southern Iran.
- 73 The Mozaffarid dynasty was powerful in southern Iran between 1314 and 1393.
- 74 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 298).
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 5).
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ibid.

NOTES

- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Hafez (Khanlari, no. 181).
- 85 Ibid.

CONCLUSION

- 1 Other examples of Sufi reforms which pre-date the publication of Kasravi's *Suyfigari* are the works of Keyvan Qazvini and the *Pand-Nameh*. On both of these see M. van den Bos, *Mystic Regimes*.
- 2 Ibrahim Monakkah, *Meftah-e Bayan (Yâ kelid-e zaban-Hafez)*, *Pasokh-e Kasravi* (Tehran: 1945).

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