

Ziarat

by M.A.Lichtenberg, 1980

In 1980 I found a small book at a second-hand bookstore. It is a record of a Western person's travel through eastern Europe, the Middle east and India, while visiting Islamic living saints, fakirs, dervishes and other people with spiritual power. He also visited many tombs of similar people who have left this physical world, whose graves are still exuding strong spiritual energies.

I am not sure if the author was Dutch or English, as the booklet is written in English, but published by a Dutch bookshop. Both the text and the pictures were cheaply printed, so I assume that it was a very limited edition.

I didn't find any reference to the book on the internet. I find the text very important, because it gives a first hand account of the Islamic mystics, primarily from the point of view of the dervishes and Sufis. It is even more valuable because of the numerous spiritual experiences the author had in the presence of these mystics and while at various tombs.

I left the text as it appears in the book, with a few spelling corrections. The spelling of the Islamic names of the saints etc. is often different than the present day spelling. I have left it as it appears in the book.

The photographs that appear in the book are black and white, and I have put them at the bottom of this page.

I have added pictures (gathered from the internet) and placed them within the text, to illustrate the different mausoleums and tombs. You can click on most of them to see a larger version.

Dirk Gillabel

Ziarat

by M.A.Lichtenberg

A record of travels in Islamic countries, and experiences with babas, fakirs, malangs and qalandars.



Ziarat or Pilgrimage is a report of the author's non-ordinary experiences while living with 'without the law' dervishes in Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. M. A. Lichtenberg has traveled extensively since the early sixties in Asia and Africa in search of spiritual techniques for the understanding of man. Having become dissatisfied with institutionalized spiritual groups he finally met a god-intoxicated baba who initiated him 'without words' . It was this living experience which made him understand that only very exceptional experiences can break man's mind patterns and transform his self. Ziarat relates the strange practices and occult experiences of the unorthodox world of the god-intoxicated baba and the wandering dervish. Various passages illustrate what is meant by 'teaching without words' and explain why dervishes assert that control in dreams and in out-of-the-body experiences is important. A valuable document both for those interested in Sufism and in occult psychology.

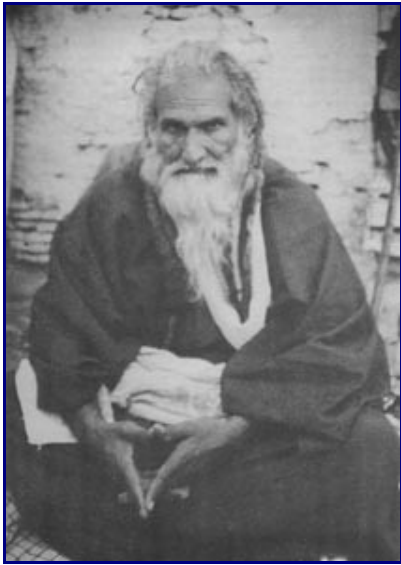
Photographs from the book:



the fakir and author



A dervish in Sabzevar, Iran



A qalandar, Lahore, Pakistan



A malang in Akcha, North Afghanistan



mazjoob, South India (with permission A.K. Irani)



A qalandar, Pakistan



Tomb of a dervish near Kandahar, Afghanistan



Tomb of Maulana Baba near Ghazni, Afghanistan



A malang in Kandahar, Afghanistan



A mast qalandar with his attendant, Pakistan



Tomb near Quetta, Baluchistan



The tomb of the Seven Sisters near Uch Turfan in east Turkestan



Mazar in North Afghanistan



Inside the tomb of Sher Sorkh near Kandahar, Afghanistan

A dervish was informed about a sheikh and his disciple who were sitting lost in recollection of Allah. He went there and found them both sitting with their faces turned in the direction of Mecca. He saluted them thrice, but they gave no answer. He remained standing and prayed with them the afternoon and evening prayer. He then asked them for some spiritual advice. The younger replied: "We do not possess that tongue which gives advice." The dervish remained standing there three days and nights without sleeping. Then the disciple, again raised his head and spoke: "Go and seek such a man, who will give thee that counsel which is conveyed by silence and not by speech."

Chapter 1

"Seek knowledge even unto China."
Saying attributed to the Prophet.

A hot wind blew from across the Amu Darya over the plains. I directed my steps towards a dried mud structure raised on a mound, which housed the tomb of a dervish. In front of the building on a platform facing the open doors of the shrine a man with a gigantic black turban sat praying, his palms turned upward and his head and upper body slowly swaying from left to right. Close to him were sitting two men, their eyes blackened with kajal. None of them seemed to have noticed my arrival. I knelt behind the man with the big turban and closed my eyes. Something compelled me to imitate his swaying movements. Slowly I felt the compactness of my body fading. I registered subtle energy waves penetrating my head and chest. As I became pervaded by that psychic energy the disturbing power of my train of thoughts vanished by itself.

When I opened my eyes the man in front of me was still praying. I stood up, went inside and kissed the tomb. On the walls hung several calligraphies, prints and photographs of sanctuaries. The form of the tomb looked like a crouched animal. It was modeled by hand with mud. The animal-like tomb had a strong presence. I went outside and asked one of the men, who was holding a dervish axe, the name of the enshrined saint. He replied: "Hazrat Sultan". I slowly walked away, stopping several times to look back at the mud structure. On the main road I caught a horse carriage going to Kunduz.

"Nothing kills the conditioned self, except the shadow of the master."

Rumi

My interest in visiting tombs was roused in India in an old mausoleum in which resided a fakir (*Fakir (Arab.): an ascetic, poor in worldly desires and material possessions*). I met him when I was roaming about in a necropolis. Standing near the entrance of a domed mausoleum he smiled in an amused way and asked in English: "Do you want to see my place?". Inside were two tombs. The charged atmosphere struck me at once. "You like some tea?", he said, and without waiting for an answer he began to light a small kerosene stove in a corner of the mausoleum. The main saint's grave over which a catafalque-like construction had been raised stood in an oblique line near the main entrance. The other tomb was a heap of earth delineated with clay bricks. As the fakir noticed that I was feeling the vibrations, he designated the great tomb and said: "He is very powerful". He put a kettle on the stove, came forward, lifted the cloth that covered the grave and suggested that I should contact its surface with my forehead. When I did so, instantly I became aware of a high concentration of energy in my head. I remained for some time in that position enjoying the energy.

The tea was ready. Apart from the stove, some tea cups, a reed mat and a blanket he possessed nothing. Perceiving that I was looking at his few belongings he explained: "Whatever I receive in the daytime, I give it away before evening." We both smiled as an expression of mutual understanding.

I went to see the fakir again. We became friends. He informed me that the mausoleum had been built to house the remains of a prince. The saint and other persons had been interred later, at different periods. Nobody knew his name, until one night the saint had appeared to the fakir and revealed his identity. The tomb was not a popular place of pilgrimage. Till the time of the fakir's predecessor the place had been infested with snakes and scorpions. Only a few people, mostly dervishes, visited the mausoleum for its subtle atmosphere. When the fakir had settled in it, people had flocked to him, but when he did not perform miracles and when the tomb did not manifest any healing qualities, they had stopped coming.

Only after weeks did I discover that except for drinking several cups of tea and eating only a few spoons of rice and vegetables or meat a day, the fakir was not taking any food. Questioned about it he said: "If I eat too much I feel weary." I had taken the habit, whenever I visited the fakir, of lifting up the cloth that covered the tomb, to touch the grave with my forehead and concentrate for a

while on the strong energy that seemed to emanate from it. I had tried other concentration methods before, but only rarely had I obtained the same powerful effect. With the tomb it was different. As soon as I contacted it I felt subtle vibrations and could accumulate them to such a density that any interfering thought processes were neutralized without effort.

One day the fakir invited me to spend the night in the mausoleum. He did not say anything specific, but alluded that perhaps some 'powers' could be revealed to me. The invitation happened on account of a dream in which the saint of the tomb had given him a hint to do so. Pointing at the grave he said: "He likes you." Whatever action or decision he had to make he always consulted the dead saint or listened to some inner voice. He told me that he saw the saint in visions, dreams or during out-of-the body projections. Some nights a whole congregation of saints from another dimension gathered at his place. They came to sit silently, communicating with him without the use of words.

That particular evening I brought with me flowers and incense and put them at the head of the tomb. I had not eaten much that day as the fakir had told me that the best preparation for a spiritual exercise was "to eat little, talk little and sleep little".

The fakir began reading extracts of the Qoran in a loud voice. Next he intoned phrases from another book. We were both sitting cross legged and facing the main tomb. From the very beginning of his recitations I had been repeating incessantly a long sentence in Arabic that he had dictated to me the day before. His only instruction had been: "Recite the sentence and stay awake as long as you can. Fight against sleep, but when you feel too tired you can go to sleep. Do not go outside the mausoleum on any account."

Hours passed and nothing happened. The fakir had become silent and had covered his head with a white cloth. I did not know whether he was awake or asleep. No longer being able to sit upright, I stretched myself out on the floor and kept on reciting.

I must have fallen asleep for a little later I woke up, stood up swiftly and directed myself towards the door with the intention of going to the latrine. I tried to open the door but was unable to do so. As I examined the lock I suddenly remembered that the fakir had told me not to leave the mausoleum. While I attempted to push the door I saw to my great surprise that my hand and forearm had gone through the wood. I looked over my shoulder and saw my sleeping body lying on the reed mat. I also saw the fakir enveloped in his cotton cloth. I looked again at the door. There were a few moments of hesitation and indecision and without my willing it I moved towards my sleeping body and entered it backwards. There was a slight shock, some resistance and the next instant I sat up leaning on my elbows, looking around. The fakir seemed asleep. I had been out of my body. I experienced that being out of the body is as different from dreaming as dreaming is from the waking state.

The next morning when I opened my eyes the fakir was out. He came back with a glass of milk in his hand for tea. Commenting the events of the past night, he said: "Whenever you recite the phrase that I gave you it is as if you are lighting a flame. Having become a light you attracted the attention of the saint of the tomb

and he came and looked into your heart. He can do different things according to the spiritual condition of the one who is doing zikr (*Zikr (Arab.): recital, remembrance. Doing zikr is a spiritual exercise consisting of the repetition of a given invocation.*) "He took you out of your body to help you and show you something. Maybe you must learn to walk in the other world just like in this world. Traveling to the other world is like an examination. If you feel some difficulty it means that your heart is not clean. One should acquire the ability to remain conscious while dreaming and leaving the physical body. But first the heart must become pure. Because of death man's heart is full of fear. Because of fear man veils his heart. As long as there remains a spark of fear in the heart one knows that one has not reached Perfection. Some men are afraid of occult phenomena because they are commanded by fear, but they should not shun them. On the contrary they should be worried when strange things do not happen to them. Occult phenomena are signs that your hidden faculties are developing and that you are contacting other worlds and forces. But do not look for them. Do not make them the object of your search. They occur concurrently. What counts is that the heart becomes clean. And doing zikr helps you in purifying yourself. Zikr cleans the heart. It works very slowly. Much patience is required."

When I asked him a method for developing astral projection, he dictated to me over the course of a month several phrases in Arabic which I had to recite in a well defined order. The opening phrases were long while the rest consisted of short syllable words. The recitations were either verses from the Qoran, or had been transmitted orally to him by elder dervishes or had been given to him in dreams. Some opening phrases I had to repeat eleven times. At the end of the invocation I had to recite a short sentence endlessly till I fell asleep. A specific body posture or breathing technique was not required. If I woke up at night I had to continue its recitation and when possible I was to recite it even in my dreams. The first results of these interminable recitations were flashbacks from my youth or an enervating lucidity that kept me awake all night. Gradually the frequency of dreaming increased, making me understand that I was dreaming continuously even when I was awake. It happened that I became aware in my dream that I was dreaming and that I became an onlooker of my own dream and began to analyze it. In some cases my consciousness became so clear that the dream ended in waking up physically as well, but mostly the dream contents clouded my mind and kept me enchanted as in ordinary dreaming. I concluded that this is what happens at the moment of death and after: either we remain conscious throughout the process or we become helplessly overpowered by dreams and thought forms.

None of the contents of my dreams was of any interest to the fakir to whom I narrated these results of my nocturnal exercises. He would not answer any of my questions if he was not inspired by the entombed saint. Once he said: "It is good to have dreams; while dreaming there is always a chance to learn about one's mind."

At the end of my first stay with him he gave me a zikr to stop my mind from wandering when being in a crowd or having disturbing thoughts. Together with the zikr he gave me a metal bowl, which had been standing on the tomb, and

from which I had to drink water every morning and evening after reciting a specific formula, "to remove all difficulties and diseases".

Looking back at the period when I began studying higher knowledge I remember how I was a purist who asserted that magic and ESP had nothing to do with it. I considered every mystic who had extraordinary experiences as unreliable. I did not perceive that all the authorities on esotericism whom I contacted were stuck on the level of intuitional-intellectual self-hypnosis. To me there was no relation between higher knowledge, magic and ESP. I could not conceive that extraordinary phenomena are indications that inner faculties are developing, without which real knowledge is unattainable.

My teacher in Europe whose mysticism was rooted in Neo-Platonism and German traditions pretended to have experiences transcending ordinary thinking. But when I discovered that he had completely repressed his emotions and instincts and neglected to transmute them in the totality of his being, I went in search of methods that included the integration and transformation of the emotions and instincts.

But to free oneself of the entanglements of one's own thought constructions requires more than making the resolution to do so. When for the first time I met a wandering dervish in 1963 in Abarghu in Central Persia, I was prevented from contacting him by my preconceptions. The old dervish sat near the entrance of a wayside inn, dressed in patched clothes and was muttering prayers. His only belongings were some sort of a ceremonial axe, two books and a begging gourd that stood in front of him. Looking at him my preconceptions called up thoughts associated with folklore and superstitions. What I needed were exceptional circumstances that would break up my habitual mind-patterns and throw me out of my conditioned self. It was not until I had my first unexpected experience of the unseen that my conceptions changed. The first one happened in a small village in South India and the second in the Topkapi Palace and Haghia Sophia in Istanbul.

I was traveling in South India, visiting temple cities, ashrams and holy places. In Tiruvannamalai I heard of a mad man residing in a small village some thirty kilometers away, a chain smoker who had stopped talking years ago and who was being worshiped by the local people. Though the man was known never to take a bath and to feed himself in a very irregular manner, periodically swallowing large amounts of food followed by long fasts. His physical condition was excellent. I had become dissatisfied with verbally initiating teachers and hierarchical religious organizations. Out of sheer curiosity I decided to go and witness such an uncommon form of religious activity.

I had to take a bus till a crossing and walk four kilometers along a river. It was monsoon and the path was flooded at several places. When I reached the hamlet, I was immediately surrounded by people. A young man who introduced himself as the local teacher offered me his help. Two boys holding up garlands of flowers tried to put them in my hands and shouted: "One rupee, sahib, one rupee!". The teacher led me to a thatched shed where I saw an old man sitting. I felt very tired from walking in the damp heat. The people, who followed every movement I made annoyed me very much, but as I approached the old man the villagers

stayed behind. All looks were on me. I took a one rupee note from my pocket, handed it to one of the boys, received a garland of flowers and stepped towards the shed with the intention of offering it to the old man and leave the place as soon as possible. The baba (*Baba (Persian): literally the word means father. Title given to a holy man.*) was not sitting in any particular posture and all the noise and excitement of the crowd did not seem to affect him. His fingers were full of rings. My bad mood was countered when I put the flowers over his head and bent over him to adjust the garland: I noticed a strong fresh perfume, totally different from any natural or artificial scent I had ever smelt. I had expected a bad odor as I had seen a huge pile of gifts and offerings dumped behind him in the small unventilated backroom of the shed. Pilgrims give him flowers, fruits, cigarettes and money, which he accepts unconcerned. Normally in the hot and humid monsoon time the offerings should be a stinking and rotting heap. He had not changed his position. He was just sitting, nothing more. The teacher told me that he rarely left his dwelling. The baba did not seem to be preoccupied with anything or to be ruminating about what to do next, he had stopped making projects and indulging in mind-games in relation to himself and his fellow-men. If any traces of memory were left in him they had been dissociated from emotion. He was now smoking a cigarette a devotee had presented to him. When a woman handed a banana to the baba he quietly refused. She left it in front of him. Still puzzled about the strange perfume I stepped some paces backwards towards the middle of the village road. All the time the baba had not been looking at me. I watched him more closely and saw a slight twinkling in his eyes. The next moment I felt something like an inner warmth developing at the place of my solar plexus. The heaviness due to the oppressive climate faded away. I heard the voice of the teacher say: "He smiled at you, this is very good". My uneasiness and haste to leave the place had vanished, the presence of the villagers did not matter any more. Drinking a glass of tea with the teacher, he informed me that the old man was a majzoob, named Poondi Baba, who had been seen wandering in the area for over twenty years. Nobody knew from where he had come. Not talking to anyone, never begging and never harming anything he seemed to be just a good madman, until an extraordinary occurrence made him famous.

For some time Poondi Baba had been sitting on a sand-bank in a riverbed. Heavy rains began pouring down. The water level rose dangerously, but the baba remained unmoved on the sand-bank. One morning the whole riverbed was flooded, the baba had disappeared and everybody thought that he had been washed away by the torrential waters. When the water level fell after twenty days, some farmers who were wading with their buffaloes through the water found the body of the baba buried under the sand. As the body was not showing any sign of decomposition they began removing the sand. Great was their astonishment when the baba began to move his body as though he was awaking from sleep. He stood up and walked away. From that day on people began to look for his company and started venerating him.

When I walked back to the crossing the warm feeling in my solar plexus was still there. It had a benevolent effect on my whole condition: I felt strong and very lucid. But what was most remarkable was that my own thoughts and the behavior

of people could in no way affect my high mood. It was as if an inner organ had flowered and was radiating a non-emotional energy. This state lasted for about three days, then it slowly decreased and evanesced.

At that time I was ignorant about masts and majzoobs or divinely intoxicated persons. Up to my encounter with Poondi Baba I had thought them to be deflected yogis, instead of understanding that their patterns of conventional behavior had been shattered by an overpowering influx of higher energies and by a gradual absorption into deeper psychic realities. I did not know that certain masts and majzoobs are vessels of strange subtle forces and are capable of transmitting that energy to other persons by merely looking at them.

The difference between a mast and a majzoob is that the majzoob's ego has been completely extinguished by divine powers. In the mast persist traces of his ordinary ego. The majzoob abides in the stage of total annihilation of the ordinary ego.

Meher Baba writes (*W. Donkin. The Wayfarers. p. 6. Sufism Reoriented. San Francisco 1969.*): "The average man of the world has only an appearance of balance, because he can often effect a provisional adjustment between the warring elements in his mind." The adjustment of conflicting tendencies that he succeeds in achieving for some time, is based upon a working compromise between them. This working compromise enables the average man to bring his outward behavior into conformity with the established conventions of society ; and because he fits into the average pattern of responses and reactions, he gives the appearance of balance. The working balance of compromise that the average man is able to strike between the conflicting inclinations of his psyche, is dictated by the exigencies of the situation. It is not determined by a careful evaluation of conflicting tendencies. The result is that the balance is only temporary, and is accompanied by a sense of partial frustration. The mast is seeking a higher and a more lasting balance of mind. He has taken in his own hands the task of intelligent psychic readjustment and new experimentation. This task is very different from the theoretical manipulation of ideas. It involves the courage to face oneself with unflinching honesty of purpose. It involves also the necessary intense ardor for bringing about the practical overhauling of the contents of the mind. The spiritual yearning for lasting Truth brings about in masts a complete unsettlement of the working balance of compromise that is characteristic of the average man of the world. In order that the mind may arrive at a true balance of understanding, any previous provisional balance of compromise has to be considerably disturbed.

Conventional thought patterns repress the functioning of higher organs of perception. With masts and majzoobs these patterns have ceased to obstruct and hinder the actualization of spiritual qualities. Divinely intoxicated persons can communicate with ordinary individuals via dimensions and channels of which these individuals are unaware. Because of a continuous subconscious communication between individuals, masts and majzoobs can influence the collective mind of humanity positively. But the reverse also happens, thought forms of ordinary people can enter the mind of a mast and make him agitated and freaky.

There are different types of masts. One mast is more blessed with divine qualities than another. Some are peaceful, while others are hot-tempered.

Some masts and majzoobs astonished me by living in extremely unhygienic conditions. They never take a bath and only eat food they find in the streets and by not being affected by it at all. Other majzoobs almost never seem to sleep or eat, yet they look healthy. It is possible that their psychic energy is so powerful that it protects their physical body against microbes and viruses. Having become free from ordinary patterns of thinking that block the inner and outer energy circuits, they either are able themselves to generate the energy necessary for sustaining their body by some unknown process or have come into contact with fields of higher energy.

The second important experience for me happened during a visit to the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul.



Topkapi Palace in Istanbul

My visit to the Palace had no special purpose. I had to wait a few days for a friend and had plenty of time to spend. Sauntering from hall to hall I came to stand before the small room called 'The Pavilion of the Holy Mantle' in which are preserved relics of the Prophet.



The Pavilion of the Holy Mantle

It is the only room in the Palace where visitors are not allowed to enter. I was skeptical and wondered whether the caskets really contained relics of the Prophet. Looking through the grilled door I gradually became aware of an unusual energy which manifested itself in my body. Unconsciously I must have associated the strange force with the place where I stood, for I remained gazing at the caskets for a long time. Finally I decided that I had somehow paid too much attention to such dubious objects and left. With the upsurge of the energy I noticed that my perception of people and objects had become finer and deeper. To my surprise I found out that I could read the minds of persons I met, not with any mode of thought-formations, but with some unknown inner organ of direct perception. Also my own thoughts became more objective and clear.

At a given moment near the gate of the Palace, while I was attentively analyzing and observing how a certain perception entered my mind and what sort of reactions it caused, I unexpectedly shot out of my body and saw myself walking in front of me. I thought that I could perhaps succeed in objectifying the contents of my mind as well and went on concentrating tenaciously on the process of thought associations, at the same time fixing my gaze firmly at the back of my head in front of me. I acted with inexplicable Knowledge; there was a slight blur - everything disappeared. No sounds. The next moment I saw inside my head in front of me an intricate and endless structure ramifying itself in complicated and unending interrelated nuclei and configurations. The intermingling of the patterns was incessant and infinite and although their activity seemed boundless, they formed a closed circuit. I was fascinated by the enormous complexity of my mind and at the same time perplexed to see that my thought structures were leading nowhere. There was no way out with mere thinking. A psychic tension erupted that switched on fear and which made the whole situation unbearable. I

looked away from the vision; my mind flashed out. My exteriorized body coincided again with my physical body. The event was accompanied by a strong release of emotion. The vision burned itself in me. In a few minutes I had learned more about being the slave of my thoughts than in years of reading and thinking. From the Palace I walked in the direction of the Sultan Ahmad Mosque. Everything looked glorious as if just created. Instead of going to the Sultan's Mosque I turned right and entered the Haghia Sophia.



Hagia Sophia

In the dim lit entrance hall I was surprised to find myself amidst a panicky crowd of old men, women of all ages and children, all shouting, crying and supplicating for help and mercy. They ran in all directions pursued by soldiers who were killing them with their swords. The ground was covered with corpses and screaming wounded victims. There was blood everywhere. In this horrible vision of a massacre I also saw tourists coming and going. The dress of the victims was definitely Byzantine. Near the walls the scenes were more clear than in the center of the hall. When I moved, the vision did not fade away. These experiences in 1971, six months after my visit to Poondi Baba, in the Topkapi Palace and the Haghia Sophia were the commencement of a succession of non-ordinary encounters and happenings. The afternoon of the following day, while strolling in the streets south of Sultan Ahmad, I saw a board on the wall of a half ruined building, which read: 'Uzbekler Tekkezi', meaning 'Convent of the Uzbeks'.



Uzbekler Tekkezi

Only the ground floor and a minaret remained. The door was open ; I went inside, climbed a wooden staircase and stood in the burnt out meeting room of a dervish convent. Driven by some urge I approached the mehrab, took a flake from the stucco covering and ate it. The windows overlooked a beautiful mosque. I decided to visit it. Its atmosphere was so subtle that I became entranced. Only years later did I come to know that its walls contained a small piece of the stone of the Kaaba.

Two days later my friend joined me and the same night we took the train for Konya.

While visiting the convent of the Mevlevi, my friend became overwhelmed by a short ecstasy and made some whirling movements. Next to him an old Turkish peasant stood praying. The scene was very solemn and contrasted sharply with the attitude of the other visitors.

That night I had an intense bright dream in which I was traveling from Afghanistan to Bukhara. I was crossing a semi-desert steppe landscape on foot and leading a horse by the rein. The horse carried provisions and a precious Tibetan statue on its back. An inner voice told me that the statue was not well attached, but I neglected the warning. Suddenly the statue fell from the horse and broke in a hundred pieces; at the same moment my heart also broke. The breaking of my heart caused a mixture of fear and joy to emerge from my innermost self. Looking around I saw a tall old man dressed in a black cloak observing me. His appearance expressed a state of peace and complete equilibrium. I recognized immediately the archetype of the Sufi in him. I calmed down and woke up. This was the first of a series of apparitions I was to have of the same old sage in dreams, in the astral world, and in this world.

The following days we made a frantic search for dervishes and finally got the address of a man named Suleiman Dede. He was living in a small house in an

alley with his wife and received us in a very friendly way. Notwithstanding the fact that we knew only a few words of Turkish and that the old Sufi did not understand English we had an uninterrupted conversation for more than an hour. It was as if a third unseen person was translating and transmitting telepathically to our respective minds what was being said. We did not understand each other word by word, it was more the meaning of each sentence that was conveyed. He informed us that among the relics preserved in the Topkapi Palace was the hood of Uwais al-Qarni.

We left Konya in high spirits and traveled to the south coast. In Mersin on the terrace of a tea house we met a man who told us about an old khaja belonging to no particular dervish order. The khaja was famous for his healing powers and other spiritual gifts. He was also reputed to have killed his own son because of grave misbehavior with the help of jinns in his command and to have been summoned to Ankara because of rumors saying that he was producing gold by alchemical means. The man narrated us a story illustrating the non-ordinary way of acting of the khaja. Once the khaja and some visitors were talking about man's state of mind. The khaja told the men present to take their knife and said: "At my command you will close and open your eyes." They closed their eyes. After a minute he said them to open their eyes. They saw lying in front of each of them a cucumber. The khaja then told them to put their knife on the cucumber but to be careful not to cut it. Again he ordered the men to close their eyes. When they opened them a second time they saw to their great amazement that their knife was on their own thumb. The khaja explained: "When you first opened your eyes and saw the illusory cucumber I showed you man's actual state. When you realized that your knife was not on a cucumber but on your own hand I showed you man's state at the Day of Judgment. I created this illusion by the power of my mind to show you the power of the illusions in your own mind."

From Mersin we hitchhiked by several trucks to Lake Van. In the wide rolling plains on the plateau the dark brown earth lay barren and on top of the mountains snow was already visible.

In the ruins of Old Van after a visit to the tomb of Abdur Rahman Baba, my friend met a dervish in splendid traditional attire. He walked slowly past him. When my friend made up his mind to speak to him he had already disappeared behind a ruined house in the dead city. The encounter so impressed my friend that he persuaded me to search for the dervish. We roamed a whole day in the ruins and the castle, revisited the tomb and questioned all persons we met, but to no avail, the dervish had vanished.

These events and others narrated below in the text made me arrive at the conclusion that I had come into touch with a circuit of entities hidden from our ordinary sense perception. Some Sufis go so far as to state positively that these entities govern the world (*see Appendix A*). Besides these entities there is a hidden network of causes and effects which determines almost all of our actions. To underestimate these hidden causes and to boast of personal freedom in the choice of our actions and thoughts is absurd. The entities interfere directly in our life or work through the hidden network. An important event can be known weeks in advance if one is able to read its presages in dreams and singular incidents.

There exist, distinct from the Sufi circuit, hidden circuits of other mystical brotherhoods as well. It is not unusual that two circuits or more manifest themselves in the life of a man. Personally I had experiences wherein two circuits revealed themselves in the same event. This was evidenced by the fakir on different occasions. One of these experiences occurred after I had been reciting a zikr for hours to leave my body. When I succeeded, I met a Tibetan tulku child of about three years old. To my great surprise I recognized in the features of the child's face my former Nyingmapa guru, Kangyur Rimpoche from Darjeeling, who had died some years before. So great was my joy that I reached out for the child to take it in my arms. But before I could touch my reincarnated guru, he levitated, rose above me, and began to bump his forehead softly on mine with such psychic power that I had to lower my head.

During an other out-of-the-body journey, I encountered a veiled woman dressed in the patched cloak of the wandering dervishes. She wanted to seduce me. After some hesitation I approached her and having come close to her shining eyes she unveiled her face, disclosing a big Tibetan turquoise encrusted in her right cheek. Turning her cheek with the turquoise in it in front of my eyes and smiling significantly, she vanished.

It is erroneous to assume that the Sufi circuit originated after the advent of Islam. Many other Sufi traditions have existed prior to the Prophet's time. Ibn al-Arabi relates that once when he was visiting the Kaaba, he beheld a huge astral figure making the circumambulation of the sanctuary and heard him reciting: "Truly, we have been, for many long years, engaged walking round this Holy House, but you are only doing it now." On hearing these words Ibn al-Arabi formed a desire to know who the figure was. So he fixed him with his eyes, after the manner called *habs-i-nazar* (*holding of the sight*) and when he had ended his circuit and desired to depart, he was unable to do so. Finally he came near to Ibn al-Arabi and feeling that he was the cause of his detention, he begged him to allow him to depart. Ibn al-Arabi answered him with the words: "Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim. I will allow you to go only after you have let me know what kind of being you are, and to what tribe or people you belong." The astral figure replied: "I am of mankind." Ibn al-Arabi next asked him how long it was since he left this world. He replied: "It is now more than forty thousand years." Surprised, Ibn al-Arabi added: "You say it is so long, whilst it is only six thousand years since Adam's time, and yet you state that you are of mankind?" He answered: "The Adam you speak of was the father of the human race, and though since his time only six thousand years have elapsed, thirty other worlds preceded him." In the Traditions of the Pride of all Beings, our Prophet and the Sovereign Ali, it is said, "Certainly Allah created the Adam you know of, only after the creation of an hundred thousand others". And I am one of these (*The Dervishes. J. P. Brown. p. 334. F. Cass & Co. London 1968.*)"

Sometimes it was very difficult for me to enter a shrine or a mosque because as a rule non-Muslims are not admitted. Usually when I told the keepers about my interest in Islam they let me in, but in countries such as Morocco and Iran it was

impossible to enter a sanctuary without risking trouble. In remote places in Afghanistan it more than often happened that my western clothes were considered improper.

Mostly in spite of the obstacles and difficulties, I managed to get in. Once having traveled to Mazar-i-Sharif in Afghanistan to visit the shrine of Hazrat Ali, I was denied access to the inner sanctuary.



shrine of Hazrat Ali

I was only allowed to circumambulate it from the outside. The third day after my arrival I got up early and walked to the shrine fully determined to enter it. I decided to try to make myself inconspicuous by suggesting to myself that I was a Muslim and not to emit any other thoughts. When I reached the main gate I had hypnotized myself in the desired state and knew with certitude that I would succeed. Repeating a zikr I passed all the guards without being detected, being careful not to make any contact with the eyes, as serious trouble could ensue if I were discovered. Neither did the shoe keepers remark me when I took off my shoes. Only once in the narrow hall leading to the tomb did I look for a few seconds in the eyes of a man; immediately I looked away, concentrating on my zikr. Nobody stopped me. I stood for about ten minutes in front of the tomb and then left.

Finally, it was decided that I should become a Muslim.

One Friday at noon, I entered an important shrine in Afghanistan accompanied by my friend Mahmud. The precincts were crowded with men performing their ablutions, talking together in small groups, or just waiting solitary for the call to prayer. While I was taking off my shoes some men approached Mahmud and inquired about my person. As always there were hostile vibrations and Mahmud patiently began to inform the men about me. Especially when he mentioned that I had just come back from a pilgrimage in Uzbekistan the atmosphere changed and I had to answer endless questions about the condition of the holy shrines there. After having paid our respects to the Presence of the shrine I followed Mahmud to a quiet corner in the garden where his sheikh was seated amidst his disciples on a terrace of tamped earth. The garden was a grove of tall pine trees, intersected by many rivulets. The sky between the tops had as usual its bright blue quality and the air because of the altitude was almost ethereal. The sheikh, a heavily

perfumed and noble looking old man, welcomed us with a smile. We both bowed before him and kissed his hand. He made an inviting gesture to sit near him. As he had a special liking for Mahmud, they soon were engaged in a vivacious conversation. After some time the sheikh addressed himself to me and said: "It is very auspicious to have come to our place and it is very good for you to become a Muslim." There was a complete silence. The sheikh closed his eyes, raised his hands palms turned upward, and murmured an invocation. He prayed a long time. Then he took my hands and began to make stroking movements as if he were applying some invisible substance on them. Again he spoke a sentence, put one hand on my chest and the other on my back, pulled me gently towards him and embraced me. All bystanders congratulated me, shook my hands, kissed me and shouted: "Mubarak ! Mubarak ! Be Blessed !" Among the group were a wandering dervish and two women dervishes wearing black veils. They also came forward to embrace me. One of the women was so ecstatic that her veil was wet from tears. From the mosque came the call to prayer. After the prayer a circle was formed and a boy with wild eyes was brought before the sheikh. He took the boy's head between his hands and blew his breath in his face. The child's wild eyes grew fixed and glazed, he grasped his ears and began to utter a zikr resembling the rasping of a saw: "Ya-Hu ! Ya-Hu ! Ya-Hu !" All the while his body made awkward jerking movements. As the sounds became more raw, it looked as if his breath would fail and suddenly the boy fell down in front of the sheikh. A heavy secretion of saliva appeared on his mouth and his body was shaken by spasms. One of the veiled women shrieked. The sheikh closed his eyes and prayed, then gave a sign and an attendant came forward who lifted up the unconscious boy and carried him away. Mahmud explained me that the boy was a mast and that the sheikh was helping him. Next, all who were present followed the sheikh inside a large room to execute the habitual exercises. The exercises consisted of standing in a circle and doing loud zikr combined with a breathing technique and jerking movements. The exercises lasted for about an hour. In the beginning I was exhausted, but afterward I felt tremendously energized. I stayed for about a month with these Sufis and during that period Mahmud taught me how to pray and instructed me in the faith and customs of Islam. Even after I had become a Muslim, it was not always without harassment that I visited a holy place. Once in Meshed, in East Persia, inside the tomb chamber of Imam ar-Reza I was attacked by a fanatic.



Imam ar-Reza tomb

It was during Muharram time when the Shi'a Muslims mourn the martyrdom of Hussein and when their religious fervor attains a fever pitch. It is a period when groups of young men dressed in black walk in procession carrying green standards and banners and shout: "Ya-Hussein ! Ya-Hussein !" On the day of Hussein's death they slash themselves in a state of trance with small long knives. A superior of the Bast (*Bast: popular name of the sanctuary of Imam ar-Reza*) had brought to my attention that at this time of the year many fanatic believers from outside Meshed were in the sanctuary and that there was some hazard in going inside now.

But as I insisted, the good man appointed three guards in uniform to accompany me. One guard walked ahead and the two others remained at my left and right. There were thousands and thousands of pilgrims. All went well until we had managed to enter the golden doors. The shouting and praying crowd was in such a frenetic emotional state that tears sprang out of my eyes. From among the turbulent mass I felt a man's eyes on me: his fierce face expressed hate. He advanced in my direction and yelled menacingly: "America ! America !" His hands tried to grasp me. One guard pushed him off; the second guard moved closer. The enraged man made a second attempt and was again repulsed by the guards. At that moment a coffin was brought inside the tomb chamber and caused such a crushing pressure that the man was carried away in the stream of bodies.

In Mirjaveh I was witness of an incident between the Iranian police and a Pakistani dervish and his attendant. The dervishes had no passport or any identity

papers. The attendant explained that on account of a dream they intended to go to the Golden Shrine in Meshed. An Iranian customs officer said: "In our religion we have no qalandars (*Qalandar (Pers.): wandering dervish with little concern for orthodox opinion*)." When I replied that they used to have many, he answered with contempt: "This is an affair of the past." The qalandar wore about forty kilos of chains and iron bangles around his neck, arms and ankles "to become indifferent to pain." Their spiritual master was Lal Shah Baz Qalandar who died in 1274 at Sehwan. It was sad to see the qalandar and his attendant walk back to the Pakistani border.

In Multan I saw a majzoob lying on the pavement in front of the town hall. His noble face contrasted sharply with the expressions of the normal people passing him. Looking straight into his eyes I caught a glimpse of a most strange spiritual state. It was entirely different from anything that I had experienced so far. No description in words is possible.

Back again in India I revisited the fakir in his mausoleum. I liked the directness, simplicity and humor with which he spoke about spiritual

To keep control of the astral body was not easy to achieve. Especially the whooshing sound that accompanies projection often drew me back. On several occasions when I succeeded, I was attacked by horrifying monsters. They fell upon me so violently that I lost control, shot back into my body and woke up. The fakir explained these attacks as being examinations. He himself, before gaining full command over his astral body, several times had to fight a lion without losing control and without following any impulse to reenter his physical body. The last time that he had to fight the lion, an old dervish appeared and asked him: "Why do you beat my lion?" The fakir replied: "Because he disturbs me." The dervish then called the lion and they both disappeared. The fakir commented: "I never saw the lion again. It meant that only from then on my heart was free from any fear and desire. Only from that moment was I able to die. Otherwise I could not have been victorious. Therefore to be able to keep control in dreams and other worlds is very important. It is the only way to know if your heart is really clean. The cleaning of the heart is not easy. Many veils have to be removed. When your heart will be less veiled powers will enter it and you will be able to do 'zikr with real heart'. Then conscious projection will be easy. Now most of the time you are doing ordinary zikr. This is good to neutralize the activity of your ordinary mind. But to do 'zikr with real heart' involves that you contact and generate a hidden energy. You have to be completely transfused by it. It gives immediate power over your mind. To be empowered by it is absolutely necessary to overcome hindrances and obstacles in both worlds. But first the heart must be clean when you contact secret powers." (*see Appendix B*).

That night his invocations gave such a pressure on my heart that I thought an artery was about to break. With this new experience I came to understand what he really meant when he spoke about "a clean heart".

Another night, while sleeping, I heard the fakir calling me twice by my western name. Turning myself quickly towards him I saw him asleep. In the morning he told me that he had dreamed he was sitting among an assembly of dervishes.

One of them began calling a name: "Muhammad Allah udDin ! Muhammad Allah ud-Din !" A person from outside the assembly responded to the call and entered the circle. I was that person. "This is your real name." said the fakir.

During the same period I had a dream that called up strong feelings of déjà vu. I was moving rapidly, almost flying, across a landscape composed of salt steppe and rock desert. The red desert covered with enormous rocks containing blue and green veins was extremely beautiful. Next I arrived in a town of East Turkestan. Walking in the main bazar street a dervish of the qalandar type came up to me and uttered the name of a mazar, which I immediately forgot. What was remarkable about the dream was the strong feeling of having been there before and of recognizing.

Then a period of disappointment set in, as if I had never done any practice at all. No more astral projection, not even dreams occurred. The fakir did not seem concerned. I continued with my zikr exercises. One night I began to dream again. It was ordinary automatic dreaming in which I took an active part without having objective knowledge, till suddenly a voice shouted: "Stop dreaming !" I woke up and began to do zikr.

"That you come to this place when you are sleeping is good. When you die you will be safe."

There was political turmoil in Southwest Asia. Borders were closed. The overland route to Europe was blocked. I asked the fakir how I should travel.

Four days later he had a dream wherein he saw me on a ship bound for Arabia. Personally I had several dreams about Mecca and Medina, but which I was unable to remember in detail. Only one astral projection did I remember clearly. I was sleeping in a two room bungalow. I went out of my body and while I looked at the walls, a wall of each room became transformed respectively in a wall of the Kaaba and a wall of the tomb of the Prophet.

I waited a few weeks but the overland route remained closed. I paid a visit to the Saudi Arabia embassy and obtained in less than twenty-four hours a transit visa for two weeks.

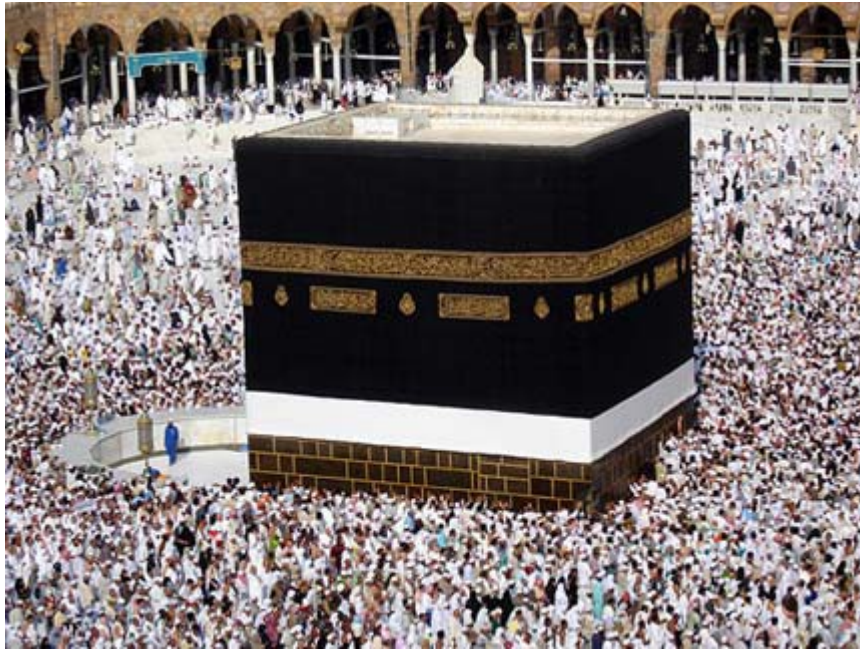
In Bombay I boarded the 'Dwarka', a British passenger ship. Together with an old Irishman and three Arabs we were the only cabin class passengers. I left the ship in Dubai and traveled via Qatar and the desert highway to Jeddah.

The next morning I told the fakir about the voice. He said: "Most dreams are a continuation of everyday thoughts and actions. So long as the heart is not clean it is impossible to have real dreams. First the heart must be clean. If you have ordinary dreams it means that you are still preoccupied with ordinary things. Doing zikr also eliminates ordinary dreams. Both in ordinary dreams and in real dreams you have to wake up in your dreams without waking up physically. Your body must remain asleep. In ordinary dreaming you see the real state of your mind and in real dreams secrets are revealed to you. Going out of your body when your mind is beset with ordinary things only can result in deformed visions. You must do zikr without any special purpose, with as little sleep as possible. Your heart must become thoroughly clean."

I had been absent from the mausoleum, visiting shrines, for about a month. When I came back the fakir informed me that he had seen me several times flying through the air in my astral body and coming to sit and sleep near the tomb in his mausoleum. I told him that I was not aware of these trips. He said: "One goes on many astral journeys without having knowledge of it."

While I made preparations in Jeddah to go to Mecca I was told that it was impossible because my visa did not mention that I was a Muslim. I was referred to the office of the governor of Mecca. But as it was Thursday afternoon all government offices were closed. At a police station I was told to go to my embassy for a letter attesting that I was a Muslim. While I walked through the center of the city thinking about my problem I came to stand in front of a reception office for pilgrims. Inside were two men, an Arab and a Pakistani. I explained my problem to the Pakistani. To him everything seemed even more insurmountable. But while I was talking with him all of a sudden I received a shock: I had dreamed exactly the same conversation in the same setting months ago. At that time the dream had rather the atmosphere of a nightmare. I had become conscious that I was dreaming while I was still dreaming and it had cost an immense effort to wake up. I realized now that the Pakistani was unconsciously trying to ensnare me more and more with problems. This was his state of mind. Just like in the dream I had to wake up from this waking dream. In the midst of an explanation I stood up, thanked him for his information and left. I made straight for the bazar. In no time I bought the prescribed ihram robes of unstitched clean cloth and took a taxi to the International Muslim League on the road to Mecca where I had left my luggage. I took a bath, donned the ihram robes and hailed another taxi for Mecca. It was March and the desert between the hills was all covered with young green shrubs.

I passed the two control posts, beyond which non-Muslims are not authorized, without difficulties. Here I was finally in Mecca, in the 'navel of the earth', at the place where Adam the first man to go in search of himself beheld the vision of the Throne of Allah and recognized it as a reflection of his own purified heart. Repeating incessantly, "Labbaik, Allahuma, Labbaik, Here I am, O Lord, Here I am." I entered the precincts of the Kaaba by traversing the five hundred meters long hall that connects the rocks of Safa and Marwah. It was like entering an immense heart. The kiswah or cloth covering the Kaaba was partly rolled up, revealing the golden and silver doors of the House. It were these splendid heavenly doors which afterward attracted me again and again.



Kaaba

After doing my ablutions I began to circumambulate seven times the Kaaba, starting each time from the Black Stone. As it was not the period of Haj, there were not too many pilgrims. After kissing the Black Stone I went to pray at the Magham Ibrahim, a place where Ibrahim stood when he was directing the construction of the Kaaba. Then I walked seven times between the rocks of Safa and Marwah. Walking in this broad hall I had the feeling that I was simultaneously in a preeternal temple and in some future science fiction like sanctuary. I was above all very much impressed by the subtle and majestic quality of the atmosphere that reigned around the Holy House.

Chapter 2

"Only he who dies while living can obtain pearls of higher consciousness."

"The whole world keeps dying after death, for no one dies the real death. I have died a death that will make me never die again. So long as you do not know how to die while living, you will not gain freedom from the cycle of birth and death." Esoteric teachings of the Sikhs.

Before the advent of Islam, recluses and esoteric communities were found in profusion in Egypt, Syria and India. They were reputed to possess superhuman knowledge and to work miracles. These hermits and magicians attracted pupils and devotees and their places became centers of learning and atonement. When they passed from this world their tombs became places of pilgrimage.

One such place was Busra in Syria. It is known as the place where the Prophet Muhammad was foretold his great destiny by a Christian monk having esoteric knowledge. Muhammad then twelve years old, accompanied his uncle with his

caravan. When the caravan passed the monk's cell, the monk called Muhammad and invited him to a feast. He inquired especially about young Muhammad's dreams and after analyzing them predicted his prophet hood.

When Islam penetrated and conquered these areas the veneration shown to extraordinary persons was transferred to the early saints of Islam and resulted in the cult of Sufi saints and powers associated with their persons (*Pilgrimage to the tombs of holy men is called ziarat in Arabic. The tomb itself is called mazar*).

Pilgrimage to the tombs of saints is an aspect of Sufism. The purpose of the visit is to establish a contact with the subtle reality of the Perfect Man who lies buried there.

Exoterically people believe that a saint is physically alive in his tomb. Esoteric sources speak of a subtle presence of the saint and of subtle forces emanating from the tomb. Dervishes assert that a person who has realized Perfection has developed and accumulated a subtle force or baraka which radiates as well after his death as during his lifetime. To be influenced by this substance is essential and necessary for the development of the Sufi. The influence of this refining element can effect the manifestation of hidden organs of subtle perception and energy. It must have been such a radiation of subtle force together with psychic energy which Jalal ud-Din Rumi experienced when he met the wandering dervish Shams-i-Tabriz. It changed his life entirely. Until that moment he had been a mental mystic. His heart was opened and he became fully energized.

Sufis profess that man has, in addition to his physical body, an astral body. While they conceive the physical body as being a crystallization of a form abiding in a creative dimension, they say that the astral body should in no way be confounded with that archetypal form. The astral body is the result of a physical body being born and living in this world. Whenever a physical body is born an astral body is created as well. The substance is ingrained in the body, the astral body is modeled out of it. Some astral bodies are denser than others.

All persons have an astral body, but consciousness has to be developed in it. This can happen incidentally or by means of particular exercises. The more an individual is free and detached from his emotional and mental impulses, the more he has a chance to become conscious of and in control of his astral body.

Advanced masters can help by means of their psychic power to develop consciousness in the astral body.

After death the substance of the astral body decomposes. The body in which dead saints appear is not the ordinary astral body. Besides the astral body there is the astral mind. The astral mind can detach itself from the astral body and clothe itself by its own power in a body of its choice. The astral mind can take any shape. Most astral operations are accomplished with the astral mind. Astral entities can be perceived when the 'eye of the heart' is developed.

In order to attain Perfection an individual must have attained mastery in the astral worlds. The astral worlds consist of the Alam-i-Barzakh or World of the Barrier and the Alam-i-Arvah or World of the Spirits. These worlds comprise several planes and degrees. They are not separated from each other, they intersect in many ways.

Strange entities and forces exist in all worlds and planes. These may attach

themselves to any human being and exert a positive or negative power. Many individuals are throughout their life accompanied by hidden entities without ever having knowledge of it.

Especially in the World of the Barrier dwell thought-forms and entities which have no control over their actions. The entities in that world do not lead a conscious life. They are in a state of dreaming without realizing that they are dreaming. It is said that philosophers and theologians are stuck in that in-between-world, puzzling in their heads, writing books and talking endlessly. Dreams engendered by the instincts and emotions also are related to the Alam-i-Barzakh.

The World of the Barrier is a place of struggle. Messengers from the saints or spiritual masters may come to help when one is in difficulty in that plane, but ultimately one's own merit will decide whether one will be victorious in crossing it. Most astral beings live in the shadow of their good or bad works achieved while living on earth. The Prophet has said: "Whoever is blind here, shall be blind in the hereafter and more erring from the way." A man's state after death is always a reflection of the mental-spiritual stage reached in his life.

There are different states after death. Most people do not go beyond the state of being a nucleus of thought-forms. They have an astral body, but no higher discernment. They have no developed astral mind and when they die, they become helpless ghosts. The mind of most men disintegrates because they have not realized a detached and undefiled state of awareness. This is why so-called contact with dead persons is always fragmentary. Fakirs do not hold beliefs concerning the transmigration of the individual ego. They say that there is only a continuous transmigration of diverse mental nuclei. Man during his life creates thought-forms which form a network that affects and impresses the minds around him. When he dies he releases these thought-forms which go to the Alam-i-Barzakh. When a child is born, nuclei of thought-forms from the living and the dead enter its mind, beset it and determine for a great part its future life.

The nature of the thoughts released by the living and the dying constitutes the heavens and hells. To every individual corresponds a particular heaven and hell. The happy residents of paradise are not more conscious of Allah than the dwellers of hell in their states of torment. Therefore neither heaven nor hell has any value for the true dervish.

One must learn to die many times. It is important to learn to die if one wants to perfect oneself. One should not have fear of risking too much when learning how to die, but one should have fear of not knowing how to die. It is good to prepare oneself to cross the World of the Barrier while one still lives in a body here on earth.

A hakim (*Hakim (Arab.): traditional doctor; physician*) told me about the sufferings of people who in the final stage of their agony can not get out of their body. He used to 'cut' their physical body by making small incisions in the forearms and chest to facilitate the release of the astral body.

If the mind at the moment of dying is still conditioned by the habitual ways of thinking and acting, one will not get across the World of the Barrier because the experience of time, as we know it, is nonexistent there. The ordinary mind can not cope with the astral time and quickly loses control. This state can best be

compared to ordinary dreaming in which the dreamer is a helpless actor in the succeeding sequences.

Ibn al-Arabi professed control in dreams in order to obtain command over instincts and hidden thoughts when crossing the Alam-i-Barzakh. To be certain that one has control over the emotional-mental impulses one has to remain conscious throughout one's dreams. If one has not mastered consciousness in dreams one will not have control over the mind at death. Spiritual masters have control over their astral body and mind during their lifetime and after death. They can appear at any moment and at any place in dreams and in visions. It is known of Hazrat Inayat Khan that he first saw his future teacher in visions and in dreams before he met him in his physical body.

Perfect masters can influence and penetrate a physical body and mind.

Saints can appear in many forms, even in the form of an animal. Sometimes the animal apparition is a jinn in the service of a saint or a spiritual quality of him. There are various records about a lion transmitting messages from the Prophet to a saint and of the apparition of a pigeon when a saint passed away.

In the abstract structure of many mazars in Afghanistan the form of an animal can be perceived. These primitive tombs made out of sunbaked clay and modeled by hand are extremely expressive. The 'animalistic' vibrations radiated by the forms have the effect of conveying hidden forces. These tombs, in harmony with the surrounding landscape, are powerful reflections of the enshrined Presence. In Kandahar there is a shrine called Sher Sorkh or Red Lion. The shrine originated with the discovery in a garden of an enormous red head of a lion. The head was found at a place where some days before a wandering dervish had been given hospitality. The lion's head was recognized as being a metamorphosis of the dervish and subsequently enshrined.

Besides the ordinary astral double, dervishes mention another body which they call 'inner man'. The appearance of the 'inner man' is not identical with the outward man. The form of the 'inner man' is molded by his hidden thoughts. It is a reflection of his real moral state expressed in the matter of the astral plane. Mostly the 'inner man' appears ugly, deformed and beastlike, almost beyond recognition, but one does not fail to recognize the person. A fakir told me about dreams he used to have of people wherein their real personality was revealed to him. The dream usually was not dramatic and unconnected with anything that previously happened, but never failed in showing the real state of mind of the person concerned.

Perfect dervishes have during their time on earth transformed their bodies into receptacles of subtle energy. These precious bodies are preserved in the holy tombs. Living in such tombs is a blessing. The spiritual influence radiating from mazars neutralizes the ordinary condition of thinking and acting, and its coercive results, and opens latent psychic possibilities in accordance with the degree of perception of the person involved.

Doing zikr at the tombs of holy men is calling up these men. If the 'eye of the heart' is awake they will appear in their resurrection body, and if the heart is clean they will confer special powers. Subtle energy is the main factor in the transformation of the individual. To open one's heart to it and to be able to

generate it is of primordial importance in one's effort to transform the nafs-i-ammara (*Nafs-i-ammara: the self commanded by instinctive and emotional-mental impulses. The nafs is described as a seat of energy located above the navel. Although the nafs is considered as being negative, in essence it is neither good nor bad. Only when the nafs is beset with instinctive and emotional-mental tendencies it is functioning in a negative way. The dervish aims at transforming his nafs.*

Ali said: 'He who knows his nafs knows Allah.'

Al-Hujwiri writes (Kashf al-Mahjub p. 206. Luzac. London 1976)

'the nafs can be mastered by discipline, but its essence and substance do not perish. If it is rightly known and under control, the seeker need not care though it continues to exist in him. Hence the purpose of mortifying the nafs is to destroy its attributes, not to annihilate its reality.'

There is a teaching story about a dervish who by ignorance had killed his nafs and who was therefore unable to work any further on his transformation.

Every form creates a field of radiation. Form is condensation of waves, radiations and vibrations. Specific forms placed in a definite proportion create a specific field of power. In Torbat-i-Jam in North-East Persia, uninitiated restorers in 1971 had completely removed the crumbled front wall of the shrine of Ahmad-i-Jami and replaced it by an iron fence which caused a leak in the energy-preserving building.

In 1975 the error was recognized and a new wall was constructed. Just as sounds are canalized by forms, so too are etheric vibrations conducted by them.

It is known that tombs have become empty because the area around them has been cut to pieces for the construction of buildings and roads.

Geometric designs on the walls of mosques and mazars express the eternal laws of creation. These archetypal designs activate corresponding subtle energies in the subconscious of the visitor. The patterns on walls are reflections of currents of energy and powers in the universe and in man.)

Mazars are gates to the astral worlds. While traversing the heavens and hells by the speed of thought one learns to transcend the emotional-mental level.

Chapter 3

"Eastern art has a mathematical basis. It is a script with an esoteric and an exoteric content. In Persia there is a room in a monastery where one bursts into tears because of a combination of the various parts of its architecture." Gurdjieff

The first remarkable fact that one observes when entering tombs of Sufi saints is the total absence of any dreary or depressing vibration. On the contrary, one finds the atmosphere uplifting and helpful for concentration. After visiting several mazars I noticed a difference in etheric density at each tomb. Besides the stage of Perfection reached by the saint, the influence of the other visitors and one's own degree of spiritual discernment at the moment of visitation, also the geographical situation of the tomb, its building material and architecture seem to

be an important factor in explaining the difference in density.

The structure of particular mausoleums, mosques and houses helps to conserve and generate subtle energies. Of Fazl-Ullah of Asterabad, the founder of the Persian Hurufi sect who lived in the fourteenth century, it is known that he owed a decisive religious experience to a stay in a special building in Ispahan.

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In 1975 the error was recognized and a new wall was constructed. Just as sounds are canalized by forms, so too are etheric vibrations conducted by them.

It is known that tombs have become empty because the area around them has been cut to pieces for the construction of buildings and roads.

Geometric designs on the walls of mosques and mazars express the eternal laws of creation. These archetypal designs activate corresponding subtle energies in the subconscious of the visitor. The patterns on walls are reflections of currents of energy and powers in the universe and in man.

Contemplation of these geometric figures can bring hidden forces within the field of our consciousness. Some figures in the majolica decoration and in carpets are representations of jinns. Other patterns remind us of dynamic flashes of extradimensional light.

The dome on a square or octagonal basis constructed over the grave of a saint mirrors the Perfect Mind of the dervish. Poetic expressions concerning the domes of tombs contain an esoteric meaning. A verse praising Timur's tomb in Samarkand says: "When the sky disappears, the dome of the Gur-i-Emir takes its place".



Timur's tomb in Samarkand

Another inscription on the stucco covering in the mausoleum of Sheikh Ala'ud-Din in Khiva reads: "This dome was constructed in olden times; because of it, the revolving dome (i.e. the sky) is devoured by envy".



Mausoleum of Sheikh Syed Alauddin in Khina, Uzbekistan

These verses are hints to a spiritual stage, rather than esthetic evaluations. The mausoleum in Khiva was built in the fourteenth century and in comparison with other monuments it looks heavy and squat. So the jealousy of the sky must have another cause. The revolving dome of the sky symbolizes the phenomenal world and the dome of the mausoleum stands for the clear mind of the dervish empty of attachments and emotions for the external world.

The mehrab in mosques and the niche in prayer carpets are doors to other worlds. The famous prayer carpets preserved in the Topkapi Palace are like windows through which we are blessed with visions of the Names of Allah (*There are carpets that reflect in their abstract geometric patterns the creative forces in the universe and in man. These carpets, like holy scriptures preserve millenia old diagrams and symbols which are a magico-mystical treasure. Some of them have all the characteristics of the structure of the mandala. Others reflect the dynamism and rhythm of latent psychic energies. The abstract geometric patterns are forms of energy. In and around the central field we see representations of protective jinns and magical diagrams, and in the borders separated by guardian stripes we find rows of amulets.*).

Some landscapes and places are more favorable for building a mosque or a mazar than others. There are traditions which relate that in ancient times heavenly light was deposited in particular places on earth. In choosing a spot for a monastery the Bektashis applied the laws of geomancy. The aim of constructing mosques and convents at particular spots considered auspicious was to activate and actualize the latent spiritual forces inherent both in man and in nature. Some spots possess hidden powers, while others are believed to be inhabited by malicious jinns.

In the convent of Ahmad al-Kabir in Blida is a cave considered to be a gate to

other worlds. When visiting the cave some pilgrims have strange visions. Often a saint indicates before his death the place where he wants to be buried. It is known of Khaja Qutub ud-Din Kaki that a few weeks before his death while he was on a walk, he stood still at a place and said: "I feel the smell of love coming out of here. Here I will rest." The owner of the land was called and the land purchased. When the sheikh had died his body was brought to the spot and buried there.



Tomb of Sufi saint, Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki in Mehrauli, Delhi

Chapter 4

"When the Imam Ali was dying he said to his sons Hassan and Hussein that after he had died a person with veiled face would come and take his body away for burial. When Ali had died the veiled person appeared and carried away the body. Driven by curiosity Hassan Hussein asked the veiled man who he was. When the man lifted up his veil, saw that he was Ali himself."

Tombs of Sufi saints dot the earth from Morocco to as far east as China. They range from open-air tombs made of a heap of stones to extremely sophisticated buildings. Generally over the grave of a saint is constructed an oblong monument of stone or wood, that is covered and embellished with shawls and embroidered silks. On top of these shawls and silks devotees sometimes put towels and clothes to absorb the healing power of the etheric remains of the saint. I witnessed this custom in 1976 in Rozaj and Djacovitsa in Yugoslavia. In Central Asia important mazars are adorned with ram's horns. The horns indicate that the grave is a place of supernatural power.

During my ziarat of tombs I have come to consider all tombs of saints, fakirs, kings or totally unknown dervishes, as potential sources of power, able to unlock

the inner forces of the pilgrim.

No definite interpretation of a mazar is possible, as the experience at a mazar depends largely on one's own actual state. The tombs have as many functions as there are categories of religious experience and activity. The phenomenon one most frequently witnesses at a mazar is that of people who consider the saint to be alive in his tomb and who ask him to mediate for the fulfillment of a wish: to get a child, a husband or a cure. Women, when making a request and a vow, may knot a piece of cloth at an indicated spot as a token of contact between the saint and themselves. A goat or a sheep may be sacrificed when the request has been granted. Not fulfilling a vow made at a mazar is deemed to provoke an affliction.

To be inhumed in the proximity of the tomb of a saint is regarded as very auspicious.

Local myths and customs have blended with the cult of the Sufi saint. In Mysore State in India near Chikmagalur is a mountain believed to emanate wonderful powers. The local people say that it is entirely hollow. This mountain is also considered to be the tomb of the legendary Baba Qalandar Shah. At the moment of the saint's death the mountain opened itself and after the saint had walked inside, it closed behind him.

In Khorasan and West Afghanistan sometimes a tree can be seen growing out of the tomb of the saint. At some places particular powers are connected with dead trees. Such a dead tree still stands in the tomb-monastery of Sunbul Sinan Yusuf in Istanbul.



Sunbul Sinan Yusuf in Istanbul

At certain tombs the pilgrim puts a pebble or stone on the grave and takes for

himself a magnetised pebble that has been put there previously by other pilgrims. In Kerbela, Iraq, it was customary for the pilgrim to eat some earth from the tomb of Imam Hussein. At other Shi'a shrines the eating of dust or earth is prohibited, as it is considered the same as taking the blood of the saint. In Swat Valley in Pakistan, I noticed that food and water were placed regularly at the foot of sacred tombs.

Many people conceive not only that the saint is alive in his tomb but believe also of certain saints that their body keeps on growing till a superhuman size is reached. The nine meters long grave of Shah Hussein Baba near Kandahar is an example known to me. In the Air Mountains in Niger one finds burial mounds made of stones, the largest having a diameter of ten meters and a height of two meters. They are supposed to be the graves of saints. Touareg hermits live in their neighborhood.

To move or destroy a mazar is taboo and can not be done without disturbing an equilibrium of forces and causing a misfortune. In some cases strange powers intervene when a mazar is threatened with destruction. In 1970, when the dam of Pul-i-Khumri in Afghanistan was being built, it happened that a Russian engineer gave the order to destroy the tomb of an unknown dervish with a bulldozer. The engine broke down. Afghan laborers who approached the mazar with shovels and pickaxes became paralyzed. A second bulldozer also broke down. Finally it was decided to dig the canal around the tomb.

Pilgrimages by proxy are accepted.

Besides mental purifications as a preparation for visiting tombs, the pilgrim is advised to bathe, to put on new clothes and to perfume himself. While entering a mazar the pilgrim kisses the doorposts and touches the tomb with both hands. In a symbolical gesture he raises both his hands full of the blessings of the saint upon his face. He murmurs a prayer, usually the Fatiha, circumambulates the tomb, makes a request and does zikr or an absorption exercise.

At a particular day of the week, mostly on Thursday, people gather at a mazar. Candles are lit, incense is burned and flowers are offered.

Sufis congregate at their tomb-convent on Thursday evening a little before the time of the evening prayer. Qadiris and Khalwatis perform loud zikr in a group, whereas Naqshbandis do their zikr silently and individually. Some orders practice only chanted zikr during their ceremonial meetings or in the beginning stage of the adept. In general silent zikr is considered to draw one nearer to Allah, until the heart is clean and the recitation of the words of the zikr becomes superfluous. Some Sufi groups observe an elaborate tomb cult comprehending many saints, while others seem to manifest only a veneration for the founders of their group. In regions of Soviet Azerbaijan, when a Sufi has died loud zikr is performed at his funeral.

Every year at the anniversary of the saint's death elaborate celebrations are held and followers from different places come and meet at the tomb of their patron saint. Visitation of the shrine at that time is believed to be very meritorious. The celebrations at popular mazars are famous for their extraordinary ceremonies and rites. Personally I treasure most happy memories of exuberant and colorful celebrations at shrines in Pakistan: incessant enchanting singing by qawwals and

spontaneous religious dancing by dervishes and lay people alike.

Among other festivities commemorating the death of a saint I remember a three day long feast celebrated by Berbers in Morocco. The ceremonies began with the recitation of Suras. Soon after, by different groups, rhythmical music was produced from drums and flutes. Adults and children started dancing. Some dancers got so entranced that they impersonated animals and ate thorny plants. Apart from these individualistic dancers there were disciplined groups of dancers with swords. They aimed at a dislocation of the normal state of consciousness in order to contact supra-conscious energy. As soon as a dancer became energized he proved it by slashing and cutting deep wounds into his body. In contrast to the rule of other dervish brotherhoods the wounds have to bleed. When they applied saliva to them, the bleeding stopped and the wounds healed without leaving scars. Each dancer had to be in a state of purity, prepared in the preceding days. If he had not established his state of purity he risked wounding himself seriously. During the sword slashing ceremony each aspirant proved to himself that he had eliminated any negative thought-pattern in his mind. There was joy that the fear in the body had been annihilated and that a state of purity had been attained. Others took red coals in their hands and put them against their body and in their mouth. At the end of the third day dancers killed a bull with their bare hands. Mere intellectual understanding and ethical observances are not sufficient to transform a man. Not unless other modes of perception and hidden energies have become manifest in the aspirant can he begin to work for his real transformation. Only the practice of particular psycho-physical exercises can weaken the hindering impact of the instinctual and emotional- mental patterns. But when approaching other stages of the Way, Sufis may warn against extreme mortifications and vehement ecstasies and say: "Tear your heart and not your clothes."

Most mazars are the scenes of devotional practices. In general they are places where one experiences divine love on the emotional level, especially when the shrine attracts large crowds. The imposing shrine of Imam ar-Reza in Meshed fulfills this function superbly. It is said that a visit to this Golden Shrine has the merit of a pilgrimage to Mecca. "Whoever sits at the shrine of Imam ar-Reza for one night is as though he had gone to the seventh heaven to meet Allah."

Next to the tomb-chamber there is a room for prayer and meditation. Imam ar-Reza associated himself publicly with Sufis. The Shi'a concept of Imam corresponds more or less to the Sufi idea of Qutub, meaning spiritual pole of wisdom and baraka.

Other mazars are famous for their healing qualities.

Important are those mazars that radiate subtle energy and rouse a similar state in the visitor. The tomb of Hazrat Sultan near Kunduz in Afghanistan belongs to this kind.

Other mazars are venerated as places where Sufis can receive information and guidance by way of dreams and visions or other unusual happenings. It is supposed that certain mazars may connect the dervish to the circuit of living and deceased Masters, who may interfere in his life. The shrine of Ahmad Yasavi in Turkestan, Soviet Kazakstan, is visited by Sufis for this.



Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasavi (Turkestan)

Shrines do not always contain the physical remains of a saint. Shrines were also built at places where a saint had appeared or passed, or where some great event in his life had happened. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem was erected at the site where the Prophet began his ascension. When the place of death of an important saint was unknown, an evocative tomb or magham was constructed at a place where he had lived or where he had been seen in his astral body. The shrine of Shams-i-Tabriz in Konya is such a magham. As the laws of time and space that characterize our world are non-existent in the astral dimension, it is quite possible that the saint is present in the different maghams attributed to him.

An apparition seen at a mazar or magham is not always the saint of the place. Sufi traditions mention, besides the entities of deceased Sufis and astral helpers, the existence of an enigmatic Master of Saints called Khidr. It is not unusual to be initiated by him. He is considered to possess and transfer esoteric wisdom and powers related to the Names of Allah. Some sects do not regard a dervish able to progress unless he has got a vision of Khidr. The Khajagan and the Assassins had a special relation with Khidr. The Khidiri order in Morocco was named after Khidr, because its founder was directly inspired by him. Several shrines are dedicated to his Presence.

Other shrines were built to house holy relics. The Kherqa Sharif sanctuary in Kandahar preserves the Mantle of the Prophet. The cloak together with a hair of the Prophet were given to Ahmad Shah Durrani, the first king of Afghanistan, in 1768 by the Amir of Bukhara. A Qadiri Sufi whom I met in the garden of the shrine told me that it did not contain the real Mantle of the Prophet, but the Mantle of Baraka.

Stones in which are footprints attributed to the Prophet and saints are the object of respect. On the rock in the Dome of the Rock one is shown a footprint of Muhammad. West of Neyshabur in Iran, at a place called Kadamgah or 'place of the footprint', stands a domed shrine in which is a stone bearing the impress of the feet of Imam ar-Reza.

Dervishes also pay visits to places called 'chillah', where a saint has performed and endured severe physical and psychical exercises, usually for a period of forty days. These chillahs are believed to be magnetized by the spiritual powers acquired by the saint during his forty day retreat.

With some mazars odd and strange events and incidents are associated. There is a story circulating in Kandahar about two westerners who went to visit a tomb situated in the desert between Kandahar and Girishk. To their astonishment they saw the saint sitting in his grave dressed in white. When he looked at them they felt somehow confused. On their return in Kandahar they became insane.

I had a strange and unexpected experience when I visited the tomb of Nesim ud-Din Tabrizi, the Hurufi martyr, in Aleppo. I went to the infrequently visited tomb, located in a small alley near the citadel, with the intention of concentrating myself a long time on the grave. After some minutes a terrible pain developed inside my body. The pain became so unbearable that I had to withdraw to the odd adjacent front room furnished with three baroque chairs. Falling back into one of the chairs the pain pervading me became so strong that I thought that I was about to die or become insane. I left the tomb. Only outside in the alley did the agonizing pain subside. Then I remembered that Nesim ud-Din Tabrizi had died in excruciating pain, inflicted on him by the executioners of the Ulema (*Ulema (Arab.): those who have knowledge of orthodox religion*). He was flayed alive. The fakir commenting the event said that I had missed a chance of transcending my ordinary physical and psychical condition; had I gone on doing zikr, nothing could have gone wrong. The feeling of dying was only transitory (*Guru Angad, the second Sikh Guru, writes: "You have to walk without feet. You have to see without eyes. You have to hear without ears. Ever while living you have to die, and only then can you meet the Beloved". The influence of Sufism on Sikhism should not be underestimated. Guru Nanak (1469-1539), when he was in Mecca received robes from Sufis which are still kept as holy relics in Dera Baba Nanak in India. When the Sikhs began building the Golden Temple in Amritsar, they invited the Sufi Miyan Mir from Lahore for the foundation ceremonies.*)

Sometimes a mazar is regarded as dangerous because it emanates jalali or terrible forces. In India I visited such a tomb which is venerated as much as it is feared. The exterior of the tomb which is built of grey granite looks grim and martial. Inside the fort-like building is an octagonal platform which is the roof of the burial chamber. One enters the pitch-dark underground chamber by a small door in the platform. Dozens of bats hang on the ceiling and humid vapors make breathing difficult. The fakir was at first unwilling to guide me to the place. The reason for his reluctance to accompany me was that there had been no sign from the entombed saint that he agreed. Only after he had seen me talking with Shams-i-Tabriz in a dream did he change his mind. Before going to the place I had to submit myself during several days to an elaborate ritual of purification. During and after our visit nothing particular, that I know of, happened. On the way back the fakir decided to go and see an old friend of his baba. He was an uwaisi (*An uwaisi is a Sufi who has no living teacher. He receives guidance from dead masters. The name is derived from Uwais al-Qarni, a hermit (7th century) who got messages from the Prophet without ever having met him. At his death*

Muhammad asked Ali to bring his mantle in which he was about to die to Uwais al-Qarni.), who lived as a solitary in a small mosque. The walls and minarets were painted in vivacious and gay colors. When we entered the courtyard he was just about to leave. He did not greet us, nor did he look at us, but walked slowly away with fixed eyes and bent under an invisible load. The hairs on his arms were standing up. The fakir said that he was probably exorcising a jinn out of his place. After an hour the uwaisi came back. Like the fakir he spoke fairly good pidgin English. The dead masters with whom he was in contact mainly belonged to the Qalandari and Chishti order. He spoke with great reverence about babas once having come from Turkestan to India and referred to Turkestan as a country of great sanctity. Astral projection also was important to him. To be out of his body was as natural to him as to be in his body. To leave his body he mostly sat in a half lotus posture, put a staff in T-form under his chest and armpits to support himself and did a special zikr.

Some tombs originated in exceptional circumstances. A peculiar mazar is the shrine of Hazrat Ali, the first Shi'a Imam, in Mazar-i-Sharif. It was stated in an old manuscript that Ali died near Balkh. Accordingly a search for the hidden grave started in the twelfth century, although it was generally believed that Ali's tomb was in Najaf, Iraq. A corpse unravaged by decay and not emitting any odor was found and identified as being that of Ali. Subsequently the body was enshrined. In the fifteenth century, after the shrine had been destroyed by invading tribes from Turkestan, the coffin was again opened and still the body showed no signs of physical decomposition. A big mosque was constructed over the mazar. On top of the dome and around the shrine flock hundreds of white pigeons. Many shrines in Turkestan attract these birds. In various Sufi legends pigeons are mentioned as being emanations of a saint.

A shrine of the Shi'a Imam Jafar as-Sadeqh exists in Chinese Turkestan. Its construction was caused when the Imam arrived there flying through the air from Medina.

Some dervishes who disappeared as mysteriously as they had appeared after having performed miraculous deeds and of whom no personal history is known are often venerated at the spots where they were last seen. Mostly these places are caves or pits where the enigmatic apparitions are supposed to have left our world. These mysterious personages are believed to be forms of Khidr.

The hagiography of Sari Saltik mentions that the dead body of the saint multiplied itself when different groups claimed the corpse. His corpse was simultaneously found in seven coffins.

Of Bu Ali Shah Qalandar buried in Panipat and Karnal in India, there is a story which says that the people from Panipat were allowed, after a controversy, to take some stones from the saint's mazar in Karnal as a relic. They loaded the stones on a bier and transported them to Panipat. On their arrival they found, to their amazement, instead of stones the body of the saint. This explains why there exist two mazars of Bu Ali Shah Qalandar.

When Kabir had died his Hindu and Muslim devotees quarreled about whether his body should be cremated or entombed. The quarrel came to an end when someone lifted up the shroud and discovered that the corpse had been

transformed into a heap of flowers.

The story 'The Donkey's Mazar' relates the peculiar origin of a mazar. Mullah Nasir ud-Din was the son of the keeper of a famous shrine, reputed to be the mazar of a great sheikh. As the inheritor of a shrine that attracted thousands of pilgrims an easy and respected life lay in prospect for the young Nasir ud-Din. But Nasir ud-Din was a sincere mystic and decided that he must leave home and go in search of knowledge. His father did not thwart such a wise resolution and ordered that the strongest and best donkey should be packed with travel equipment and given to his son. First he travelled westward, visited Mecca, Yemen and Egypt. Then still unsatisfied he wandered eastward. The journey was hard and the donkey, being his sole companion, in his quest for truth, became very dear to him. But in Badakhshan while climbing a high pass the donkey died. Nasir udDin who through the years had become very attached to the animal buried his friend his eyes full of tears. So great was his grief that he could not depart from the grave. Caravans and pilgrims who came by saw him praying and weeping. They said: "This certainly must be the grave of a great dervish. Look how his disciple is mourning him." They halted, prayed and presented the weeping Nasir ud-Din with food and money. Winter came and Nasir ud-Din took shelter in a nearby cave. His fame spread. The next spring rich officials passed by and were so moved that they gave orders to construct a dome over the grave and a house for Nasir ud-Din. Through the years the renown of the shrine spread in all directions and one day a pilgrim told Nasir ud-Din's father about it. The tale made such an impression on him that he decided that before his death he must go on pilgrimage to the faraway mazar. After a long and arduous journey he arrived at the mountain shrine and recognized his son. Both were very happy. In the evening his father pressed him to relate the events that led him to this famous place of pilgrimage and Nasir ud-Din told his father that it was their donkey that lay under the richly ornamented mazar. The old Sufi became very silent. Then he spoke: "O my son, I must confess that the much venerated shrine where you were born and of which I am still the respected keeper originated in exactly the same circumstances when my donkey died while I was in search of wisdom."

This story is told by dervishes themselves. Dervishes also like to quote the following maxim: "How long in visiting tombs, oh confused man, will you spend your life? One live cat is superior to a thousand dead lions."

Chapter 5

"Whilst there are many who are dead and yet are seen walking on the streets, there are others who lie entombed but who are really alive."

Al-Kharaqani.



Gul Baba tomb

In the old part of Buda in Budapest, on a hill overlooking the Danube, stands the octagonal tomb of the Bektashi dervish Gul Baba. He lived in the sixteenth century and was a Spiritual Successor of Sari Saltik. Gul Baba died shortly after the city was taken by the Turks.

Sari Saltik crossed the Black Sea seated on a magical carpet given to him by Haji Bektash himself. When he set foot on Bulgarian soil, he found his way barred by a seven-headed dragon. With the help of Khidr he slayed it. Dervishes wandered and settled in all parts of the Ottoman Empire. Still today, in regions of the Balkans where Muslim culture persists, one comes across active Sufi groups. When Sari Saltik had died his corpse was found in seven coffins. He had multiplied his body to satisfy the several Sufi centres he had founded. Ibn Battuta mentions a tomb of Sari Saltik in the region between the Dnieper and the Crimea. Other sources locate his tomb in the Dobruja province in Bulgaria. In 1976 while visiting the Friday Mosque in Constantza in Romania I met a Turkish speaking man who certified to me that the real tomb of Sari Saltik was at Babadag near the Russian border. But when I journeyed to Babadag and began a search for the tomb, I found no one who was able to indicate its placement. In the village of Hagibektas in Turkey lies Haji Bektash entombed in his convent.



Haji Bektash-Veli resting place

He died around 1335 at an advanced age. Already at the age of four he was initiated by a Spiritual Successor of Ahmad Yasavi. One day while he was being instructed, Ali, the first Shi'a Imam and the Possessor of the Mystery of Sainthood, appeared to him revealing many secrets and endowing him with superhuman powers. He received the title Haji when he was seen travelling to Mecca in his astral body. Many tales in the hagiography of Haji Bektash show him as uniting in his saintly person the character traits of the mystic, the magician and the hero. He is always intrepidly fighting for his cause, never compromising. Sent out by Ahmad Yasavi on spiritual conquest, he journeyed from Khorasan via Badakhshan to Anatolia, bringing down calamities on people who opposed him, materializing dragons, turning attacking lions into stone, conversing with fishes and having occult psychic battles with other dervishes. Ultimately Bektash was crowned with a 'turban of light' belonging to Ahmad Yasavi that came flying through the air.

In an old painting Bektash is depicted as holding a deer and a lion in his arms. The animals look lovingly up at him. In contrast to ordinary mortals Bektash is not in conflict with the world of the animals. They are his friends. He knows their language and has acquired their qualities.

Haji Bektash is typical of the wandering babas of those days who followed armies on their campaigns, travelled in armed bands of dervishes or who were lonesome errants. It was a time when dervishes rose in armed revolt against worldly rulers and founded theocratic communities. Haji Bektash was also revered by the followers of Ishak Baba who had led a revolt against the Seljuk Sultan near Amasia. Bektashis were among the first who fought their way into Constantinople in 1453. It is not surprising that Haji Bektash became the patron saint of the Janissaries.

The migrating miracle-working babas from Turkestan influenced and strengthened the already existing tradition of the wandering qalandar and malang (*Malang* (Pers.): *ecstatic wandering dervish*).

Bektashis were called 'accursed ones' because of their unorthodox conceptions and customs: they were accused of not performing the five prayers, of drinking wine and admitting women in their order.

A tomb I was attracted to many times is the presumed tomb of Daud or King David in Jerusalem. Although it is cared for by Jewish attendants, Muslims still visit the place. Opposite the burial chamber is a small mosque. The atmosphere is particularly suitable for inducing states. A tradition holds that before Ali, King David was the repository of the Secret Treasure of the Sufis.

The veneration of Jewish prophets and kings by Muslims is explained by the fact that Muhammad considered that the Jewish prophets had been sent before him by Allah to reveal parts of the truth to mankind.

After his miraculous nocturnal journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and before ascending to the Seven Heavens, Muhammad, his body asleep but the 'eye of the heart' fully awake, prayed with the prophets of the past (Moses, Solomon, Jesus) at the place where the Dome of the Rock now stands.

In Bistam, North Iran, and twenty kilometers beyond Bistam in Kalat-i-Nau Kharraqani are the mazars of, respectively, Abu Yazid al-Bistami (ninth century) and his Spiritual Successor Ali al-Hassan al-Kharraqani (eleventh century).

Al-Kharraqani visited the tomb of Abu Yazid daily for twelve years before having a substantial contact with the saint. About Abu Yazid he said: "To the world Abu Yazid is dead, but for me he is still alive and knows all my activities."

Al-Kharraqani is renowned for his extraordinary gifts of clairvoyance, perfect wisdom and baraka. One day a dervish visited al-Kharraqani. After some conversation al-Kharraqani embraced the visitor, who instantly felt a spiritual power pervading his whole body. But the power was so strong that the dervish passed the entire night in constrictions and psychic disturbances. The next morning he went back to al-Kharraqani and asked for release from the power he had bestowed on him the previous day, as he was not so advanced to be able to integrate this new state. Al-Kharraqani again embraced his friend and the dervish regained his former stage.

Usually the living Sufi receives guidance and baraka from a dead saint, but in the relation between Abu Yazid and al-Kharraqani it was the long deceased Abu Yazid who was helped by the visits of al-Kharraqani. One day al-Kharraqani heard a voice from the tomb: "O Hassan, all my present spirituality is a gift from you to me." Al-Kharraqani replied: "How is it possible that I, who was born many years after you had already died, can confer blessings on you?" The voice from the tomb answered: "In my spiritual stage there was still some derangement. Coming back to my tomb, I saw it bathed in light. A voice then told me to contact that radiance. When I did so my difficulty vanished and seeing that you were the source of that light I thank you for it."

In Kunya-Urgench in Soviet Turkmenistan is the mausoleum of Najmu'dDin Kubra.



mausoleum of NajmudDin Kubra

His masters were the founders of the Suhrawardi tradition. The power of his baraka was so phenomenal that the title of Maker of Saints was given to him. Anyone on whom his glance fell in moments of up-surging baraka attained sainthood. This transforming power emanating from him also extended to birds and animals. Once when the saint was standing entranced outside his house his gaze fell on a dog. Instantly the behavior of the animal changed. Wherever the transformed dog went, other dogs would gather in a venerating manner around it. When the dog died the saint gave the order that the animal should be buried and that a structure should be raised over its grave.

In Samarkand stands the mausoleum (Guri Amir) of Timur Khan and his Naqshbandi teacher Sayd Baraka.



Mausoleum of Guri Amir in Samarkand, Uzbekistan



Timur Khan tombstone in the middle, and tombstones of his two sons, and Said Baraka. Notice the green slab of jade, which was the largest slab of jade in the world at that time.

Timur had it built in 1386. To the left of the entrance one can still see the ruins of what was once a dervish convent. Timur was a religious minded person. He was accompanied on all his campaigns by dozens of babas on whose supernormal powers he relied for his victories. He himself believed that he was protected by Ahmad Yasavi.

Behind the mosque-like facade, under the blue ribbed dome on a high drum raised on an octagonal base, lies Timur's dark nephrite (jade) tombstone. It is difficult when one looks at the dome not to associate it with a dervish cap. The cap of a powerful baba is often believed to be endowed with the qualities of his spiritual stage and to be able to transfer these qualities to a person on whose head it is placed. There are many accounts of miraculous transformations when a cap of a powerful dervish was placed on the head of a disciple.

There is a tradition which relates that Muhammad transmitted to Ali a turban of light that was passed down through several Shi'a Imams to Abu Yazid Bistami and al-Kharaqani and further to Yusuf al-Hamadani and Ahmad Yasavi. When haji Bektash during a psychic battle with other dervishes ascended to the Throne of Allah, it is said that the turban of light conserved at Ahmad Yasavi's mausoleum came flying through the air and put itself on Bektash's head.

Ahmad Yasavi. When Haji Bektash during a psychic battle with other dervishes ascended to the Throne of Allah, it is said that the turban of light conserved at Ahmad Yasavi's mausoleum came flying through the air and put itself on Bektash's head.

Baha'ud-Din Naqshband as a young man received in Samarkand from an unknown person the headpiece of one of the Khajagan. When he placed the cap on his head he became a transformed man.

In the summer of 1973 I travelled from Afghanistan to Soviet Uzbekistan. After some difficulties with the authorities I obtained a permit for a three day stay in

Samarkand, once called 'The Light Point of the Earth'. I had come to Samarkand to visit the tombs of Kussam-ibn-Abbas and Khaja Ahrar. The first evening I had a vague vision of a tall ascetic looking old man with a goatee beard, dressed in a rather dark cloak and wearing a black turban. I associated the old man with Kussam-ibn-Abbas, but his features were not Semitic. The vision repeated itself when I turned off the light; I recognized now the old archetypal Sufi from the dream with the broken Tibetan statue.

The first monument I came across in the morning of my arrival was Timur's mausoleum. Thinking of Timur as a mere conqueror I did not pay much attention to it. The next morning, having expressed the wish to visit the countryside and having met with a refusal from the concerned officials, I went out alone to the bus station and jumped on the first bus leaving for an unknown destination. The bus drove southward to Kitab. In Kitab I took another bus. The excursion ended in Shahr-i-Sabz where the ruins of Timur's palace, near his birthplace, can still be seen. I got back to Samarkand in the late afternoon, took a rest and walked to the tomb of Kussam-ibn-Abbas, 'The Living King', but found it locked. Again wrong information. Disappointed I strolled back along the Bibi Oanum Mosque to the fabulous Registan Square. As I sat down looking around aimlessly, all of a sudden it was as if a curtain was torn open before me and in the golden dust of the setting sun I had a vision of throngs of Uzbeks on foot, on camels, donkeys and horses, moving in a certain direction. All wore magnificent traditional clothes. Hypnotized by that splendid sight I got up and followed the crowd. The strange luminous and half transparent beings led me through small clay-walled streets to the Gur-i-Emir, Timur's mausoleum! The door of the mausoleum was open-no guard, nobody. I walked through the dark hall inside the mausoleum. The atmosphere was heavily charged. I sat down between the tombstones of Timur and Sayd Baraka and began an absorption exercise.



Timur's tomb

I saw and felt spirals of etheric energy under the dome. The spirals twirled downward and penetrated my body. I began to sweat intensely as I had never sweated before in my life. One moment I thought my heart would burst, but I

sensed no real physical pain. A heavenly floating sensation arose in me. The density of the subtle energies increased. I prostrated myself upon Timur's tombstone. After some time I became aware of a presence, someone was gazing down upon me. When I looked up, I saw again the noble old man from the vision of the day before. He stood motionless in front of me. To his left I saw also four pillars under the dome, that had not been there before. The old man ordered me to stand up and make the pillars turn. I hesitated, then stood up and tried to move the pillars: they were pillars of baraka. First they moved slowly; gradually their rotation became quicker until they became whirling spouts. They expanded until they merged into each other. I stood in the midst of an immense whirl of compacted etheric energy. I myself began to whirl. Slowly my body dissolved and was transformed into a blazing effulgence. In the pillarless sky I lost all notion of time and place. After an eternity or a second I found myself again between the dark nephrite stone and Sayd Baraka's grave. Out of the mural decorations emanated mythical birds. Looking upwards I saw the dome of the shrine descending upon me. The walls of the mausoleum seemed to dissolve into an illuminated substance. The air was full of vibrating energy. I was lifted up by unseen forces. I became aware that I was sweating heavily again. With each drop of sweat I became lighter and lighter. My head expanded towards the approaching dome, until the dome rested on my head as a radiant giant turban. I was ablaze with energy. Later, I remembered the words of the poet: "When the sky disappears, the dome of the Gur-i-Emir takes its place."

From Samarkand I travelled to Bukhara. In Bukhara the officials were extremely unhelpful. Many mazars seemed to have disappeared. Only in the afternoon of the second day was I successful in getting to the sanctuary of Baha'ud-Din Naqshband. I had almost lost all hope of seeing the place, when a young man accosted me and asked if I was a believer. He told me to meet him again at two in the afternoon. At the appointed time he arrived in a taxi. Introducing the driver he said: "He is also a believer." When we reached the place I found the sanctuary closed and was only allowed to look at the mazar through a hole in a door. Looking through the hole I met with an immense flash of light.



Bahauddin Naqshaband tomb

The monument over the tomb is a rectangular platform about eight meters long and two meters high. Before the Russians occupied Bukhara the tomb was covered with old bushes and grass, with horns of rams and with the usual rags which decorate many sacred places. There is a black stone which is supposed to cure all maladies of the head. In the mosque of the sanctuary are holy springs. The water is believed to have healing properties.

Dynamic visions of light are a bestowing of blessings. At a given stage effulgences and brilliant apparitions may occur. Some visions of light are so strong that they may rouse deep emotion because of their quality of overpowering all contents of the mind.

That same night in the hotel I had an out-of-the-body experience. I found myself in a Central Asian plain. It was freezing cold and the earth was covered with a thick crust of snow. I was not going anywhere. The air was grim. From the left emerged an enormous creature marching with heavy mechanical steps in my direction. It was dressed in a long sheepskin coat and wore on its rudely carved head a leather dervish cap. Its rude face bore no expression. I was irresolute about what to do. The creature was now standing in front of me and began to sway as if to prevent me from running away. The creature raised its colossal left fist ready to strike me on the heart. The blow was terrible: it was as if my heart was torn out. I was choking and thought that I would die, but it did not happen. The monster was still standing in front of me and lifted again its fist to strike me a second time, when the same noble old Sufi (from the dream with the broken statue and the visions in Samarkand) loomed up, half running and half floating, out of the grey air and stretched out his right arm in a commanding gesture just in time to stop the creature. It obeyed, dropped its fist and became motionless. The majestic old man looked coldly into my eyes without uttering a word. We stood for an emotionless eternity in the frozen vastness: the old Sufi, the monster and I.

A few kilometers north-west of Kandahar, near Baba Wall, one can see on a deserted mountain side the open-air mazar of Shah Husseini Baba. The tomb is remarkable both for its architecture and its baraka. It is the longest mazar I have so far come across: it is nine meters long and more than one meter high. Parallel to the main tomb is an equally high but smaller mazar. The sepulchers are enclosed by a circular wall. The whole structure is made of rocks and naturally polished boulders skillfully piled up. Near the entrance stand two low buildings. One building was always locked whenever I visited the place. The other is open on one side, probably serving as a shelter for wandering dervishes and pilgrims. At the head of Shah Husseini Baba, built into the encircling wall, is a womb-like hut. The powers emanating from the tombs possess healing and purifying qualities.

Behind the mountains north of Kabul is a small village where is situated the popular mazar of Padshah Saheb. It is an open-air shrine, more than four meters long and two meters wide, with green and red pennons fluttering on high poles placed at the head of the grave. Every week miracles and healings are ascribed to the saint.

When I visited the mazar a large group of pilgrims was present. On one side of the tomb eight men were doing loud zikr, while their heads and upper bodies made rhythmical movements. Before I got out of the car I came in telepathic contact with the mazar and the people around it. Some men came forward and asked me if I was a Muslim. The men embraced me and led me through the crowd to the tomb. The group doing loud zikr were Qadiri dervishes. Having made their acquaintance they invited me to accompany them to the far end of the valley, to visit the tomb and mosque of Sad ud-Din Ahmad Ansari.

On the way to Sheikh Ansari they halted for a short ceremony at a spot where some people were gazing attentively at a deep hole. One of the dervishes explained to me that it was the place where centuries ago a famous malang had disappeared from this world.

After a rough drive we arrived at our destination. Inside the mausoleum they started again performing their loud zikr and jerking body movements until they reached a state of complete exhaustion and rapture. I joined them in their exercises. At a given moment one of the dervishes collected the dust from the tomb and ate it.

Sheikh Sad ud-Din Ahmad Ansari was a descendant of Ali. At the age of nineteen an ecstatic state overwhelmed him and lasted for nine years. The first six months of that state he was a mast. He wrote treatises on the diverse possible states and stages of the Sufi. He died in 1812.

Outside Srinagar in Kashmir, against a mountain, is the simple open-air mazar of Hazrat Sayd Ibrahim Balkhi. The tomb is remarkable for the strong scent of roses that emanates from it.

At Kalyar near Roorkee in North India stands the mausoleum of Hazrat Ali Ahmad Sabir.



Alauddin Sabir Kaliyari mausoleum

Sabir was a wrathful type of dervish, expressing the terrible aspect of divine powers. His contemporaries named him: 'The Wrathful Sword of Allah'.

While still in his mother's womb, his mother used to see a brilliant red light moving up and down between her and the sky. She often heard Sabir talking. Before his birth he fought and killed a snake in his mother's womb. On the day that he was born in 1214, the roof of his house blew away and a reddish cloud was seen descending upon the child, while the atmosphere became charged with a strange perfume.

From an early age Sabir did not eat, his body being sustained by subtle energies. His terrifying personality was such that, when he was in a particular state, powers emanated from him which killed anyone who came in his surroundings. So it happened that he was in such a terrible state when his intended wife was brought before him; she was instantly killed by the deadly powers emanating from him. More than once he caused a conflagration with his occult forces. Some of his biographers assert even that he destroyed Kalyar, and that for more than two hundred years after his death his terrible powers continued to cause havoc and destruction in and around Kalyar. Still today, except for a few shops and buildings, no houses are to be seen around the shrine. After two hundred years his destructive aura changed, allowing a mausoleum to be built over his grave.

For years Sabir stood under a tree, most of the time in a state of enchantment, at the place where his shrine now is. The only human being who could remain in his deadly presence was Shams ud-Din Turk, who had come from Turkestan.

Notwithstanding Sabir's terrifying personality Baba Farid appointed him as his Spiritual Successor. More than once when people complained and intrigued against Sabir, Baba Farid said that Sabir was more than a saint.

At his death, Sabir conducted his own funeral in his astral body in the presence of hundreds of saints, *abdals* (*Abdal is the plural of badal. A badal is a Helper from an invisible world*) and ninety-nine jinns. At times a glittering red light can be seen above the tomb. Sabir is considered to be a Qutub.

To the right of the main entrance is a dhuni or fire place where dervishes gather to drink tea, to smoke hashish and play religious music. At the time I was there they were preparing bhang, a cannabis beverage. When I inquired about the use of datura, a dervish replied: "Few dervishes take datura. Hindu sadhus smoke it. The preparation of datura is very delicate. If one does not know how to prepare it, it can produce premature old age without giving knowledge."

A night at the shrine of Sabir I was blessed with the astral vision of an assembly of fakirs sitting in front of a mausoleum. Some were cutting their fingers and ears. Two of them made attempts at cutting their throats and others were sitting erect with their decapitated head in their hands. Although the scene was bloody the atmosphere was serene. Out of the mausoleum now marched a giant, more than two meters in height, holding a club and a sword in his hands. His immense body was transparent and incandescent. As he approached me the power emanating of his body of translucent light increased, till I was unable to bear the sight of it.

At Makanpur near Kanpur in North India is the tomb of Badi ud-Din Zindah Shah Madari. He is the founder of the Madari order, which is considered as being outside the law. He died around 1440 at the advanced age of 150 years. The following story narrates his death and explains partly why it is explicitly stated by his followers that Shah Madari is alive in his tomb. Sheikh Madari was an out-of-the-body expert. He had given instructions to his attendant not to let anyone in his room when he was on such excursions. But one day his attendant disobeyed him and absented himself. An old woman with a sick child who had come to see the saint entered his room and saw him lying lifeless on the ground. The woman ran into the village, screaming and lamenting that the baba had died. The villagers came to his cell and started making preparations for his funeral. Suddenly Shah Madari sat upright and realizing what was happening, he asked them why they wanted to bury him without his permission. Great was their confusion. But seeing their bewilderment and distress he told them that after it did not make much difference to him and that they could as well continue with what they had already begun. Having thus spoken, the saint entered a state of concentration and left his body.

Chapter 6

"The Night of Power is better than a thousand months." Sura 97.3.

Some dervishes roam from mazar to mazar. In contrast with dervishes attached to one of the many branches of the ancient orders who meet in their respective convents, these wandering dervishes gather near mazars, mostly outside the cities. Their meeting places are always places of power. Considering the strong tomb cult which they observe one could name them tomb Sufis. They call themselves baba, fakir and malang. The appellation dervish and qalandar is less used and the title Sufi not at all. Not infrequently did I meet dervishes who referred to themselves as mast qalandars. They are despised by the townsmen,

but also feared and consulted in secret. Villagers have a deep respect for them and tell many wonderful stories about them. The Way of the wandering dervishes is still much alive in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Writers on the history of Sufism trace their origin to Muhammad ibn Yunus as-Sawaji who in the thirteenth century introduced the shaving of beard, head hair and eyebrows, and Yusuf al-Andalusi who imposed the rule of perpetual travel on his disciples. A disciple of the former, Khidr Rumi, is said to have introduced the Qalandari order in India. Besides these two founders, the Way of the wandering dervishes was also influenced by Turkoman babas who wandered in a non-conventional manner from tomb to tomb and to whom were ascribed various miraculous powers. But before the origination of these orders it was already an established tradition among dervishes to wander from place to place in search of knowledge.

Khanegah dwelling Sufis disliked qalandars for their individualistic behavior. The orthodox resented their heretical tendencies and rulers saw in them a threat to social order. Qalandars accused sheikhs of creating a cult around their person. Sheikhs stated that qalandars "seek to destroy accepted custom." They retorted that they discarded social conventions because they were obstacles and that the blame they incurred by their rude manners protected them from being bothered by crowds of devotees. Often the indifference shown by wandering dervishes to the personage of a king resulted in their execution or exile. Qalandars were notorious for their aggression. Historical records, mention many conflicts. Most of the babas are easily distinguished from the multitude by a striking turban, a long uncut beard and many rings on their fingers. Some carry an axe or a staff on which are fixed different paraphernalia, or a scepter with the hand of Ali on top. Other fakirs just look like ordinary beggars. To judge who is a beggar for alms and who is a beggar for Allah is not always easy. The following anecdote tells of a pilgrim who visited a shrine and who found only dirty looking beggars as attendants there. Thinking that the true dervishes had deserted the mazar, he did not stay long. The same night he had a dream about the shrine which puzzled him, and the next morning he went back. Approaching one of the beggars and looking into his eyes he saw the whole world and the universe, the past and the future reflected and contained in the eyeballs of the beggar. The vision was so overwhelming that he had to look away from it.

Most of the malangs have a pir (*Pir (Persian): literally elder. In dervish parlance: Spiritual Master*), living on earth or in an unseen dimension, whom they unconditionally obey. A wandering fakir may settle at a fixed place for years or till the end of his time on earth when commanded to do so.

A baba very rarely becomes the head of a large group or organization. A sincere baba only accepts a disciple after having got clear indications of a supernatural character. The fakir requested me not to disclose the location of his mausoleum. If individuals were to meet him they should be directed by other means than 'address on paper'.

All the fakirs I talked to claimed to have had an experience of an other world. Some of them whom I came to know for a longer period were in permanent communication with hidden entities. They were all convinced that these entities had, at one time in their life interfered directly and decisively. Having experienced

to the utmost the limitations of their ordinary human mind and will, some had surrendered completely to these hidden forces, in such a way as to ask them for permission whenever taking a decision. The entities respond in various ways. Either they appear in dreams, send a messenger, give a sign or interfere directly. A malang in Pakistan told me of a presence on his right shoulder who gave him signs whenever required. Sometimes the entities remain silent and this means that they do not agree and that no permission can be granted. It happened that a friend of the fakir expressed the wish to photograph the interior of his mausoleum. The fakir replied that personally he had no objection but that he had to ask the consent of the entombed saint. Days and weeks passed and no answer was given. Still the fakir's friend insisted on photographing the tomb. Finally after months of silence the fakir yielded to his friend's desire and told him that he could try to photograph but warned him not to expect too much. When the film was developed it turned out to be overexposed. A new film was put into the camera with the same result. No further attempts were made against the will of the saint. If babas have strange relations in other worlds they also have very eccentric friends in this world. The fakir was regularly visited in his mausoleum by a gang of smugglers. The leader was a curious man who spent much money in donations to mazars and dervishes. Once I was present when the gang came in. After they had paid their respect to the mazar their leader tried to persuade the fakir to accept money for the restoration of a wall showing many cracks that endangered the whole edifice. Whereupon the fakir as usual replied that he first had to ask the saint for his consent. In the meantime the youngest of them had prepared a hashish pipe. Because the fakir rarely smokes and then mostly alone, they all went outside. The fakir had made tea for them. While pouring the tea in cups he said in English: "Special tea." They all laughed. Then he distributed the excellent sweets which they had brought with them. An animated and joyful conversation about famous saints and shrines followed. When they had left the fakir remarked: "He is good man; maybe one day he will become a dervish. There is light in his heart."

While talking about 'powers' the fakir omitted to define these forces more clearly. When questioned about it he gave the impression that such a question was irrelevant. Mostly by powers the fakir meant psychic energy emanating from hidden entities, persons, places and objects which help to develop spiritual qualities. In other circumstances he personified power.

The following passage illustrates a 'bestowing of powers'. An old dervish living in a tomb was dying. The fakir invited me to accompany him for a last visit to his friend. When we arrived already a dozen men were squatting near the dying man who was speaking in a low raw tone, describing visions. His agony lasted for a whole day and night and shortly after sunrise he died. He had expressed the wish to be buried next to his pir some thirty kilometers away. Money was collected and an ambulance was hired to transport the corpse. The ambulance was full of dervishes doing zikr or being absorbed in their inner world. After the burial the fakir and I walked past some simple tombs. We were back in the village in the late afternoon. Round about ten in the evening I went to bed. I lay on my back with closed eyes, when suddenly a radiant head of a dervish appeared whose

white effulgence was so strong that it caught my breath. The face flashed out to reappear a second time and came so close to me while emanating such a brilliant power, that my heart was about to break. It felt as if it was held under water. The next morning when I narrated the vision to the fakir, he said that he also had seen the face around the same time. According to him it was a powerful dervish who had died five years ago and past whose tomb we both had walked the previous day. He had known the dervish very well. The fakir then recounted me a wonderful happening. One day the dervish had called him and given him his clothes to wash. While he was washing he had experienced such a tremendous upsurge of powers that it had cost him a superhuman effort to finish the task. If I had not talked about the vision, the fakir would not have mentioned it either. My relation with the fakir was entirely governed by the will of hidden forces. Never did the fakir do anything without consulting the saint. He said that his real father and mother were the saint in the tomb. He showed not the least intention of ignoring 'the signs from the invisible'. On the contrary, he had eradicated any personal desire and volition in himself in order to become a neutral receptacle and vehicle for the Powers. It seemed as if he had died long ago and as if some other entity was using his body as a means of communicating with ordinary mortals.

He emphasized that the heart must be clean, that unless the heart has attained that quality all effort comes to naught, and that difficulties may arise when one contacts the Powers with a troubled heart.

To interfere with the decisions of the Powers is taboo. Once the fakir had to intervene on my behalf when I was unable to leave the compound of the mausoleum because strange forces kept me there. However much I tried I could not go beyond the dried mud walls which surround the mausoleum.

On two occasions the previous days the fakir had indirectly hinted at what was about to happen. Twice he had joked about a man that had been caught by the Powers and kept spellbound by them. But I had not related this to my person. So it happened that a few days after his humorous remarks I came back to the mausoleum to find a visitor there whose aim it had been to thwart my relation with the fakir. At first I did not mind but when I observed that the man was still obsessed by hatred and jealousy, I reasoned that his place was not with us. I waited for a reaction from the fakir, but he didn't do anything. His apparent indifference caused me to doubt the real meaning of the situation. But whenever I contacted the mind of the man I felt intense bad vibrations. Because the atmosphere between us became worse and as the man showed no intention of going away I decided to invoke the entombed saint. Murmuring a zikr I approached the tomb, lifted up the silk drape, put my forehead against the bare stone and said deep in my heart that if the man's purpose was really negative, he should be removed from the mausoleum. No sooner had I expressed these thoughts when a tremendous power manifested itself. The atmosphere became unbearable. A seemingly endless and insupportable length of seconds passed and then I heard the man get up and quickly leave the mausoleum. I remained for some time under the drape doing zikr and then went to sit next to the fakir. His eyes were wide open and the hairs on his forearms were standing up. With a fixed

gaze he said: "Powers have come." He looked entranced and I saw that he was reciting a formula.

The air was vibrating strongly. I began to ponder on what had happened. This was a mistake. Instead of surrendering to the powers I began apprehending the event with concepts. Gradually I became aware that I could no more bear the forces that I had conjured up myself. I stood up and said to the fakir that I intended to go out and visit another tomb in the neighborhood. All he replied was: "Take my cap." As I left the mausoleum adjusting his headgear on my head, a terrible pain developed in my head. Coming near the mud walls that surround the shrine my limbs became numb and stopped obeying me. Except for the pangs of pain in my head I felt completely insensible, as if I had no more a physical body. I was unable to go beyond the compound; an invisible force held me under its spell. Completely overpowered I sank down against the wall facing the door of the mausoleum and the open-air tomb of the fakir's mast pir next to it. Slowly a whitish transparent substance materialized above it and took the bright shining shape of the pir. He stared impassively at me. The effulgence was so strong that I was incapable of looking at it. Closing my eyes I still saw the unbearable light. I was paralyzed by the invisible power with my head bursting with pain and burned by the light of the apparition. In a defensive reflex I covered my eyes with the cap of the fakir. The pain and the burning light subsided. I heard an inner voice say: "When your heart is not clean, you can not bear the sight of it." Again I tried to look at the brilliant body of the mast pir, but again I was obliged to cover my eyes with the cap. My resistance broke, inside me everything collapsed, tears came to my eyes and I began kissing the cap. I understood how my self-centeredness had prevented me from grasping the secret of the fakir and how it caused me now to suffer. I had to stop relating everything to the same nucleus in me. I had to interrupt feeding and fortifying a structure of concepts and affects that I used to call 'I'. I beheld the vision of my mind as a closed fortress with small windows and iron doors that had to be transformed into a lofty white marble pavilion without walls, supported only by thin marvelously sculptured pillars, through which everything could enter freely and unobstructed. I heard again an inner voice, the voice of the fakir, saying: "You have to become nothing. This world is nothing." I had to stop interpreting, I had to stop comparing. I had to stop saying that I had to stop anything. I worked hard in my mind to remove all obstacles that impeded the light from shining through me. Slowly the pain and the burning feeling faded. I had to efface myself. I had to maintain a state in which I didn't make any distinction between me and what I perceived. Whenever I surfaced and tried to face the effulgence of the pir's body the pain and uneasiness came back. At last I gave up any attempt to be or remain anything. I felt a last tension vanish, and with that all bodily awareness disappeared. I became some kind of empty and transparent being. I could look at the light without feeling any pain or joy. I was even perceiving more directly and totally. I thought that I had died, but without really thinking about it. It was as if another body and mind had taken over in me. I experienced another mode of being. Especially my consciousness had changed considerably. I was in a state of full awareness without thinking, feeling or willing anything. I remained in that

position for about an hour until an attendant of the fakir came out of the mausoleum and told me to go inside. I got up with difficulty. Walking was almost impossible; it was as if I were dragging an immense load. The fakir was still doing zikr in the same posture as when I had left him. "You are a king," I said to him. He answered with a neutral voice: "I have nothing. The Powers have everything." He told me to come and sit next to him and do zikr. More than once I was convinced that I had died, that I was perceiving through some other mind that had not yet left my physical body.

After some time the fakir spoke: "To leave the tomb now is impossible, the Powers have caught you; it is impossible to do anything by your own will, you need their permission. The Powers are acting directly by themselves." Two other babas were present. To one of them the fakir gave an order to bring me a glass of water. The fakir was able to contact the Powers at will at any time. On such occasions he would incline his head, pronounce a formula, and gradually a psychic tension would arise, perceptible by all who were present. A hardly bearable pressure that suppressed all normal mental activity. One had the sensation of sitting in a vacuum. Then a blank ensued, followed by a piercing of that pressurized vacuum.

The fakir stood up, his eyes wide open, and while reciting phrases in Arabic put both his hands on my head and ordered me to drink the water. Slowly the numbness disappeared and I could again feel my physical body. An invisible force made me stand up. At the same moment one of the babas also jumped up and came towards me in dancelike mechanical paces. Still possessed by the invisible force I began to move in identical movements towards him. We both seemed to be willless creatures commanded by invisible hands. We performed a weird dance composed of strange gymnastically gestures and movements that ended in a double embrace, performed by both of us. By each embrace when our chests touched I felt a strong irradiation of energy. His face was completely transformed and I recognized with the certitude of inner sight that he was a badal or Changed One. The fakir interpreted our possessed dance as an approval from the Powers. He elucidated that They had intended to show me certain things. They had lifted a veil to make me understand some secrets.

When I told him that I had thought that I was about to die or become a mast, he laughed. He narrated me then how he himself had been sick and vomiting for a month until his heart had become pure. He made a difference between ordinary diseases having no spiritual implications and physical and psychical afflictions sent by the Powers. These non-ordinary diseases have as their purpose to annihilate the false ego structure. He again insisted that the heart had to be clean of ordinary mental tendencies if a dervish wanted to become a recipient of divine qualities.

Some dervishes say that if one really wants to change one must not be afraid of hurting oneself. By that they do not mean ordinary suffering which is quite useless, but a suffering that is equivalent to the pains of agony. In order to advance on the Way one has to be prepared to die many times. If one's interest in Sufism is only caused by the desire to avoid pain, one will not gain anything. Of Abu Bakr Shibli it is known that he forced his disciples to undergo hard

spiritual practices. Once somebody speaking in favor of a disciple said to Shibli: "If you continue with these hard practices, Ahmad will surely die." On which Shibli replied: "To waste time and befool yourself with easy practices is not better than to die during a hard practice." Always the fakir interpreted extraordinary happenings, no matter how terrifying, as opportunities when "powers are given", or as inevitable and necessary incidents "to clean the heart". Yet this was not invariably his attitude.

A man arrived in the necropolis and went to live near a tomb in the vicinity of the mausoleum. The man visited the fakir regularly and complained often about jinns who caused all sorts of psychic disturbances. The fakir never replied. One day he came in and asked the fakir for a protection against the jinns. He advised him to leave the necropolis, but the man insisted on being given a charm or ritual to defend himself. The fakir refused blankly. When the man had left the fakir explained: "His heart is veiled. He must learn to understand that he is not fit to receive powers now. He is not mad because of jinns. If I tell him he will not believe me. That man thinks he knows already too much and because of that cannot learn anything more about himself. He is not really asking for help. It is all the same for him if he behaves normally or if he remains in this crazy state."

One day a woman of about forty years old, living in the nearby village, showed a radical change in her behavior. She began to dress herself as a malang and became less and less talkative. Her otherwise normal way of moving became rigid and mechanical. She seemed to suffer but did not complain. Her visits to the mausoleum increased. When someone suggested that she was becoming a mastani or women mast, the fakir disagreed. When I spoke to her she answered in an impersonal tone.

One evening she came in very late. The fakir made her a glass of tea. As it was already dark and unsafe for a woman to walk the distance to the village she asked the fakir if she could stay with us. To my surprise he refused. He called an attendant and arranged that she could sleep somewhere else.

When I asked him why he had refused to give her hospitality, he replied: "Her state is not good. Jinns have caught her, she is in their power. The area around here is full of tombs and jinns. She has perhaps done something wrong. Not all tombs are housing saints. She does not know."

Two days later she came again. As the mausoleum was very dark inside it was necessary to have a lamp burning if one wished to write or read. She sat down, near the prayer niche in which a lamp was lit, so that the light shone on her back. She did not utter a word. After some time I looked up at her and saw her head and shoulders enveloped in an aura of tiny transparent bat-like beings. They had mouse ears, sharp teeth and wings. Their monstrous heads were as big as their bodies. It was as if they were observing me. In order to see them better I slowly approached and squatted in front of the woman. She did not move. The little monsters grew restless, their thick wings began to quiver. Suddenly I saw two of them jumping in my direction and felt something like a weak electric current. Horrified I made a protecting movement with my right hand. The fakir had all the time been looking at us while doing silent zikr. "I see many animals around her head.", I remarked to him. He nodded affirmatively and said: "Many jinns are on

her. They are bad ones. You contacted them and maybe one of them is now on you and will cause you trouble. But you have protection. She has not; they eat all her body and mind. I will ask the Powers tonight."

After she had left, the fakir advised me to change clothes, wash them and have a bath. He dropped the subject and continued his silent zikr. That night I was unable to sleep, half awake dreams and images made rest impossible and twice I saw one of the little monsters hanging close to my face. I decided to sit up and pass the night doing zikr. The next morning the fakir said that he had dreamed about the woman. He had seen her walking on the path leading from the mausoleum to the village. She had gone off the path towards a bush, had urinated and taken some rest on an unmarked mound. "That place is a tomb," he commented, "but it is full of jinns, like the ones you have seen. Nobody goes there, but she does not know."

In the afternoon the woman came in with her arm in a bandage. She had fallen from a flight of stairs. She started sobbing, her body began to shake and she stretched herself out on the floor in convulsions. Her breathing was very loud. We were both looking at her, when I saw a grey mass coming out of her abdominal region that came floating as a small cloud in my direction. I was fascinated. On a sign of the fakir I made a quick backward movement. He was muttering a formula. The grey floating mass disappeared through the open door in the heavy afternoon light. The woman continued to visit the mausoleum for some time and then vanished from the village.

Whilst in Jenne, Mali, in 1975, I was shown a lane where since 1943 no person had endeavored to enter because of malevolent jinns. I was warned not to enter the street and disturb the jinns as this would endanger my health and that of others.

Spiritual combats among dervishes are a not uncommon phenomenon. Knowing that the gift of miraculous powers is vouchsafed to persons who have attained a higher stage of being it is expected and considered natural that they should perform extraordinary acts. One can not expect normal things to happen when real dervishes meet. Spiritual combats among dervishes should be interpreted as a form of non-ordinary communication.

There are many stories of impostors being unmasked during a psychic duel. I know of a psychic attack executed on the person of a dervish which aimed at freeing his mind from obscuring pretensions. The victim was a disciple of a well established sheikh. Having become engrossed with ideas of spiritual superiority, the dervish showed more than often disrespect towards others. One time he received the hospitality of a baba but displayed much disdain in his behavior towards him. In the evening while the arrogant dervish was doing his exercises the baba penetrated his mind in such an overpowering way that a state of fearful madness was caused. This humiliating situation lasted for about half an hour. Terrified the dervish fled in the middle of the night, accusing the baba of practicing black magic.

Every Thursday a hakim, possessing magical knowledge, used to come to the fakir's place to give consultation and write charms. The hakim had selected the place because of the powers emanating from the tomb and the fakir. When he

took the habit of bringing food with him and asking the fakir to prepare it for him with his own hands, the fakir began to resent this form of vampirism and refused to transmit power to the hakim through the substance of the food. By refusing to empower the doctor, bad vibrations arose from the hakim and relations between them became cool and distant.

One evening when coming back from a ziarat the fakir found himself surrounded by four hissing snakes drawn up in a square. Reciting a subduing formula, he stepped towards one of the snakes. It shrank backwards so that the fakir could get out of the magic square. Three snakes vanished but one pursued him. When he arrived at the mausoleum the snake managed to get inside, and continued to menace him. The fakir repeated the formula uninterruptedly for a seemingly endless time, till suddenly the snake began to make agonizing convulsions and turned on its back: under the snake's hood the fakir recognized the face of the hakim with protruding eyes. The following day being a Thursday, the hakim showed up rather late and in a tired mood. As the fakir had just prepared coffee for visitors, a glass was also presented to him. Still in doubts about the true heart of the hakim, the fakir decided to request the Powers immediately for a sign to reveal to him the real intentions of the doctor. There still was the possibility that the hakim was a real dervish sent by the same Powers to test him. He put it that should the doctor be allowed to drink the coffee it would mean that he was a real man, and that if the reverse happened, his intentions were egotistical. The fakir made a promise to the Powers to submit himself to the outcome of what would happen. Being engaged in conversation with the other visitors, the hakim was holding the full glass in his left hand. Several times he brought the glass to his lips without however drinking a single drop, when quite unexpectedly for no reason at all he put it back on the floor and to everyone's amazement, the coffee spilled over the floor without the glass having turned over.

Other stories of supernatural contests between dervishes have a chivalrous and playful character. For instance in the hagiography of Haji Bektash it is told that when the saint was travelling westward, a powerful Sufi went forth to meet him mounted on a lion and using a poisonous snake for a whip. Haji Bektash, unrolling his prayer carpet, seated himself on a big rock and commanded it to move. When the two met, they dismounted and had a friendly talk together.

The fakir did not specify whether certain facts had happened in a dream, a vision or in this world. He made me understand that after all it was unimportant whether things had happened in a dream or in the Alam-i-Arvah. What counted was the right attitude towards what was happening.

When drinking our tea one morning the fakir told me that he had seen me the previous night carrying a bucket of milk to his mausoleum, while the spirits of powerful babas were assembled around the tomb. Thereupon he invited me to spend a night with him.

After hours of special incantations and zikr the tomb itself transformed into a recumbent lion. This perception lasted for several minutes, followed by a sudden sharp shout of "Ya". Next appeared small dense fumes above the tomb and around us. I was fixing the vast space of the mausoleum without however looking at a specific object. Though I was using my eyes, it seemed that I was not

perceiving through them. The vaporous shapes formed a minaret-like column close to the tomb. With the spiritual help of the fakir the zikr reached my heart. There was a gradual psychic piercing. I stopped feeling myself as a compact body; a sensation of floating apart overwhelmed me. The certitude that I was going to die that night erupted in my consciousness. Slowly I reclined until I lay on my back. The objects of my perception became remote and at the same time sharply delineated.

Suddenly I had a vivid vision of myself fighting a monster. The next moment I was surrounded by a swarm of hissing monsters. Clawing and biting they attacked me. Simultaneously from a *punkah* (*punkah: a fan used especially in India that consists of a canvas-covered frame suspended from the ceiling and that is operated by a cord*) emerged colorful doll-like creatures. They approached up to a certain distance to watch how the monsters assaulted me. I tried to repel them, but could not avert being ripped open. I was fighting for my life. I felt my forces fade, the struggle became desperate. Their piercing jaws and claws dismembered me. Control over my body became discoordinated. The devouring of my body lasted for about half an hour. All the time the colorful jinns remained in the background. At last, when also my bones were disintegrating, I gave up and was willing to die. I became surprisingly quiet. The monsters receded for a moment and then it happened: my astral body separated itself from my physical body. I saw my exhausted and mutilated body lying on the ground among other objects in the mausoleum. I perceived also the hazy shape of my astral body. The next instant my mind detached itself from my astral body and I became some sort of 'pure consciousness'. I distinguished very clearly my astral form hovering above my physical body. My detached mind had no body. I was only seeing and knowing without a body. I was not looking with my eyes, I was looking by another organ of perception. I realized that I was in a further state than a mere out-of-the-body projection. The air around me became full of brilliant particles. My process of thinking happened without feeling my thoughts. I knew that I could go further. Fascinated by the radiant space around me, I was drawn towards something beyond the dimension wherein I had moved in a physical body, to a world of endless possibilities, a dimension of liquid radiant matter ready to take any shape or nothing at all. Although I was still aware of a sequence of happenings, past and present events began to exist simultaneously side by side. I had some difficulty in accepting "that the present moments and images from my memory were getting off the time-track. I was now in a sea of a whitish light, at the threshold of something indescribable." There followed a timeless moment of radiant matter, then my mind shot back into my astral body and my astral body reentered my physical body. The monsters were waiting. In a final attack they tore my body to pieces; my mind exploded. The monsters vanished and the colorful jinns began putting the pieces of my cut up body together. They all looked very happy. Good jinns of life! When they had put my body together they disappeared. The fakir was still sitting in the same posture. The atmosphere in the mausoleum was extremely pure and airy.

That night had begun like all previous zikr nights. Before starting his incantations he had again told me that he had expelled all bad influences and warned me not

to leave the mausoleum. He had not suggested or predicted in any way what was going to happen.

The object out of which had come the colorful jinns, was a punkah or fan hanging near the tomb. Originally fans were presented to a saint for use in the hot season. When the saint had died, this usage was continued and fans were hung over his tomb as a token of respect to his presence. Most of the fans which one sees nowadays hanging on walls and pillars of tombs are simple color-prints, representing Mecca and Medina, glued on decorated cardboard, but some made or designed by babas are divinely inspired. They are believed to attract and emanate powers to keep away disturbing influences and to mirror their benign influence over their possessor. When I showed a veneration for the punkah inhabited by the jinns, the fakir made one especially for me and magnetized it during a fortnight. He stressed that the fan reflected only powers and no jinns.

Chapter 7

"A day will come when nothing will benefit you - neither wealth, family, friends- nothing except submission to Allah with a pure heart."

Bektashi saying.

The fakir of the mausoleum had up to the age of thirty six been entangled in worldly affairs. His excessive liking for a special brand of whisky had earned him the nickname of 'White Horse'. Adversities made him decide to commit suicide. When he tried to carry out his tragic determination, a person appeared who prevented him from doing so. Dismissing the man as a hallucination of his deranged brain he continued his superficial pursuits until a new misfortune put him again in a depressive mood. A second attempt was again foiled by the apparition of the same personage. It was only after a third unsuccessful attempt to put an end to his life and a third unwelcome interference that his resistance collapsed and that he asked for help. The mysterious man told him to go to the shrine of Haji Malang at Kalyan near Bombay.



Haji Malang

At this mazar he became very sick. For more than a month he vomited continuously and for more than a year he behaved as a mast. The time for him to be a mast ended, when a day, an old malang came to him and said: "Now you have become like a child."

Three more years of peregrinations and associations with diverse dervishes passed, before he finally settled in the mausoleum where he became the attendant of a mast baba.

How he came to stay at his present place is a classical example of a set of strangely connected incidents that molded the destiny of many a baba. A night after having prayed at the shrine of Muin ud-Din Chishti in Ajmer, he had a vivid dream in which a man suggested to him to move to another specific shrine. Having by now learned to rely more on his dreams and visions than on his own personal opinions and conclusions, he set off the next morning for the indicated shrine. There he joined the fakirs and beggars at the gate. After a week a man came to him who handed him an envelope and told him to keep it for him, while stipulating that the envelope contained precious papers. The fakir accepted the papers. Ten days later, as the man had not yet come back, the fakir opened the envelope to look for an address to send the papers to, but great was his surprise when he found only two photographs: one depicting the shrine of Haji Malang, the first shrine he had been directed to and the other showing the mazar where he was staying now. With tears running down his face he carefully put the photographs back among his few belongings.

While living as a beggar at the mazar he was regularly accosted by a mast baba of the terrible type, who dwelled alone in a mausoleum some distance away. Many times the old mast told him: "You must come to my place, I have been waiting for you." At first the fakir was reluctant to go and live with a mast known to be hot-tempered, but when he met the baba again during an out-of-the-body journey and he disclosed to him that he needed him to take care of the tombs as he was about to die, the fakir consented.

The mast baba had an attendant who had been with him for more than twenty years. He sent him away. The attendant remained for some days outside the tomb imploring his master to be allowed back in his presence, but the mast baba refused. To outsiders this decision looked very cruel, as the mast had also been notorious for beating the same attendant often for apparently no reason. The only plausible explanation was that he was a jalali mast. But the mast told the fakir that he only beat his former attendant when he came to know telepathically that his mind had become distracted and had stopped doing 'perpetual zikr'. Shortly afterwards the old mast died and the fakir replaced him in the mausoleum. For fifteen years now he has not slept one night outside the mausoleum.

Dervishes have a deep respect for masts and majzoobs. Many of them have in one way or another been transformed by a meeting with a mast or majzoob, or have passed themselves through the experience of being a mast. Some assert that the state of mast is inevitable for most dervishes. The condition of mast and majzoob may last for short or long periods or till one dies. Some are born a mast or majzoob.

Meher Baba kept up throughout his life a special relationship with masts and majzoobs. This relationship was both remarkable and unique. Meher Baba went himself for a short period through the state of majzoob. One afternoon in 1913 as he was coming back from school and passing the dwelling-place of an old woman fakir, who was reputed to possess occult powers, she called him to approach. She took his head between her hands and kissed his forehead. He reached his home in a dazzled state of mind.

In 1936 Meher Baba began to show an intense concern for divinely intoxicated people. He sent his disciples to all provinces of India in search of masts and majzoobs and set up several ashrams for them. He himself visited and contacted hundreds of them during his many travels. With some masts and majzoobs he sat in seclusion for hours and days, communicating and receiving powers on a supramental level. He explained that he was helping masts to reach a higher stage or that he was using their minds as a medium to transmit particular energies to other parts of the world, as their minds reach far beyond the ordinary levels known to us. He went into a state of 'two in one mind' with them. After sessions with certain masts Meher Baba was completely exhausted and perspiring. While distinguishing divinely intoxicated people from ordinary mad people who "can at best hope to return to normality by suitable treatment", he said that masts and majzoobs occupy a significant position in our world.

In Afghanistan while staying with the Sufi group whose sheikh advised me to become a Muslim, I once went on ziarat outside the city with Mahmud and a mast

malang. Just outside the gate of the mazar, the malang became immobilized: his left leg slightly bent, his head turned towards the tomb. Mahmud waited some minutes, then called his name and touched his back. No response. He remained motionless and mute. People gathered around us. They surrounded the malang in a reverent manner. Some invoked Allah. Mahmud explained to me that the malang had passed into a state of enchantment. Intense contact with the vibrations of the tomb or some other power had dazed his mind. This state could last for hours or days, no one could tell. In the late afternoon a man came by, put both his hands on the malang's head and went his way. An atmosphere of timelessness emanated from the malang. Finally he made a movement. The bystanders shouted sacred sayings. He was not puzzled at all, and walked away as if nothing had happened. He seemed not to remember anything of the time spent in his state of enchantment.

I had another experience with a mast whose name was Kala Baba and who originally came from Bengal. I had known him for years as a sweeper in a shrine in Pakistan. We used to have a lively contact, but with the years his mind became more and more empty from ordinary subjects and our communication became reduced to a quick smile— and an exchange of a cigarette. Sometimes I even forgot to look for him. Then, one day when our external contact was at its lowest, while I was standing near the pool for ablutions, Kala Baba approached me. It was no ordinary approach. Looking at him my mind contained his mind and we became one mind. I saw that his mind was totally empty and that for the moment he was helplessly linked to my train of thought. He reacted to whatever came up in my mind. I was also spellbound. The experience was not pleasant. His hands were trembling. Gradually I became aware of an obstacle in my mind. When I succeeded in removing the obstacle he stopped trembling and our minds disconnected. Kala Baba had taught me an important thing.

Once when questioning a malang about his spiritual affiliation he answered: "My pir is a majzoob. In these times the orders have little baraka. Most of the sons of the great sheikhs have lost it centuries ago. Only at particular epochs does the Light of Allah come to many individuals. Now is the fourteenth century."

Chapter 8

"By pious fools my back has been broken." The Prophet

For centuries the dervish orders have been persecuted by the ulema or institution of orthodox theologians. In the twentieth century the existence of the orders has been further affected by western social and political influences. In Turkey and the Soviet Union the orders are officially prohibited, but the veneration of the mazars continues. Personally I witnessed an important number of pilgrims at the mazars of Konya, Hagibektas, Bukhara and Samarkand. Although many sanctuaries in the Soviet Union have been closed for years one can still see pilgrims kissing the closed doors. Recently an active Sufi group in Istanbul reobtained official authorisation to bury their deceased sheikh in their convent.

In Albania, to where most of the Bektashis of Turkey fled, all the convents,

mazars and mosques have been closed since 1967 and transformed into 'Houses of Culture'. Here follows a report of the closing of the first mazar in Albania: "A group of young men entered the shrine. They broke open the sarcophagus and found the skeleton of a dog. The young men decided that henceforth the sanctuary should serve as a 'House of Culture'. For days and days the incident was made headline news in the press, radio and cinema. The campaign caused similar actions throughout Albania. Mazars were destroyed and relics were burned. In some places where dervishes were not cooperative they were killed or confined to an asylum."

Mazars have been desecrated not only by non-religious fanatics but also by religious zealots such as the Wahhabis who destroyed all mazars in the beginning of the nineteenth century and again when they rose to full power in Saudi Arabia after the First World War. The Wahhabis held that worship at shrines of saints is idolatry and as such opposed to the Islamic dogma which says that 'Allah is without a second'. Forswearing music, stimulants and the wearing of silk clothes, they consider it blasphemy to attribute any action or effect to someone or something other than Allah. They do not accept the possibility of an intermediary between Allah and man, because they hold that the souls of the deceased have no power to act. At one time they considered demolishing the dome over the Prophet's tomb. Along with the cult of the saints the Wahhabis also abolished the orders.

The only country in Eastern Europe that has not outlawed the orders is Yugoslavia. In the southern republics I found a notable number of active tekijas or convents. In Sarajevo I assisted at the Thursday meeting of a Qadiri group. In Djacovitsa I visited a Qadiri, a Bektashi and two Sadi convents. The Bektashi convent headed by an old sheikh still had five resident dervishes in 1975. It is perhaps the only remaining traditional convent of the once widespread Bektashi order. My informants told me that in Djacovitsa alone there were thirteen active tekijas. Only the Sadi convents showed a strong tomb cult. Many tombs were covered with towels to absorb the healing baraka. In Tetovo I went to see the large Bektashi monastery founded by Sersem Ali Baba on the spot where he experienced the Presence of Hazrat Ali. After the last Bektashis left in 1944, the monastery was turned into a war museum and later into a hotel. The magham of Ali in its octagonal edifice still breathes a subtle atmosphere. Institutionalization of an esoteric teaching usually causes reformation of the teaching towards orthodoxy. With the evolution of an order into a large social organization the criteria of admission are lowered and much time is spent on politics to maintain the power and influence of the order. This contrasts sharply with the wise universalism and keeping aloof from politics of many of the great Sufis of the past. Of Abu Yazid al-Bistami it is known that he followed for some time the instructions of a non-Muslim from Sind in Pakistan. Of Ahmad Yasavi it is said that he had contacts with a shaman. The original Chishti sheikhs did not demand conversion to Islam as a prerequisite for being accepted by them as a pupil.

But the outward behavior of a dervish or order should not mislead us. The attachment shown by Sufis to the observances of the Qoranic law may be a way

of protecting their secrets and themselves. I remember a meeting in Timbuktu, after the call to evening prayer when shops close and when the silence of the desert recaptures the town, with an orthodox brotherhood of which the self-effacement of its members was such that they gave the impression of having almost ceased to exist. Their vibrations while performing prayers in one of the sandy streets made me think of those who 'are not aware of the excellence of their state' and 'who are hidden from themselves and from mankind.'

Of my association with institutionalized Sufi groups I recollect my initiation of the *latifa* of the heart by a Naqshbandi sheikh, reputed as much for his *baraka* as for his political power. He was the head of an order that had been reformed in the seventeenth century. During my first interview with him he listened attentively and kindly to my religious experiences and aspirations. When I expressed the wish to receive a spiritual exercise, he told me to come back after four days in the morning.

That particular day I went to his *khanegah* (*Khanegah (Pers.) : dervish hostel; convent*) and was led into an empty room. Soon the sheikh came in followed by two men. He was dressed in a dark grey classical cloak and wore a white turban. The two men were dressed in local costume. After some joyful talk the sheikh began with the verbal initiation. The eldest of the two dervishes translated: "The blessing of the *latifa* of the heart originated with Adam and is related to the divine attributes of *Takvin*: the power of creation, of sustaining life and causing death." "Sit cross legged. Each time before you begin your practice, say, "The blessing of *Takvin* will come to me through my Spiritual Teacher." "Next concentrate your attention three fingers below the left breast. Put your teeth together and place your tongue against the roof of the mouth. Start breathing through your nose and close your eyes. Then visualize your teacher's face and imagine that your heart *latifa*, three fingers below your left breast, says 'Allah'. The best time for practice is before sunrise after morning prayer and in the evening after evening prayer or before going to bed. Put always when possible your attention on your heart *latifa* and say silently 'Allah' also during your work or any other occupation."

I was to practice this exercise for six months. I was also advised to do four cycles of prayer at each prayer time. Good moral conduct was required. I was to trust my teacher and feel love towards him. If anything important happened I was to write it to him. If any physical or psychical derangement should occur, I was to say five hundred times 'Hu Allah'. After some time I should see a light inside. The two interpreters left the room and I stayed alone with the sheikh. We sat cross legged facing each other. The sheikh told me to come nearer and put his hands on my heart, at the same time looking fixedly into my eyes. He began to roll me from left to right, about ten times, until I was out of equilibrium, then pulled me against his chest and embraced me. He repeated this action three times. It seemed as if I was a child. At other moments the scene looked as if we were lovers. His hands passed endlessly over my chest, shoulders and back. I let everything happen, without resistance. Again he looked straight into my eyes, rocked me and pressed my body hard against his chest. As the sheikh's manipulations continued I became tired and drowsy. At the end he held me for a long time in his arms; I was breathing heavily and had closed my eyes. Then he

took me by my shoulders and smiled. The sheikh stood up, called and went into an adjacent room. The two dervishes came in and congratulated me. The sheikh emerged from the room with a bottle of rose perfume and two old Kasghar incense burners of colored lacquered wood which he presented to me. A servant announced that- dinner was ready. Time had passed quickly. The food was delicious and after tea we separated in the best of moods. I was allowed to kiss the hand of the sheikh.

The initiation had an unexpected effect. Other rites of initiation or ceremonies by which I was authorized to practice a particular exercise had always had some result. But this time nothing happened. In the meantime I travelled to India and rented a room in the village near the mausoleum of the fakir, where I continued the sheikh's exercises with the knowledge that the transformation of the nafs-i-ammara needs patience and perseverance. When I told the fakir about my initiation he made no comment.

Shortly after my arrival in the village I had two dreams. I dreamed that I was walking in what looked to be a deserted Muslim city in ruins. Coming near a mosque I perceived standing under an arched gate three turbaned men who held a spotless white horse at the bridle. The horse was saddled for a long journey. One of the men shouted at me: "Take the gate of the Afghans!" When I walked towards them, I woke up.

In the second dream I found myself in a long underground vault, resembling in many aspects of its architecture the main alley in the bazaar of Aleppo. Along the whitewashed walls stood a row of rectangular wooden coffins, the size of which was larger than a human body. Except for the sarcophagi the immense underground necropolis was deserted. The whole atmosphere was pervaded by a majestic tranquility. All of a sudden I heard a man's voice above my head saying very clearly and distinctly: "Of their bodies should be taken care. This is not a command. If they do not, they shall not be punished. I only tell them."

Yet while visiting the fakir and visualizing the face of the sheikh I became aware of an important difference in my relation respectively with the fakir and the sheikh. With the fakir there was a link of mutual sympathy. Insights and energy were given to me without my having asked for them, while drinking a glass of tea or just while sitting in the mausoleum. Though the sheikh was very hospitable his high status and his many religious duties made a very distant personage of him. In reality I did not feel any love for him; there seemed not to be any affinity between us. With the fakir it was entirely different.

One time coming back after a long absence I found the fakir very ill. He had a dry cough and fever and was very weak. Worried about his health I advised him to break his ordinary fasts, but he only smiled and refused to eat more than was his habit. He had bought a big lock that he could hang from the inside on his door so that occasional visitors had the impression that he was absent. Only some dervish friends and I could drop in at any time. He said that he took this measure because some visitors withdrew power from him. In the same way that he was able to see the real mind of people, he was also able to feel the psycho-physical condition of visitors. He avoided being touched by visitors who were in an unbalanced psychophysical state as their touch caused him to suffer pain for

several hours. I walked in every day and saw to my happy surprise that he returned more and more back to his physical body. First I did not connect his friends' visits with his recovery but when after a week he had again resumed his regular activities, I did. His recovery had been helped by the flow of sympathetic-complementary energies between him and his friends. Between the sheikh and me there was not such a flow of energy. At least not as visible as with the fakir. That current of love and subtle energy between us was so strong that sometimes when departing from him tears sprang out of my eyes. More than once the fakir said: "There is a 'connection of hearts' between us." In another context he used the expression 'there must be heart connection' to designate a psycho-energetic condition necessary to contact hidden powers. Sitting with the fakir was always rewarding. We communicated by the medium of a pidgin English of our own, full of curious idioms, that had developed between us through the years. He did not pose as a teacher. On the contrary, he told me twice that he himself was waiting for a person to guide him further on the Way.

Above all I learned much by living in his presence and by comparing my own moods and actions with his behavior. But this was not the main factor in the slow change that I underwent. Some subtle force which emanated continuously from him was the determining factor in refining my mind. At times the atmosphere between us was so strong that we hardly spoke a word. Then he only said: "Powers have come." I often found out that, while we remained silent, he had communicated knowledge by telepathy. I would sit with him empty-minded, and at the appropriate moment I would 'remember' or become inspired.

While never losing himself in speculative metaphysical talk he excelled in knowledge about the extraordinary feats and stories of famous saints. When he was recounting the glorious exploits of a saint or a miraculous event it was extremely difficult to follow his train of thought. My thoughts were blocked and dissolved in the psychic energy that he was transmitting. His way of telling stories had to some extent the effect of doing zikr. It was like plugging our mind into the other world and calling up powers. The story was only a switch that turned on the current. Afterwards my perception and awareness became sharper. One of these changes of perception was that I came to see the real face of people hidden behind their physical face. It happened that while I was talking to someone, his ordinary head eclipsed and a hidden inner head took shape. Mostly the inner heads I perceived were ghastly and deformed, only rarely did they have a harmonious expression. Some stories he recounted over and over again. Every time some new aspect, hitherto seemingly unimportant, was discovered. On the other hand he never discussed past situations, no matter how significant they had been. He only recalled an event for the purpose of calling up powers. He never indulged in the game of remembering past data.

Not a day passed without a humorous happening. One morning a friend of the fakir came in with tears in his eyes and asked why he had refused to shake hands with him at a faraway shrine the day before. Great was the astonishment of the man when the fakir told him that he had not left his place for days and not visited that shrine for years. No further comment nor explanation was sought or given. The same attitude prevailed when someone had received a message in a

supernatural way. No elaborate assumptions were derived from the event. It was all very real and important, but only for the moment. The fakir never got trapped in anything.

Another feature of his personality was his ability to become invisible though his physical body remained present. His mind at times was so empty of ordinary thought-forms that one almost forgot his presence. To the outside world our communication looked quite normal. An amusing scene happened when a man came in at a moment when the atmosphere in the mausoleum was very subtle. As we went on drinking tea in silence, the man grew nervous and started firing questions at the fakir, who gave indirect hints as to the nature of the present situation. But he was blinded by his problems and continued with his irrelevant utterances. When his spiritual impoliteness became insupportable, the fakir stopped sipping his tea, looked straight at the man, said something which nobody could remember afterwards and gave such a terrifying command by telepathic means that the man became perplexed and silent. Then as if nothing had happened he continued sipping his tea. Nothing was left of the discordant vibrations of the visitor.

Many orders observe the system of hereditary succession of the sheikhdom. While it is generally accepted that baraka is inheritable, sainthood is not and has to be realized individually. In Jerusalem I met a descendant of a famous companion of the Prophet and of an important hereditary line of Rifa'i sheikhs who claimed that all members of his family could easily handle snakes and scorpions from childhood on without initiation or training. He confided to me that, though he himself had never been a practicing dervish, certain genetically inherited Sufic qualities in him still caused miracles to happen in his surroundings.

When Chiragh-i-Delhi, the sixth and last sheikh of the Chishti order, was dying, he refused to indicate a Spiritual Successor because he found none of his disciples worthy to carry on the task. He ordered that all sacred relics of the order (cloak, staff, rosary and a special wooden bowl) which were usually given to the Successor should be buried with him. Only after Chiragh-i-Delhi's disciples had established themselves by their own authority as sheikhs, did a hereditary system of succession originate in the Chishti Way.

Appendix A

The Hierarchy of Hidden Masters.

Dervishes conceive a hierarchy of spiritual beings residing in a world not perceptible to the senses.

Their center is Mecca, but they are said to be present at the same time at any other place of the world and the universe.

Although they are invisible they can be seen with the 'eye of the heart'. The spiritual condition of the dervishes is decided by them; they are Spiritual Masters. At the top of the hidden hierarchy is the Qutub or Pole. He is attended by three Nujaba.

Below them are four Autad or Pillars.

Next in rank come seven Anvar or Lights.

The following category of entities are called Abdal or Helpers and number forty. Though they are considered to reside in a different dimension, they manifest themselves also in persons here on earth. When any one of them dies his place is filled by one selected from mankind.

Further we find seventy Nughaba or Nobles and three hundred Naghabat or chiefs. All of them have 'the power to bind and to loose'.

Next comes Khidr as the Master of Saints.

Below him are the Auliya or Saints.

All the beings of these different categories have the power to appear in any form of their choice.

A description of the saints attributed to the Prophet reads: "Their faces are luminous and they sit on thrones of light; they are not afraid when men are afraid, nor do they grieve when men grieve."

AI-Hujwiri writes in his *Kashf al-Mahjub* (*Translation R.A. Nicholson. Luzac & Co. London 1976.*): "Among them (saints) there are four thousand who are concealed and do not know one another and are not aware of the excellence of their state, but in all circumstances are hidden from themselves and from mankind."

Appendix B

Spiritual exercises can develop an inner organ of perception called the qalb or 'heart'. Divine light enters a person through the qalb. The qalb is the first of the lataif.

Literally *latifa* (*Arab. sing. of lataif*) means delicate, subtle, penetrating. In Sufism the lataif are organs of higher perception and subtle energy. They are not located physically in the body. Their activation leads to higher psycho-physical stages. Naqshbandis consider five lataif. Other orders consider six or only two lataif.

It was in the Prophet's 'heart' that Jibrail placed the Qoran on the Night of Power in a cave on Mount Hira in 610 A.D. When Jibrail first opened Muhammad's 'heart', Muhammad felt as if he were suffocating, as if he were about to die.

Development of the qalb should lead to a state of perpetual awareness, even while asleep or dreaming. A hadith relates that the Prophet once told the Companions: "My eyes sleep, but not my 'heart'. Sleep is confined to my eyes. It does not affect the consciousness of my 'heart'." Zikr exercises not leading to a transfusion of subtle energy of the practitioner's being are quite ineffectual.

While reciting a collection of zikrs the disciple can practice *rabita* or the visualization of a mental picture of his teacher.

Development of the 'heart' and further transformation of one's self can be achieved through *muraqaba* or concentration of the disciple on the Presence of a saint in order to benefit from his vibrations. When the saint has left his physical body *muraqaba* can be practiced at his grave.

Tawajjuh happens when a saint with his psychic powers actively assists a disciple to realize a higher stage.