

**IN THE NAME OF THE LORD OF
LIFE AND WISDOM**

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IDENTIFICATION

**ON A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY
STORY**

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ON A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY



ROMAN

Abdul Basir Shafaq
AUTUMN 2023 AD



PREFACE

The story on a Spiritual Journey is one of the valuable philosophical works of Abdul Basir Shafaq. I have edited this valuable work. My attempt has been to make this text, which is both enlightening and thoughtful, accessible to the people of wisdom and thought, refined and purified. Ultimately, I have endeavored for my work to be based on modern writing rules and methods. During the editing of this work, the utmost precision has been applied to observe the modern writing techniques, and this work has been methodical and rule-oriented. I am grateful to God for granting me this ability, and I have successfully managed to undertake this great and purposeful task.

The story on a Spiritual Journey is one of Mr. Shafaq's literary and philosophical works. In this valuable work, the author has attempted to awaken contemporary humans to self-knowledge and highlight the importance of self-knowledge. He also beautifully presents solutions for Theology. As a thinker and philosopher,

the author is present to critique the undesirable and improper and guide towards the right path. This book is entirely a critique of undesirable rituals, full of advice and moral, and ultimately, entirely about self-knowledge and God-knowledge. It compels the reader to first delve into self-knowledge and then into God-knowledge. The author introduces self-awareness as the essential prerequisite for God-awareness. Therefore, it's upon us to acquire such valuable books and enrich our spirituality.

Regarding how to understand God, the author says: "God exists in the present moment. You can feel the glory and greatness of being with God wholeheartedly in the present moment. Living means joy, happiness, laughter, contentment, gladness, and wonder alongside God in the present moment. After death, a person deeply plunges into the pleasure and joy of being in the present moment. Bring your entire being to the magical present moment to feel God. Embrace it and enjoy. The magnificence of existence and the enchanting power of God are within you right now. He is capable of anything right here. So, right here, you are capable of anything you set your mind to. You will feel God beside you.

You meet Him wherever you are right now. Almighty God, in the present moment, which encompasses eternity from the beginning to the end, is immersed in the pleasure and love from the presence of His servants.

He calls you at this very moment. He summons you to experience the miraculous embrace and taste the beauty of life right here, right now. He is joyfully laughing with you at this moment. Being immersed in the delight, happiness, and the song of love at this present moment is enough. After much effort and long journeys, the author concludes and provides us with a lesson in self-understanding. The author relies more on the views of Rumi and says, 'Rumi believes that behind all phenomena of this world, a complete, conscious, and infinite existence hides with all the qualities and names of goodness. Rumi refers to 'Inside' as God; God is the eternal source of existence and life. God is the creator who brought all existence from 'nothing' and solely by His will. The center of Rumi's thoughts is the Almighty God. Rumi is the same unified human. He dissolves into the attributes and names of God.

In my opinion (Alampour Alami), Rumi regards love as the healer of all causes and the instructor of method. Rumi's statement implies that if love is a healer, it cures the patient; if it doesn't cure, it's not love. Someone who loves money does not cure their illnesses with love; on the contrary, their ailments multiply. The more money they have, the more corrupt they become. So, how can we call such individuals 'lovers' and their actions 'loving'?

The meaning of the poem:

"My beloved, you come intoxicated and smiling from

the encounter with God. You take nothing of the good and bad of the world, or..."

"Every lover whose heart is wounded in the love of God, no longer remains tainted at all by any disobedience or sin... Molana (Rumi)"

This love can be any love, it doesn't make a difference; there is no distinction between earthly and celestial love here. According to a systematic view, everything is a game except love: the world is love, and everything else is mere amusement except the game of love. Khwaja Abdullah Ansari says: 'Love is the bond and attachment of the heart between effort and intimacy, and love is the first step in the deserts of annihilation and in the whirls that descend from there.' Rumi regards love as a fire that, if absent in any existence, is not worthy of life: This is fire; not the sound of the flute, not the wind. Whoever does not possess this fire is not the wind. It is the fire of love that falls into the reed. It is the heat of love that falls into the wine.

Ultimately, we arrive at the conclusion that the first condition for knowing God is self-awareness and self-belief. Moreover, if we don't go towards God lovingly and do not seek the eternal God within ourselves, we won't find Him anywhere else.

**With respect and regards,
Alampour Alami**



AUTHOR'S PROFILE



Abdul Basir Shafaq, born on March 4, 1953 in the village of Baqa Baraki Rajan in Logar province, opened his eyes to the world in a semi-intellectual family. His father was an imam at the mosque; he received lessons in jurisprudence and religious studies from him and also completed his primary, secondary, and high school education in Baqa Baraki Rajan, Logar province. According to the schedule of the Ministry of Education at that time, Shafaq was introduced to Paktia Dar al-Mulemmin and graduated from the field of literature.

Shafaq spent six years in the sacred duty of teaching, and after six years of teaching, he became the headmaster of Hussein Khel School in the district of Baghrami, Kabul province. Subsequently, he continued as the principal of the Kuchis High School in Logar province until the year 1993 working in the relevant departments of the Ministry of Education and the USAID Office.

Alongside his sacred teaching duties, he collaborated in writing with the country's press; his initial articles were published in the Zhwandoon Magazine in the year 1977.

In 1993, like other migrants, he was compelled to leave his homeland and migrated to Pakistan. Up until now, Mr. Shafaq has had three poetry collections titled 'Shafaq Dar Ghorub (Shafaq at Sunset), Khate qesmat (The Line of Fate), Faryad Biseda (Silent Scream), as well as four collections of short stories named 'Parhizgaran Qatel (The Ascetics of Murder), Sowdagaran Qurn (The Merchants of the Century), Pakize Bent Deraxt (The Pure Daughter of the Tree) and Farzand Aftab (The Child of the Sun) published. This versatile and hardworking writer spent 13 years as a writer for the Sahar newspaper in Peshawar, Pakistan. After the Taliban's downfall, he returned to his homeland and worked for 14 years as a writer and editor at the 'USAID' office.

Mr. Shafaq has worked as a presenter on Zinet Radio for some time; during his work, he wrote 1400 educational programs for teachers and worked as a radio announcer. His articles have been published in American newspapers. In 2018, he sought refuge in the country of Kingdom of Holland; he also obtained a Dutch language diploma.

Mr. Shafaq youngest son is studying diligently at one of the reputable universities in the country of Holland. Mr. Shafaq lives in Holland with his wife (Balqis Shafaq) and his daughter (Muska Shafaq).

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ABSTRACT

Humanity, as a thinking being, commenced its existence with atheism. However, events and occurrences beyond its comprehension have propelled it towards imaginary concepts that have occupied its mind to this day. Spirits, fairies, and similar entities are among these concepts. Over time, with the progress of human thought and scientific experiences, these concepts transformed into benevolent and malevolent gods, masculine and feminine, earthly and celestial, ultimately culminating in the concept of a singular god (monotheism). Nevertheless, human curiosity to seek the truth remains wandering, and the question is: Is monotheism the ultimate stage of human intellectual evolution, or must it surpass this stage as well?

Can mankind see God? It must be acknowledged that the boundless and unique God exists everywhere and within every particle, or every particle and all of nature are enshrined in God. So why are human eyes helpless

in seeing God despite the powerful telescopes? Is it that the precise vision of God can only be achieved through asceticism, night vigils, supplication, shedding tears, rituals, and through the unconscious or the inner giant?

In the name of pure love, which may be the solution to all problems, I intend to write a book called "In Search of God." Of course, despite the discomforts and troubles that this work may create for me, I may even be called an unbeliever, atheist, troublemaker, or hypocrite. Although I was not familiar with these facts in the past or generally considered myself moderate, it is impossible to stop the course I have started because I intend to act based on what my instinct dictates, not what those around me say. I want to be myself, to be what is in my nature. I don't want to have a momentary existence, meaning "now in the embrace of this, now in the embrace of that."

Perhaps a more provocative and thrilling question is for those who want to hang me sooner on the gallows of punishment so that the crows of the era of the Prophet Yusuf can make use of my brain; because five years ago, when I was trying to find God and especially when I wanted to write such a book, my closest friends declared me an apostate. But in order for me to stay alive and not be executed as an atheist, they introduced me to a psychotherapist.

"The psychologist spent two years on me, but my

question to him was still the same: Where can I find God? However, I didn't get an answer. Perhaps some people will try to label me as a heretic or an apostate, like Spinoza or Salman Rushdie, and set a million-dollar bounty on my head for the laughter of Iranians, the demands of Afghan clerics, or the extremist Christians. They have the right to do so because overall, the followers of every religion, especially the followers of the Abrahamic religions, are seeking to guide humanity by claiming that God sent the Gospel, Torah, Psalms, and the Quran through their rightful prophets. Yet, they have not seen God so far. Who are you to set out and find God?

Please bear your pain patiently. I am not someone who sets out in search of God, wandering from alley to alley, mountain to mountain, desert to desert, mosque to mosque, Kaaba, church, and temple to temple in search of the lost God. 'Yuliya,' a young, charming, and beautiful Dutch girl, has taken up the quest to find God with sleeves rolled up. If you want to accompany Yuliya on this journey, read this valuable philosophical and true story. In this story, I make an effort to accompany Yuliya in every darkness and light, day and night, church, temple, and mosque, Kaaba, and idol house, reflecting her realities, perspectives, and words.

Wishing for the victory of the honorable Yuliya. Surely, success always lies in truth; Yuliya will succeed and find what she has lost.



ON A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Before anything else, I must have a definition for God; who is God, and is it possible for humans to know God? God, meaning the owner and master, a superior and indefinable power, is often defined based on the central concept in many religions, especially the Abrahamic religions. In these religions, God is titled as the creator and initiator of the existence of the universe. It is imperative to understand who God is, how He came into being, and how we can know Him. In this story, an attempt is made to at least provide an accurate address for God, the place and being of the God beyond location, despite the doctrines of all Abrahamic religions stating that God is transcendent and without a place.

The story began here: One day, I was invited to explain the book 'Pure Daughter of the Tree,' which I had recently written, in one of the churches. During the

question-and-answer session, each of the attendees had questions about Mary, the Pure Mother. Thank God I had satisfactory answers for the session participants.

“Although we didn’t agree on everything, during the questions, one undeniable fact was that a girl next to me, who was very close to me and even resembled me, with a fair complexion, golden hair, wide eyebrows, blue eyes, tall stature, and a finely-shaped nose reminiscent of the beauty of her time like Zoleykha, seemed as if I had given birth to her, as if I had become her mother. She asked me, ‘I have been searching for God for years, and if you know anything in this regard, please explain it to me.’ I explained what I had on hand, mostly from the Quran and the sayings of the esteemed Prophet of Islam. I explained to her to the extent that my incomplete knowledge allowed, but unfortunately, I couldn’t convince Yuliya. Yuliya asked me to be her companion on the path of searching for God. I accepted her request, and I joined her on this journey. Many people were present in that gathering, each expressing different opinions, but Yuliya’s conviction was not achieved. I took Yuliya’s opinions into account and started my work. First, as per Lady Yuliya’s request, we need to understand the myth, and then we will delve into the search for God.

A myth is something or someone that has been created according to narratives and legends. Therefore, a

history based on oral traditions and stories is called mythological history. However, God is what has not yet come into the imagination, and humanity has not been able to physically show the presence of God to people. Nevertheless, most humans on Earth believe in the existence of God, who governs this vast universe.

“Myth” is a term derived from the Greek word “historia,” meaning “search” or “knowledge.” In Persian, “myth” has two meanings: 1) legend or story, and 2) meaningless and confused speech. However, as mentioned earlier, what humans believe in as God is considered the creator of the entire universe. Throughout history, humans have worshipped thousands of gods, but over time, the interest in multiple gods has diminished, and gradually, these gods have made way for the real and singular God. Now, Yuliya is striving to find the true God. This journey is very interesting but full of danger, with the constant threat of death. For example, Yuliya, yesterday in the church, asked for God’s address. The priest was close to issuing a stoning order for Yuliya, but she didn’t lose her courage and said, ‘I do not believe in God as the one born of a virgin who eats and drinks like me. Please, if you have any information, enlighten me.’ The priest, lacking a precise answer to Yuliya’s question, told her and me, ‘Go and disappear, do not utter such meaningless and futile words. If you have made a vow to God, leave it in the church and go away.’ It was a heartbreaking situation where only

for the vows made to the priests, it is permissible to say anything only in the name of God. However, if we don't have a vow to give to the priest, we no longer have the right to speak. I marvel at such religious rituals. Yuliya also laughed and was even more scared; she imagined that humans have created a source of revenue for God, which she will not do from time to time. If she ever finds Him, she will speak to Him and hear from Him.

The next day, Yuliya asked a Muslim man and woman, 'Do you know God's address? When you pray and talk to Him, please give me His address too!' The Muslim man said, 'Yesterday, a certain Mullah said, 'God is in the sky,' and today, the same Mullah says, 'God is on the earth.' I am also puzzled about where God is. That Muslim man made a meaningful statement and said, 'Let Him be wherever He is comfortable. You go towards your work and burden so that you can earn your dinner.

The husband of that Muslim lady said, 'The Mullah in the mosque, during congregational prayers, on Fridays and every five times a day, only says to stand precisely facing the Qibla (direction to turn which in praying), with your feet towards the Qibla and your face towards the Kaaba; but one day, he did not say to turn your hearts towards God. Therefore, I believe that two percent of Muslims still do not know God's exact address.' Yuliya was very disheartened, but I assured her and said, 'The

seeker will find. We will definitely find God, and then we will celebrate together and honor that day. Believe me, we will succeed in finding God with one hundred percent determination. But Christians have other beliefs about the omnipotence of God; true Christians say how beautiful is the wisdom and power of our God, and how great it is that He not only created the heavens but also miraculously preserves them. In true Christianity, God is the absolutely omnipotent God who can do whatever He wants. When the Lord appeared to Abraham, He informed him: When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abraham and said to him, 'I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be perfect. The Book of Genesis, Chapter 17, Verse 1

According to the sacred writings, Christians believe in a God who has neither a beginning nor an end because God is eternal. They believe in a God who is omniscient and possesses all powers, having created all visible and invisible things through His word. Haman True Christians do not imagine God in human form and believe that God is not limited by time or space but is always present everywhere. The Word of God in the Holy Scriptures teaches that the Almighty God has a specific name, mentioned about 7,000 times in the sacred texts; this name is expressed as Jehovah. Please refer to the Book of Exodus, Chapter 3, Verse 15, or the Book of Psalms, Chapter 83, Verse 18. Psalms 83, verse 18

Belief in a singular, true God possessing these attributes is crucial because it is these attributes that distinguish the God of Christians from the God of Muslims and other religions. Attention to these distinctions must be given the utmost consideration; otherwise, in the belief in God, one may become plagued by doubt and uncertainty. The singular, true God, who is characterized by the Trinity of persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, should be acknowledged. However, it should not be forgotten that sometimes Julia does not accept such descriptions; she wants to continue her quest for understanding. The more precise humans become, the more difficulties they encounter in finding God themselves.

Because, according to the narratives of the four sacred books: Torah, the Bible, the Psalms and the Qur'an, perceiving God in the material world is not possible, but nonetheless, Yuliya and I continue our efforts to find the address of God.

One of the days, I noticed that my companion and fellow seeker, Yuliya, was shedding tears and visibly upset. When I inquired about the reason for her tears, she candidly raised her shoulders and said to me, "I did not expect you to be so indifferent. Why and how?" I asked.

She replied, "The reason she has no address for God is because she understands that God has tried hard to have companions and has had many companions, even

naming prophets among the people. But unfortunately, either all of God's companions have lied about Him or they have done things for their own benefit. Therefore, God remains forever alone. It pains my heart for Him; wherever He is, He will feel loneliness, perhaps in my heart or perhaps in yours. But since we could not become His companions and stay with Him, He feels the loneliness and solitude, as I shed tears for His loneliness."

I told her, "Yuliya, my dear, God is always with people and among people." She responded, "Accurate, but what good is a companion if you do not know the language and do not understand their pains?" I will never be happy until I find His address and have words with Him.

I said to her, "Yuliya, the scholars of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all affirm that as long as we are alive, we cannot see God." Yuliya smiled and said, "So, I should die as soon as possible to see Him? Your words imply that God is among the dead, not among the living! What you say means that I want a God who talks with everyone among the living, solves everyone's problems, and at least answers our questions. How long should I wait, or should I die and then meet God later? I suggested to Yuliya, my dear, if you allow me, I will tell you a story that one of the professors at the University of Chicago has witnessed about one of his students, for you to hear.

Yuliya said, "I am all ears; I am listening." I began the story like this: About twelve years ago, one day I stood up to look at the files of students in the first class of my theology course. It was the first day I saw "Tommy." At first glance, he caught my attention. He had long, bushy hair that reached his shoulders. It was the first time I saw a guy with such long hair. Of course, I know that what's behind this appearance and what's inside this head is what matters. That day I was not so prepared, and I was a bit excited. Immediately, I wrote the letter "S" on Tommy's file because of his strange and peculiar nature. On that very first day, Tommy showed that he denies God. He regularly objected and rejected love for God without conditions. We spent that academic semester peacefully with each other.

"Although I had gone through a lot of trouble to approve his presence in the class, one day after the end-of-semester exam, he quietly asked me, 'Do you think I will never find God?' In order to give him a wake-up call, perhaps to awaken him from the slumber of neglect, I emphatically told him, 'No, no!' He only responded, 'Oh.'

He wanted to leave the class; he had taken a few steps when I called out to him and said, 'Tommy! I never think you will find Him, but I am sure He will find you.'

He shrugged, left the class, and exited my life forever. I felt that my words had an impact on him. Later, when I heard that he had graduated, I was happy and thanked

God. But later I heard some distressing news. I heard that Tommy had been diagnosed with an incurable disease (lung cancer). Before I could reach out to him, he came to see me one day. When I saw him, his body was badly deteriorated, and all his hair had fallen out. However, his eyes were still bright, and his speech, like before, was firm and steady. I approached him and said, Tommy, I often think of you, I haven't forgotten. I heard that you are sick, and I am very sorry.

- Oh, yes, very sick! Both of my lungs have cancer. It's been the topic for weeks.
- Can we talk about it together!
- Definitely, however you'd like.
- How is it that someone, at the age of 24, is dying?
- Well, it could have been worse.
- Like what?
- Like a fifty-years -old person who has no value or purpose in their life.
- Like a fifty-year-old person who is obsessed with desires and accumulating money.

I recalled a moment when I wrote the letter 'S' on

Tommy's file as a symbol of its strangeness and said, "Interesting!"

"The reason I came to see you was because of something you told me on the last day of class. I asked you, 'Do you think I will never find God?' And you answered, 'No!' This answer surprised me a lot. Then you said, 'But He will find you!' This sentence deeply affected me, and I thought about it a lot. I made a lot of efforts in the search for God and became intensely interested in it."

"When doctors diagnosed me with cancer and began my treatment, I was in the midst of searching and researching about God. I knocked my hands firmly on the doors of heaven, but nothing happened. Has it ever happened that you try your hardest to achieve something, but you don't succeed? Undoubtedly, a tired person no longer has the patience to endure and eventually gives up trying.

One day, I woke up from this quest and decided not to pay attention to God, the afterlife, and similar matters anymore. I decided to spend whatever time I had on important and meaningful tasks that I had neglected. I thought about you and your class; I remembered a sentence you had said: 'It's very distressing for someone to live a lifetime without love, and even more distressing is for someone to live a lifetime and die, but not tell those they love that they love them.'

So, I started with one of the most difficult and challenging issues in my life, my father. He was reading the newspaper. I called out to him, and without lowering the newspaper, he said, 'Yes, what is it?' I told him, 'Dad, I want to talk to you.' He said, 'Okay, talk.' I said, 'I want to tell you something very important.'"

"He lowered the newspaper a bit and asked, 'What is it?' I said, 'Dad, I love you very much. I just wanted you to know.' Tommy smiled at me, describing the situation with complete approval and a strange, pleasant feeling that bubbled up from the depths of his being.

The newspaper fell to the floor. My father did two things that I could never remember him doing before: first, he cried, and then, he hugged me. We talked all night, even though my father had to go to work early in the morning. Seeing my father closer, I could see his tears, and hugging him and hearing my father say that he loves me gave me a very good feeling.

The same issue was much simpler with my mother and younger brother. They also cried with me, and we hugged each other, starting to say beautiful things that were missing in our home. We shared everything that we had kept as a secret in our hearts for years. Then, I turned to God; this time, I had found Him, and I felt that I had come much closer to Him. and I was practically breathless.

'By loving, you've found a sure path to your Creator; a

path that everyone is seeking. You've sought a path that many are in search of."

"John Apostille says: '... whoever lives with love, lives with God.'

Tom! Can I ask you for a favor? You know, when you were in my class, you were really a big trouble for me. (laughs) But now, you can make up for it. Can I ask you to come to my class and share this story with the kids? Without a doubt, the impact of your words on them would be much greater. You can express it better.

- Oh... I was prepared for you, but I don't know if I'm prepared for your class or not!
- Tom! Think about it. Whenever you're ready, give me a call.

After a few days, Tom called me and said, "I've prepared myself to attend the class. He wanted to talk to the kids about God and the stories of his life. We planned for a specific day, but he never made it to the appointment. He had a more important appointment; an appointment more important than my class. He was prepared for a life beyond this worldly life: eternal life; a life where death was not its end. Instead, death was just a transition from this life to another. He had found a more beautiful life that no one had seen before, heard of, or even imagined.

“And finally, I added to Yuliya: what Tom meant by bringing the cancer-stricken student closer to God was love, the love expressed by his father towards him.

Yuliya said to me, ‘I understand correctly, but still, the meaning of your words was that I should find God after my death, not before, because Tom couldn’t find God before his death either. Despite this observation, I continue my efforts. I love God too, but I don’t want to talk about my love for Him before I die; I’m not so interested in post-mortem discussions.

I told her, ‘The beginning of any task seems difficult, but when you start, imagine half the job is done; you start by loving. She chuckled and said, ‘Loving is not a task, a day, or an article that I can fill the pages with sitting at a desk in an hour; love is a feeling, and I need to find that feeling first.’

I chuckled as well and told her, ‘That feeling itself is love, and love itself is God.’ This exploration had been going on for years. Once, we sought refuge in the mountains to find God hidden from the eyes of people.

After spending five months in the mountains, a man, I think a traveler or a passerby, encountered us. With Yuliya’s permission, I asked him about the address of God. I believe that man was insane because in response to me and Yuliya, he said, ‘What quality does God have in the mountains and deserts!’”

“If you truly love, be steadfast like a man, take firm steps. You will find God in the city, in ruins, and even in taverns, tavern houses, bars, and even in places where oppressed humans sell their bodies, not in this plain, foothill, desert, and wilderness.

To be honest, the words of that passing man above Yuliya had a positive impact. We descended from the mountains again and, during the days, together attempted to find God in mosques, for it is stated in various verses of the Quran that mosques are the guesthouses of God. The speech of the dawn of Islam and the beginning of it, and the truthful dawn of the Muhammadan religion, is the mosque. The mosque is the guesthouse of God on earth, the place for the descent of heavenly blessings and gifts, the house of secrets and needs, love and affection, purity and intimacy, sacrifice and mercy, the manifestation of God’s paradise on earth, and the place of tranquility for the monotheists.

To be honest, when we spent a short time wandering in mosques, what we found there was all deception, fraud, hypocrisy, and deceit, not the desire for God or an interest in God, not the love for God, nor anyone like me On A Spiritual Journey. Everyone came to raise themselves; sometimes the mosque leaders recited Quranic verses loudly, and neither Mawlavi nor those standing behind him understood the meaning because the Quran was in Hebrew and Arabic, while

the language of the worshipers was Persian, Baluchi, Pashto, Hindi, etc. Sometimes they didn't know what they wanted from God and what God should give them because neither God understood their words nor did they understand their own questions.

“Chatting with the Imam of the Grand Mosque: It was 8 o'clock in the evening when Yuliya called me on my mobile phone. I said, “Yes, I am here.” She asked, “Are you ready to go and have dinner at the Grand Mosque with Mullah, and if possible, let's get the exact address from him together?” After a brief pause, I said to her, “Yuliya, my dear, the clerics, considering the religion they perceive, are generally impatient and sensitive people. What if we end up being bedridden with broken arms and legs in their infirmary?” She laughed and said, “No, it's not like that. I have the ‘magic touch’ for clerics.” I said, “Alright then. At 8:30 in the evening, both of us, in unity, went to the Grand Mosque. The people had just left the mosque after performing the bedtime prayer; some looked at Yuliya's yellow headscarf and blue eyes with disapproval. Anyway, we entered the mosque and had a private conversation with the cleric. Yuliya spoke fluently in Persian, Pashto, English, and Arabic. Both of us kissed the hands of the cleric. His hands did not smell like God to me; they smelled like blood. Anyway, after the introduction, Yuliya took the lead in the conversation and asked her question as follows:

“Esteemed Mr. Imam: I have been on the quest for God for seven years now. No one has given me his exact address, and sometimes people even consider me deserving of death. Now, if you, sir, know the exact address of God and provide it to me, you will earn the greatest reward and merit.”

“I saw that Mullah’s forehead wrinkled, he became angry, turned toward me, and said, ‘Why do you join hands with people who are not believers in God and God’s book, while your appearance itself suggests you are a Muslim?’

I said, ‘Mr. Imam, it’s not like that; rather, he has hired me. If you have information, please enlighten us.’

The Imam became even angrier, his face turned red, he turned toward Yuliya and said, ‘Hurry up, get out of the mosque, or else I’ll hit you, and you won’t stay alive. Muslim liar and hypocrite!’

I was very frightened, but Yuliya said to me in Dutch, ‘Don’t be afraid; I told you that I have the ‘magic touch’ for clerics.’ She handed him 200 euros from her ladies’ purse. The Imam made a 180-degree turn and said, ‘Humble human, I understand. Thank you, it’s good that you came. Your steps are above our eyes. This is God’s house, the house of all of us, including you. Whenever you can, come in; the core of the matter is always enjoyable. Don’t worry; the answer to a very simple and easy question is right in front of me.’ Yuliya

became happy and said, 'Please, Mr. Imam, where is the God's address?'

The Imam said to Yuliya, 'You just gave me 200 euros right now. In reality, you did not give me this money; Rather, God extended His helping hand toward me through your existence. For now, you are God yourself.'

Yuliya looked at me in amazement and said:

Mmmmm I am God, Mowlavi said precisely, you are God. Just this activity itself makes me want to prostrate before you. Anyone who gives bread to the hungry is God. No need to wander around, just see yourself in the mirror; you are God. Now you are free; here is the exact address I gave you."

Yuliya and I, with astonished eyes, asked Mowlavi, "Mr. Mowlavi, has Yuliya become God forever, or is it just for a few minutes?" Mowlavi smiled and said, "God is simple; whenever he says 'Here I am' to my voice and helps me, at that moment, he is God forever. And if he wants me to demonstrate the greatest connection to him, I'll show it to him. Yuliya asked Mowlavi, 'How is the greatest connection with God?' Mowlavi said, 'Now, if you wish and allow me, it means I will worship your unparalleled beauty; that's the path of connection. And if you and I lie together on a bed, naked, and engage in sex, that is the greatest connection; do you want to come and do the same with me to see the greatest

connection with God?’ Yuliya said to me, ‘Look for the escape route.’ Both of us asked Mowlavi for permission to leave the mosque. At the time of parting, Mowlavi said to Yuliya, you set my soul on fire. God, set your house on fire. You were your own god. I swear by your life; The Father of God is not beautiful like you. He kissed Yuliya’s face firmly and both of us left the mosque. Mowlavi said, ‘I’m waiting for you, come back safely so we can talk more about the exact address of God; you, the active God, farewell.”

Yuliya and I set out together and engaged in conversation. Yuliya said, “I’m amazed that during these 1400 years, while we are all unaware of God, may God forbid, hasn’t God died? Otherwise, that compassionate and merciful God, the unparalleled one, sent dozens of thousands of prophets only to the 12 Jewish tribes within a few years. How could he have tolerated his servants’ ignorance for such a long time? Or, according to the scholars of the Abrahamic religions, especially the followers of Islam, they say, ‘God sent his last messenger, Muhammad, and said everything he had to say. He no longer wants to face anyone. But these statements are not believable because how can the God of compassion and mercy leave his servants in a state of ignorance so easily? My fear is that God might be dead, may God forbid. I seek refuge in God from the accursed Satan. In my opinion, we need to act as soon as possible, find God, dead or alive, so that people’s duties become clear. I’m

afraid that this pure religion of his will be destroyed by enemies. I fear that people might again revert to their self-made idols and become idolaters once more. I'm even afraid that in the absence of God for such a long time, these Muslims might become deniers of Him. And if these honorable scholars want us to follow the sayings of those prophets of the ancient covenant, it has passed, and now we need to hear a new and fresh message directly from God Himself. All these religious scholars have turned into merchants of religion, and for this reason, not many people pay attention to their words. I told Yuliya, 'My dear, the time is near when you might deny God. Refrain from saying such things; otherwise, you might become an unbeliever.' She laughed at me and said, 'It's not the time of the beginning of the Prophet of Islam when anyone not accepting Islam was either beaten on the head or given jizya "'

Now is the age of the digital era. I, like many others, am waiting for God to prove His existence. I said "Astaghfirullah, Wa La Hawla Wala Quwwata Illa Billah." (I ask forgiveness from God. There is no power but from God) Yuliya said, "I'm not the devil; I'm just a fellow traveler." I remained silent until there was a momentary pause, then Yuliya broke the silence again and said, "I think these gods have appeared for different tribes for example, Jehovah, the God of the Jews, was revealed only to the Jewish people and Allah, the God of the Arabs, was sent down exclusively for the Arabs who

were all immersed in ignorance. They forcefully accept the superiority of their God through coercion and the massacre of their fellow human beings.

God forbid, I have no intention of blasphemy. I have distanced myself thousands of leagues from my home and possessions in order to discover the address of the unchanging, compassionate, and merciful God—not to become an unbeliever or an idolater. I believe that if everyone were to remain ignorant of God in such a manner, humanity would face significant difficulties. My dear companion! Honestly, I have fallen into doubt about how the singular God does not intervene in these bad days, when worse conditions have arisen in human societies. Especially now, with the widespread atrocities and injustices being committed in the name of religion throughout history, and particularly at this moment, as we witness prominent examples of such in our own homeland. The question has always lingered in our minds: Why doesn't God take action and do something about it?"

How is it that He observes all this oppression, injustice, inequality, poverty, misery, and especially the hypocrisy and deceit of those who claim to follow the divine law without taking any action? "We have been ignorant of God for fourteen hundred years," meaning that during this time, the Almighty has neither given us any news of Himself, nor sent a messenger to us, nor manifested His existence in any way. He has not

brought any nation, tribe, or people to destruction with His wind, storms, pests, or locusts, as if He has either fallen silent or withdrawn His hand from dealing with the affairs of His servants.”

“It is unbelievable that someone, with great effort and hardship, brings a handful of people from the realm of non-nothingness to existence, provides them with so many means and tools for their livelihood, and then expects them to become His caliph on Earth. Afterward, He abandons this dear creation, who is still immature and inexperienced, once and for all, without guidance or direction.”

“Truly, the God who, every now and then, sent a messenger and prophet for the happiness and prosperity of the people, has sent more than a hundred thousand messengers solely in the deserts of Arabia, Najd, Hejaz, and Palestine to present His religion to the people. Today, when societies are distancing themselves more than ever from religion and belief, why does He not send any messenger?”

“Many gods have existed in various societies and tribes, like the mythological gods of the Greeks, etc., who are now retired and gone. Could it be that our God has also retired?”

“Could it be that all religious teachings, which have now become tools in the hands of a few wealthy and merchants of faith, are fundamentally lies and

deceptions?

These, and dozens of other questions, linger in many minds. Yet, not only does anyone have the courage to pose them, but even contemplating them is considered blasphemy. Even now, as I raise these questions with you, I fear that my shadow might record my words and hand them over to the clergy for profit. Otherwise, our goal, yours and mine, is clear: we are On A Spiritual Journey. May our God grant us success in finding Him, so that we can raise certain questions in His presence, questions that have arisen in my mind, your mind, and the minds of all humanity, and receive answers. Above all, we hope to kiss the hand of the unparalleled and incomparable God up close; may it be God's will."

Dear audience! Don't assume that we are godless people; no, we are in search of God and believe in His greatness.

"Dear companion: I have heard that the elders of mysticism also have a close connection with the existence of God. What do you think about having a conversation with one of the elders of mysticism this time? I added that our common goal is to find God by any means that you find reasonable, so let's proceed in the name of Allah. I will briefly summarize my limited knowledge about the four paths for you. Yulia was pleased and said, 'I'm all ears.' I continued, 'Sufism or mysticism is an ascetic method that has had a special place in the culture of Eastern nations, especially

among Afghans.”

“In Afghanistan, there are four Sufi paths followed by many: the Qadiriya, Chishtiyya, Naqshbandiyya, and the Suhrawardiyya, with a notable presence in Kabul and Herat.

It is said that these paths have a common purpose, which is the remembrance of the Lord. Typically, the spiritual leaders in the Khanqahs (Sufi monasteries) organize gatherings for remembrance, and they vary in style, some involving music and others conducted without music or Sama (a form of spiritual concert).

In contemporary times, Sufis have managed to sustain their presence, with Sufi markets thriving in many warm regions and having devoted followers. However, in some places, hypocritical practices have infiltrated the relationship between seekers and Sufis, diminishing its splendor. It’s worth mentioning that women have also been part of these paths since ancient times. When I shared this information with Yulia and added that I not only agree but would like to visit one of the Sufi elders now to ask them our questions, she seemed intrigued.

We both confidently proceeded through Kabul to the Wazir Akbar Khan district, the seventh district, where we visited a venerable elder. This elder, introducing us to another honorable elder, said:

“Throughout the completion of 19 classes or 19 lessons, you find your own path.

We went to the address provided by the elder, where people were gathered, each engaged in chanting and praising the Almighty. The venerable elder occasionally uttered ‘Haq-Haq-Haq’ (Right-Right-Right), and other disciples responded with prayers for the Prophet Muhammad. We found a corner to sit, and Yulia wanted to ask her questions, but officials instructed us to wait until the chanting and fervor subsided; everyone was immersed in spiritual communion. Later, they said we could ask our questions. In summary, the supposedly deceptive ritual of the elder’s ‘Zaman-o-Saal’ (Time and Communion) came to an end. We approached him to present our questions. Yulia said, ‘I have been on a quest for God for years. Can you guide me?’ The elder unabashedly stood up, pounded the ground, and exclaimed, ‘Haq-Haq-Haqoo.’ This frightened Yulia, and I reassured her. She then asked, ‘It’s not that I am scared, but my question is, why did the venerable elder stand up and shout ‘Haq-Haq-Haqoo’ in response to my question?’ The elder responded, ‘We have 19 lessons or classes. You must complete those 19 steps.’ I asked, ‘How does that work?’ The elder gestured to one of his disciples to explain to us. The man said, ‘Our elder responds not anytime but only when he is in a state of. You can ask your question when he is in that state. For now, the venerable elder is in contemplation and prefers not to speak to anyone.’”

“Yulia asked, ‘What state is meditation considered?’ The man replied, ‘Meditation means that at this very moment, the venerable elder is in conversation with the Almighty; he is not present on Earth; he is currently intoxicated with the truth and expresses love to God.’

“I said, ‘So our guide must be precise in his directions; can this man lead us to God?’ The wise man replied, ‘Yes, he is fully capable. Whatever you desire, whatever questions you have, he can provide answers. I asked, ‘In that case, while he is in direct communication with God, can he just give us the address of how and where we can find God?’ Once again, in a loud voice, he shouted, ‘Ask your question.’ Yulia couldn’t contain her joy. To the wise man, I said, ‘My question is simple: just tell me the address of God.’ The wise man told his disciple that these moments could be put to good use; tell them that finding the answer to this question takes time and effort.”

“Another man said, ‘The elder owner says to make a vow for something in the way of God; give alms so that it equals the ground for conversation between you and God. Honestly, Yes, I thought that this man is the second secretary and the elder owner is the first secretary of God, making the ground for my meeting with God suitable. I asked, ‘What should we give as alms?’

“The second secretary said, ‘You can donate \$500,

and your affairs will become easier later. Yulia wanted to pay the money urgently, but I told her to be patient. I asked him, 'May we give this money to orphans, the poor, and widows?' The elder owner shouted 'Haq-Haq-Haqoo' and said, 'No, you must give alms to this lodge.' Anyway... Yulia gave \$500 to the venerable elder, and he said, 'Now, go and come back at 2 o'clock tomorrow. Both of us left the place, and on the way, we met someone we knew. He asked, 'Where are you going?' I told him the story, and he explained about the elder owner with such clarity: The story began with a foundation established by a person named Hamid Reza Ansari in 2009, claiming to be a faith healer. He asserted that he could transfer tranquility to others in 19 sessions and, through this method, improve productivity in companies and institutions. He further claimed that the foundation, by promoting good ethics, strengthening faith, and creating human connections, aimed to elucidate the path to human happiness and perfection with a new approach. In this condition, God is always with us, and we all converse with the Almighty.

"Mr. Ansari, with the deceptive words that most sect leaders use to exploit the ignorance of the people, managed to conduct classes and endeavored to instill the idea that his classes aimed at addressing and improving common conditions such as acute depressions.

He cited reasons such as workplace uniformity, family conflicts, unemployment, frustration, aimlessness, and others. He claimed that his classes were moving towards stress and anxiety control, aiding individuals struggling with addiction and seeking permanent recovery, hyperactive children, and more.”

Many people worldwide face these problems due to the industrialization of life, and they try to escape and treat these issues in any way possible. This has attracted attention and, of course, the main audience for these classes is women. Sometimes four or five of them gather, and one of them reads the book ‘Nineteen Steps,’ written by Ansari. At the end, they collectively recite one hundred prayers. I have critiqued the book of this gentleman, which will be published soon.

Initially, this movement did not reveal its hidden intentions at all and managed to hold classes in various parts of the city. The foundation also organized teacher training courses, and I participated in those courses to better understand this movement. What I was taught in this course was the method of conducting classes and how to read the book.

After completing the three-session teaching course, I wrote a critique of this movement and published it. It was the first critique in this regard that appeared on websites and news agencies.

“After a while, this movement announced that the

Nineteen Steps classes were closed for security reasons, and they shut down all their advertising channels. However, they continued their activities secretly. In my critique, I associated this movement with the Kasnazani Sufi sect, which the supporters of this movement denied.

After a short time, this movement came back with a new approach, this time revealing its true face and started promoting its classes openly in the virtual space. In these classes, which were no longer referred to as classes but rather as gatherings for remembrance (Majlis-e-Zikr), participants pledged allegiance.

Here, we understood that the greedy elders of the Sufi path and the clever disciples could not create anything meaningful. Nevertheless, one day, Yuliya asked me to introduce her to one of the elders of the Naqshbandi Sufi order.

On another day, in the Unknown Sepahi Area, there is a pilgrimage site called Moi Mubarak which is attributed to a hair of the blessed beard or head of Prophet Muhammad. In this pilgrimage, sometimes on Thursday nights, the elders of the Naqshbandi and Chishti Sufi orders gather, and people engage in the preparation of sherbet (a sweet drink). Later, they play the Marsh song. Mostly, in these gatherings, they recite mystical poetry, and in the excitement of playing music and singing, various instruments are used, including drums and flutes, which, initially, were only drums and flutes.

However, now other musical instruments are also used, with the majority of them being attributed to the followers of the Chishti Sufi order.

“They have Sufi disciples who sometimes perform Sama dancing. Occasionally, the disciples, and even some of the elders of the Sufi path, prepare and smoke hashish. In this state, when they become intoxicated with the effects of hashish, their belief is that they are conversing with God. We discussed the noble Chishti Sufi order with the Sufi elder.

Yuliya asked the Sufi elder: “We have been searching for God for years. If you kindly guide us, we can talk to the Almighty God.” The Sufi elder named “ tammA” looked at Yuliya and said: “Give charity in our monastery because it needs renovation; soon you will see God. Just a few minutes ago, I was talking to God, probably the same moment I was intoxicated with the smoke of hashish. In any case...”

Yuliya gave 500 US dollars to the Sufi elder. The Sufi elder instructed Yuliya to recite Alhamdulillah (Praise be to Allah) two hundred times every day; she could meet God in forty days. Yuliya, being a simple girl, believed in his words and was very happy that she had finally found the address of God; the Chishti Khanqah is the house of God.

For forty consecutive days, Yuliya and I spent day and night in one of the pilgrimage sites of the righteous

martyrs and practiced asceticism. On the fortieth day, Yuliya expected that, God willing, the Lord, the Generous, would come riding on a celestial horse, but unfortunately, it did not happen. The next day, Yuliya visited the Sufi elder again and took me with her.

She asked the elder: "I couldn't converse directly with the Almighty or at least see Him from a distance. The charity went in vain." The Sufi elder replied to Yuliya: "You should have come to us; during these forty days, why didn't you come? Your charity was in vain. You must contribute again, be with us, and occasionally smoke hashish with us. Still, another day, we participated in the gathering of the followers of the Suhrawardi Sufi order, but unfortunately, what Yuliya wanted did not come to pass. In this series, people, believing that mentioning God while getting intoxicated gives them a divine experience, could witness God in another person or object. Unfortunately, Yuliya and I, being blind to spiritual knowledge, only smelled the scent and smoke of hashish, and nothing else. If only we were among God's people to see God, but Pain to us.

Yuliya looked at me and said, "What should we do?" I replied, "These people deceive everyone. We can only find God ourselves. Let's go to the humble and oppressed people, not to these freeloaders and wicked thieves." Now, for our salvation from these criminal opportunists, it's better to give \$100 to the Sufi elder and leave them with the false promise that

we will return soon and learn nineteen lessons from them. But when we left, we would never come back. Yuliya paid \$200 and took permission, but we never went in that direction again.

As we were on our way, a person joined us, presenting himself as a Sufi elder. We asked him about the Qadiriya Sufi order, and he said, "I have complete faith in all four Sufi orders, and followers of each can be connected to God through me." He provided information about the Qadiriya order, stating that its followers believe in the unity of existence, hold love and service in high regard, and, despite originating among the Hanbalis, are generally tolerant. The preservation of tradition and rituals is emphasized in this order. The majority of Qadiriya followers in the Balkans have deviated due to the lack of access to genuine Islamic resources and true scholars in many cases. Although fundamentally belonging to the Sunni tradition and being one of the four Sunni orders, it has followers among various Muslim communities. Followers of the Qadiriya school are inclined towards Sama (listening to spiritual music) and ecstasy, considering bodily joy as a means to purify the soul.

The founder of this order in Afghanistan was a man named Naqib Sahib, a resident of Jalalabad. After his passing, his son, Sayed Ahmad Gilani, continued to promote the Qadiriya order and also established the collection of alms for the National Mobilization

Movement. They actively participated in the jihad, and Sayed Ahmad Gilani, having some relation with Zahir Shah, the former Shah of Afghanistan. Sayed Ahmad Gilani was known to consume alcoholic beverages and was conscious of his actions.

In reality, I myself am also affiliated with the four Sufi orders, but these individuals have exploited the order. Each of these elders enjoys a luxurious lifestyle, indulging in worldly pleasures. They gather all the delicacies and blessings from their followers while the followers struggle to provide bread for their own children. At least once a year, they must present a sheep as a gift to the "Anchor" elder, or else the chain between the follower and the elder is severed.

I asked, "What should the Anchor say when sacrificing the sheep?" He replied that the Anchor is a term for the elders of the Sufi order who cook the bread for their guests. Naturally, the cost comes from the pockets of their followers, and, of course, the holy kitchen of the Sufi elders must also be given a sacred name. The sacred kitchen of the Sufi elders is referred to as the Anchor. The man said, "You know the rest better yourselves." He was excused, and we continued on our way. Yuliya and I also sought information from the Melang and the servants of the shrines and monasteries.

Unfortunately, in Abrahamic religions, especially the sacred religion of Islam, various forms of deception

have been used, and religion has been manipulated as a tool. One of the ways of gaining benefits is through this practice of deceit in the shrines. For example, the Arabs, who killed our forefathers and wiped their names off the pages of history, elevated themselves so much that they became representatives of God. "In the pilgrimage of Tamim Ansar, the Melang, despite being strong and healthy, are honored as pilgrims and servants of the holy shrines, especially in one of the renowned shrines, particularly those of individuals who were martyred in Islamic wars. They strive to represent themselves as honored Melang."

This group generally uses hashish, but each of them considered themselves representatives of God and had their own Nauzubillah (seeking refuge in God). Besides smoking hashish, they also sold it, and in the later stages, they had gained a high status in the trade. Most of them also sold powder and heroin. This group had the habit of wearing a long green shirt, letting their hair grow wild, avoiding water as much as possible, and appearing dirty to gain acceptance from the people. They often made a significant amount of money. In recent years, especially in our country, particularly in Kabul, pretending to be Malangs in shrines and graves was a highly lucrative business. These Malangs typically deceived people, convincing them to return to their homes while chanting "Haq Haq Haq" or presenting themselves as divine lovers, all amidst superstitions and idolatry.

Our people, shamelessly, repeatedly visited them, referred to them as elders and leaders, or people of understanding or lovers of God, seeking prayers and donating large sums of money for ziyarat (religious visits) or to those so-called ziyaratchis who, 1400 years ago, were the murderers of my ancestors, all while hundreds of children wandered in the garbage dumps seeking a piece of bread. It is astonishing.

Yuliya also wanted to be in contact with this group for a few days. Yuliya well knew that God is beyond a place, but she still asked them for God's address. However, Yuliya did not know this.

These individuals are not just tricksters, deceivers, and charlatans; Yuliya herself, having adopted an appearance of humility, asked them about their beliefs and the address of God. Once, at the pilgrimage site called Tamim Ansar in the Martyrs of the Righteous, we saw one of the green-clad Malangs with a bushy beard and green clothing. Yuliya inquired, "How is the man of God? What do you know about God and the divine address?" The deceptive man, realizing Yuliya was a foreigner with blue eyes, pulled out a firm and tall white-dollar bill from his pocket, saying, "Haq Haq Haq..." These words were not new to Yuliya; she had heard them elsewhere. Still, she was curious about what response this Malang would give to her question. The Malang said, "Dear lady, I have been a Malang in this shrine for years. This man of God buried here is

one of the companions of the Noble Prophet. He came here during the Afghan Jihad and was martyred in this place.” He continued to speak of the miracles of this man of God, mentioning two of his companions, one named Jubair Ansari and the other named Tamim Ansar, whose virtues were beyond my comprehension.

Yuliya asked, “When these individuals were at war with your ancestors, they killed your ancestors and relatives. Where are their shrines?” The Malang replied, “They were infidels and died as such; their graves are unknown.”

Yuliya questioned, “For those who have miracles, tell me about yourself. How many miracles do you have? Do you know where God is?” The Malang responded, “God is right here.”

The speaker emphasized that God is present and watching, even though we lack the insight to see Him. He mentioned that God sees us, and if one spends several nights in the pilgrimage site with him, engaging in ascetic practices, they will undoubtedly meet God.

Yuliya asked, “You, who have been a Malang in this shrine for many years, practicing asceticism day and night and worshipping God, how many times have you met God?” The Malang pulled Haq Haq Haq (an expression) and replied, “By Allah, we haven’t seen

Him yet, but hopefully, we will. If you stay here with me for a few nights and engage in ascetic practices, you will surely meet God.”

Yuliya further inquired, “If both of us stay here for a few nights and engage in ascetic practices, is it possible that we may see God?” The Malang responded with Haq Haq Haq and said, “I see God in your presence right now. If you stay with me for two nights here, you will undoubtedly see God. Now the decision is yours whether you stay with me or leave.”

Yuliya asked, “What do you think about my companion joining us, or should it be just you and me?” The Malang suggested, “Oh, it’s better to stay alone. I can see God in your presence, and if you manage to see God in the pilgrimage site, it would be the greatest connection with the Almighty.”

In the midst of this conversation, the guards of all the pilgrimage sites, dressed in green robes and carrying a metal piece called the “Shah’s Claw,” adorned with fabrics of various colors, suddenly rushed in. Yuliya felt a sense of danger and thought to herself, “I believe that within these Malangs, there are dormant leopards, and upon seeing dollars and a beauty, they all woke up.”

During this chaos, each Malang claimed self-display and pride, trying to outdo their rivals by presenting themselves as closer to God. Some even made

extravagant claims, asserting a familial connection with God.

I intervened and addressed the Malangs, saying, "In the name of God, you have all reached God; God has given to you. But now, let us go as it is not the appropriate time. We will return another time." One of the Malangs, wielding a strange and peculiar axe on his shoulder, turned to me and said, "The king dies, but the king's glory doesn't die. Which layer of onion or onion root are you? Why are you challenging God's gift to us? In the presence of this extraordinary being, we all see God, and tonight we all want to serve Him. Let us continue our spiritual journey so deep that this lady can witness God with her blue eyes. If you go, go, and may God protect you."

I responded, "You are mistaken, brother; this lady is my guest. Sometimes you cannot forcibly prevent her from leaving." One of the Malangs struck me forcefully, attempting to take the girl towards the mountain. I resisted, and a scuffle ensued. They beat me severely, even taking Yuliya's handbag with all her money. Fortunately, they returned her passport and ID cards, saying, "Go, disappear." In the end, a Malang named Tameem Sahib Ansaar forcibly took Yuliya into his arms.

And he took a few kisses from her forehead. Yuliya was crying, saying to herself, "I will never go to such places On A Spiritual Journey again." The fact that I, too, had

been beaten provided some comfort to her, and she said, "At least you are from this realm, you must have known such people; we shouldn't have come to such places." I cried for Yuliya and said, "My dearest! I am deeply sorry that we unintentionally ended up in such an undesirable place; these were the same people who killed Farkhondeh a few years ago, burned her men alive, and even the honorable scholars approved of the Malangs' actions. It happened because the Malang of Shah's shrine, Doshmeshirah (Hanif bin Qais, one of the Arab martyrs in our country), had requested sexual relations with Farkhondeh. When he heard the defiant response, he loudly declared, 'This lady, meaning Farkhondeh, has burned the Quran and is liable to be killed.' Everyone, men and women, ants, snakes and locusts, were all eager to throw a stone into the wounded soul and endure the injustice of Farkhondeh 's martyr to show their devotion and burn the veils between themselves and God. Everyone did the same...

We must get ourselves to the motorcycle. Both of us hurried to the rented motorcycles, mounted them, and left the vicinity of the shrines of the righteous martyrs.

Clerics are individuals tasked with preaching religious and doctrinal matters among the people and presenting information about the realities of religion to them. In all three Abrahamic religions, clerics have a

physical existence. For example, among the followers of the sacred religion of Islam, they recognize scholars, muftis, theologians, sheikhs, judges, and others as clerics.

Especially in our traditional society, they refer to scholars, mosque elders, and religious leaders as clerics. One of the social groups that heavily uses titles and consistently exploits them to achieve its goals is the clergy. However, it must be acknowledged that in our Islamic society, there are religious scholars, but there are no clerics. By this, it means that both the religious scholar and the cleric are engaged in various ways in the pursuit of wealth, jumping beyond their limits, claiming to have a direct connection with God, and considering themselves deserving of kissing the hands of the masses who have been deceived, all while being certain that whatever they acquire, no matter how, the ultimate goal is money.

They are not sincere. When I expressed these words to Yuliya, she saw the aversion in my tone and said, "No matter how much you make excuses, I will talk to a couple of clerics; therefore, please don't hold back and help me." I promised and said, "Certainly, dear Yuliya, I won't regret anything that comes out of my hands, and not only because of your satisfaction but also because I am interested. If I can find the address of God, I will speak with him."

"The clergy is one of the most influential legitimizing

and discourse-producing forces in the political and social interactions of Afghanistan. In the absence of powerful civil society institutions, intellectuals, and urban bourgeoisie, having a prominent presence in the institutions of monarchy, monarchy, constitutionalism, and republicanism, it has been effective. Moreover, in this rural society, the illiterate masses of tribal life are among the social factors that have a strong presence of the clergy in political schools and government institutions, which continues to this day.”

Political sociology aims to elucidate the role of social forces in political life. As in Afghanistan, where the clergy has historical roots as a powerful political force, serving as a historical legitimacy-bestowing force and a new power-oriented discourse;

This book seeks to explore the approach of the clergy to politics in the historical context of Afghanistan and analyze the perspectives of political systems on the clergy using historical-sociological data. Political isolation and power-seeking have been two fundamental approaches of the clergy in Afghan politics.

When Saber Shah Kabuli, as a clergyman, placed a cluster of wheat on Ahmad Shah Abdali’s crown in 1747 to establish a great empire, the clergy emerged as a powerful force in Afghanistan. The first political governance in present-day Afghanistan and ancient Khorasan was the empire founded by Ahmad Shah

Abdali, which he officially referred to as “Khorasan” in his letters and official writings. Mountstuart Elphinstone, an ethnographer and historian, writes that Ahmad Shah Abdali respected the sanctity of property and the clergy, and this act had emotional and political implications. Abdali himself was inclined towards mysticism and Sufism, continuously aspiring to attain the status of a spiritual guide. (Elphinstone, 1379: 496).”

Ahmad Shah Abdali, who derived part of his legitimacy from the clergy, had a good relationship with this institution. He consistently utilized the influence and legitimacy of this influential group, prominent among the illiterate rural masses. In all foreign military expeditions of Abdali to India and neighboring territories, the clergy played a fundamental role in mobilizing rural masses. Despite the Abdali military campaigns having economic dimensions highlighted alongside religious symbols, it was the clergy that stamped the religious approval on these bloody attacks, putting the masses at the service of kings mentally and gaining respect from kings in return, who bestowed them with political and economic privileges.

The power-seeking nature of political Islam in Afghanistan has a brief history. This group gained prominence and gradually became the dominant discourse after the second half of the twentieth century. In the traditional clergy sector, a policy-averse

interpretation emerged, illustrating how this group interacted with the pre Amanullah Khan governments and when it experienced ruptures and confrontations. The real conflict between the clergy and the government arose during the reign of Amanullah Khan. However, until the era of democracy and the establishment of the first political parties, the clergy had less cohesion compared to the subsequent decades. As Jürgen Todenhöfer, the German journalist and author of the famous book "My Dream of Peace," writes, terrorism is the severe response of power-hungry people, and the cohesion of the clergy has been a response to left-wing parties in Afghanistan.

They once aspired to modernize Afghanistan and persuade people to abandon their traditional beliefs. In the 20th century, Americans, in an unprecedented manner, supported the clergy to counter the rising wave of communism in Asia and Afghanistan. This global support cultivated unity and cohesion among the clergy on one side and altered their approach to power on the other. In Afghanistan, Americans, in collaboration with Saudi Arabia, provided political, military, and economic support to the clergy. They extended comprehensive international backing to the clergy. In essence, the dream of the clergy gaining power in Afghanistan became a reality through the efforts of the United States and Pakistan.

This form of clergy manifested in two dimensions,

one as a legitimacy-bestowing force and the other as a power-oriented discourse in Afghanistan. Today, the clergy, who have drawn their swords against the Republic of Kabul within the Taliban framework, are financially supported by external countries. In summary, the absence of other powerful institutions in Afghan society, the reactive performance, and the anti-communist approach with the clergy, extensive external support for this group in the 20th century, the birth of political Islam and the Islamic government, are factors that pulled the clergy into the vortex of the power discourse in Afghanistan and marked the course of contact, confrontation, and rebellion in this land.”

“I have presented the above topics here to emphasize that there was no clergy in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, political systems focused on the clergy in the turmoil, and individuals who were supposed to fulfill their duty of connecting with God and spreading the teachings of religion throughout the country seized the opportunity to gain power. Examples include the founder of the National Solidarity Party, Mr. Sayed Ahmed Gailani, the son of a prominent clergyman in Afghanistan, or figures like Ismail Khan, a relative and the president under the term ‘Islamic system’ in Afghanistan, Mr. Sibghatullah Mojaddedi. All of them were clergymen who, annually, monthly, and even daily, received funds and provisions, in the name of stoking the stove, from their followers.

The governments of that time allowed them this privilege until the time of Zahir Shah. Therefore, in our country, instead of the clergy mastering the path and approach to approaching God, everyone has become a slave to their own desires, and such statements are no longer believable for them.

Yuliya also couldn't benefit from this group and couldn't obtain any assistance in her quest for knowledge of God. Therefore, we attempted to seek help from a Sheikh al-Hadith, the scholar specializing in the field of Hadith. With my Yuliya, during days and nights, we wandered around in search of our lost selves, restless and disoriented. Finally, wandering through the streets and alleys, we arrived at one of the grand mosques, where the Imam was called Sheikh al-Hadith. There, we performed prayers, spoke with the mosque-goers, and listened to discussions. Later, around 3:00 PM, after gathering very detailed information from the followers of Sheikh, we approached him and asked:

"The Sheikh, if you permit, we have a question. We've been wandering and bewildered around the precincts of scholars for years, but unfortunately, we haven't received a satisfactory answer. Sheikh, please allow us to present our question; I won't hesitate to bear the responsibility if it's beyond my capacity."

Yuliya, opening her mouth, asked: "Greetings and health to you, Sheikh. My question is, where can I find the address of God? Is it in the Kaaba, mosques,

monasteries, temples, churches, or where?”

The Sheikh, without furrowing his brow or showing displeasure, replied, “God is everywhere; there is no place without the existence of God. However, our perception is weak, and we cannot see Him.”

Yuliya continued, “Thank you, Sheikh, but I’ve heard that in Riyadh, in the scorching desert of Saudi Arabia, they’ve built a house for God, and most of the pilgrims of Hajj go there every year. Yet, so far, no one has been able to find God in that house. This raises a question for me: God is not in houses, not in mosques, not in churches. So where is God? My reason for this claim is that over the long years, I consider your homeland, where hundreds of people are killed daily; mothers, fathers, children, husbands, wives, and more cry to the Almighty day and night in the separation from their loved ones. But the just God has not given a positive or negative response to any individual throughout these 40 years. This itself is the absence of God, Hazrat Sheikh?

The Sheikh, visibly distressed, responded to Yuliya, “Firstly, you’re not a Muslim. If you were, you would observe the Islamic hijab, and you wouldn’t entangle hundreds of people in sin. Do you know that by showing your attractive beauty daily, you lead hundreds of young people into hell? Yuliya retorted, “My faith has nothing to do with it, Sheikh.” The Sheikh of Hadith replied, “Women should keep themselves away from

men and observe the hijab so as not to provoke the lust and instinctual rebellion of men.”

Yuliya responded, “Our focus should be on men controlling their desires, not on covering ourselves. Sheikhal-Hadith said, “So you must understand that you yourself are causing the corruption and misguidance of people. How can you, with this uncovered face, see God?”

Yuliya asked as her final question, “Honorable Sheikh, I’m not referring to myself; I mean you, for example. How many times have you met God so far?” The Sheikh of Hadith replied, “In every prayer, I communicate my secrets and needs to my God and express my problems and the problems of the people to Him.”

Yuliya, daring once again, asked, “Sheikh, then you must surely have the address of God! Please help us.” The Sheikh replied, “My dear girl, I never said I have the address of God. I said that in every prayer, I talk to Him.”

In mosques, outside of mosques, in the Kaaba, and even in brothels, but so far, unfortunately, I haven’t received precise answers to my questions. From this moment, I am determined to seek answers regarding the weeping of the heirs of martyrs. Honestly, I see the light of God in your face. If you spend some time with me, perhaps we can become mystics, meet God, and you are the best mirror for me.

Yuliya laughed and said, “Honorable Sheikh, I’m very generous and use substances. I massage my skin to see Hussein.” Sheikh became upset, turned to me, and said, “We should stone you. Why did you bring this infidel, half-naked, into the mosque?”

I said, “Honorable Sheikh, I consider myself sacrificed to you. I brought this guest to you to solve her problems. If not, sometimes I had no bad intentions.”

The Sheikh said, “Now you have to be punished.

I won’t flog you, but you have to pay a fine of \$1,000.” I was shocked, explained the situation to Yuliya, and she said, “To get rid of these ignorant sheikhs as soon as possible, I’ll pay the money.” Hastily, she took out the mentioned amount from her purse, gave it to the Sheikh, and both of us left the mosque. We didn’t want to go to the ignorant and foolish scholars who claim to see God in the face and chest of exposed women and girls. As we exited the mosque, the memory of an unclearly named poet came to our minds.

Both of us, when we got on the motorcycle, recited this poem along with its stories: “By fate, if I become the ruler of this city one day.”

One day, a man intended to travel, and he had an unmarried daughter whom he couldn’t take with him. He thought to himself, “I’ll take my daughter to Amin, the people’s sheikh, and then I’ll set off on the journey.” He took the girl to the sheikh and explained the

situation to him. The sheikh agreed; it became night, and the girl saw that the sheikh had wicked intentions. With great difficulty, the girl managed to escape. The weather was very cold, and the girl had no warm clothes. On the way, she saw a few people gathered around a fire, joyously drinking wine. She thought to herself, "That was the Amin of the people, and he had wicked intentions; drunks have their place." One of them saw the girl and told his friends to lower their heads. Amidst these discussions, due to exhaustion and cold, the girl fainted. One of them picked up the girl, placed her by the fire to warm her up. After a while, the girl regained consciousness, saw that she was safe and warm, and they had no ill intentions. At that moment, she said, "Invite me a courier as well, and then sing this poem:

The meaning of the poem:

"If it's destined, and I become the ruler of this city, I would sacrifice the blood of hundreds of scholars and clerics for the sake of one intoxicated person. And in the midst of the Kaaba, I would build a tavern, so that people won't say: 'Oh, the intoxicated and the mad wanderers are unaware of God and are homeless.'"

Unfortunately, the poet and author of this story are unknown, but it warmed us so much that it felt like hundreds of veils between God and me were lifted. At a moment with the drunks: one winter evening, when the air was relatively cold and icy, Yuliya put on her

winter coat, and she asked me to go outside to enjoy the fresh air. She had heard that there was apparently a madman or a drunkard who, in this cold weather, continued to roam without feeling the cold and continued to live in the open air until morning. It would be better to find him and spend moments talking with that intoxicated person.

Honestly, the weight of the heavy snow covering the ground in that cold and winter air was above me, and I wondered how we could continue our journey. However, in any case, I always obeyed Yuliya happily and accepted her every suggestion with an open mind. I put on my black winter coat, wore my Russian hat with very warm socks on my feet, and we set out, crossing the fields and meadows. Yuliya took out a small notepad from her shoulder bag, read out the address of the intoxicated man, and said to me, "I've heard of a barefoot man wandering in this cold weather without winter clothes; I want to see him."

We set out, walking for about 30 minutes. The weather was very cold, shaking me, and my upper teeth were chattering. Yuliya noticed me and said, "Do you feel the cold too much?" I replied, "Yes, the weather is cold." She said, "Then we must find the barefoot intoxicated man in any case." It was 10:00 PM; the stars were very bright, and the moonlight illuminated the ground, making the snow brighter. From a distance of about twenty meters, we could see moving figures. Yuliya

became very happy and said, "I found him, there he is, the barefoot intoxicated man." I said he might be a lunatic, but as we got closer, the exact same man, wearing only a torn shirt and torn pants with bare feet, was mumbling something to himself. We greeted him, but he didn't respond. This time it was Yuliya's turn to communicate with him. She greeted the barefoot intoxicated man, who had his head thrown back, sitting on the cold and icy snow with bare feet. He raised his head, laughed above Yuliya, and said, "What kind are you, and what are you doing here?" Yuliya pointed at me and said, "I have been searching for God with this man for a long time. Have you seen the address of God?" The intoxicated man chuckled and said, "Where are you looking for God? I said, "Everywhere, and in every possible place we go, to find His exact address."

Yuliya said to the intoxicated man, "Don't you feel the cold?" He replied, "You are wandering On A Spiritual Journey, yet you ask me if it's not cold? It amazes me how you stand in the search for God while your feelings are at work." The words of the intoxicated man were truly thought-provoking. Yuliya turned to me and said, "God's intoxicated don't feel the cold or warmth; they are intoxicated with the love of their God. Perhaps this man can help us." Again, Yuliya asked him, "Can you help us? Please assist us and give us the address of God, and I, in turn, will help you." He laughed again and said, "Maybe you want to burn your heart for me; you

want to buy warm clothes and boots for me?" Yuliya said, "Yes, exactly." The intoxicated man laughed again and said, "Poor thing, I'm not one of those you think; I'm not more insane than others. I'm still in the loop of figuring out who I am and what I am. Whenever I succeed in finding myself, then I will strive to find God later." He expressed his stories like this: "Who am I? What am I? Which one is correct?"

People have the habit of identifying themselves based on their occupation. It seems to me that, fundamentally, we need to first know what we are. Are humanity and humaneness part of our current state, or are we still in the realm of animality? When humans help each other and recognize their own and others' rights, then we can go beyond the state of what we are and the word "who we are" includes our current state. Therefore, it is necessary to first become part of humanity and humaneness, which unfortunately I have not been able to do until now.

I need to know myself to be successful in self-awareness. Now, in the cold weather, I don't feel the cold, my senses don't work, I'm not more insane. He laughed and, a moment later, before we could talk to him again, he took off and started walking among the snow, disappearing from our sight. We couldn't get the address of God from him. Yuliya and I, discouraged, headed back home in the same cold weather. On the way back, we only talked negatively about the

barefooted intoxicated man in this cold weather, minus 2 degrees Celsius, with Yuliya. We were one hundred percent convinced that this intoxicated man knew the exact address of God but didn't tell us. After the long journey, we returned home again, and we intensified the wood-burning heater. But God is my witness; until the next day, Yuliya and I didn't sleep; we only thought about that barefooted intoxicated man. Several times, we went to his previous address in the daylight, in the evenings, but unfortunately, we couldn't find that man again. We understood precisely that we have not yet left the realm of what that intoxicated man said about what he is. The night turned into morning. After having breakfast, Yuliya and I went out together. On the way we had determined, we encountered a man who was a boot factory worker. He had just finished work and had been working from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., behind our car. We saw him with disheveled and tangled hair, dry and cracked lips, calloused hands, faded color, and bloodshot eyes from sleeplessness. We met him, said hello, and realized that he was interested in talking to us, but unfortunately, sleeplessness was torturing him. He said:

Yuliya apologized for being sleepless as she had been driving all night. The man responded, "That's okay, good man." He continued, "Before I leave, may I ask you something?" Yuliya replied, "Certainly, I'm interested to hear from you." He said, "I don't have much to say; a question came to my mind, and that

is, you seem unfamiliar with this area. Where are you from?" Yuliya promptly and enthusiastically answered, "We're from another city, searching for God. From city to city, street to street, we ask everyone we encounter for the address of God. Hahaha! By the way, do you know the address of God?" He smiled and said, "What an easy question! Immediately, he took out a handful of notes, several one-hundred-dollar bills that he had just received as wages, showed them to Yuliya, and said, "This is God; didn't you know this easy question? Yuliya said to him, "This is paper and dollar bills; how can it be God?" The worker chuckled and said, "I'm sure this is God; I've read about God solving problems, being the provider, and merciful. I've seen all these qualities in this very paper. I've never seen them anywhere else, so this is God, and even dignity, humility, and all the honors, this powerful God has given them to humans. Look at our factory owner; this powerful God made him. Everyone respects him; he has a place at the forefront of every gathering, and all these things are exactly and undoubtedly given to him by this God. While smiling, he said to Yuliya, "I thought that you foreigners were so intelligent, but I'm sorry that you haven't recognized God yet."

I'll go, may God protect you. I also didn't want to hear his blasphemous and senseless words, so I said to him, "Have a good day, may God protect you." We parted ways, and as the passing man distanced himself from us, Yuliya said to me, "Travel companion! It seems

that this ordinary worker has somewhat solved our problem; he clearly understood the address of God because he understands and has read about God being kind, provident, and a healer of the sick. He said it precisely. I remember that the worker said, 'I have read about God that He is kind, provident, and a healer of the sick, and as far as my eyes have seen, He has done all these things for me with these dollars; He has solved my problems.' There is a great philosophy hidden behind these few words; if we don't overlook the truth, he has said it very precisely and given a very appropriate address. We and people like us are wandering aimlessly while God is always in our pocket and with us, but we are searching for Him."

I said to Yuliya, "I'm sorry, but I don't agree with these blasphemous beliefs. I don't want to hear such nonsense." Yuliya said, "I'm sorry that you don't accept the facts. I've been in a constant state of disagreement and opposition with my lifelong companion." I said, "No, I will never accept anything contrary to the command of the Qur'an and the tradition of our beloved Prophet. Yuliya said to me, "It's strange. Where in these words is it contrary to your religion and legitimacy? I said to Yuliya, "I'm sure one day you'll be executed for these ridiculous beliefs, and I'll see you." Yuliya laughed and said, "I'm sorry you're denying the acceptance of realities."

"You have to reform yourself with me; otherwise, I

will soon separate my path from yours. Honestly, the ugly and disrespectful words against Islamic beliefs from Yuliya and that worker had a negative impact on me. Yuliya dealt another blow to me, saying, 'Look, companion, be ready to hear concrete facts about nature, for example, science has proven that the Earth is not the center of galaxies and the universe; it is spherical. You don't accept; I can't endure with you and live together under one tent. I promised her that after the completion of this journey, we could no longer be together. On that day, we went towards dinner, had a walk, and returned home with mixed emotions.

What we had prepared for the night was delicious, and we rested after having a good meal. The next day, when Yuliya raised her head from the bed and said to me, 'Good morning, travel companion. I hope you had a restful night,' I also said, 'Good morning, travel companion. It was a good night.' Later, we both prepared breakfast together. We cooked scrambled eggs with eggplants and ate together. During tea time, Yuliya again praised that factory worker. I thought Yuliya was doing things contrary to my beliefs, which were not pleasant for me. I had to clarify her position. I told her, 'You know very well that I don't like that faithless man, yet you keep praising him. This action of yours is against my beliefs. Please choose a path. What I say and stand for is based on my rights, and I follow in the footsteps of my forefathers. But you want to deviate from your standards.'"

“I sacrifice all that I have, both tangible and intangible, for the pride of Islam and the religious beliefs inherited from my father. I don’t want to hear nonsense from you.” Yuliya said this unpleasantly to me. She continued, “Companion, don’t be against me; I never allow myself to get involved in someone else’s beliefs. But I can’t deny the existence of the sun during the day and the moon at night. What I say applies to everyone.” I told her, “What I say has been established by the Holy Prophet of Islam 1400 years ago and currently has one and a half billion followers. I can prove it.” She replied, “Yes, it’s true that your great prophet deserves respect, but I also assure you that the Earth is rotating, not the heavens and other stars.” Despite her understanding, Yuliya fell silent this time and said to me, “Companion, I made a commitment to you that I will be with you until the end of this journey, or maybe even the journey of life, and until then, we will coexist and maintain mutual respect.” We laughed together, and I asked her to note down with whom she wanted to talk, so I could make an effort to find those individuals as soon as possible. Yuliya drew a piece of paper from her notebook and handed it to me. It was written as follows:

- Conversations with famous figures
- Eating manners of Yuliya and her companion according to religious scholars
- Followers of Hinduism

- Journey to Mecca for the fourth time
- Returning to one's origin.

Regarding humans who were followers of the school of humanity, we made efforts during the days to find and obtain information from one person out of every 800 individuals. It was there that I thought to myself how much more difficult it is to become a follower of the school of humanity and how much more challenging it is to be human and remain humane. Across fields and through squares, a man of justice and dignity was found among hundreds of people, and he was a follower of the school of humanity. Yuliya introduced herself and said, "I am Yuliya, and this man with the black and gray head covering is my companion. If you are followers of the school of humanity, please introduce yourselves first. Then, if you know anything about the address of God, tell us."

The man smiled meaningfully and said, "I am Jamil, a son of Adam, and currently, I am a psychology professor at one of the universities. Regarding your question, I will say something later, but first, I offer a few words about the school of humanity to you. Yuliya told him, "I am all ears, and I have prepared myself to hear Mr. Jamil's words with respect." He said, "We mentioned that the world has returned to the school of humanity in many ways. That is, philosophies called humanistic philosophies have been found in

the world, and perhaps the most peculiar of all is the religion of humanity founded by Auguste Comte in the mid-nineteenth century, which has achieved many inventions and innovations.”

“This man was caught in a peculiar deadlock between his reason and thoughts on one side and his heart and conscience on the other. For this reason, he invented something called ‘The Religion of Humanity’ and said: Humanity needs a religion, and all... Yulia said: Wow! That’s great; please go on. He added: Humanity, which is essentially man, the unique explorer and researcher, is always engaged in the greatest research of humanity itself or humans. In my view, all offspring of humanity are part of the school of humanity. However, followers of this school are few. Every murderer, thief, and robber who has deviated from the path of humanity and turned into a predatory animal cannot be called a human. Humans, with understanding, pain, moderation, and emotion, can be said to be part of the school of humanity. Those who, before going to sleep, are aware of the hunger and poverty of their neighbors, can be called the top scorers of the humanity class, and the rest of us cannot be excluded from the table of humanity; however, we cannot exactly consider them dressed in the garment of humanity. Humanity is one of the most important axes of discussion in all schools of thought and worldviews. Among them, the explanation of the happiness and perfection of human beings, and the sensitivity and importance

it holds, is one of the principles and foundations of every worldview and one of the fundamental axes of human knowledge and thought, which has always attracted the attention and interest of thinkers. In various sections and in various ways, they have addressed the understanding of human beings and their characteristics and abilities.”

“While new ideologies, despite their differences, center on humanism [instead of God-centeredness] and present it as the core and foundation of everything, the only way to achieve human happiness, perfection, liberation from darkness, and overcoming limitations and indignities, in the teachings of divine religions, especially Islam, human beings can only find real and human life and their prominent and distinguished position through God-centeredness and connection to the origin of creation. When humans explore their own knowledge, they will later find themselves. In my opinion, self-awareness is more important than awareness of God. Once we know ourselves, recognizing God becomes much easier, but if we do not know ourselves, recognizing God is a difficult task. For example, a hungry child asks where God is; he will definitely reach for the bread in his hand. Hungry humans call bread God, and conversely, affluent humans call their wealth and capital God; because they want everything from money. For example, their dignity, luxury homes, and all material things are indebted to their wealth, not to God. If they physically help hungry humans, they

thank God, not the individuals, even though they do not know who or what God is, where He is. Because, in my view, God is hidden in humanity; whenever you help someone in need, that act of helping itself is a divine act, and at that moment, you are your own God. Also, wherever there is a human being and humanity, exactly there, God exists. But observing God is beyond our human capacity.”

“In summary, everyone’s God is within themselves, not farther or clearer than they are. According to the noble verse, God Himself says, ‘I am as My servant thinks of Me.’ If you think I am with you, I am with you one hundred percent at that moment. And if you think I am in Mecca, I am one hundred percent in Mecca. In general, humanity is the best school of thought, but unfortunately, it does not have many followers. However, overall, compared to any other segment of society, they recognize God more and sooner and consider God always present and observant. Followers of the school of humanity are informed from all four sides and their neighbors about who deserves to be arrested and who has bread; this feeling is essentially the unity with God. Those who belong to the school of humanity never feel themselves farther from God... Yuliya expressed gratitude to the man, and we said goodbye.

When Yuliya and I moved together, Yuliya seemed very happy, and I asked her what she gained from this

disciple of the school of humanity. Yuliya, who couldn't stop smiling, said, 'I am very happy to have found God's address, and my main wish is that people should feel and be aware of the pain of their fellow human beings. All these signs are theology, and if someone is engaged in the five daily prayers and worship of God but does not have a compassionate heart, sometimes he has not reached God and has not found God's address.'

Yuliya intends to contact famous and influential people this time and ask them for God's address as well. We both agreed that we would talk to one of the Jihad commanders in this regard; surely they have God's address, or maybe each of them has met God several times."

"Because they are striving in the way of God. Humans are inherently endowed with innate faith, and those who strive in the way of God are evidently more successful in the science of theology. When we talk about human nature, we mean that a kind of inclination, talent, and attraction to doing good deeds is ingrained in the makeup and essence of human existence by the Almighty Creator. If humans are left to their own devices, they will have a tendency to perform those good deeds, unless those previous abilities and talents are covered by external factors.

One of the important issues in religious studies regarding human nature and theology is whether

the knowledge of God primarily and the inclination and worship of God secondarily are ingrained in the institution and nature of humans. Individuals who, from a young age, have risen in the way of God strive to please God; it is accurate that they might be the most complete in recognizing God and having a precise address for God. When I said these things to Yuliya, she didn't seem very convinced and said, 'Now it remains to be seen how far this group has been able to find God. It has been said that Plato believed the human soul had knowledge of all sciences and knowledge before the material world. But after the soul became attached to the material body, it entrusted them to the winds of forgetfulness. Therefore, human knowledge and understanding in the world are actually a reminder and recollection of previous knowledge; theology is also based on this concept.'

"The human soul, prior to the worldly realm, had knowledge and understanding of God, and in this world, it must keep that knowledge alive and revive it. This perspective among later philosophers did not gain much importance, and even Aristotle, a disciple of Plato, opposed the preexistence of the soul before the body and its knowledge. The second meaning of the innate theism is defined by talent and ability in the sense that the creation of humans is in a way that it has the potential and ability to recognize God within itself. These perceptions, potentially present in everyone's mind, although not actually present in some

minds or contrary to them, are like the knowledge that is known to the self by inherent knowledge but has not yet been realized. According to the belief of the Sadr al-Mutalahin, the innate nature of knowledge appears to be a direct analysis of the essence of God. It seems that the analysis of nature is incomplete in the sense that nature, beyond talent and potential perceptions, itself, is the nature of the creation of the human soul, mixed with its theology. In other words, the nature of theology goes beyond talent and potential perceptions; rather, it is at the level of (unchangeable). Another point is that some researchers have noted that talent, the ability for theology, and potential perceptions are not only related to theology; rather, humans also have the capability for atheism and disbelief. Therefore, nature is one level higher than the mere potential and talent. Now it remains to be seen.”

“How much have those individuals who have reached very high ranks of power and have relied on the summits of authority grown their innate faith?”

It happened that one of my friends had a close connection with one of the leaders of jihad and the Sheikh al-Hadith. I asked for his help to assist Yuliya in this field and make the ground for our meeting with this esteemed leader and their eminence favorable. Two days later, my friend arranged the setting for our conversation and meeting with the honorable leader and their eminence (Sheikh al-Hadith). Out of kindness,

when we went to their home and said 'Bismillah' and 'Alhamdulillah,' I realized that another leader of jihad, whose name was 'A.R.,' was also present. Initially, they treated us well as guests or foreigners who were pleasant and attractive. Both of them warmly welcomed us, especially paying more attention to Yuliya. Later, it became clear that they thought perhaps Yuliya could provide an opportunity to obtain funds. Anyway, we drank tea, and after introducing herself and me as her companion, Yuliya asked the question:

"Honorable leaders of jihad for the sake of Allah!

You, who have engaged in continuous jihad for years, purely out of satisfaction for God and His Messenger, do you precisely know the address of God? I have been on a quest for God and His address for seven years. Can you help me?"

First, the Sheikh al-Hadith cleared his throat and poured a cup of tea, then replied with such eloquence: "Firstly, welcome to our humble abode, and later, even more welcome to the world of Islam. He had the impression that Yuliya, with her fair face and blue eyes, was definitely from non-Muslim and infidel countries... Anyway, he continued:"

"Indeed, 'Verily, Allah is closer to man than his jugular vein.' It means that God is always with me, and I attribute all my successes to the grace of God. It is God who has brought us to the pinnacle of power and

fame and bestowed upon us all these material and spiritual blessings.

Yuliya posed her second question: Does it mean that your God is always with you, and you communicate with Him, sharing secrets and needs? But how can I find God? Should I first enter into you and reach God through you to ask Him my questions? The external demeanor of Sheikh al-Hadith changed, and he said: Try not to fall into the well before finding God. Yuliya asked: How, Your Eminence? The leader replied: Many claim to be God-worshippers, but true monotheists are not many. Strive to find a way that leads to God.

Yuliya said: Are you confident that in all your successes, the hand of God has been with you? The esteemed leader became a little agitated and said: Exactly, all of this is the effect of God's grace. One of the attributes of God is 'power,' and God has granted me and my present companion this attribute.

Yuliya continued: Most people, especially the hungry masses, believe that you haven't acquired all this wealth honestly, that you and His Eminence 'A.R.' have embezzled and pilfered all this capital. Is this what the millions are saying true, or is it just an allegation? I was shocked. If God's hand has been in all your thefts, then how is this God?"

"This time, Leader 'A.R.' took the floor and said, 'Who are you, and what do you want? In my view, you are

the worst and most atheistic person, and this city is the most godless place. How did you manage to find your way here?’

Yuliya was distressed. This time, I respectfully responded to the esteemed leader and said, ‘No, no, please don’t misunderstand. Yuliya has been striving for seven years to find the address of God and is On A Spiritual Journey. I, too, with their benevolence, have found you as esteemed leaders of jihad and also Sheikh al-Hadith. We wanted to obtain this address from you.’ Leader ‘A.R.’ stood up from his place, gave me a stern look, and pressed the buttons on his work desk with his sacred finger. Someone entered; Sheikh al-Hadith instructed him and said, ‘Detain these two atheists in separate rooms to determine which country’s spies they are.’ The man complied with military formality and said, ‘Yes, sir.’ Despite our pleas and apologies, we were separated, I was placed in one room, and Yuliya in another.

The entire day passed in anticipation, and with hungry stomachs, we awaited release from the prison of Sheikh al-Hadith. Yet, with all the dreaming and imagining, The day was passing slowly. I had no information about Yuliya, and she had none about me. Nevertheless, the address they had given us brought nothing but sorrow and regret. Night fell, it was around 10 PM when we were both summoned by Sheikh and his ally ‘A.R.’ We stood in their presence for about ten minutes.

The question-and-answer session began: "Who are you? Where have you come from? Why have you come?" After ten minutes, Sheikh al-Hadith allowed us to sit. Both of us, in a very bad condition, hungry and tired, took our seats. Without permission, Yuliya asked Sheikh, "Your Excellency, it's good that you threatened us with death and kept us imprisoned and hungry until now. Now, if you know, please be kind and provide us with the address of God!"

Sheikh al-Hadith smiled and said, "Punishing you was a manifestation of God's wrath upon you. Have you seen that God is present within me and our leader (my friend)?"

Yuliya replied, "Yes, I knew that the God of anger, the God of theft, the unjust God, and the merciless God exist within you. So where is the just, absolute, and omnipotent God?"

This time, both esteemed leaders demanded sticks, and two very strong men knocked me unconscious with harsh blows, bordering on death. Every time the stick struck my body, Yuliya cried out loud. The leaders, inflamed with anger, said, "Look, you are like Layla and Majnun?" Yuliya replied, "No, this is my companion." Leader 'A.R.' then stood up, subjected me to merciless beatings, and asked, "Tell me, who are you? Which country's spy are you? What are you doing with this young lady when you are possibly 70 years old, and she is maybe 24?" The beating intensified, and

I lost my patience, breaking into tears. Unfortunately, Yuliya was crying with me. After the brutal beating, they threw me on the ground, and it was Yuliya's turn for questioning. They asked her where she was from, which country's spy she was, and what she wanted from us.

Yuliya said to him, "How did you bring evil and corruption into my house? I don't know you precisely, and truly, I am On A Spiritual Journey, and this 70-year-old man is my companion. Someone introduced you as an advanced scholar, a knowledgeable person of the era, a prominent figure of the present century; that's why we came by your invitation. We came to inquire from you about our goal, which is the address of God. Unfortunately, it seems we made a mistake because we have witnessed the qualities of wrath and anger of God even in non-believing countries. Most of the bombs they make are, of course, for the destruction and killing of humans. We mistakenly thought that the leaders of the Afghan Jihad might be close to God, but no, it was a big mistake that we committed, and we won't repeat such a mistake in the future."

Both esteemed leaders smiled. Leader 'A.R.' said to the Sheikh, "What do you think about the future fate of these two unbelievers?" The Sheikh replied, "I don't know, what's your opinion?" 'A.R.' said, "In my view, it's better to separate these two, so they can't pursue the path of atheism and disbelief alone." Yuliya asked

again, "Is being On A Spiritual Journey considered disbelief and atheism from your school of thought?" At this point, 'A.R.' said, "Our esteemed Sheikh, if you command, we can imprison this young man, and we can allow this old man extra bread and leniency. What is your opinion on this matter?" The Sheikh agreed, saying, "Yes, you said it accurately." They kicked me out of their house and unfortunately imprisoned my companion, Yuliya. Without Yuliya, I was empty and ignorant; I could do nothing and knew nothing.

I, too, wandered through the fields with tear-filled eyes, separated from my dear Yuliya, heading towards the deserts. Insanely, I roamed back and forth, seeking refuge under every bush and among the thorns. Two nights passed; I was in great pain, severely beaten. I found myself again in the carriage room; sleep overcame me. When I woke up, fortunately, I saw Yuliya beside me. She had also been released, but unfortunately, her face was covered in blood; she had also been severely beaten. She didn't want to speak anymore. I said to her, "I don't know who you are. Where did this danger come from for me? You are no more than a thief; I don't want to have anything to do with you." Yuliya was upset with me for confronting her with such people, but with a happy look, she said, "It's good that we were beaten, but I have gained something."

I asked, "Where is it? What have you gained?" She slowly reconciled with me and said, "I found the cruelty

of God in the presence of the esteemed leaders of Jihad. This was a good address that we obtained after much beating.” I embraced Yuliya, kissed her gently in a customary and affectionate manner, apologized to her, but once again, we set out to achieve our goal. That night, we had dinner together, and the next day, in another place, we became the guests of another ally. Our decision was to go to Dharamshala or a Hindu temple. When we approached the temple, as we were foreigners to the customs and culture of India and intended to visit a Hindu temple, someone warned us, “You must be very careful not to do anything contrary to Hindu rituals and not to be offensive.”

For visiting a Hindu temple, it is not necessary to research Hindu religions, and you don't have to believe in any of these religions. Hindu temples are usually open to people of all religions and faiths. You may want to visit the temple on a specific date when a particular ceremony is taking place or wander around these places any other day. There are also tours available where a guide takes you inside the temple and explains everything to you. It's up to you whether you go alone or with a tour.

Keep in mind that visiting a temple is an adventurous and recreational experience for you, but for Hindus, it is a sacred place. Therefore, you should behave with respect and be calm in the temple. Follow the temple rules, and when entering the temple, keep the

following points in mind:

- Cover your shoulders before entering.
- Wear neat and clean clothes.
- Buy gifts and take them with you to the temple.
- Remove your shoes at the entrance door.
- Respectfully view the statues.
- Obey the temple staff's instructions.
- Follow the temple rules.
- Give alms.
- Help the beggars.

Whenever you want to go to a Hindu temple, observe the above-mentioned points before entering. We received all this information outside the temple from the guide, returned home, grabbed our belongings, put on better clothes, and then returned to enter the temple. This time, we positioned ourselves to warmly welcome the people and followers of Hinduism. However, as long as our goal was in the search for God, we had to speak inside the "Mandir," meaning the temple, with the temple scholar.

We waited for their ceremony to conclude; when it

finished, I asked one of the attendees: "We would like to talk to your head priest or scholar." He pointed to a man and said, "That man is the head priest and monk." The man was covered in hair and wool.

Slowly, Yuliya and I approached the man covered in hair and wool. After greetings and pleasantries, Yuliya softly asked him, "Great monk, may I ask you a question?" The monk, whose only visible feature was his eyes, struggled to speak as his mouth was obscured by the wool, and he pointed to a man, saying, "That man is the great monk and ascetic. He is full of wool and hair."

Yuliya and I approached the wool and hair-covered man slowly. After greetings, Yuliya softly asked him, "Great ascetic! May I ask you a question?" The ascetic, whose only visible feature was his eyes, struggled to speak as his mouth was obscured by the wool, and he pointed to a man, saying, "That man is the great monk and ascetic. He is full of wool and hair."

Yuliya asked him, "We have been searching for God for seven years. Do you have a specific address from God? If you do, could you help us reach Him and have a conversation with Him?" The venerable monk smiled, signifying that he was intoxicated with the truth, and when he spoke, his mouth was even more obscured by the wool. He said, "Out of every five people in the world, one believes in the teachings of Buddha. Buddha lived in the sixth century BCE. In fact, 'Buddha'

is a title meaning 'Enlightened One' or, in other words, 'One who has a high level of understanding.'"

The real name of Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, never engaged in the practices that followers of Buddhism perform today, believing that their self-made stones or statues are gods. This was never the conduct or speech of Buddha. He endeavored to find the true God. Like you, he spent years seeking refuge in the jungle to the extent that, in the end, through rigorous asceticism and breath control, he was able to constantly see himself in a high position. Therefore, he announced to his followers throughout the world that only through asceticism could one speak to God, seek God through contemplation, silence, and constant listening in any place and at any time. Buddha said, "In the prime of my youth, I thought about three essential aspects of life. I enjoyed seeing everything with my eyes, hearing things I liked with my ears, tasting various flavors with my sense of taste, and touching everything tangible with my body. He never said that his followers should seek help from a statue.

The venerable monk added to Yuliya, saying, "I also suggest that you search for everything within yourself. Sometimes, do not go after stone and wooden statues; they cannot help you. what can help you is solitary devotion and worship of god alone. Then perhaps you will find the address of God. Why do we worship these statues that we have made ourselves? We adhere to

the culture of our ancestors; otherwise, all this work is our own doing and is never worthy of worship.”

For now, I am engaged in worship. I entrust you to God,” I said. Yuliya also said, “Goodbye.” Both of us left the temple without any gain and continued on our way.

Yuliya and I attempted to find followers of the first Abrahamic religion, Judaism, and inquire about our goal from them. We walked through fields and paths and went to one of the Jewish temples. We asked a Jewish religious scholar, “In your view, how is Judaism as a religion?” He replied, “Judaism is the philosophy and way of life of the Jewish people, and this religion is the first and most correct Abrahamic religion. Followers of Judaism adhere to all the commandments of Yahweh, the God of the Jews. Judaism includes a wide range of religious perspectives, ceremonies, branches, and religious texts. Today, most Jews follow Orthodox, Liberal, Conservative, and minority branches of Judaism, such as Reconstructionism, Karaism, and Humanistic Judaism. From a religious perspective, these branches have very different views. Orthodox Jews believe in the divine revelation of the Torah by Yahweh, strict adherence to religious laws, and the advent of the promised Messiah. Liberal Jews believe in modernity, personal independence, and free thought. According to religious Jews, Judaism is a covenant, guided by Yahweh, and all Jews follow this religion in

various ways. Judaism is the center of many texts and traditions, and its history, principles, and ethics have had a significant influence on Abrahamic religions, including Christianity. Whether they are converts (individuals who have entered Jewish society in very limited numbers in each generation through marriage) or individuals born to a Jewish mother and father, they are referred to as Jews.”

Although Judaism is a religion, Jews consider themselves an ethno-religious group. Racial issues and numerous DNA tests confirm this matter. The religion of Judaism has a continuous history of four thousand years. The term “Jews” is derived from the Hebrew word meaning “praised.” It is also an acquired attribute given to the inhabitants of Judea, a part of the land of Israel where the tribe of Judah lived. However, some believe that in the past, the term “Children of Israel” was used for everyone. In Iran, the title “Kalemi,” meaning follower of Moses, is also used to refer to Jews. According to the religious Jews, the origin of Judaism begins with God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and is officially completed with the delivery of the Torah laws to Moses and the entry of the Children of Israel into the promised land.

Followers of Judaism reside in many countries around the world. Nevertheless, the main goal for both me and Yuliya was to obtain the address of God from the followers of Judaism (the first Abrahamic religion),

which we found in a religious leader of this religion named Kohen. This spiritual leader, wearing a white embroidered skullcap and having a coarse beard, welcomed us for such an important and valuable concern as recognizing God.

In fact, throughout their lives, humans seek their origin. After proving the existence of the origin and believing in the existence of the Creator, they dedicate all their efforts to understanding this Creator and the existence around them. Who is God? This is a more important question that occupies the human mind after answering the question of whether there is a God. All subsequent efforts take shape in this direction.

Perhaps answering the question of whether there is a God is not a difficult and exhausting task, and indeed it is not. We believe and argue that God is one of the most obvious entities, and His existence is more self-evident, clear, and certain than the bright day when we look at the sun. But beyond proving the existence of God and believing in His existence, let's move on to understanding the essence of God and knowing the sacred truth about Him—what is He, and what is the truth of His essence?

The forbidden zone is where humans and any other beings, whether greater or smaller than humans, are prohibited from entering; not that ordinary humans lack permission to enter this area, but even the great saints, prophets, and Imams cannot set foot in this land

and even touch it. The prohibition of human entry into this zone is a constitutional prohibition. In the sense that the divine essence is infinite, and it is impossible to reach a level where it can be comprehended, while humans (even the most perfect ones, such as Prophet Muhammad) are limited. It was here that Yuliya became somewhat discouraged;

But don't give up the search. She once again asked the rabbi, the Jewish clergyman: So, does your statement mean that one should not be On A Spiritual Journey? The man said: The unknowability of the divine essence does not mean that a person is deprived of any knowledge about God; rather, another kind of theology is available to humans that provides knowledge of the attributes and actions of God through recognition. Therefore, it is not that a person has not asked for the knowledge of their Lord and requested something that is impossible; rather, theology, in the mentioned sense, is feasible and desirable. Divine prophets have also walked this path and tried to acquaint humans with the attributes of the Lord. They have shown him the way of theology and corrected his mistakes. The Quran has extensively discussed the attributes of the Lord, so much so that most Quranic verses end with the attributes of God. Some verses, like verses 23 and 24 of Surah Hashr, only describe His attributes, but there are no explicit verses in the Torah, the Gospel, and the Quran about His essence and how we can find Him. However, these verses repeatedly emphasize

that seeing God in the material world and that too with the sight and eyes we have is impossible. The rabbi added: God is purely and absolutely the truth of existence, unlike other creatures that have an extrinsic nature; therefore, conceiving, imagining, and understanding the essence and attributes of the Creator are impossible for a created being. Paul Clarence Abersold, a biophysicist in the United States, writes: "In the scriptures, when God is defined, it is with the same words that are used for humans!

Of course, this is due to the limitation of words, as the concept of God is a spiritual and metaphysical concept. Human thought is confined within the four walls of matter. It cannot find a way to conceive the divine essence and articulate a description of the concept of God. From a scientific perspective, we cannot imagine God in material terms, as He is beyond the power of human material definition and description.

When you are On A Spiritual Journey, we wish you success; however, it must be remembered that the only way for a person to achieve the goal in this regard is through asceticism, repentance, and seeking forgiveness for sins so that the person becomes purified from all sins. Only then can the fragrance of devotion to God be felt within, not the address of God other than the existence of the individual. So, you too should search for everything within yourself.

Freethinkers should pay attention to a few points:

loving God, considering God as one's beloved, and feeling God's presence and observation whenever God is willing. Yuliya seemed pleased because Islamic scholars did not object to questioning, or perhaps they did not have objections. We were scolded and rejected in contrast, but in this religion, everything was allowed; all kinds of questions were considered permissible, and they did not consider anyone deserving of punishment. Yuliya and I thanked that religious man and left the temple after having a cup of something. Together, we decided that this time we should ask the clergy or the Pope of the Christians. We went to several churches and wanted to talk to one of the popes.

Unfortunately, one or two of the Church Popes did not have time to accept us. Therefore, we went to the farthest church to have a discussion with one of the popes about our goal. In one of the churches, a pope provided the following information about the history of Christianity: According to the followers of this religion, Christianity is the path of monotheism, and the ultimate promise of God to Abraham. The messenger of this path is Jesus Christ, and the fundamental scripture of this religion is the New Testament. Beliefs such as the Trinity, the death of Christ as atonement for sins, baptism, and the Holy Spirit are fundamental tenets of this faith. With 3.1 billion followers, Christianity is the world's largest religion from the perspective of the number of followers. Christianity is generally divided into three major branches: Catholic, Orthodox, and

Protestant, with numerous smaller denominations branching off from them. The foundation of Christianity dates back to the 1st century AD and is rooted in Judaism, established by Jesus of Nazareth (Christ). Early Christianity is divided into three periods: the era of Jesus and mission, the era of the first fathers of the church, and apologetics. These three periods cover a span of 400 years, starting from 30 AD with the beginning of the ministry of Christ and ending in the late 4th century. In the first century of Christianity and in the early decades after Christ, there were theological conflicts among Christians. The first and most significant separation in the history of Christianity was the separation of Paul and the Judaizers, led by Peter. The first century ended with the relative victory of the Pauline faction, but the conflict did not end and intensified into sectarian disputes in the second and third centuries. Among the conflicting parties, some rejected Paul and his theological system as fundamental.

Like sects such as the Ebionites and Nazarenes who continued to adhere to the Mosaic law, Christianity is an Abrahamic faith and monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. As of 2021, it has the largest number of followers worldwide, with an estimated population of around 2.6 billion people. The primary sacred text of this religion is the New Testament or the Gospels. Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) was born at a time when the Roman Empire had

recently come to power, and Palestine was one of the last lands to be conquered by the Romans. During that era, the Jews were subjected to unwanted subjugation under foreign rule, and the Roman government's pressure was unbearable. In response, unsuccessful uprisings occurred in various parts of Palestine, but they ruthlessly failed. Later, his disciples and followers, with firm determination, dedicated themselves to spreading his teachings. This movement attracted the survivors of previous uprisings.

In the world, various religious collections are found; for example, the Abrahamic religions form one collection, while the religions of India and China constitute another. Every religion that comes later claims that its emergence was predicted in the previous religions of its collection. Therefore, Christians have sought to find predictions of the advent of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) in the Old Testament, the book of the Jews, from distant pasts. Since the name of Jesus son of Mary (peace be upon him) does not appear anywhere in the Old Testament, Christians have resorted to interpretations to relate other prophecies found in that book to him.

This method is abundant in the Gospel of Matthew, and for this reason, it is said that the Gospel of Matthew was written for the guidance of the Jews.

When the followers of Christ (peace be upon him) were deprived of the blessing of the divine presence

of this prophet among them, and he ascended to the heavens, his messengers and disciples engaged in preaching the teachings of Christ (peace be upon him) and endured many hardships. However, after a short period, "Paul" - who should be considered the architect of contemporary Christianity - took over the leadership of Christianity. He was originally a Jew and persecuted Christians severely, but after a while, he became a Christian and managed to influence people. He traveled as an apostle of Jesus in cities, altered the beliefs of Christianity, and spread its doctrine.

In the Middle Ages, Christian scholars attempted to justify deviant beliefs present in contemporary Christianity and portray a reasonable face of it. However, some concepts from the Gospels were not logically justifiable, and despite all the efforts made by philosophers of the Middle Ages, such as "Aquinas," they could not rationally reconcile everything that was in the apparent scriptures of the holy book.

The man who was also a pope provided further explanations about the emergence, dissemination, and propagation of the Christian religion. One of his statements was such that it seemed Christianity does not differ much from Islam.

At this moment, Yuliya asked the Pope: If there is no difference between the Abrahamic religions, why have religious wars caused the killing and massacre of millions of people? She added: Muslims, in some cases,

contradict Christianity; for example, Muslims say that true Christianity is the Christianity where Jesus (peace be upon him) was its leader and prophet, and we Muslims also accept Jesus (peace be upon him) as a prophet from God. However, in addition to this, we believe that what Jesus brought was completed and presented by the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him), and Islam is the fulfilling religion of past religions.

As you know, completing the Christian religion by the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) does not mean that the teachings of Jesus were false; rather, we believe that he promoted correct and accurate teachings. For example, what Jesus stated about the oneness of God was entirely true and real, and our Prophet accepted them and complemented them with teachings such as inner unity, etc. Therefore, the God we and true Christians believe in is one; however, contemporary Christians have accepted incorrect teachings due to the innovations that have occurred in their religion, which are not acceptable to us Muslims. One of these views is the issue of the Trinity, which indicates a belief in a triune God. Therefore, our belief in the essential and fundamental matter of monotheism contradicts theirs. Yuliya, who is still not sure about which prophet has spoken accurately and is in doubt, asked the Pope: In your opinion, is Jesus the Son of Mary or the Son of God?

The Pope frowned at the expression of disapproval

and said: Indeed, Jesus was born of Mary, but he is also from the heavenly Father, meaning he is the Son of God. He continued: Is Jesus a prophet for Christians worldwide or the Son of God? The date of his birth, the birthplace, and the manner of his birth are subjects of dispute, a historical dispute among Christians, Muslims, and Jews.

The difference lies in the fact that Mary became pregnant by the Spirit of God: « فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا «إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ «كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ «غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا» Mary said: ‘I seek refuge in the Most Merciful from you.’ The spirit replied: «كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ «غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا» The spirit replied: ‘I am only the messenger of your Lord [who has come] to give you [news of] a pure boy.

How can he be a son when no human touch has reached me?

The Quran narrates that Mary became pregnant from a spirit, and Jesus was her son. Later, when they gathered, as this matter was strange and far-fetched, he was told that if anyone asks you, say, “I have vowed to fast, and today I will not speak to any human.” When he turned towards his people, they asked him, “What was this action that you did?” The Pope, sticking to his belief, said: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and we recognize God of heaven as the Father, the Father of all Christians. What other Abrahamic religions believe

about the Lord is their own concern, but we always pray that the Lord, meaning the Father of all, guides everyone so that all may believe in the sonship of God from the name of God.

Mary, in accordance with what is mentioned in the Quran, referred to Jesus and said: Ask him. He, too, is concerned about this bitter story, and in the midst of the verses of Surah Maryam, he says: I wish I had died before this and forgotten everything, due to this improper event that happened, thinking that no one would easily accept him. This narrative is present in Islamic tradition and specifically based on the sacred text of Muslims (Quran). The Pope added: In the Gospel of Luke in the first chapter, this topic is addressed. The answer given by the angel and found in the Holy Scriptures does not help much in explaining the story to Mary and not to us, the readers of today's text. It says that the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and therefore, the holy offspring born will be called the Son of God. From then on, Yuliya did not want to hear the Pope's words, as she believed that Joseph the carpenter was Mary's husband, but the Quran also states that Mary was still a virgin after the birth of Jesus. Despite all these reasons, Yuliya did not accept the Pope's words. She questioned him about her own inquiry (On A Spiritual Journey) and asked: Where can I find God in your view? The Pope, looking disapprovingly at Yuliya, said: When your faith in the idea that Jesus is the Son

of God is not complete, sometimes you won't speak to God or the Father.

Yuliya, as her last question to the Pope, asked: Since you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, how many times have you met God or the Heavenly Father during your lifetime?

The Pope became more thoughtful, looked at Yuliya, and said: I have met God or the Heavenly Father many times. If you also devote yourself to prayer in the church, you can meet God well. This time, Yuliya laughed again and said to the Pope: The God you call Father is higher than our understanding, and sometimes He does not need our prayers. Anyway... Yuliya handed a few bills from her pocket to the Pope and said: This is not an offering; I pay this for you and those who come to this sacred place in hope. I seek your permission; thank you for your kindness.

The Pope said: Our religion is a religion of love and unity. Unlike other religions that are harsh and frightening in the days after death, our religion talks less about the promise of hell and heaven. Yuliya and I left the church with affection for each other and headed towards an unknown destination On A Spiritual Journey. Yuliya, who was quite tired and also felt discomfort from hearing conflicting answers, said to me: Where can we find that elusive God and how can we feel His presence? In this world, everyone introduces God based on their own beliefs. One must go inside oneself

to delve into the depth of one's being, and then, as Rumi says, may find God in the heart. Anyway... We are not reluctant to explore and search; both of us went to one of the restaurants, got lunch, and outside the restaurant, beggars were lining up. Yuliya went to them and talked to each one of them.

She asked questions to the beggars and heard strange and peculiar answers from them. For instance, one of the beggars said, "God is bread." Another one said, "I saw God yesterday; He gave me ten euros and treated me very kindly. He kissed me, and I'm sure it was God; I could smell the pleasant fragrance from His clothes." I approached a half-grown girl and asked her, "What does your father do?" She said with disappointment, "My father is dead." I asked, "Who are you living with, and where is your mother?" She replied, "My mother was made a martyr by the mujahideen's bombs, and my two brothers were turned into drug addicts; both of them died burned under the bridge."

I told Yuliya, "What do you think about this child?" Yuliya said, "How can I understand?" I said to Yuliya, "This little one has lost her parents and all her relatives and is struggling to survive. The man who helped her yesterday and kissed her; because she heard that God is kind, she believed that the person was God and precisely at that moment, hungry and helpless, when there is no one to help, he is like God. The scene became very tragic, but it was instructive for me. I

told Yuliya, "The scent of God comes from this child; in the innocent face of this child, God is seated. We can find God among the poor and in ruins, not in palaces, churches, monasteries, mosques, and temples." Yuliya and I cried together, and we took that little girl with us to give her a full stomach with bread in the restaurant. We also provided bread for the others so that we invited all the children present in that area for a meal. God is witness; at that moment, I saw God in the presence of those hungry children.

I saw a lady who had caught Yuliya's attention. She took a breath, approached us from her distant spot, and said, "You are not from this world; I think you've come from God's paradise. Why have you come to hell? I guess you have also sinned, and that's why God threw you into hell. Yuliya was amazed at what to say; she asked for my help. I told her, "Dear lady, who told you that you are in hell? What sin did you commit to deserve being in hell?"

The lady said, "I am a sinner, yes, I have committed a great sin. On a day when I was very hungry and couldn't bear it anymore, I stole a piece of bread from a bakery. God threw me into hell because of that; I have truly committed a grave sin, I stole a piece of bread and became worthy of God's hell."

I asked that woman, "Did you see God yourself, or did the angels bring you to hell?" The woman said, "No, I saw God at that moment when He saved a millionaire

thief who had stolen from the public treasury. I also ran away, and I saw God at that moment. God was very angry. I couldn't see God anymore. I heard that God is very kind, compassionate, and forgiving, but unfortunately, my God is very unkind and merciless. He threw me into hell for the crime of stealing bread. But the millionaire and billionaire thieves were taken to paradise."

From the woman's words, it became clear that she had lived an unbalanced life in the world, likening it to hell, and identified the unjust judge as God. Anyway... Yuliya and I continued our search for God. This time, we wanted to go to the synagogue of the Jews, familiarize ourselves with their ways and principles, and obtain information from them about our goal.

"The followers of Judaism live in many countries around the world. The global Jewish population is 13,746,100 (17,936,400 including those who are not counted as Jews according to halacha), equivalent to about 0.19% of the world population. About 6.1 million people live in Israel, and 5,275,000 (6.8 million total) live in the United States of America, with 1.5 million in Europe, and the rest in Oceania, the Americas, and Africa. Jews in Iran have a history of 2,700 years and, according to the statistics, there are 8,756 Jews living in Iran in 1391 (2012). Anyway...

Our main goal, Yuliya's and mine, was to find the correct address of God, regardless of the source. For us, black

and white, disbelief and Islam were not relevant. We sought to find another knowledgeable scholar who could give us the right address of God.

This time, following Yuliya's suggestion, we headed to the church. There, we spoke with a few people about the search for God and exchanged ideas. Each person had different opinions, just as followers of every religion hold different beliefs; here too, there were different beliefs.

Yuliya and I initially listened to the words of the priests. It was a fortunate coincidence that it was a Monday because followers of Jesus consider Monday a day of worship. One of the priests of this church explained: According to the beliefs of the followers of this religion, Christianity is the path of monotheism, and God's ultimate promise to Abraham. The messenger of this path is Jesus Christ, and the holy book of this religion is the New Testament. Fundamental beliefs of this faith include the Trinity, the death of Christ as atonement for sins, baptism in water, and the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, another layperson expressed a different opinion: Christianity is a monotheistic religion based on the teachings and words of Jesus Christ. Fundamental beliefs of this faith include the Trinity, the death of Christ as atonement for sins, baptism in water, and the Holy Spirit. With 2.2 billion followers, Christianity is the largest religion in the world.

Another prominent priest stated: Jesus Christ was the son of Mary, and it is believed that after his birth, Mary remained a virgin. Therefore, it can be said that Jesus is the son of God, and according to the promises of the Quran, he will come again from heaven to earth in the last days, ruling for 40 years, and then the Day of Judgment will come. For now, Jesus Christ has ascended to the Father, and you can raise your hands in prayer to Jesus Christ for your repentance to be accepted first. Later, you can express your desires to Jesus, and he will convey your words and desires to the Almighty God, and later, God will speak to you. However, in the realm of dreams, it is not physically possible to talk to the heavenly Father. Another scholar there explained:

Prophet Jesus, the Messiah, was born to Joseph, a carpenter, and Mary. At the age of 30, he received baptism from John the Baptist. Jesus had 12 apostles or disciples who spread his messages among the people. Initially, the Jews approached him with friendship, but when they realized that Jesus was awakening and enlightening the people, undermining Jewish power, they turned against him through injustice and oppression. Consequently, the Jewish scholars issued the death sentence for Jesus and two of his disciples, and they were crucified. However, according to his wife and other women, after three days, he rose from the grave, spoke with his disciples, and said: "I went to the heavens to be with the Father, but in the end times,

I will come back for 40 years and pass judgment, and after that, there will be resurrection.” He added that he has two types of books, both called the Gospel: The Old Gospel, accepted by the Jews, and the New Testament, sacred only for the followers of Jesus. At the same time, I noticed that Yulia was heading towards the southern hall. I followed her and asked, “Hello? Where are you going?” Yulia replied, “See there, where two people are exchanging thoughts and discussing Jesus Christ, whom they call the Son of God.”

In my opinion, listening to these two seemingly empty scholar won't be without merit. Perhaps these followers of Jesus are directly in contact with God, or their Father, as they call Him. What better than to listen for a few minutes to their conversations? I, too, as an obedient disciple, said, “Certainly.” We approached closer, and many people had surrounded the two of them. They were engaged in heated discussions about the birth and emergence of Jesus:

Is Jesus a prophet for Christians worldwide, or the Son of God? The date of birth, the birthplace, and the manner of his birth are subjects of dispute, a historical controversy among Christians, Muslims, and Jews. In this week's taboo, Soroush Dabbagh, a researcher in religion and philosophy, and Mansour Borji, a Christian priest residing in Britain, respond to these questions. One of them says: “Allow me to begin the discussion with Mr. Borji and with this question about the disputed

time of Jesus Christ's birth. The Muslim accounts differ, Catholics say something else, the Orthodox Church has a different view. Where do these differences come from, and can each have a specific meaning?"

Mansour Borji: Honestly, part of the reason is that there are no direct indications in the Gospels themselves about the exact date of Jesus Christ's birth. As it comes from the Gospels, there is no precise date mentioned about the time of Jesus Christ's birth. However, most scholars and historians of the Holy Scriptures mention the birth of Jesus Christ between four to six years before the Common Era.

Regarding the birthday, there have been and are differences of opinion. That's why you see, especially Armenians in our country and [Armenians] in Armenia, usually celebrate January 6th in Orthodox churches. However, most Western countries celebrate their own on December 25th or December 4th. After the schism between the Western Roman Church and Byzantium, these two days are celebrated differently.

Mr. Dabbagh, as a religious intellectual working in the field of Islamic mysticism, we can start with the Quran and discuss what the Quran's account of the birth of Jesus Christ is and how much it differs from what is mentioned in Christian narratives?

Soroush Dabbagh: In reality, in Christianity, there are various accounts of the time of the birth of Christ, but

in the Islamic world, the Quran does not provide an explanation specifically about the time of the birth of Jesus. However, whether in terms of the birth of Christ or how he died, or his ascension to heaven, there are significant and contrasting differences between Islamic and Christian teachings.

Or, in the chapter about how Jesus was born of Mary, in the third book of the Masnavi, Rumi has elaborated on the story of how Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit or how the Holy Spirit appeared in human form to Mary in detail. This narrative is, of course, consistent with the verses mentioned in the chapter of “Mary” in the Quran.

The difference lies in the fact that Mary became pregnant by the Spirit of God: « فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا «إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ « كُنْتُ نَفِيًّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا « زَكِيًّا » Mary said: ‘I seek refuge in the Most Merciful from you.’ The spirit replied: « كُنْتُ نَفِيًّا قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا « زَكِيًّا » The spirit replied: ‘I am only the messenger of your Lord [who has come] to give you [news of] a pure boy.

How can he be a son when no human touch has reached me?

Further details are provided in the following verses, describing Mary becoming pregnant with Jesus and seeking refuge in a distant place with him.

Mr. Dabbagh, I apologize, but there are other narratives that suggest Mary had a husband and other children. How does Islam explain this?

Soroush Dabbagh: No, the narrative in the Quran is that Mary became pregnant by the Spirit and Jesus was her son. Later, when she gathered with her people, as this matter was very strange and unlikely, she was instructed to say that she had taken a vow of silence that day and would not speak to any human. When she turned back to her people, they asked her, "What was this action you performed?"

Mary, in accordance with what is mentioned in the Quran, referred to Jesus and said to ask him. She herself was troubled by this bitter and distressing story. In the middle of the verses of Surah Maryam, she expresses, "Oh, that I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten." She thought that no one would easily accept her due to this unconventional situation. This narrative is found in Islamic tradition, specifically based on the sacred text of Muslims, the Quran.

Let's return to Mr. Borji. Mr. Borji, you heard Mr. Dabbagh's comments. Could you please explain a bit about this historical ambiguity about Mary having a husband, and Joseph the carpenter being her husband? Do you have any explanations for these points that are raised?

Mansour Borji: Yes, firstly, despite the similarities, there

are differences between the Christian narrative and the Quranic narrative regarding the virginity of Mary. In fact, one of the first individuals to encounter this issue with ambiguity and questions was Mary herself. Physiologically, she knew it was completely impossible for her to conceive a child. That's why when she hears the announcement in the Gospel that she is chosen by God and will give birth to a child, her response is how this can be possible.

In the Gospel of Luke, in the first chapter, it addresses this [topic]. The response given by the angel, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, doesn't provide much help in explaining the situation to Mary or to us, the modern readers of this text. It states that the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and therefore, the holy offspring will be called the Son of God.

For me, as a contemporary reader, these questions generate more than answers. It seems that neither God nor the angel nor the Holy Scriptures are attempting to solve this physiological mystery for me. Their goal is more to inspire faith in the reader. However, Mary's reaction, in my opinion, is very clear and perhaps the answer for you and the listeners as well. She says that she is the maidservant of the Lord and let it be as you have said.

This is a faithful response. It is much easier for me, as a believing Christian, to accept that the Lord may bring

forth a child from a virgin. I can even believe that God can bring existence from non-existence. However, I don't have enough faith to believe that mere matter, energy, and random chance can bring about the intricacies, complexities, and subtleties of this existing world. Therefore, my explanation is limited to the understanding that God and the authors of the Holy Scriptures were not aiming to provide an explanation in the realm of empirical science and modern exact sciences.

Well, another controversial or perhaps I should say intriguing and ambiguous point regarding Jesus Christ is the place of his birth. Some argue that "Jesus the Nazarene" was born in Nazareth, while there are detailed debates suggesting that he was born in Bethlehem. Mr. Dabbagh, I want to know, what significance does the birthplace of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem have, fundamentally? Do you think it has historical, philosophical, or even ideological importance?

Soroush Dabbagh: Essentially, from a religious and historical perspective, it can be important for Christians and those who are interested in knowing where their prophet came into the world. Most prophets of the Abrahamic religions originated from this region, namely present-day Palestine and the broader Middle East, extending to Saudi Arabia, where the Prophet of Islam arose. This region has been the geography of the

emergence and manifestation of Abrahamic religions, what is referred to in the literature of the philosophy of religion as the Abrahamic religions and the cornerstone of this kind of perspective on the personal and anthropomorphic God. In its own context and to its own extent, it's a matter that some people, specifically among Christians, have explicitly addressed. You mentioned Islamic rituals and Islamic mysticism where this point has been less discussed.

Mr. Berji, do you have any points about the disagreement over the birthplace of Jesus Christ? Mr. Dabbagh mentioned that in Islamic narratives, this is not such a controversial issue.

Mansoor Berji: Yes, especially in the Gospels, you see that the birthplace is a sensitive matter. When you look at the holy scriptures, especially the Gospel of Matthew, which provides detailed narratives about the birth of Jesus, you find special references to the birthplace of Jesus in the city of Bethlehem. In the Gospel of Matthew, there are repeated mentions, emphasizing the significance of the town of Bethlehem. According to biblical prophecies, particularly in the Book of Micah, it was predicted that the awaited Messiah or Christ, who the Jews were anticipating, would be born in this city.

For this reason, the Gospel writers go to great lengths to explain why Jesus's foster parents, who were residents of Nazareth in the province of Galilee, had to

make the effort to reach the city of Bethlehem. They assert that this child born is the promised Messiah expected by the Jews, and he is meant to fulfill the deeds foretold by the prophets. That's why they depict him as someone far greater than a mere prophet, born there to accomplish the awaited tasks.

Jews, using sarcasm, deny the birthplace of Jesus by saying that these are disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, an Jesus from the town of Nazareth. Some believe that the term "Nasara" used in Islamic texts for Christians is derived from this. Well, it might not be clear to many Muslim friends where this word comes from, but the Jewish reference, at least to the Nazarene aspect of Jesus, is a mockery indicating that he cannot be the promised Messiah because he is from Nazareth, and we know his parents who are from there.

In your explanation, Mr. Berji, you lead me to the next question regarding whether Jesus is the promised Messiah or not, which, of course, the Jews reject. In Christianity, Jesus Christ seems to be more of a central figure around whom a ritual is formed, and he does not claim prophethood, if I am not mistaken; please correct me if I'm wrong. In Islam, Jesus is officially recognized as one of the divine prophets who brought the Gospel and performed miracles. Mr. Dabbagh, I ask you, with what reasons do Muslims consider Jesus a prophet, and why are these reasons more valid than any other source according to the Qur'an?

Soroush Dabbagh: It is mentioned in the Qur'an. If you ask Muslims, those who believe in the Islamic faith, it is explicitly stated in the Qur'an that Jesus is mentioned as saying, "I am a messenger of God." In this sense, he is referred to as a prophet. It can be understood that even in times and circumstances where the sacred text of Muslims was being established, there was a kind of theological and doctrinal confrontation with Christian teachings.

Similarly, in the same chapter, Surah Maryam, the verse "قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا" ("Say, 'Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet.'" - Maryam 19:30) clearly states that God has appointed Jesus as a prophet. In verse 35, the subsequent verses reveal a clear stance against certain Christian doctrines. It emphasizes that God does not beget a son, and He is far removed from such attributes. Furthermore, if you examine Surah Al-Ikhlās, recited in daily prayers by most Muslims, it asserts from the very beginning: "قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ" "لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ" ("Say, 'He is Allah, [who is] One, Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born, nor is there to Him any equivalent.'"") This part, "لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ" ("He neither begets nor is born"), reinforces the notion that God is unbegotten and without offspring, underscoring a divergence from Christian teachings.

So, in contrast to the concept of the Son of God in

Orthodox Christian theology, the notion of prophethood has been employed in Islam to explain the status of Jesus. The narrative of God having a son is explicitly criticized.

Now, I would like to ask Mr. Barjai. The issue of the prophethood of Christ in Christianity is not as pronounced. Why does this difference exist?

Mansour Barjai: You see, there is a difference in what is assumed about the role and mission of a prophet in Christianity and Judaism compared to what is defined in Islam.

In the Holy Scriptures, and specifically in the Gospel, Jesus Christ is referred to as a prophet, but being a prophet alone is not the exclusive attribute of Jesus. He is considered beyond a prophet, and his other characteristics, especially his divine aspect, blend with his prophetic aspect.

The Holy Scriptures are regarded as a salvation narrative. The story in the Holy Scriptures is that these prophets are like the beads of a prayer, fulfilling or completing this salvational plan, which reaches its pinnacle in Jesus Christ. Therefore, we do not reduce Jesus to the status of a prophet.

According to the promises made, God emptied Himself at the appointed time. It is said that the servant accepted the human form, became like humans, and dwelt among them. His claims about himself,

the attributes and titles he assumes, the deeds he performs, such as forgiving sins, provoke the Jews who question, "Who but God can forgive sins?" His responses are convincing to them; Jesus claims divinity, like when asked why he heals on the Sabbath, he says, "So you may know that the Son of God is also owns of the Sabbath." This is a direct claim of divinity and is more than just a prophetic status.

Now, Mr. Dehbagh raised a point that leads me towards the confrontation between Islam and Judaism. Mr. Dehbagh, as we are talking about the prophethood of Christ, is it possible that Islam places Jesus in opposition to Judaism, confirming and emphasizing his prophethood and miracles, considering that Jews deny the prophethood of Christ?

Soroush Dehbagh: What I mentioned was more based on the fact that both Islam and Judaism are ritualistic, meaning they are based on rituals and practices, compared to Christianity where rituals are minimal. My point was; when you look at the Medinan verses of the Quran and parts of the Prophet's battles manifested in the Quran, many times the problems and conflicts were with the Jews residing in Medina, compared to Christians where theological differences were prominent.

In this regard, there are differences with Christianity, especially regarding the Messiah or the points you mentioned. However, this chapter is common among

Jews and Muslims who occasionally look at Christianity from the outside. In terms of the concept of God, despite the differences, especially in the concept of God of Son, all three religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism, are recognized in comparison to Eastern religions, anthropomorphic religions, meaning religions that present the image of an anthropomorphic God. From this perspective, we see a common chapter between Islam and Christianity and Judaism. My point is that these similarities and differences coexist.

Alright, from here we are entering the discussion of doctrines, and I want to know, Mr. Beraji, what is your perspective on this matter? In mysticism or in religion, is it correct to say that both Christianity and Islam could be significantly influenced by Judaism, and what common ground between believers in both religions could create these influences?

Mansour Beraji: Yes, I think that religions don't form in a vacuum. Even if God wanted to communicate with a group of people today, He would use concepts familiar to them. In many cases, the holy books use narratives, parables, and judgments from the communities around them.

Christianity, which they see as an extension of Judaism, means that, just as Islamic mysticism or Sufism was later excluded from mosques and considered outside the religion, they sought refuge in homes, established convents, and formed another group, Christians were

initially considered part of the Jewish community. Later, different names were given to them, and they became Christians. Initially, neither Christ nor his disciples intended to create another religion. But have they also been influenced by others and other religions? My assumption is yes.

Okay, if we go back to the Quran's account of Christ, we know that the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of Christ are denied in the Muslim holy text, and it is believed that he ascended to heaven bodily. What is the exact confrontation between Islam and Christianity regarding this? Mr. Borji, I'll first pose this question to you.

Mansour Borji: The crucifixion of Jesus Christ, his death, and resurrection are the central and pivotal points of Christian beliefs. Christianity without this purpose, which is the central mission of Jesus Christ and the work he does for the salvation and redemption of humanity, is meaningless. So, this central point is the main difference between Islam and Christianity, and you know that it has a prominent role for Christians. The cross is a symbol that plays a role in many churches, and it is a sign of the emphasis that Christians place on the work of Christ on the cross. Therefore, it is not just a sacrificial and altruistic martyrdom; rather, it is a meaningful concept that is very important and central in the necessity of Jesus's death and the role this death plays in God's plan for salvation.

In the Quran, there are 93 verses referring to Jesus Christ, and 64 verses are specifically about the birth of Jesus Christ from a virgin and the narratives surrounding it. However, the sections that deal with Jesus Christ's claims about the Trinity, divinity, his crucifixion, and a kind of resemblance to those who thought he was crucified are mostly areas of disagreement with the Gospels and their narratives.

Mr. Dabbagh, how can you explain this difference over the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of Christ from the Islamic perspective?

Soroush Dabbagh: It's a difference that has been emphasized in both Islamic narratives and sacred texts. In Islamic accounts, someone similar to Jesus was put on the cross and crucified, while Jesus ascended to heaven and will return at the appointed time. Rumi refers to this theological difference, saying: "The timid one does not have the imagination that Christ is crucifying himself on the cross."

This question arises about the narrative you mentioned, where someone resembling Jesus is said to have been crucified. Well, there were people present at the foot of the cross, including, if I'm not mistaken, his mother. How is it not recognized that this is not Jesus and is someone resembling him? How can you explain this?

Soroush Dabbagh: Well, the claim is that it was not

meant for Jesus to be crucified, meaning to be put on the cross. From a theological perspective, I would say, and also from a historical standpoint, the claim is that it was the will and providence of God that someone resembling him be crucified. That's the meaning.

I actually have a Christian friend who is a priest here, and we occasionally have discussions. I remember, during the discussion on this story, Once you asked me what historical evidence is.

And I, who was giving this explanation, at that time, he would respond that from the Christian perspective, it is understandable for him that if the hands and arms of the Lord are open in existence and His determination and will are present, then it can be said that certain events occur. Well, the story of Jesus going to the cross has central importance in Christianity because the necessity of his suffering and bearing the burden of sins of all humanity is contemplative, and in any case, it can be said that Christianity carries that burden on its shoulders. In Islam, due to the initial image they had of Christ and the confrontation of monotheism and the Trinity, as well as how he ascended to heaven, these differences and conflicts are seen.

Mr. Berji, as a summary, now that we are in the situation of Jesus Christ's birth, and with all the differences that exist, Christians worldwide celebrate Christmas. What are the most important teachings you want to mention about Jesus as a prophet or a central figure

in Christianity?

Mansour Berji: Perhaps this Christmas season is an opportunity for us to draw inspiration from the message of Jesus Christ, regardless of whether we are Christians, Muslims, or have any other belief or no belief at all. We can draw inspiration from the liberating message of Jesus and the responsibility he places on our shoulders for compassion, selflessness, and respect for each other. Let's mark a new chapter in our own lives and the lives of those we are connected with.

Mr. Dehbagh, thank you for summarizing your thoughts.

Soroush Dehbagh: As someone who believes in the salvation of pluralism, but I believe in the salvation of Christians, Muslims, and Jews collectively, and I think that messages of kindness, peace, and love can be received from these religions. The more we strive for a more peaceful coexistence and a broader perspective on the concept of salvation, and help place all humans on the path of right vision and settlement in one neighborhood, it contributes to the deep closeness of hearts. Yulia and I, with respect for Christian beliefs, have gained considerable insight from these conversations and understood that Prophet Jesus has been brought to fame by his narrators, and he himself is a prophet with a determined book, the Gospel, revealed by God through the angel Gabriel like other

prophets. We must continue our search by going to other doors along our path until, for the time being, as mentioned by Rumi, every time a new religion came, it brought war and hypocrisy on the same scale. We were close to getting lost, but I thank Yulia for taking me to such forbidden places where, in some places, we step on the hills of infidelity, and in some places, we endure the heartbreaking blows. In the end, we are fine, as long as we have life, we continue our search. Yulia smiled charmingly and said, "You might say a lot of bad things in your heart, but I have to as well. There's someone inside me who urges me to explore. I promised Yulia that as long as I have life in me, I won't leave her alone and will pursue her path. Today, we've become quite tired."

Yulia wanted to drink alcohol, or as they called it, "wine," but I stopped her. I said, "Here, the laws of God and the children of God command in the light of the Quran. Drinking alcohol is not only forbidden in Islam, but if our authorities catch us, they punish us first and then put us on trial. Therefore, both of us refrained from drinking wine and continued on our way.

On Yulia's way, she had a good idea and said, "The slogan of the religious people is 'the price of love.' What do you think about having a conversation with some followers of the Baha'i Faith, who are more modern and contemporary?" I accepted Yulia's suggestion, and both of us continued on the path to the unknown, as

we didn't know where to find followers of this religion. We walked through the field and after 30 minutes of walking, a green dome became visible. We thought it might be a place of worship, but we had to ask someone which religious group it belonged to. As we approached the temple, we saw it had the shape of a mosque. We assumed it was a mosque for Muslims, but no, it wasn't. A man with white hair came out of the temple, and we asked him about the construction and the followers of the Baha'i Faith. He answered with an open forehead, saying, "I am a follower of the Baha'i Faith myself, may my head be sacrificed for the name of Baha'u'llah. Our religion is a religion of love and acceptance, unlike other religions. We love and have affection for followers of all religions, but unfortunately, followers of Abrahamic religions (followers of Islam) consider us infidels and want nothing to do with us, whether dead or alive. However, we mostly participate in ceremonies of joy and sorrow with followers of all religions."

Inside the Imam Mosque, there is a man sitting and spreading love to the people. If you wish, you can go inside. It doesn't matter what religion or sect you belong to; everyone is welcome.

Yulia and I entered that sacred place, where about 30 to 40 people were gathered in a circle. One of the luminous-faced men was sitting in the middle, inviting people to love. Everyone respected us and

said, "Please, have a seat. Welcome!" Someone, who seemed to be assigned the task, brought two glasses of a refreshing drink for us, and later, the luminous man asked, "Welcome! The doors of God's house are always open to you. If you have any questions, I am at your service!"

Yulia asked him, "We are in search of God. For seven years, we have knocked on the doors of every mosque, temple, church, and monastery on this side, but no one has given us a satisfying answer. Hopefully, you can help us." The man said, "First, you need to know about the Baha'i Faith, and then you will find God on your own." Yulia was thrilled and said, "We are all ears, sir." The sheikh explained, "The history of the Baha'i Faith begins with the mission entrusted by God to two divine educators and messengers, namely, Bab and Baha'u'llah. Baha'u'llah laid the foundation to ensure that after their passing and over time, the Baha'i community could harmoniously and unitedly implement divine teachings and build a world based on peace and unity. It is recognized as "covenant and pledge.

In this way, they clarified the continuity of the guidance, the issue of succession, and the explanation of enlightenment, outlining their effects with clear, explicit, and written guidelines. According to this covenant, the responsibility of guiding and leading the community, after Baha'u'llah, passed to his eldest son,

Abdu'l-Bahá, then to Shoghi Effendi, the grandson of Abdu'l-Bahá, and ultimately, as Baha'u'llah had determined, to the Universal House of Justice (the international council of the Baha'i community). Despite efforts made so far to create disunity and weaken the followers of this faith, a unique unity is evident among Baha'i communities worldwide. Every Baha'i accepts the divine authority of Bab, Baha'u'llah, and their appointed successors.

Yulia became interested and asked, "In your opinion, how can one find God, and in the religion you follow, through which methods can one find God?" The sheikh replied, "There are various ways by which a seeker can connect with God. First, let me explain a bit about the service of this religion to you!" Yulia said, "Please do; I'm all ears." The sheikh said, "Baha'u'llah established the Holy Institution of the Universal House of Justice, and he detailed its duties in some of his other works. Abdu'l-Bahá emphasized the authority and jurisdiction of the Universal House of Justice in his will and provided further explanations regarding its establishment and functioning."

After the passing of Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi prioritized the establishment of the Universal House of Justice in the affairs of the global Baha'i community. For over three decades, Baha'is prepared for the elections of the Universal House of Justice. Ultimately, in April 1963, six years after Shoghi Effendi's passing

and concurrently with the centenary of Baha'u'llah's announcement, the first global elections for the Universal House of Justice were held.

Baha'is believe that the teachings of Baha'u'llah encompass visionary and unifying perspectives for the future of human society. According to Baha'i beliefs, humanity has reached a collective maturity, a stage where the principle of unity should manifest in all aspects of social life. Revolutionary and widespread changes occurring worldwide are characteristics of this transitional period. Across the globe, human society is re-emerging. In this era, thoughts, attitudes, and habits related to the childhood of humanity are fading away, making room for new modes of thought and action reflective of the age of maturity, gradually taking root. Humanity has the potential capability to move toward a united and coordinated global civilization belonging to all human beings, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender, encompassing progress, well-being, and both material and spiritual prosperity for all.

The teachings of Baha'u'llah serve as a source of fundamental principles and concepts for achieving this global civilization. Among the foundational topics addressed in Baha'i beliefs, the following can be highlighted: belief in the oneness of God, the unity underlying all divine religions, the gradual unfolding of religious truths, considering the human soul as a

transcendent reality devoid of gender, race, ethnicity, and class, the oneness and inherent dignity of the human race, belief in equal rights, including freedom of thought for all humans, gender equality, harmony between science and religion, the inseparability of worship and service, the necessity of liberation from blind imitation and any form of prejudice, independent search for truth, the importance of nurturing spiritual qualities and education, the necessity of learning and acquiring knowledge about material and spiritual realities, and the centrality of justice in human endeavors.

This makes it clear that through love, everything can be attained; the unchanging God responds to your call when you express love, resolving your problems. However, seeing God by humans with these eyes is not possible; the promise of God is true, and you can see God in the afterlife.

Sheikh elaborated on the oneness of religions with the following statement: Baha'u'llah asserts that the origin, foundation, and purpose of divine religions are one. He emphasizes that religion is one and can be likened to a book, with religions forming successive chapters within it. Each religion can be considered as a stage in the never-ending process of revealing a single truth.

Humanity is constantly progressing and evolving. The knowledge and understanding of humans about

material realities, ethical concepts, and spiritual matters evolve over time. Each religion represents a stage in the endless process of spiritual and social evolution of humanity. Since human evolution is an ongoing and forward-moving process, one can never speak of the final or most complete religion. Divine messengers (Manifestations of God) will continually provide the necessary guidance for the social and spiritual evolution of humanity progressively and gradually. The teachings of each of these divine educators, in each period, organize society at higher levels of unity relative to the previous period, impacting hearts and minds, strengthening deep human motivations, and empowering communities to participate in advancing civilization to an extent that was previously impossible.

The principle of the oneness of religions, believed by Baha'is, also states that all religions are united in fundamental and essential truths. Differences in the teachings of religions can be attributed to the varying conditions and needs of each time, especially in the realm of social customs and norms. Each manifestation of God can be regarded as a skilled physician who has a complete understanding of the nature of the human species and is capable of prescribing the appropriate medicine for treating the pains of the world—a treatment that aligns best with the needs of the time. Baha'u'llah explains in this regard: The vein of the world is in the hands of a wise physician. It sees the pain and

heals with knowledge.

Every day is a secret, and every moment sings a melody. Today's pain is one remedy, and tomorrow brings another.

The existing differences and sectarian orientations among religions have their roots in a misinterpretation of religious texts, blind imitation, prejudice, adherence to rituals, and traditions that have been introduced into religion by humans, often by religious clergy. Such issues obscure the fundamental nature of religion. If we cannot differentiate between the transient and peripheral aspects of religion on one hand and its real message on the other, accepting the principle of the oneness of religions will be challenging. Ignoring the evolutionary nature of religion in many societies has led followers of a religion to continue following and repeating ordinances and rituals that have long lost their efficacy or are no longer relevant to contemporary life. Adherence to such rituals and traditions not only fails to contribute to ethical progress but also diminishes the significance of religion in today's world.

To enable religion to play its role in improving society, awareness of the unity and oneness of religions must increase. Abdu'l-Bahá explains, "The foundation of the divine religions is reality and the essence of religion is one." Differences arise from traditions, and since traditions vary, disputes and conflicts arise. If all the religions of the world abandon their traditions and

adhere to the fundamental essence of religion, they will all become united, and discord and disputes will cease.

Because religion is the truth, and the truth is one. It does not accept multiplicity. He added: From the Baha'i perspective, the nature of human beings has both a material and a spiritual aspect. The reality of a person, or in other words, the spiritual aspect of their existence, is the soul. The material aspect of human life ceases with death, but the soul will continue to grow and progress eternally. Abdu'l-Bahá introduces the primary purpose of human life as recognizing their Creator and striving to approach Him. They also state that all humans are always progressing to reform the world and advance civilization.

The human soul in this material world acquires the qualities and capabilities needed for its glorious and eternal journey towards God, much like a fetus that gains abilities and characteristics in the mother's womb that it will need for life after birth. According to Baha'i beliefs, God has entrusted all His qualities to humanity. We all potentially possess divine qualities and characteristics, and we must purify the mirror of the soul and polish it to manifest these qualities. Therefore, from the Baha'i perspective, spiritual growth and efforts to cultivate inner qualities are among the most significant concerns for an individual throughout their life so that they can acquire the necessary capabilities

to contribute to the progress of civilization. Worship and supplication, improving ethics and behavior, as well as observing divine ordinances and laws, are examples of efforts that every individual must make for their spiritual progress throughout their life.

Prayer and supplication hold a special place in the life of a Baha'i individual. Prayer is a daily nourishment for the soul, allowing it to strive for its lofty goal. Prayer and supplication are direct conversations between humans and their Creator, providing an opportunity to express love for the true Beloved, marking some of the dearest and most precious moments in human life. Baha'is are also encouraged to engage in daily study of divine writings, contemplating their meanings deeply. Daily study of the Word of God is an opportunity to focus on the profound concepts within it, reflecting on how to apply divine teachings in one's behavior and life and participating in efforts for societal progress.

Such attention and focus assist in implementing the guidance of Baha'u'llah, who advises us to make each morning superior and better than the previous evening. However, Baha'u'llah emphasizes that excessive indulgence in the study of divine writings should be avoided to prevent fatigue and weariness.

Yuliya seemed quite pleased, as if she had found her purpose. Sheikh took a short break for everyone, and tea was prepared. Sheikh paid a lot of attention to Yuliya, occasionally glancing at me as well from the

corner of his eye. Personal conversations began, and Yuliya and I received permission to leave the gathering. Sheikh rose from the group of nine people, bid farewell to Yuliya and me, and said, "Come back twice, everything will be resolved here because Baha'u'llah has shown us the way."

Sheikh, during the farewell, reiterated these words: Divine attributes are potentially present in all of us. Cultivating these qualities plays a crucial role in our spiritual progress and has an inseparable connection with continuously improving our ethics and behavior, to the extent that our actions increasingly reflect the nobility and authenticity that God has entrusted to the existence of all humans. Such spiritual qualities are not acquired through self-centeredness but are nurtured through serving others. The more we polish the mirror of our hearts and minds through prayer, reading and applying sacred texts, acquiring knowledge, striving to improve our behavior, overcoming trials and challenges, and serving humanity, the more we can reflect divine attributes.

Baha'i teachings emphasize that each individual is responsible for their own spiritual growth. While institutions assist in flourishing and directing individuals' capacities and a Baha'i community should be a supportive environment full of sincere consultation and encouragement, there is never an imposition of enjoining good or forbidding evil, or guidance and

direction by religious leaders in the Baha'i community. Ultimately, it is the individual who consciously decides to follow the path of spiritual progress according to their understanding of the divine laws and teachings by studying the Word of God. None of those on this spiritual path can claim perfection. However, absolute relativism, which condemns adhering to clear ideals and principles, also has no place in this context.

"Every Baha'i individual is obliged to strive daily to consistently reflect the standards set by Baha'u'llah, no matter how challenging they may seem, in their behavior. We bid them farewell as we exit the gateway of the worship area. Along the way, we exchanged words and remembered the great poet Rumi, who explicitly conveys a message to the people of God in one of his verses, stating that with the emergence of each new religion, the differences among people have become more pronounced. The poem attributed to Rumi begins as follows:" "One day, a son asked his father, 'Dear father, from your perspective, among all these religions, which is the best religion?'

In response, the father said, 'My son, the more religions there are, the more conflicts and bloodshed arise among the followers of different beliefs. I don't have a specific religion, and I don't believe in other religions either. Religious beliefs, in my view, lack credibility because I don't want to spill human blood in the name of religion. Therefore, my religion is in serving humanity,

avoiding harm to people, and fostering friendship with all human beings on Earth without discrimination of color or scent.'

'Immerse yourself in this illusion of mine and serve humanity without distinguishing between them,' he added."

"Yuliya and I, in our pursuit, got entangled in the idea that perhaps this poem isn't from Rumi. Consequently, we came to believe that the beauty of the poem transcends its authorship, and one should learn the essence of humaneness from it. We continued on our journey and were still in search of God. The weather was rainy, the sky was cloudy, and thunder and lightning accompanied the seasonal winds.

To be honest, we were both tired. We went to one of the city's restaurants, had dinner, and set out on our nighttime adventure. Spending the day together, Yuliya seemed happy. She had heard loving words from the Bahá'í mosque's sheikh. She was slowly resurrecting her dead hope, and her belief was transforming into certainty that, fortunately, humanity hasn't entirely disappeared from the world yet.

The next day, Yuliya and I decided to visit one of the houses of Shia Muslims in order to find the precise address of God through them. We moved from our place towards Chandaol (an old part of Kabul, a very large and ancient center). Both of us walked slowly,

approaching the Chandaol's house. In front of the entrance gate, relatively young individuals, all wearing special clothing for the purpose of ensuring people's security, stood guard. Each one was equipped with weapons such as daggers and rifles.

"A bit further, young people welcomed the guests by offering glasses of milk or pomegranate syrup. I took a glass of milk, and Yuliya chose a glass of pomegranate syrup. They guided us inside the center of the refuge. Inside, all men and women were dressed in black. This style of dressing indicated that everyone was shedding tears for the mourning of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him). We found a place in one of the corners.

A session of eulogy recitation and singing was underway, with young people in black reciting eulogies, and everyone was shedding tears. In the midst of the people who had formed a circle, about 15 or 18 individuals were standing, the chains hanging from the tip of each chain adorned with dozens of razor-sharp blades. They pulled their upper garments and struck themselves with those chains. Blood dripped from their bodies, and a few of them, with deep wounds, were taken to the hospital. I noticed that Yuliya was frightened; suddenly a horrifying sound echoed. Those who were chaining themselves shouted, 'Stop, this is not worship; this is heresy. You cannot please the soul of Hussein this way. Don't spill your blood in vain; go

to the hospitals and donate blood. Instead of shedding tears and using spears, read the Quran.'

A man in black attire and a turban stood up on the pulpit and shouted towards Yuliya, 'Who are you? You are not one of us! Who gave you permission to enter?'

I stood up and said, 'The guide outside is obligated to guide us, and we are in the pursuit of finding God.'"

"Yuliya repeated her words, saying, 'The path you have taken is contrary to the commandments of Islam and humanity. Do not harm yourselves; give alms, read the Quran, and pray. Abandon this non-Islamic practice.' Physical attacks on Yuliya began from all sides; her face was injured. I considered myself responsible and said in defense of Yuliya, 'Acting against the Quran and the traditions is an innovation, how can this be pleasing to God? Why are you inflicting wounds on yourselves? Do you think Hussein approves of your actions? Never! Please abandon this abnormal act. By the way, why don't your fathers and mothers, who have passed away recently, shed tears in their mourning? Once again, several people from all directions stood up and beat me with boots, kicks, and sticks. Yuliya was crying; they beat me to the point of losing consciousness. I no longer had any awareness of myself and Yuliya; they threw me out of that area like the carcass of a dead dog. I was in that pit until two nights; I had no news of Yuliya and did not know where I was, as they had beaten me with a stick on my head. On the second day,

due to the rain and my dampened condition, I woke up, and I found myself in the jungle near the Chendawol region, where hundreds of people relieve themselves every hour. I searched for Yuliya in tears. After a few minutes of thinking and searching, I saw Yuliya sitting in a corner, tending to her wounds. I approached her, and we became united. We were both severely injured, and blood was still flowing from some parts of my body. I found Yuliya under my shoulder, and we reached the infirmary. After an hour in the infirmary, we left for our residence. After an hour from the infirmary at the Ibn Sina Hospital, we went to our accommodation, and in our notes, we recorded the worst days, including this day. However, we did not give up on our goal.

The journey to Makkah: Yuliya was determined this time to visit the house of God up close, and there we will ask pilgrims about the various ways and paths to reach God. We submitted our passports to obtain a visa for Jeddah or Riyadh because we could not obtain the visa ourselves. Fortunately, the servants of the Holy Religion have secretly arranged the affairs outside the gates of embassies, and they obtain visas for the holy land, especially Saudi Arabia, for the purpose of the main pilgrimage very soon in exchange for 300 US dollars. Yuliya and I paid \$600 to Mr. Haji (the commission agent), and after three days, they returned our passports with the visa for the Islamic country of Saudi Arabia.

Both of us were prepared by a public commission company among other pilgrims. We considered Friday the best day for the journey to the house of God because Friday is for Muslims, Sunday is for Jews, and Monday is a day of worship and a blessed day for Christians. According to our Islamic traditions, we obtained a dress that was provided through the guidance company and wore it on Friday. We dressed exactly like the burial shroud for the deceased.

“Yuliya was seen in that beautiful white shroud, but with my black color, I looked very ugly. Anyway...

Our transport plane took off at 14:00 local time; we landed in the holy land, the holy place, the holy world (Jeddah) at dinner time. When the plane landed at the runway, it found the designated location and stopped. Inside this plane, there were about 150 of us, all ready to perform the obligatory Hajj. The residents of the main city of Riyadh welcomed us, saying they wanted to guide us, but the company that sent us had sent a teacher for us. Following the teacher’s guidance, we all slept in the designated rooms after having our meals, and the next day we started visiting the holy places. For the first time, an Imam was appointed for us. According to the guidance of the Quran and Sunnah, he instructed us, ‘Hajj is a spiritual and divine journey. Those on the path to the Grand Shrine, devoted to God, before such a journey, must prepare themselves, absorb the divine color, and remove the

shackles of sin and disobedience from their hearts and souls to prepare to be accepted in the presence of the Almighty.’ I added that travel has always been and is associated with danger. Long and rough roads, armed robbers, lack of food and hygiene facilities, and the insecurity of roads and the like made some travelers sacrifice their lives and be buried in a corner in a tragic way. In the present era, despite the abundant facilities provided for travelers, dangers still threaten the lives of people.

“Humans, on the earth and in the sky, do not have the necessary security. Sometimes a passenger plane crashes due to technical failure, and some are killed. Sometimes two cars collide, and the lives of the innocent passengers are taken. Therefore, no one can predict their future and be sure of their return. Hence, writing a will and setting one’s affairs in order is necessary and essential to ensure that heirs do not encounter problems and know their responsibilities.

Hajj: Journey to the Heart of the Islamic World

The land of revelation, the meeting place of God's lovers—those who break all material ties, worldly appearances, family connections, and affiliations and bind themselves to God. They eagerly cast away the garments of deception and hypocrisy, donning the white attire of piety, purity, and uniformity. The pilgrimage to the Kaaba is a manifestation of devotion and dedication to God, where pilgrims learn the essence of Islam in its entirety. Hajj embodies sacrifice, sincerity, faith in God, and God-consciousness. Pilgrims learn the lesson of humanity and return from this sacred journey adorned with the ornaments of love, compassion, sincerity, and the attainment of spiritual heights and excellence, free from the impurities of the world.

When the boiling of true love for God erupts within the human soul, and the existence of a Muslim becomes filled with enthusiasm and fervor, "By hastening towards the house of God, one can attain their desires, express their state of being in this sanctuary of intimacy and love, and shed tears of eagerness. Here, Yulia and I also shed tears before the door of the Almighty and cried out to the Bestower. Truly, enthusiasm had taken over us all; everyone was shedding tears of eagerness. Yulia approached me and said, 'Certainly, a host welcomes and receives guests in their home. We are currently guests in the house of God, and I am

sure that the Almighty, the Incomparable, will reveal Himself to us and speak to us.'

The pilgrimage and the spiritual significance of Makkah, along with people converging from all corners of the world, have an unparalleled impact on Islamic awakening. The wisdom of God deemed it appropriate to make such a barren and uninhabited region the global center of Muslim congregation—a place with neither commercial, industrial, nor agricultural significance and lacking any climatic allure. God, in His glory, placed His own Kaaba in this land and made it the birthplace of His greatest prophet, so people understand that the real measure of true value is religion and faith. Beyond national, ethnic, and regional bonds, the true bond is a religious and faith-based one that should receive attention. They should recognize each other based on this and consider it the superior criterion for their mutual respect. Considering this, the pilgrimage becomes a meeting point for various spectrums of Muslims from different regions and nationalities, all centered around Islamic values. It serves as an opportunity for Muslims to benefit from each other's sound thoughts, strengthen the foundations of their faith, and contemplate the improvement of the religious structure of Muslims worldwide.

“During the Hajj season, sincere, devout, and spiritually enlightened individuals embark on this sacred land, creating a magnificent and spiritual society. Allameh

Nadvi writes: The attention of Almighty God has been that during the most difficult and crisis-ridden periods that the Islamic Ummah has faced, there has not been a shortage of the presence of divine scholars, sincere worshipers, righteous God-seekers, guides, fervent supplicants, humble and penitent individuals, as well as outstanding scholars and intellectuals. Those whose spirituality and God-seeking scents fill the air, softening hardened hearts, making rebellious souls obedient, drying up tearless eyes, turning them into tearful ones, and spreading divine mercies generously, bringing tranquility everywhere, while Satan sits in humiliation and disgrace on the ground.

God has commanded complete abstention from sin and conflict during the Hajj period, a command that is, in fact, teaching peaceful coexistence and humane living. Humans are supposed to learn to avoid sin and abandon conflicts that lead to violations, and live a complete life like a perfect human being. These commandments essentially lay the foundation for a life accompanied by tranquility. The more a person pays attention to the execution of these commandments, the more success is added to their achievements. Additionally, one of the things that a pilgrim must observe is not to harm animals and plants within the precincts of the sanctuary. This commandment is based on the establishment of a healthy, peaceful society, free from any infringement or violation of the rights of others, be it the right of God, the right

of people, the right of animals, or environmental protection. Unfortunately, most people disregarded all these religious preaching's, and on the first day of the Hajj rituals, they snatched Yulia's money and handbag.

No matter how much we tried, unfortunately, thieves or professional pickpockets took away the amount of ten thousand dollars along with Yulia's backpack on their shoulders in that holy place. We promptly reported the incident to the police station and relevant authorities. The relevant officer cooperated with us extensively, but alas, all our hopes were in vain. Yulia had become deeply disappointed; she would say, "What kind of Islam is this? Stealing in the house of God is shameful." At that time, the loudspeakers were also preaching: "The first time your gaze falls upon the Kaaba, ask God, ask God Himself. Those who go for Hajj and Umrah should try not to spend a moment in disobedience to Almighty God. When going to Madina Munawara, recite abundant blessings."

Furthermore, the announcement of Yulia's missing backpack was repeated several times, but unfortunately, the money was gone, and our enthusiasm was wounded. Yulia and I performed the rituals with the congregation of pilgrims gathered from all Muslim countries. During the circumambulation of the Kaaba, Yulia was once again trampled under the feet of the pilgrims in the crowd. She was no longer herself; her

hands and face were injured, and it seemed as if every pilgrim stepping on her stomach was intoxicated with love for God, trampling the servants of God. Truly, it was not a pleasant scene.

As each pilgrim attempted to reach out and touch the Black Stone, people would trample upon those with weaker builds. This issue was intriguing for Yulia, and she always asked me: "What is hidden in this Black Stone that everyone wants to touch it, even by pushing others with force?" I explained to her that this stone, known as Hajr al-Aswad, was brought by the Prophet Abraham from Paradise and is highly sacred for Muslims. Yulia asked, "So, is Paradise made of stones, or is it the Garden of Eden? Is it a place with beautiful houris and servants, or is it mountains full of stones? Also, isn't this stone worship akin to idol worship?" I was becoming frustrated and gestured for her to remain silent, but she asked the Somali man standing beside her, "Brother, what is the difference between this stone and those stones that the Arabs used to worship, such as Al-Lat, Al-Uzza, and Manat?" The Somali man, named Abu Turab, first invited Yulia to calm down and then explained, "In the pre-Islamic era, scattered across the Arabian Peninsula, there were simple shrines where Arab tribes placed their idols and gathered for worship. In each of these shrines, a 'sacred' stone was placed, symbolizing the connection between heaven and earth. The most famous of these shrines was the Kaaba in Makkah,

and the Black Stone, known as Hajr al-Aswad, was its sacred stone. Besides that, there was a shrine in the city of Ghayman in Yemen, with the 'Red Stone' or Hajr al-Ahmar as its sacred stone. Also, there was the Kaaba of the city of Al-Abalat in southern Makkah, where Hajr (Stone)

After the advent of Islam, all these shrines were demolished, and only the Kaaba remained, becoming the place of worship for all Muslims. Hajr al-Aswad, one of the rubies of paradise, was transferred to its current location beside the Kaaba through divine command and the hands of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). This sacred stone has witnessed numerous ups and downs throughout history.

Over the years, this stone has been subjected to attacks by various individuals and has been shattered. As a result, a mixture of adhesive has been used to piece it back together. Therefore, providing an accurate and complete description of Hajr al-Aswad is challenging for us because the surrounding mortar makes only eight small fragments of the stone visible, with the largest being the size of a date. It is said that these pieces, totaling fifteen, are hidden among the coffee-colored mortar, and the custodians conceal seven of them from the view of those who come to touch Hajr al-Aswad during the pilgrimage. Over centuries, human contact with the stone and the surrounding mortar has contributed to its smoother surface and

color changes.

Yulia expressed her gratitude to the man, but before she could take a few steps, the black-skinned African man identified her as an unbeliever with blonde or golden hair and struck her from behind, much like a farmer threshing barley on the ground. Yulia remained weak and indifferent for hours. I wanted to ask the man for the reason, but the crowd was so dense that I, too, was struck. The man explained, "This is not a place for infidels, and I managed to remove the injured Yulia from the ground and take her aside."

The reason why the African man struck Yulia with a nail-studded club is believed to be due to the perception of Yulia as an infidel and the prohibition of infidels in the sacred precincts of God's house. When the man hit Yulia to the ground, he muttered to himself, "You accursed infidels have conquered all the regions of the world. Now that you have reached the House of God, why did the Jews seize the first qibla of Muslims and trample the rights of the people of Palestine underfoot? Go and lose yourself; if you don't, I'll turn Himself a warrior and send you to hell."

In any case, we sat a bit farther from Hajr al-Aswad, and it took almost an hour and a half for the obligated doctors in the sanctuary to bandage and treat Yulia. When she returned to normal, we resumed the Tawaf until we completed seven rounds around the sanctuary. Yulia's patience and even mine had worn

thin. We decided to rest, and in our designated room, unfortunately inhabited by zealous and narrow-minded individuals, each in turn uttered offensive and vulgar remarks about Yulia simply because she had green eyes and blonde hair. We could hear them. Days and nights passed, and on another day, we went to Mina for the ritual of Rami or Stoning the Devil, which means casting stones at the three pillars representing Satan. There, too, was not free from incidents. Yulia's aim was to find God's specific address, but we had unfortunately entered troubled days. Every question she asked was met with a fist as an answer, and a tragic incident occurred in this place. Yulia asked me, "Since nothing is visible here, what do the believers call stoning the devil?"

I explained to her and said, "Here, it is a mandatory Islamic ritual to throw stones at the Devil's pillars; both you and I will throw stones." Yulia chuckled and said, "When we still haven't recognized ourselves, how can we know that there is Satan there, and why does Satan still survive and reappear every year despite billions of believers stoning him? Right here, a man with a bushy beard and Kohl-rimmed eyes shouted loudly, "Stop! I found the Satan; hit him!" Everyone threw their stones towards Yulia, and the collective anger hit her; she became bloody and cried, as if a divine power within Yulia had risen from under those stones. She stood tall and addressed all the pilgrims, saying, "Dear Muslims, I am not an infidel. My hair is naturally blonde. I was

born to a mother with blue eyes. I am not an infidel, but I am in search of God. I ask you all, do you have God's address? Is God sitting in the middle of that stone house, and are you circumambulating Him? Does Satan have a physical form, or is Satan the very breath we take? Why do you beat me in vain? I will be grateful to anyone who guides me in this path, and I will obey any scholar who guides me correctly while I am alive. Let's all truly worship God together. Let's all be in search of God, not in tormenting people with blue eyes and blonde hair."

To be honest, some of the pilgrims, like me, were left speechless by how Yulia, with her bloodied and bruised face, found the power to speak and express herself. Yulia, facing everyone for the last time, asked, "Since the beginning, when we and all of you entered Saudi soil and especially entered the enclosure of God's house, how many of you have been able to understand where God is? Can we confine the great God of the universe within a 9 to 12-meter stone wall? Everyone fell silent, and Yulia, weakened by the loss of blood, collapsed; but this time, the doctor and a large number of pilgrims were treating her. They put Yulia in an ambulance and transferred her to her room with my assistance. For two days and nights, Yulia and I were estranged from everyone else. She would tend to her wounds and say to me, "I will never turn back from my decision, which is to seek God; as long as I have life, I will seek God, and it doesn't matter to me what they

say about building a house for God; it's a tradition, but in reality, God must be sought and found everywhere and in everything.”

Yulia suggested that I should pay more attention to Mount Arafat because I have read a lot about Arafat and self-knowledge and God. I agreed, and the next day, in the company of many pilgrims around Arafat, we went to Ghandi Arafat. There, a preacher delivered a sermon:

Arafat is the name of a land surrounding Makkah where the act of standing and staying, known as Wuquf, becomes obligatory for Hajj pilgrims on the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijjah. The term “Arafat” is derived from the word “Arafa,” meaning recognition, and this land is a place for self-awareness and knowledge of God. Therefore, it is named Arafat. In this land, individuals reflect on their needs and sins on one side, and on the other side, they contemplate the greatness, grace, and benevolence of God comprehensively. As a result, they confess and repent for their sins and shortcomings. However, Wuquf in Arafat becomes a means of self-awareness only when accompanied by contemplation and knowledge; otherwise, merely performing the act, even though it fulfills the legal requirements, does not lead to self-awareness. However, such an individual will miss out on the attainment of these insights, including self-awareness.

Wuquf in Arafat is the second stage of the Hajj rituals,

and the purpose of this act is for pilgrims to spend a portion of the day in the Arafat desert without leaving. Therefore, it is necessary to stay in Arafat from noon on the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijjah until sunset on the same day. However, delaying Wuquf from the beginning time is acceptable as long as it does not exceed the time needed for performing the Dhuhr and Asr prayers and their prerequisites. Wuquf in Arafat and the performance of other Hajj rituals, except Tawaf and prayer, do not require ritual purity (ablution or bathing), although it is recommended.

Yulia and I carefully listened to the words of the Arab preacher. At that moment, Yulia asked me, "How can one attain a state of knowing oneself and God?" Since I didn't know how to express a single word without Yulia, I helplessly said:

In the depths of our hearts, we immerse ourselves in any hardship that exists. In this one bite, there is the meat of a pine nut, and God willing, we will succeed.

On the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijjah, the Day of Sacrifice, all pilgrims, numbering in the millions, sacrifice a cow, sheep, or a camel according to the tradition of the Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him). Regarding this, the same instructor instructed us as follows:

Performing the sacrifice is one of the obligatory acts for the pilgrims of the House of Allah, the Haram. The verses addressing this decree are for the pilgrims

who, after assuming the state of ihram, encounter an obstacle such as the presence of an enemy or an illness that prevents them from continuing the acts of Hajj or Umrah, referred to as “mastoord” or “confined.” Such a person, if the obstacle is an enemy, and there is no possibility of appointing a proxy for the sacrifice, must perform the sacrifice at the same place where the obstacle occurred. If the issue is an illness, they must appoint a proxy for the sacrifice and, once assured of the completion of the sacrifice, shave their head and exit the state of ihram. Another case for sacrifice is as a compensation for violating certain Hajj acts, such as cutting one’s hair during the state of ihram before the designated time. In a portion of the verse, it refers to this matter and presents three options for expiation for those who commit this act out of excuse and necessity: sacrifice, fasting for three days, or giving charity.

The sacrifice of a sheep or cow, or the slaughtering of a camel, is among the obligatory acts of Hajj. According to the verdicts of Shia jurists, the place of sacrifice is Mina, and the time is the day of Eid al-Adha. Most Sunni jurists consider the days of the 10th, 11th, and 12th of Dhu al-Hijjah as the time for sacrifice. All Islamic sects have mentioned conditions for the sacrificial animal, such as it not being old or emaciated.

According to Shia sources, the sacrifice should not be defective. According to the majority of Shia jurists, it is recommended for the pilgrim to divide the meat of the

sacrifice into three parts: one part as a gift, another part as charity, and a portion to consume. Conversely, according to Shafi'i jurists, eating the obligatory sacrifice is not permissible.

The sacrifice, which originates from the same root, is said to bring humans closer and near. The sacrifice that becomes an offering to God on the day of "Eid" is called "Hadi." In the context of the Hajj pilgrimage, it is referred to as "Qurbani" (sacrifice), and it is also known as "Adha" during the festival of sacrifice (Eid al-Adha).

All pilgrims listened carefully to the instructions of their instructor, translated into various languages. Both I and Yuliya paid close attention to the words and guidance of the Imam, or the instructor. At the conclusion of the teacher's guidance, Yuliya asked me, "How do we sacrifice a sheep, cow, or camel, and how do we receive its reward? In reality, the same animal sacrifices its life for the sake of God, so what are we doing when we only take the life of an animal? What reward and what path for the closeness to Allah exist in this act?"

The reality of the question Yuliya asked me was indeed challenging! Following what the Quran and the interpretation say, I told Yuliya: This is one of the recommended practices and part of the legacy of the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), who, after the mission of the Prophet of Islam, became an obligatory act.

Whether we gain reward or the slaughtered animal, I don't know.

Without consulting me, Yuliya asked this question to the mentor: "Honorable teacher, when we slaughter a sheep, cow, or camel, do we receive the reward, or does the slaughtered animal, as it sacrifices its own life?" The mentor recited verses from the Quran and explained later that God had prepared wealth for the sacrifice of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), and it is obligatory for us to sacrifice wealth as well. The reward for sacrificing an animal is limitless. Yuliya laughed and said, "Dear teacher, how can it be a reward to take the life of an animal and get a little reward?" She found it amusing. The mentor responded, "We must act according to the guidance of the Quran. It has been said in the Quran and the traditions that we should sacrifice. We sacrifice, but if you are not satisfied or, more precisely, if you do not have the belief, then don't do it. However, sacrificing is a significant pillar of Hajj; your pilgrimage won't be valid without it."

Yuliya told the mentor, "Dear teacher, I haven't come to this land to perform the duty of Hajj. I have come to understand all matters thoroughly and to achieve my goal, which is the search for God. Sometimes, I am not successful in this endeavor. I haven't come here to fulfill the obligation of Hajj. I have come to know all the aspects from the root, and my goal is the search for God. Sometimes, I am not successful in this endeavor."

The mentor asked, "Are you a Muslim, Christian, or Jew?" Yuliya replied:

I am in search of truth to find God and embrace the true religion, even if it is Buddhism; however, sacrificing an animal for the sake of reward raises a thought-provoking question for me. The teacher exclaimed, "No way!" I said, "Are you a disbeliever or a Muslim?" Yuliya replied:

"I am still not in any religion. I am in search of reality and truth. Firstly, why one God and several other religions? Secondly, I need to find God and then determine my religion. The mentor had not yet opened his mouth when a powerful blow struck Yuliya's chest in the Mina desert. Several people grabbed her, beating and kicking her until she lay motionless, accused of mocking their religion. I, firmly standing, said, "No, she is not mocking our religion or yours. She wants to be a true Muslim, not just imitate. This time they grabbed me, beating and humiliating me to the point of helplessness. All were busy sacrificing animals, each buying an animal and slaughtering it. I was in a weak state, and since Yuliya was left behind, I gathered her up in my arms and took her to our room. Today, those who have sacrificed are concluding the formal Hajj ceremonies, but some, like us, have not sacrificed yet; their Hajj has not been accepted and favored by God.

On the second day of Eid al-Adha, Yuliya went to the

imam of the Kaaba and asked, "Honorable Sheikh, may I ask you a question?" One of the sheikhs of the Kaaba replied, "Certainly!" Yuliya asked, "Was sacrificing common in the time of ignorance (pre-Islamic era) before the arrival of the sacred religion of Islam?"

The Grand Sheikh said, "Yes, but it wasn't like that back then. Sacrificing for the sake of God or gods, which accompanied festivals and religious ceremonies, has a history dating back to ancient times. All nations of the world have practiced it, and today, more or less, consider it a tradition. Apparently, this practice dates back to a very ancient time when humanity had not yet entered the historical stage, and people were familiar with and believed in such rituals.

When the children of Adam had a moment of leisure from eating and sleeping, they began contemplating the concepts of fear, love, and emotional matters. They interpreted their daily events, both small and large, such as the arrival of night or day, the rising and setting of the moon and sun, the eclipse of the moon and sun, storms, droughts, earthquakes, dreams, illnesses, and death, all through their limited thoughts. They thought of a superior force, supernatural powers that were involved in the creation and execution of these events. When their minds were occupied with these thoughts, whether they feared or loved these powers, or justified all these events as the work and payment for them, they believed in superior forces beyond nature. At that time,

for the sake of attracting their friendship or warding off their harm, they believed in their simple and primitive thoughts that by offering sacrifices and offerings, they could appease these superior forces that determined their fate. Many, perhaps all, the worship, sacrifices, and offerings made to gods and supernatural forces were initially driven by this belief.

Certainly, over the centuries and with the passage of time, these beliefs and traditions have evolved, become more humane, and taken on a more humanistic and superior aspect. Gradually, over time, they have become a logical habit, an anthropomorphic and spiritual connection between the Creator and the created. The ritual of sacrifice, as a form of worship, has undergone these stages.

From sacrificing humans and animals to offering fruits and plant-based foods to God or gods, this has been the fate of humanity. Humans have desired to sanctify their consumables and sustenance by associating them with the name of God or gods when offering sacrifices. This practice aims to impart a spiritual and celestial dimension to a material matter related to their livelihood. Nevertheless, human needs, shortcomings, and weaknesses, which have never left him and have always kept him in a state of distress, have compelled him to strengthen his connection with higher realms and strive to gain more knowledge about the unknown worlds full of mysteries. These worlds have always

been enigmatic and complex for him, and he has held a vague notion about them, prompting him to seek assistance from superior dimensions.

In Islamic narrations, we find the first story of sacrifice from the offspring of Prophet Adam, namely, the story of Habil (Abel) and Qabil (Cain). Surprisingly, this story, which marks the first instance of “fratricide” in human history, revolves around the marriage of a girl to Habil. Adam wanted to give his daughter, who was born from the same mother as Qabil, to Habil, her other brother, but Habil refused. Adam then told them to make sacrifices, and it was revealed to him that the day he performed the sacrifice, he would die. Thus, throughout history, people engaged in sacrifice under the feet of gods, praying and worshiping to alleviate calamities. Later, they would sacrifice an animal. Traders who came to Makkah for worshiping 360 idols brought animals as hosts for them. Arabs would sacrifice sheep or animals for their guests who came from other countries for worship.

Will Durant considered human sacrifice to be a practice that was prevalent among all ancient nations and witnessed daily in various places. According to him, in some regions, they would sacrifice a man for agriculture, pouring his blood onto the soil during sowing to obtain a better harvest. Later, this sacrifice transformed into the ritual sacrifice of an animal. When the harvest was reaped, they interpreted

it as a symbolic renewal of the sacrificed man's life. Consequently, both before and after the act of sacrifice, they deified the sacrificed man, attributing a divine aspect to him. Moloch was one of the deities to whom the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, and other Semitic peoples offered human sacrifices. According to Durant, this practice led people to develop a taste for cannibalism, as they believed that the gods also favored human flesh. However, with the evolution of human ethics, this religious slogan changed, and the gods gradually followed the example of their devotees, accepting animal flesh instead of human flesh. Over time, even animal flesh acquired a sacred status for the gods, and priests, who themselves craved delicious food more than the gods, only presented the entrails and bones of the sacrificed animal on the altar.

The people of Syria used to sacrifice their children, a practice reminiscent of the Phoenicians who also had such a ritual. They would dedicate their children to the god "Sun" and sacrifice them to him. During these occasions, the people would dress up like on their own festival day and gather at the sacrificial altars. The beating of drums and the sound of flutes were loud enough to drown out the cries of the children being burned in the arms of God. However, these people mostly engaged in sacrifices that involved less brutality.

Fortunately, with the advent of the sacred religion of

Islam, the act of killing and sacrificing humans was replaced by animals. Annually, millions of people from various nations and Muslim countries gather at this central location to offer sacrifices to the one and only Almighty and Glorious God in devotion, and this practice is sanctioned until the third day of Eid al-Adha. It was previously customary to bury the bodies of sacrificed animals directly underground, but now, thankfully, the Saudi government packages and sends the offerings to impoverished Muslim countries. Sacrifice, or Qurbani, is one of the rituals of Hajj, where animals such as sheep and camels are sacrificed by pilgrims in the name of seeking closeness to God. This act is performed annually during this period and more explicitly on the days of Eid al-Adha.

Yuliya approached Sheikh Kabir and inquired, “Dear Sheikh, it seems that the practice of sacrifice was prevalent before the promotion of the blessed Islamic religion. At that time, it was for the gods and, for now, for the satisfaction of the one true God. May I ask if the pilgrims who perform this act, depriving an animal of its life, are deserving of reward or liable to sin?” Sheikh, visibly agitated, raised his voice above Yuliya and exclaimed, “Are you a donkey or a human? It is God who commanded Ibrahim to sacrifice his son Ismail, and this method is sanctioned for us in verses and hadith. Why don’t you understand?” Yuliya replied, “I am not unreasonable. If I had an ounce of reason and wisdom, I wouldn’t have been on this quest for God from

distant countries to here. Now that I have reached you, possibly one close to God, please guide me on how to find God.” The Sheikh softened his tone and advised her, “Engage in worship, make vows, pray, supplicate, don’t sleep at night, worship diligently, and you will surely achieve your desire.” Yuliya was fortunate to be excused from further scolding by Sheikh Kabir on this occasion, but she declined to sacrifice an animal. Soon after, the days of Hajj concluded, and our flight was ready for departure. This time, Yuliya and I returned to our country without sacrificing, meaning without shaving our heads. A few days later, the remaining guests visited us, expressing their congratulations on the acceptance of Hajj. We became generous hosts, and many of our fellow travelers, after returning, slaughtered cows, cooked rice dishes, and invited familiar people to have the suffix “Hajji” added to their names by the entire local community. The Hajji hosts presented prayer rugs and a prayer bead ring to mosque imams and religious leaders of the region as gifts.

Interestingly, most pilgrims procured these various offerings from the Bazaar Kah Froshe in Kabul, presenting them to people as blessings. They claimed, “These gifts have been washed in the water of Zamzam,” and those who received the gifts rubbed them in their eyes, believing that a blessed gift washed with Zamzam water would save them from the torment of the grave and the Day of Judgment. Some pilgrims

from Riyadh bought a few meters of white fabric to use as their burial shroud, believing that this fabric, washed with Zamzam water, would rescue them from the punishment of the grave and the Day of Reckoning after their death. However, Yuliya and I, following the plan Yuliya had in mind, returned from the Hajj without success in our quest for God. Today, both exhausted and fatigued, we rested together. After returning from the airfield, we chose only to rest, but I still prepared a flavorful cup of coffee for myself and Yuliya. We listened to one of the songs of Sarban, how beautifully he sang: "O Sarban, slowly drive my soul away, the heart that I kept with me is leaving with my beloved." We both went to sleep around 9:00 PM. Later, we woke up and both made an effort to prepare something to eat. Both with determination, we cooked an eggplant dish together and enjoyed it with the bread we had brought from outside. We continued to discuss the fruitless Hajj journey. I couldn't convince Yuliya to be content; I tried hard to persuade her that she should no longer wander aimlessly and should come back and search for God within herself.

However, at this time, I don't know why Yuliya suggested to me, "What do you think about going to a Taliban (fundamentalist group) committee in one of the provinces and asking about our situation? Maybe our problem can be resolved." I told her, "My dear, if you want to be executed without a proper trial, then we can go." Yuliya, whom I liked a lot, secretly revealed

that we needed to meet with Taliban scholars before leaving Afghanistan, regardless. I, too, had to arrange the itinerary; eventually, three of us set out for the province of Kandahar. In every region of Kandahar, the Taliban were secretly involved in military activities against the Afghan government. The person we had hired was named Haji Asif, and he also had clandestine collaboration with the Taliban group. After an 18-hour-long journey through torn and rugged roads, we reached the beautiful city of Kandahar. We wanted to rent a hotel there, and one of the hotel staff came to me and asked, "Is he a black-headed one, and when is his Mahram (legally permissible escort)?" I told him, "He is my guest," but he said, "In no way are we providing a separate room and bed for you; we have a separate room for him and a single room for you and your companions." We had to accept it. That night, Yuliya and I were separated from each other. The next day, Haji Asif rented a taxi for 1000 Afghanis, and we traveled for about 40 minutes. After 40 minutes, we arrived at a place where there was a Taliban committee. Before Haji Asif left, he had arranged for Yuliya to have a tent, meaning a chador. Initially, Haji Asif went in alone to talk to the Taliban, and later, he obtained permission for us.

When Yuliya and I entered, three Taliban members, adorned in commando uniforms with bushy beards, tall hair, black turbans, and Kalashnikovs, were present. They shouted from above, "Who are you? Where

have you come from, and why are you here? Are you American government spies?" Most importantly, they declared, "We don't want to hear a woman's voice; hearing the voice of a non-Mahram (unrelated) woman is strictly forbidden." Yuliya asked, "If you permit, can I uncover myself, meaning remove my chador?" The Taliban member loudly repeated three times, "Astaghfirullah, Astaghfirullah, Astaghfirullah." Yuliya said, "Why do you assume we're Arabs? Once again, the Taliban member pulled his voice and said, "Does a woman mean an animal? You don't understand." I said, "You have no right to Talk; which of these two is your Mahram?" If he speaks, you remain silent; according to Islamic law, when men are sitting, women have no right to Talk. Yuliya said, "Why doesn't my brother have the right to Talk?" The Taliban member said, "The ruling of God and the Quran is like this; we do nothing contrary to the guidance of the Quran." Again, Yuliya said, "I have a question." The Taliban member said, "Who is the Mahram for this woman? Forget about this and leave here; a woman's voice is provocative; it is Satan's temptation. God, we seek refuge in you from the evil of this Satan." I pulled my voice and said, "I am the Mahram for this lady. She is my sister." The Taliban member in charge said, "You are black, and she is a woman with blond hair and blue eyes! Oh, she is a foreigner." I told him, "No, the owner this is my sister.

The Talib said, "Why have you come here, and for what

purpose have you come?" Haji Asif, looking for the approval of Molavi, responded on their behalf, "Molavi Sahib, they have questions."

Molavi said, "Ask your question." Yuliya wanted to ask her question, but the Talib once again, said "Astaghfirullah" (I seek forgiveness from Allah) three times and told me, "I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan," indicating his intention to Yuliya.

I hastily presented Yuliya's question: "Honorable Molavi, we have been in search of God for seven years. How can we find God?" Once again, the angered Talib, Haji Asif, without water and without a curtain, covered him and struck him several times on his chest, asking, "Who are these people? Are they infidels? Why did you bring them here?" Haji Asif apologized helplessly. Finally, the Talib said, "You are not destined to see God; it is we who are destined, as we are the warriors. For instance, if it is proven that you are a spy and we kill you, we are the warriors. If you have performed righteous deeds and helped our mujahideen, then you can see God afterward; otherwise, in this world, seeing and talking to God is not possible. You have not become a Muslim; you have become an infidel. Leave here immediately; otherwise, we will turn you into carrion and make ourselves warriors. The esteemed ruling of Islam is that one should not engage in conversation with a non-mahram woman. A non-mahram woman carries the status of Satan, and Satan incites humans.

The hair, face, chest, and thighs of a woman also incite humans; therefore, Islam has guided against it.”

“That women should not work outside the home, and whenever a man faces a woman, he must continuously say ‘Astaghfirullah’ to ward off the accursed Satan and keep the woman safe. Otherwise, it will be hell for women, especially for men who engage in conversation with non-mahram women. Yuliya, who had no peace, kept repeating these words, even as her veins echoed the sound of death. She asked Talib, ‘Mr. Molavi, during the holy jihad, the golden era of pure Islam when the noble mujahideen were conquering the regions of infidels, they used to take their wealth and possessions as booty and make their women captives, concubines, and lawful partners. What do you have to say about this?’ Sheikha Molavi, infuriated, instructed the police officer present, who was handling an AK-47, ‘Hit this woman and send her to hell.’ The man, armed with a weapon, was about to take Yuliya off the stage of existence permanently, but Molavi said, ‘No, according to the guidance of the Quran, use the whip in soft places.’ The man lifted Yuliya and struck her hard on the harsh ground; dust rose from the ground! I thought Yuliya had died, but she, too, was remarkably resilient. Molavi ordered the police officer to throw these filthy people out. The officer dragged me, Yuliya, and Haji Asif out of the room and locked the gate of the mountain cave with a large stone plank. Haji Asif was also frightened. All three, with the fear of

Allah and saying 'Bismillah,' emerged from the Taliban committee's cave. We returned to the taxi we had come in and headed back to the city of Kandahar. We gave Haji Asif 3,000 Afghani and bid him farewell."

Yuliya and I spent the night stealthily in the previous hotel, and Haji Asif went to his daughter's house. The next morning, both Yuliya and I set out alone towards Kabul in the Lini service vehicles. Fortunately, we did not encounter any Taliban ambush on the way. When we got off the vehicle, Yuliya removed her burqa and took a breath of relief. Both of us went to our respective hotels for the night, and the trip to Kandahar ended without results.

Waking up in the morning, having tea for breakfast, and chatting, Yuliya suddenly said, "In the Pul-e-Sokhta area of Kabul, there is a hidden Orthodox church. What if we visit a monastery or the Orthodox church and talk to the monks there about the search for God? Perhaps they can help us." I replied, "Dear Yuliya, you are not a good companion. You always throw yourself under people's feet and cannot find any answers on your own." She laughed and said, "I am a good companion, but unfortunately, when people don't have answers to questions, they respond with violence. Otherwise, there is no religion or creed that requires you to know your religion well and then act according to the accepted faith. I said, "That's true. Let's go, there is an Orthodox church nearby."

Fortunately, it's Monday, and all the monks are present. We can ask our questions. Both of us went from our room towards the Orthodox church. A monk was sitting at the pulpit and giving a sermon. All worshippers were busy in their worship. The sermon of the monk of this monastery ended at 11 o'clock, and at the end, he asked if anyone had questions, they could ask their questions one by one.

During this time, Yuliya was the first to register and soon it was her turn to ask her question. The monk turned to the people and said, "Let the first questioner ask her question." Yuliya stood in a designated place, after showing her respect and introducing herself, she asked her question: "Reverend monk and honorable priest, I have been searching for God for a long time, but I cannot find Him. Do you have the address for God?" The priest, calmly and without any reaction, said to Yuliya, "Yes, I also know that you know that Jesus, the Son of God, ascended to the heavens. For now, access to God or the Father is impossible, but after inevitable death, you will meet God. Hopefully, you are content with this answer." Yuliya added, "Reverend monk, I mean the one and only God; if you could provide some information on this matter." The monk said, "I introduced the Son of God to you, but I don't have much information about the 'Father.' Thank you," Yuliya said and took her seat.

Several others also asked their questions, but Yuliya

and I left the church or monastery and went to one of the city's restaurants to have breakfast. To be honest, a lot of arguments and discussions started between me and Yuliya. I got tired of her pointless questions, and I told her directly, " I don't want you bastard anymore. In the end, you'll entrust my head to the executioner. I have a wife and children. Most importantly, I am known among the people as a believer, a pious and abstinent Muslim. I have made a name for myself, but you, the disgraced bastard, from which grave or hell did you proudly emerge to ensnare me?"

Yuliya smiled and said to me, "I don't want to give you up to be killed. I want to reveal the truths to you, and in this journey, I have become your companion. Now, see for yourself. It has been 1,400 years since we have been unaware of God. He has not manifested Himself through a prophet, nor has He destroyed any people with stone-bearing winds and birds, nor has He raised any storms. This clearly indicates that either God is indifferent, or He has withdrawn from being God."

I, being a Muslim, told Yuliya, "Dear companion! Honestly, it seems to me that you are a person without belief and faith. Please leave me. In no way and never will I be willing to abandon the religion of my ancestors and forefathers, which I have inherited for thousands of years. You, an atheist, are not someone I can be with. I will start an armed struggle against you. Yuliya was visibly frightened and said, "Dear companion, I

have never been an atheist or an infidel. I love God. I want to find Him. I want to talk to Him. Do you consider such thoughts as blasphemy?" I replied, "In any case... I am tired of being with you. I want to escape from you." She said, "You know, the most challenging escape is from oneself. Today, you have become a part of me, and we are so intertwined that we cannot live without each other. And if we do survive, perhaps we won't be completely sane. So please, be with me for a little while longer. I am confident that soon we will find the path and understanding of God. Later, I will thank you profoundly for being my companion."

I, too, was forced to tell myself that the condition of courage is not someone trusting you and then leaving you alone halfway. I said to her, "You're right, Yuliya. I will be with you for a short time, and later I will part ways with you because my strength and ability have run out."

We were unaware that the two individuals sitting at the adjacent table and having their meal were members of either the ISIS or Taliban criminal gangs. While we were still in conversation, suddenly, without us knowing or being informed of anything, those two individuals lifted Yuliya like a feathered pillow and threw her to the ground. They grabbed her under their filthy rags, brought her to the brink of death, and threatened my life. They told me, "If you want to continue living, step aside from this wicked person; otherwise, we'll treat

you just like we're treating this fatherless bastard. Your face won't look like a human anymore, but rather like one of those godless infidels, won't it? It's a warning to both of you. Reform yourselves, or our groups are active everywhere."

I asked one of them, "What is our sin, and what are you doing here?" He said, "This is a city of Muslims; there is no place for hypocrites and infidels in this ancient region, which has been revitalized by the victorious warriors. Those who have raised their heads high, even if their beliefs are a bit abnormal, have been turned into carrion by the holy warriors. Do you not remember Farkhunda and how he met his deserved fate? This individual who is with you must leave here immediately; otherwise, I will turn him into carrion, and I will send him to the hell of God. What's your purpose in asking where God is? What purpose do dogs have in trying to find God? You haven't become Muslim yet; you've become an infidel. It was one of the qualities of God that we gave you in our torment, and we made you grovel at the command of Allah. The attributes of God's severity in our existence led us to treat you like wandering dogs. Go and get lost." In the meantime, two individuals and finally all the people who were present in the restaurant for the purpose of having a meal, all rose from their places and joined in the second round of torturing Yuliya. They all stood up and beat Yuliya with their fists, kicks, and boots. In the end, they managed to torture her to the

extent of their ability. Some with their fists, some with sticks, and others with their boots trampled Yuliya under their feet and beat her mercilessly. Moreover, everyone was unanimous; everyone was saying, "To the bottom of hell, you infidel! You are an absolute infidel, the daughter of a dog. Where did you come from in the kingdom of lions, where they don't want even an inch of your donation from the teachings of the Quran, Sunnah, and the traditions of 1400 years ago? Everyone was saying, "This is not Tajikistan or Pakistan, where they stand in the story of the atomic bomb, space, and Mars but not in their own religious story. Here, we sacrifice everything for Islam, and a woman here is valued as much as property."

According to the guidance of the Quran, you have no right to come to a restaurant and eat bread with your face unveiled. Which shameless brother, husband, or family member are you? May God's curse be upon you, you infidel! Right now, hundreds of people present were incited by showing your face. Not only are we not tolerated here, but God's hell is also awaiting you. There, snakes, vipers, and thousands of other crawling and stinging creatures will deal with you. Here, in the homeland of lions, anyone who seeks ways of progress and self-discovery under the guise of infidel acts is sentenced to death. Soon, when Farkhunda receives the punishment, curse upon you and your shameless companion. While I was trembling with fear and shaking like a mountain goat, I grabbed Yuliya from under the feet

of the warriors and threw her over my shoulders. I paid for the food and left the restaurant, heading towards home. Until around 9:00 PM, blood was flowing from her head and face; she had become helpless. She was mumbling and sometimes complaining about God. Oh, merciful God, to what extent should I endure torture? Should I go without water until I find you, or will you be satisfied and reveal yourself to me? Hours later, she woke up from unconsciousness. I made tea with Greek medicines for her; we both drank tea and lamented the inhumanity of these people. We both confessed that we were terrified, and it became clear to us that in this ancient region, the birthplace of Zoroaster, Rumi, and Rudaki, no one should utter anything contrary to the commands of the Arabs; otherwise, they must face the consequences of punishment.

Yuliya was still bleeding from some wounds, and I was disheveled. I had to take her to one of the government clinics for bandaging. When I entered, a bearded doctor, seeing Yuliya's blonde hair, refused to treat her and said, "It's not in our law to show mercy to infidels. We want the generation of infidels to be wiped out from the face of the earth. Which communist infidel or atheist of the city are you, bringing her to our clinic?" He told me to leave from any way I came and take her away. Forced to leave that clinic, I went to one of the private clinics to get her some bandages and pain relief tablets. There, I faced another inappropriate encounter. The doctor, who had a trimmed beard and

relatively short mustache, asked, "This is not a Muslim; who is she?" I said, "Yuliya is my guest. Please, for God's sake, treat her wounds as she's bleeding." The doctor turned to me and said, "Here, in this country, treating non-Muslims is considered a crime. Nevertheless, I will bandage her wounds and give her a few pain relief tablets, albeit discreetly, but the fee is 1000 dollars." I told the doctor that the white coat indicated impartiality. Please be fair. He loudly responded, "If it's unfair, then justice costs an extra thousand dollars." As Yuliya was still in a weakened state, I had no choice but to pay and hurry her treatment.

The doctor and his team, consisting of a male nurse and a surgeon, cleaned Yuliya's wounds, gave her pain-relieving stitches and a few tablets. We were then discreetly dismissed from the clinic. I hurriedly took myself and Yuliya home via taxi. Yuliya needed a week of rest, and after some improvement, we decided to leave Afghanistan. With foreign passports, we managed to find a one-way ticket and travel to Dubai.

In the United Arab Emirates, a country supposedly following Islamic laws like Riyadh, it wasn't entirely true. In the UAE, a church, a mosque, a temple, and a bar could be situated on the same street, and people coexisted without issues. We spoke with a few individuals about the search for God, and most accepted Spinoza's theory, except for some mosque

imams who were rigid in their stance and reluctant to entertain any questions. One person, when asked about our quest for God, said, "Good luck. But according to Spinoza, the power of God is the same as His essence, and there is no distinction between the essence of God and the power of God. Spinoza's argument is that only the guidance of God comes from His essence, as He is the cause of Himself and the cause of all things. Therefore, the power of God, through which He and all existing things operate, is the same as His essence. Spinoza, a renowned European philosopher in the modern era, elaborated extensively on God in the first part of his most significant work, 'Ethics.'"

"He considered God as the essence possessing infinite attributes, and nature as the expression of His infinite attributes. Therefore, for Spinoza, the essence consists of the attributes and states, the three fundamental elements of reality. The most significant issue in Spinoza's philosophy is his view on the transcendence or non-transcendence of God from nature. In other words, whether nature, as the aggregate of states of God, is God Himself or not, whether God, in addition to manifesting in states, is a reality transcending them. To put it differently, whether Spinoza believes in 'pantheism,' asserting that God is the same as the whole of nature, including everything that constitutes it, or if he acknowledges the existence of God as transcendent from nature. In this context, based on Spinoza's text, the 'pantheism'

has been negated, and it has also been demonstrated that his proof for the existence of God is not the same as Anselm's ontological proof, but rather the proof of the truth-seekers, which establishes that God's existence is not only a mere existence but a necessary existence."

For Yuliya and me, the man's opinion was not as crucial as his conduct and attitude towards people. He considered all humans as the children of Adam and Eve, being knowledgeable in religious sciences himself and not unaware of contemporary sciences. He confessed that all humans are the descendants of Abu al-Bashar and Hawwa.

At the same time, another individual with a doctorate in theology and an interest in contemporary sciences, not only appreciated our question about the search for God but also guided us in the best way. He explained one of Spinoza's theories as follows: "Spinoza has expressed in his book 'Ethics' that in the world, there is only one essence, and that essence is God."

"God has not created nature separately; rather, God Himself is present in all of nature. In other words, He Himself is the manifestation of this nature, encompassing the planets, stars, animals, plants, and ultimately, humans, all of which share the attributes of God, and He has infused all aspects of the created nature with His own qualities. Do not make yourself wander in all directions; search for everything within

yourself. Spinoza adds that humans should elevate themselves to the highest stages of progress and excellence to be able to absorb all the attributes of God.”

The man spoke very eloquently and served as a good guide for Yuliya. Yuliya, respecting the first human above the limit, kissed his hands and mentioned during the kiss that his hands emit the scent of God.

During the farewell, the man told Yuliya, “The best way to reach your destination is to read the works of Rumi and especially Spinoza, and most importantly, search for everything within yourself. Whatever you desire is within you, not outside of you.” According to Molavi, in one aspect of existence, the infinite God, soul, and the spirit of the universe reside, while in the other aspect, the finite and ever-changing world is in contradiction and flux. All contradictions are related to multiplicity, and ultimately, multiplicity returns to unity. This world, contingent and created, is blessed every moment with the divine grace, in accordance with the will and power of God. As guided by that man’s teachings, Yuliya and I immersed ourselves in reading the works of the poet Rumi. In one of the pages, we found the following:

“Rumi’s works are replete with theological and monotheistic concepts. He mentions in one place concerning the claim of love: Everyone makes the claim of love, but few attain the reality of love. The primary condition for love is transcending the illusion

of self-preservation and breaking free from the confines of 'me and mine.' As long as you preserve your own self, you will not reach the essence of love. You must bear witness to the oneness of Truth with utmost sincerity and express it in words so that the path of knowledge may open up to you. Rumi has presented very beautiful insights into the nature of God and our human existence in the world. He not only possesses the ability to appreciate the benevolence of the Almighty but also understands well the sufferings we endure in this world. He endeavors, utilizing the geometry of his thoughts and knowledge, to alleviate human suffering and enhance its joy. According to Rumi, faith is the best response of humans to pains and sufferings. Pains that must be consciously accepted and, through the grace of faith, will become sweet and meaningful for us.

It also seems self-evident that at the beginning of the journey towards God, there is a direct relationship between the power of reasoning and the faith or love of humans, so that human rationality and logical reasoning guide their thoughts towards a better understanding of God and religion. However, it appears that in the higher stages of faith and love, rationality and logical thinking lose their credibility and relevance, and there is no need to rely on them. Throughout history, Eastern and Western philosophers have attempted to prove the existence of God through intellectual inquiry and logical reasoning. Nevertheless, most of

them ultimately arrived at results similar to Rumi's, affirming the existence and presence of God can only be confirmed through the spiritual eye and faith."

"Rumi believes that behind all phenomena in this world, there is a complete, conscious, and infinite existence with all the attributes and names of goodness hidden. Rumi refers to this existence as God. God is the eternal source of being and life. God is the Creator who has brought all existence from 'nothing' solely by His will. Rumi's thought revolves around the Almighty God. He is the same monotheistic individual who dissolves in the attributes and names of God.

The general understanding of Rumi's insight into recognizing this is quite clear. The Masnavi by Rumi covers various and diverse subjects, but if we were to summarize the essence of its content in one word, it would be 'God.' In fact, the Masnavi incorporates various themes that all converge and emanate from one point of light but can shine in different angles and aspects. Whether Rumi starts with reed and the story of the king and the maidservant or concludes with the story of the intelligent donkey, everywhere he speaks of God. All the issues and subjects are presented with God at the center and ultimately culminate in Him. Rumi's God is an enchanting God who loves him in sorrow and joy. His love nurtures Rumi's heart. This God is so captivating and endearing that He does not leave Rumi alone; instead, every moment, He portrays

another aspect of Himself and engages in love with these images and manifestations. Sometimes He calls Him the sun, sometimes the sea, and sometimes He praises Him as God. Occasionally, He describes Him with the beautiful name of love that has filled the entire existence of the universe.

“He is so enamored that he is willing to lose his own life, but for a moment, he is not a witness to the absence and gaze of God. His love (=God) has filled the entire existence, and Rumi, in his journey and spiritual path, has sought to be immersed in such love. As a result, Rumi becomes so submerged in the love of Shams that his entire being becomes filled with Shams. When Shams is absent, the pain of love begins. This initiation of pain is essentially the key to receiving God in the spiritual essence of oneself and all living beings. Sometimes, he shouts and sings like this: ‘I was a drop; now I have become the sea. I was a servant; now I have become the Master.’ When Rumi is deeply immersed in the pain of Shams, he loses himself like a raindrop lost in the sea and blends his soul so much in God that he no longer utters the voice of ‘I am the Truth’ and sets a guideline for us, the human beings, that seeking God is the path to finding the unique love. Myself and Yulia discovered more and became convinced that love is not sold in the market for us to buy. Love is not planted; love is not traded. So, how should one become a lover?

Yulia slowly, gradually fell in love with her mother. She

was too entangled behind her mother, and she went in search of her mother. In this regard, Rumi explains the matter as follows: There is no doubt that the concept of God is the most fundamental and essential topic in all of Rumi's works because all the issues raised in these works somehow relate back to God.

“There is no story, tale, or knowledge in the Masnavi that does not have a connection to the theme of God. Although Rumi presents a completely absolute, boundless, directionless, incomparable, and formless image of God, he considers this knowledge attainable, but it is specific to the poles that are realized through the soul and the intuitive perception of the heart. However, this knowledge is obtained through a relatively lengthy process, as follows:

1. Realizing love through seeing the effects and understanding the attributes of God.
2. Achieving union through love.
3. Attaining knowledge through love. This understanding (apart from intellectual perception) is not the result of thought and contemplation but the outcome of unity and becoming one with God. Therefore, complete knowledge of God is only achieved through devotion. Yes, a human has a heart capable of accepting divine light, and since there is no limit for divine light, there is no limit assumed for the heart either. Through such devotion, one becomes

intoxicated with God.

In another place, Yulia reads in Rumi's spiritual Masnavi: Rumi's joy and sorrow are all about letting go of human control and surrendering oneself to God. He considers love merely a ladder for humanity to reach the world of meaning. The Masnavi is, in fact, a spiritual epic that has reached a wide range of audiences, and its verses have found their way into popular culture. Yulia, now enamored with Rumi, spends her days engrossed in reading Rumi's books and works. She has even delved into Rumi's writings to understand how the dance of Sama (Sufi dance) is a form of self-discovery.

"As long as we do not know ourselves, we cannot claim to have known and worshipped God. According to Yulia: Most Muslims are traditionalists, people who have inherited Islam either geographically from their place of birth or inherited it from their ancestors' beliefs and have accepted it. Only a few, like Rumi, have been able to find themselves and God together. So, let's take steps towards finding ourselves; I, too, have endorsed his words and become his follower.

The first love Yulia found was the love with her mother. She delved into the love with her mother to the extent that she even reached the brink of madness. Fortunately, after each ecstasy, Yulia felt she had God with her. With each passing day, minute, and moment, Yulia got closer to God. Slowly, Yulia began to love all humans; she loved every person as they were, with

their forms and qualities. With each passing day, Yulia changed absolutely, and I became more content with her action of accepting every person as they are. This series continued for about six months. One day, Yulia, immersed in the spiritual works of Rumi, joyously exclaimed, 'I found it!'

I hurriedly asked her, 'What did you find?' Yulia said, 'I was in search of God, and I found myself.' It was one of the great sayings of Rumi that encouraged me on this path. Finally, I found myself before God.

I asked Yulia: How did you arrive at the result of all these questions regarding knowing God? Yulia told me: I discerned from the confused and dark minds of humans that they know their imaginary and self-made God well. In the search for God, I found myself amid the deluded and dark minds of people who know their false and self-made gods well.

I said, "What harm are you doing! How many gods exist from your perspective?" Yulia replied, "Not from my perspective, but according to the views of some individuals, there are two gods. One is where each person acts as their own advocate, and the wealthy, affluent, powerful, and lords consider wealth and power as their god, like the Hindus who worship the idols they create for themselves. The other is the true and real God, whom people have sometimes mistakenly approached in recognizing the immutable and compassionate God. They worship a substitute

god, which is pure disbelief, replacing it with their imaginations, so that if needed, these servants or their slaves can support them. But the immutable and most merciful God doesn't need their help; He is the great and self-sufficient God. Unfortunately, fewer individuals have achieved a true understanding in this regard.

I found God within myself, or rather, I found the compassionate and kind feeling within me towards all living beings, which are the attributes of God. Now, it is necessary to understand that divinity, the God within, the soul, and our real existence are within every human. Divinity is the same unity and inherent divinity that connects us to God and our soul. It is the same force of unity and eternal love. To understand and know Him, we must go beyond the limited and conditional mind, connect with the divinity within us during moments of union, silence, and seclusion with our divine nature.

If you believe that God exists within you, guiding you towards higher realms and directions, you will always be guided towards those elevated paths. If you believe that the God within you knows the answers to all your questions and tells you these answers at the right time, He will reveal them to you. If you believe that the God within me inspires and guides you in both good and bad times, always taking care of you, you will be directed towards paths filled with tranquility and where good

things always happen for you. If you believe that you deserve the most beautiful interactions and behaviors, you will be guided towards situations where people treat you in the best possible way. If you believe that you are worthy of conversing with the Lord, He will inspire you. Of course, under certain conditions, you will feel that the God within you is speaking to you. If you believe that you came to this world to achieve the best, you will be guided towards circumstances where the best opportunities are reserved for you, and so on.

Now, if you believe that the God within you, with open-heartedness, guides all abundant blessings, opportunities, and excellent conditions towards you, you will be directed towards them. If you believe that money and wealth are good things, you will be guided towards more wealth, entering a cycle where abundance, spirituality, prosperity, and faith in the Lord prevail. My dear fellow traveler, I learn all these things from the God within me. I have found God; God is within me, within you, and in every nook and cranny of the universe, speaking in all living and non-living entities.

See, my dear fellow traveler! Right now, the God within me is teaching me this lesson: Imagine that everyone has a God within themselves that, through the God within, they can connect to an infinite power. Now, the more cohesive your will is, the stronger the God within

you will be, and your relationship with the God of the universe will become firmer. Perhaps you occasionally have new and creative ideas or opinions about a subject that, according to this hypothesis, are sparks from the God within you that come to your mind.

From now on, it depends on your will how you deal with this spark. You can either add a log to this spark with every step you take towards that idea and enjoy the warmth of its flame in the future, or you can ignore it until this blind alley of your success slowly fades away and is forgotten.

Consider that you are forced to migrate to a rural area to continue your life. When you enter that area, you see that people there have to travel to another village with better facilities to buy their necessities, then what would you do in the face of such a situation? Like other villagers, you lament to yourself: if only there was a store in this area, or you actively seek a solution to establish a store in that area. Without a doubt, the God within has brought this spark to the minds of most people in that village, wishing there was a store in that area; however, there was no will to take the God within and place it in the hands of the God of the universe and realize this idea.

The difference between successful individuals and others is the value they place on the God within them. One important point that you, dear fellow traveler, need to understand is that the God within and the

God of the universe are one and the same. The term “understanding” here refers to how an individual has found their own God. In mysticism and self-knowledge, the God within us is referred to as the pure conscience, and it is also called innocence and awareness. God is within the realm of mysticism and self-knowledge, and religions and the masses have fabricated it from mysticism.

When it is said that God is the best listener, it means that the pure and innocent conscience is the best listener. Our conscience does not need loud speeches or loud crying because God is closer to us than our jugular vein, and our “intention” is enough for Him to hear us. When they say that God is aware of everything, the primary meaning is the pure and innocent conscience. To give the masses a conceptualization of conscience, they have called it God, and after that, the masses search for God outside themselves. This level of self-recognition can be called immersion in mysticism. When people become so close to God, they no longer distinguish between consciousness, conscience, and their own God. In other words, those who are familiar with God are never without conscience, and mystics of God are never a moment without God and are never far from God.

The singularly cognizable issue in the system of existence is self-awareness. Everything else is not an issue but rather a challenge, and perhaps even self-

awareness itself is not a problem but a “secret.” Often, humanity thinks it knows itself, and many individuals believe they know others as well! The more dangerous aspect is when psychologists worldwide assume that they know themselves and others. If you believe you know yourself, and this belief is not based on reality, it means you have fallen victim to a mental delusion, and the nature and effect of this disease are contradictory. It generates truth and falsehood, creates good and bad, selects the good as its model and belief, and views anyone without trust and faith as strange and foreign. Each person, with their own set of beliefs and good intentions, sees lack of harmony and collaboration as an enemy. Just as the nature of the mind against reality is nothing more than mere guesswork, assumptions, and false imaginations. Yuliya, addressing me, said, “Dear fellow traveler! I regret that humans perceive other humans based on their own interpretations of good or bad when it’s not the case. Each person, in their essence, nature, and being, experiences life with their own inner God. If you think positively of the inner God of that person, you consider them good; however, believe me, if someone does not align with your beliefs, it does not mean they are not a good person, but rather it’s your perception.”

The God within me, a kind, compassionate, honorable, cheerful, and modest God, sees all humans positively. It becomes evident that by adopting such a mindset that considers all humans as part of myself, I am not

this person; this is my inner God. Fortunately, I have found this, and truly, one of the other qualities that my inner God appreciates is that I am not striving to have titles like Doctor, Engineer, Poet, Writer, etc. I want to distance myself from all these things and present my personal identity as it is to everyone. You know that every person has a dual personality: one is a false personality, meaning what they want to portray themselves as, which can be called a false personality, and the other dimension is the same personality and the inherent nature of individuals, which exists solely within themselves. Now, I want to be this very thing that is my nature for everyone. Therefore, it indicates that I have found myself and my inner God.

Now, the otherness of my identity is reliance on the Lord and myself. Nothing can grant me identity. Neither my place of residence, nor my job, nor my car, nor my house, nor my knowledge. Knowing them is for nourishing the ego, and therefore, knowing them, and even meeting about them, keeps me away from my essence. Even these words are not me. These words are a small indication towards meeting with the true essence of myself and you. They are a means for self-discovery and awareness.

Dear fellow traveler! Except for yourself, now if I invite someone, if you want to get to know me, you will be kept away from me. I invite you to come hand in hand, let's get to know our true selves, not the persona that

is common in the market. The one that is common in the market is for deceiving others, not for self-awareness. Of course, after much effort, I have come to realize that mental constructs lead to distance from the essence, and the more I discard mental constructs, the closer I get to my essence, becoming self-aware and God-aware.

Dear companion! I suggest to you that connecting with the God within is the knowledge of the omniscient God. Playing with God's love saves you in life; salvation from life means reaching tranquility, enjoying the present moment. Connecting with the God within brings you peace. Inner peace arises when we have the imagination to trust and entrust our concerns to God, who cares about our present and future, so why should I worry about the affairs of life when God exists? God is omniscient and knows the best time to act.



CONNECTION WITH THE INNER GOD

God is aware of us, so talk to Him as much as you can because God is the savior of all of us. In my love letters to God, I have tried to express the heartfelt words about the topic of connecting with the Inner God. Therefore, be sure to read them. Trust in God frees us from everyday worries. We become detached from our daily concerns and focus on what we have. So trust in God and entrust your life to Him, so that your life takes its excellent path towards happiness and perfection with more speed and assurance. He is always with you and within you. Do you know that it is this 'me' of yours that makes it difficult to see God? Surely, if we succeed in burying our egos in the black soil, we will see God as we truly perceive all His attributes. Connecting with the Inner God can save you."

We all want to succeed at every stage of life. Therefore, in every moment, we strive and make every effort to achieve success and happiness in life. One of the things we must do is practice relaxation and meditation. Meditation and contemplation bring us closer to success and happiness in life and strengthen our connection with God.

I know, and you know, that God is present in every moment of our lives. He is in constant communication with us, so take time for your God, talk to Him, get to know your Inner God, express love to God, live your life, and ultimately, you will see that all aspects of your life are moving towards improvement.

Dear companion! As I mentioned before, the love of my mother brings me into line. It became clear to me that love with God has a hundred percent positive result.



ETERNAL MOMENT NOW

God exists in the present moment. You can feel the glory and greatness of being with God in the present moment with your whole being. Life means joy, laughter, happiness, delight, and wonder with God in the present moment. After death, a person deeply immerses into the pleasure and joy of being in the present moment. Bring all of yourself to the magical moment to feel God. Grasp it in your hands and enjoy the delight. The grandeur of existence and the enchanting power of God are within you right now. He is here, capable of anything. So right here, you are powerful to do anything you will. You will feel God beside you, meeting Him where you are right now.”

“God, the Almighty, in the present moment, which encompasses the expanse from eternity to eternity, is immersed in the pleasure and love of the presence of His servants. He calls you in this very moment. He summons you to taste the beauty of life’s wonders right here, right now, in the arms of His miracles. He smiles joyfully now that you are immersed in the delight, joy, and melody of love in the present moment. Being lost in the pleasure and ecstasy of the current moment is enough.

Dear companion! If you are interested, I convey this message from the God within me to you, which is expressed in the form of two questions. Yuliya opened the conversation by saying, ‘Throughout history, humanity has embarked on various explorations to find answers to their inner questions, but various sciences have failed to provide an answer to the inner power of humans. They have not even been able to provide an accurate definition of the inner self, and we have always been confused and bewildered about it. Now, we want to address two important questions that have always been raised for humans: Why should we enter this world? And what mission do we have? Truly, why should we experience this world and why should our lives come to an end after a few short mornings? What are the points in this story? We are all seeking tranquility in life, but we usually don’t know the way to achieve it. We engage in many activities that are often futile. Perhaps outwardly, we appear beloved,

attractive, calm, and energetic, but we know we are playing a role. So, what should we do to achieve inner peace? This is the greatest question for humanity. The experience of tranquility means reflecting the voice of God in one's being. It means listening to the inner call. This experience is so powerful and boundless that when a person reaches this stage, they transcend all times."

"In a way that he himself did not anticipate. In fact, connecting to the inner self means attaching oneself to a limitless and vast package. The impact of the presence and the melody of God's voice saturates my life's melody with love and divinity. Because the work of this presence is, in reality, to assist us in achieving our goals and missions. This calling constantly comes to us in various forms in our lives and seeks to connect with us. Our duty here is to understand the meaning and significance of these calls and not pass over them easily. These calls arise from the subconscious perceptions of humans, which everyone possesses to some extent. For example, if you reflect on your past life, you will surely recall moments when, as you wanted to do something or say something, words spontaneously flowed from your tongue, or that task was suggested to you from somewhere. This occurrence signifies a proper alignment and harmonization with the divine essence. These alignments place equivalent forces correctly on top of each other. Not randomly, but as a consequence with galactic proportions. Human

beings are something beyond a simple being. We have something within ourselves that is always ready for an explosion and movement. We must lend an ear. Bringing this feeling into life is not a strange task. It is enough to feel this energy and make use of it. It has been a long time since the human race forgot these sensations. Before putting on the garment of the body, we were part of God's existence and borrowed all the attributes of our Creator from Him. When we connect to the spiritual soul, we receive pulses of energy source in various forms such as sound, message, reminder, love, intuition, and more."

"We must be vigilant to move on the right path. Often, we act contrary to what we should. When we distance ourselves from our spiritual source, we see the terrifying consequences, and it's only due to our departure from our own source. However, by connecting to this powerful force, we can eliminate any undesirable trait or ailment from our existence, and that is when the purified soul shows us the way. Now, let's enter human life from before its birth with an analytical perspective. Existence, intelligently, guides all beings on the path of elevation, and we are a part of this universal consciousness. For example, consider that a drop of our blood contains all the characteristics of our existence, but once it exits the body, it loses the ability to return and becomes dry and useless after a while. When we distance ourselves from our source, we become like that drop of blood, with the difference

that we can return and reconnect with our source. Humans have willingly stepped into this earthly world and have chosen the path of evolution with their consent. If we are here, the reason is our own choice. The intuition within us, like an agent from the pre-birth realm, is supposed to make us alert and aware in this earthly realm so that our thoughts are divine, and we become a reflection of our Creator. Every event in our life plays a significant role in completing the divine plan. Whenever you encounter a difficulty, ask yourself what lesson it holds for you and seek answers. Instead of blaming others and complaining about fate, we should be receptive to spiritual teachings.

“In the infinite wisdom, there is no flaw or deficiency in our lives. A blind person, a poor person, a disabled person, a mentally disturbed person, and so on, with all their shortcomings, are part of evolution. Someone who is visually impaired and benefits from their inner perceptions does not judge and is more grateful. Our source is the divine world and pure intuitions. We allow this source to be present in our lives for our evolution. This source takes on material forms to manage various dimensions of our lives, so that we humans, after birth, become completely oblivious to everything in our earthly attire.

Well, dear companion, our main goal in the search for God is for me to hereby confess that we've been through a lot, I've troubled you a lot, subjected you to

the torture of humans, but I give you the good news that those who find God, like me, have this feeling of love for others, love for humanity. That's the love of God, and when individuals have this quality, they become God-loving or God-conscious. Dear companion! I am sure to say that the powerful and mighty God has granted me, above all, the sense of needlessness and liberation. I have a strange inner self-sufficiency, and I understand that the essence of a human being is of the same essence as the soul of God, and the soul of God can do anything it wants. So, oh unaware human, there is an astonishing power of the Creator in your existence. Will yourself by the desire of your soul; you can accomplish the greatest and most challenging tasks.

“Dear fellow traveler! I was able to realize, after going through a series of difficulties, that God has been within me, within nature, and everywhere. However, I was unaware of myself, wandering into temples, pulpits, and mosques. Now, I have understood well that the greatest temple, mosque, church, monastery, Kaaba, and all sacred places are within my own heart. When we have faith, the secrets of the universe are in the hands of God, and that very God is in your heart. So, you are the most powerful God-seeker. I can know right now what humanity will achieve a thousand years from now, for this knowledge is not from me; it is divine knowledge residing within me, called the soul. All the mysteries of God are within me and all

humans because with God, with all His greatness, He is in our hearts. Dear companion! You know that none of the prophets had formal education, yet all of them derived from this mysterious knowledge of God within themselves, guiding the universe in various ways with different interpretations. Therefore, dear fellow traveler! All humans can turn to their hearts, their consciousness, where the voice of God is heard from their subconscious; meaning the prophets quickly received their strange knowledge from the source of the Creator. You know that the prophets, without reading or writing and without literacy, became the guides for millions of people; they had only found the path of communication with their hearts through their spirit and consciousness. The inner spirit knows the secrets of all the sages in the world and the solution to all the miracles of humanity. But we must believe, you, me, and all humans, that the God of existence is within me and you, and He is our guide. Although the ego is often in conflict with the spirit, we must have faith.

“Actions contrary to my and your spirit do not guide. Such matters are guided by the ego, but if we can polish our spirit, then in no way can Satan or the rebellious ego accept anything beyond us. The incredible power within you knows the thoughts of all sages, the mysterious force within you knows all the secrets of the world, the inner force in you knows extraordinary ways, even miracles.

“The mind is infinite, answering our questions every moment. Ask from your heart; it is the voice of God you’ll hear. The voice of God is the sound of our souls; God is within the depths of our being, guiding us every moment. God’s wisdom has made me so wise that I become a gathering of the two seas. All the sciences of past and future centuries are within me; the inner illumination within me is brighter than the sunlight, and this is my God. The greatest gift from God is His own spirit for you, guiding you to higher levels every moment, second by second. God has sown His good words and guidance in my heart every moment, and I see new illuminations, so I have found God within myself. I found God without having to follow the guidance of imams, sheikhs, priests, day and night in crying and lamentation. I found Him through the guidance of love, wiping the tears of love, helping the oppressed with parents, not through ostentatious and theatrical worship. So blessed is every person who, by serving humanity and expressing love in various forms, sees the face of God in the veiled and naked bodies of humans and becomes an enlightened one. Every person, like me, can, when realizing and believing that their God is within them, observe all the mental hells and heavens that the human mind has created in this world. Salutations to those who worship God through serving the needy and oppressed humans and have found Him.

The voice of the heart of an enlightened person is connected to God's throat. What they hear is from God, and what is guided is from God; thus, God is within me and you.

I heard from my inner powers to a corner of myself, a whisper of God's throat in my heart that He is within me and with me. What they had taught me about God was as if God, the stern, biased, sour-faced enemy of humanity, after people die, makes them the food of snakes and vultures, or the fodder of Hellfire. But the only thing that creates distance between God and humans is this filthy stomach that has made us a waste-producing machine. First of all, we must create this damned thing with silent contentment, and we must accept that death is not the beginning of misfortune but the beginning of a wonder. I heard all these words from God within myself, and by hearing the kind voice of God, I realized that all the talk about the hell of snakes and vultures is mostly baseless. God is very merciful, compassionate, and full of affection.

The legendary force within is the greatest power that can bring you and me to our great goals in every possible way, and this force is your God that performs miracles within you.

"Whenever I listen to the voice of God through the window of my heart, I attain great tranquility. He speaks the most beautiful words in my ear and guides me towards the right path. The God within me can

teach me sciences that I have traversed over the years in an instant. God teaches me that I am a soul of God who came to this world for a journey and will return to my origin, always being with Him.

God teaches me and whispers to me to go and guide humans, for I am within the soul of every being. God inspires me that He is always with you from the moment of your birth within you and within every soul. Do not be confused and frightened; proceed forward, step by step, until the day you meet me. Blessed companion! I have found God after much searching but in a very simple, easy, and close manner. I now hear His voice from my heart, saying, 'I am not alone in the paths of solitude; I am waiting for someone who is waiting for you. I am in a heart that beats for you, in a smile that takes a breath twice at the sight of you, and in the fragrance of fresh bread. God is in my heart and soul, and I am in God; God is in all of nature, and all of nature is in the existence of God.'

Yuliya celebrated this success and proved that God is perceptible and even visible in some places; however, the complete power of God is your own unconscious feeling; congratulations.

End