

## SUFI MOVEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY

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At the outset, let me make clear that all mystical activities have been forbidden in Turkey by the decision about the closure of dervish lodges and hermitages, no. 1925/677, dated 30<sup>th</sup> November 1925, of Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Though it was probably planned to be valid during the next 10-15 years, it is still valid in today's Turkey because of some unfavorable political developments, which occurred in subsequent periods. Therefore, there is no legal mysticism, tariqahs and places, which they can legally carry on their activities. In other words, it is not possible to mention any disciplines that are traditionally living and training in dervish lodges and hermitages, nor of any dervish lodge that has its own budget and program. However, actually there is a new style of mystical life and tariqahs, which has relatively changed, but is not precisely adapted with modern social and legal conditions. This paradox between legal conditions and social realities has led to some social and psychological problems.

Firstly, by the enforcement of this law, mystical organizations have become illegal, underground structures, and it has become difficult to determine what people believe and do for mysticism. For this reason, knowledge about today's mystical activities usually depends on police reports and inquiries or press releases, which are generally exaggerated and speculative. The estimated number of tariqah members varies between two to seven million: the result of this confusion. Exploitation of people having tendency to mysticism by religious leaders and politicians is another unexpected result of this contradictory situation. Secondly, with this prohibition, the opportunity of freely reinterpreting and improving mystical doctrines and practices in terms of new changing social conditions has been impossible, because discussing alternate ideas and practices is no longer possible. Thirdly, several undesirable controversies sometimes appeared between devout people and state officials and then some devout people fell out with the state; and, moreover, a hostility toward the state emerged among devotees. Eventually, some policies of state, even like Red Crescent and Society for the Protection of Children, could not find strong support among the public. Fourthly, tariqahs and dervish lodges were organized as a legal associations or charitable funds to protect themselves from a legal prosecution, and this has led to a belief that different political and religious movements are taking the same approach. Even some groups that are known to be against mysticism were mentioned with some tariqahs.

### I. TARIQAH OF NAKSHİBENDİYE

The most powerful tariqah in Turkey is Nakshibendiye. It was established by Hoca Bahaeddin Nakshibend in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and called by names such as Nakşibendiye-i Ahrariye, Nakşibendiyye-i Müceddidiyye, and Nakşibendiyye-i Halidiyye. Although the most prevalent branch of this tariqah is Nakşibendiyye-i Halidiyye, which was founded by Halid-i Bağdadi, it can be said that members of Nakşibendiyye-i Müceddidiyye are also active. The main branches of Nakhsi-Halidi are as follows:

**İskender Paşa Community:** This community consists of persons devoted to the famous Nakşi sheikh Mehmed Zahid Kotku (d. 13 November 1983). Kotku confronted many problems during the period he lived because the tariqahs were forbidden, but he carried on his

activities according to laws. Performing two difficult activities together; reinforcing people's weakened faith and the Sufi movement is considered to be his best skill. Kotku, who considered ignorance as a sign of "commanding flesh" (voice of desires of the self-nefs-i emmâre) gave great importance to scholarly knowledge. For him, knowledge is the shortest way taking people to heaven and so he engaged in scholarly knowledge throughout his life. He based teaching of Hadith in Sufi activities of his dervish lodge, and in this context he indoctrinated Gümüşhanevi's work named Ramuzu'l-Ehadis. After he died in 1983, Prof. Esat Coşan superseded him. According to Coşan, the aim of Sufi training was to emulate Prophet Muhammed and learning and living with ethics of the Qur'an. Sufi competents should give importance to aesthetics and avoid from cacoethes as gossip and calumny, which damage endearment between people, because if a community does not have love for each other, they have no chance to serve humanity and Islam. The community that was under guidance of Coşan, who gave importance to training people, began to publish a *Journal of Islam (İslam Dergisi)*, beginning in September 1983. The first article belonged to Coşan with his pen-name Halil Necatioğlu. Coşan indicates in this article that they aimed to improve the education and training of Muslims. Besides this journal, the Iskender Paşa community has also three publications, which are the monthly *Woman and Family*, quarterly *Science and Art* and *Rose Child* for children.

The *Journal of Islam* especially deals with nearly all issues related to Islam and publishes articles and interviews about disciplines such as the doctrine of Islam (*Akaid*), Islamic Law (*Fıkıh*), Hadith (*Hadis*), Interpretation of Qur'an (*Tefsir*), Sufism (*Tasavvuf*), and the History of Islam and Islamic institutions. Naturally, interviews with Zahid Kotku and leading articles of Halil Necatioğlu have been published in the journal. The main feature of the Islamic journal is that it approaches every activity in Islamic world. Wherever in the world a Muslim has a problem, the *Journal of Islam* tries to publish an article about it.

**Erenköy Community:** This community consists of persons devoted to Sheikh Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu. Born in Adana in 1892, Sami Ramazanoğlu, is believed to come from the Üçoklar tribe of the Oğuz clan of Turks, and his family is related to Halid b. Velid. Ramazanoğlu completed his education in Adana and then went to Istanbul for university. He graduated from Faculty of Law with first degree. For a time he attended dervish lodge of Gümüşhaneli, which is one of the Nakşi-Halidi lodges. Later he became affiliated with another Nakşi-Halidi lodge named Kelami dervish lodge and its sheikh Erbilli Mehmet Esat (d. 1931). He returned to Adana when dervish lodges were closed. He preached in Cami-i Kebir (The Great Mosque). He maintained his tariqah activities by means of conversation circles. Meanwhile he worked as an accountant in order to earn his bread.

Sufi activities of this lodge are based on interpretation of Qur'an. In addition, Ramazanoğlu deals with some issues like the basis of faith, ethics and education of the self. Mentioning of God (Zikrullah) is a nourishment of heart and touchstone of love and faith. The heart continually should be within this remembrance and mentioning situation while he is working or sleeping. He always emphasized that less eating, less sleeping and less speaking are principles of Sufism. He saved his good manners throughout his life, gave importance to atoning and avoiding breaking one's heart. He worked through all his life to death, because he considered that earning money lawfully was the essence of worship.

After the death of Sami Ramazanoğlu in 1984, although Musa Topbaş superseded him, it is said that the committee is led by four persons on tariqah activities. The community began to publish the *Altınoluk Journal* beginning from March 1986. It is argued in this journal that it

is not necessary to perform a radical revolution in order to construct an Islamic order but it must be aimed to train people.

When people start to live an Islamic life completely, a social transformation spontaneously will become true. Altınoluk Journal, which aims to generalize and enforce sense of faith and responsibility of worship in society, does not prefer to try to prove truths of faith by means of positive sciences like other communities. It upholds addressing people's hearts within a Sufi discipline.

The power of this community does not come from the huge number of its members, but by their prosperity. The community uses this power for financing university students who have tendency to Islam and thus it becomes much more known and popular in the university community. It carries on its cultural activities by two funds named *Foundation of Aziz Mahmud Hüdayi* and *Culture and Education Fund of Muradiye*.

**İsmail Ağa Community:** The leader of the community is Sheikh Mahmud Ustaosmanoğlu. The community's name comes from İsmail Ağa Mosque, where Ustaosmanoğlu performs prayer leadership (*imam*). Mahmud Ustaosmanoğlu, who was born in Trabzon in 1929, is the successor of his sheikh, Ahıskalı Ali Haydar (d. 1960), who was an important Nakşi-Halidi sheikh. After the death of his sheikh, Mahmud Ustaosmanoğlu superseded him and maintained his respect to Zahid Kotku, who was sheikh of the İskender Paşa community. After Kotku died, Ustaosmanoğlu began to be more active and independent. According to this community, women must wear a black garment covering their bodies from head to feet; men must wear a full beard, shalwar and cassock. Sheikh always defines the lives of members thoroughly as to how and what kind of relations they make with others and how must they live. İsmail Ağa community is against modernism and westernization and states this notion clearly and sharply.

The community has the İsmail Ağa Mosque, Course of Quran and a student residence for boys, Course of Quran and a student residence for girls, and important potential in some cities like Trabzon, Kayseri, Tokat, Adapazarı, İzmit. It also has great followers in Istanbul's counties like Üsküdar, Beykoz, Ümraniye. Though it is a tribal community, it has become widespread over time. Except in the Southeastern Anatolian Region, it generally is not common in rural places, but it is prevalent in big cities. Its followers come from every occupation and age, however most are middle-aged. Giving great importance to miracles, auspices and sight of sheikh, disciples always await help from him. Legends about help and auspices of sheikh are narrated everywhere by his disciples. It is said that disciples consult with their sheikh about almost every issue, even for activities of daily life.

The followers of this community prefer a dark and silent room for making *zikir* (remembering God), and they close their eyes and cover themselves with a blanket. The number of *zikir* is minimum five thousand and *zikir* is generally made after morning and *yatsı* (a time about two hours after sunset) prayers. The ritual of *zikir* called *hatme*, which is made collectively, is required for becoming true of disciple's wishes, forgiving sins and the spiritual improvement of the disciple. Affiliation of sheikh and death are extremely important, because it is believed that these affiliations bring them to the love of God. These are even accepted more important than *zikir* for spiritual improvement.

**İşıkçılar:** This community, which was constructed by a Nakşi-Halidi sheikh Abdülhakim Arvasi (d. 1943), is known as İşıkçılar because its sheikh's surname is Işık. After the Mongol emperor Hülagu, who was ancestor of Abdülhakim Arvasi, invaded Bağdat, his tribe immigrated to Anatolia and settled in the Arvas village of Van and then they built a big

mosque and dervish lodge over six hundred years. The fame of Abdülhakim Arvasi increased after Necip Fazıl Kısakürek wrote a book about him, named *He and Me*.

This community, which became famous with its economic and educational activities after 1980, now has a big holding, a news press, and a TV channel that broadcasts throughout Turkey. In addition, it has *Journal of Human and Universe* and *Journal of Turkey Child*. Because of the old age of Hüseyin Hilmi Işık, Dr. Enver Ören manages the community today.

In addition to Nakşi-Halidi communities, which are common all over the country, there are different tariqahs that are regional, like the Nakşi-Halidi tariqah of Muhammed Lütüfi (d. 1956), which was known as *Alvar İmamı* or *Efe Hazretleri*; *Ehramcılar* community of İsmail Hakkı Toprak (d. 1973) in Sivas and Malatya; the community of M. İhsan Oğuz, which is active in Kastamonu and the surroundings; the community of Musa Efendi who is known as Dede Paşa (d. 1974) in Erzincan and Bayburt.

**Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan Community:** This community consists of persons devoted to Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan (d. 1959), and is known as *Süleymancılar* in public. Tunahan was born in Bulgaria in 1888. He descended from İdris Bey who was assigned to Tuna as leader of there by Fatih Sultan Mehmet. His father Hocaşade Osman was a great teacher at Satırlı Madrasah in Silistre.

Süleyman H. Tunahan went to Satırlı madrasah for elementary education. Later he went to Istanbul in 1913 for education in Fatih Sahn-ı Seman Madrasah and Süleymaniye. When he was a student in madrasah, he attended to circle of guidance of Selahaddin b. Mevlana Siracüddin, who was a Nakşi sheikh, and he completed his spiritual journey to God (seyr-i süluk) near him. Then he began to make activities as a Nakşi Müceddidi sheikh with his authorization in 1936 and he maintained these activities until his death in 1959. He did not leave any works about Sufism except for a book named *Letters and Vowel Points of Quran with a New Method*. It shows that his aim was only teaching Qur'an because of political and social conditions of that period.

It is said that a committee managed the community for a time. In this committee, four persons are prominent: Kemal Kacar, Hüseyin Kaplan, Mehmed Arıkan, and Seyfeddin Alkan, and next, other students of Süleyman Tunahan like as Hüseyin Kumaş, Harun Reşit Tüylüoğlu, Hilmi Türkmen, Mehmed Emre, Lütfü Davran, Mustafa Özaltın, Mustafa Çırpanlı. However, Kemal Kacar, who is a student of Süleyman Tunahan, undertook this mission alone himself. Later Kemal Kacar was elected to the Turkish National Assembly as representative of Kütahya and he was a member of Turkish Parliaments Union in The Council of Europe.

The community of Süleyman Tunahan headed by Kemal Kacar is the first group that started Islamic activities among Turkish workers in Europe as well as dissemination of courses of Qur'an in Turkey. It first constructed courses of Qur'an, later Centers of Islamic Culture in 1974 and Union of Centers of Islamic Culture in 1975. There were more than 150 mosques of this community in Germany alone by the year 1990. In Turkey, there are more than 1000 associations related to *Federation of Charities to Students*. This situation shows that this community grants approximately 100,000 students.

There was a journal named *Ufuk* and a daily press named *Sabah* and some editions by *Fazilet Publications*, and today a university student group has started to publish a journal called *Genç Akademi*.

## Critics

The Nakşı groups mentioned above mostly belonged to Nakşibendiye Halidiye branch of the tariqah. As far as we could determine, only Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan is a representative of Nakşı Müceddidi branch of it. But eventually both chains of two branches agreed on the great sheikh İmam Rabbani Ahmed Faruk Serhindi of Nakşibendiye tariqah. Therefore, it can be said that doctrines of all of these branches are based on Imam Rabbani's book named *Mektubat*.

The book, which never makes concessions about Seriah and emphasizes that it must not have any element conflicting with Seriah in the mystical convenances and rules, is the main book of all Nakşı groups. Because of this, mentioned sheikhs of Nakşibendiye always put the words in very different manners and ways that their purposes are revitalizing the Seriah, and they struggle for adopting society to Islam. The members of the tariqah carry on their activities in compliance with the principle of "solitude within society" (halvet der encümen), mostly with no engagement with any dervish lodge, instead living in society with other people in close relationship. Considering all of Turkey, members of this tariqah are mostly common in cities like Istanbul, which was the capital city of the Ottoman Empire; also in centers of population like Izmit, Adapazari, Bursa, Balıkesir, Bayburt, Gumushane; in cities of Black Sea Region like Trabzon, Tokat, Kastamonu; in cities of the Central Anatolia Region such as Sivas, Kayseri, and Ankara; in Antalya of Mediterranean Region; in Izmir of the Aegean Region; and in cities of Eastern and Southeast Anatolia Region such as Malatya (Darende), Erzurum, Erzincan, Adıyaman, Siirt, and Bitlis. From the point of density and diversity, Fatih county in Istanbul is the most common place which they live in. Next counties are in this context, Üsküdar, Beykoz, Ümraniye, Sarıyer, Eyüp, Eminönü, Erenköy and Çağlayan.

## II. TARIQAH OF HALVETIYE

Tariqah of Halvetiye was constructed by Ebu Abdillâh Siracüddin Ömer b. Ekmeleddin el-Lahci el-Halveti (d. 1349 or 1397) in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It spread out by means of the successors of Yahya Şirvani (d. 457), who was registered secondary master of tariqah.

Today, the most important branch of Halvetiye is Cerrahiye, which was constructed by Nurettin Cerrahi (d. 1721) in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Istanbul. Sertarikzade Emin (d. 1759) expanded this branch. Twenty-four of 29 dervish lodges of Cerrahiye were in Istanbul until closure of lodges in 1925. Only a dervish lodge in Karagömrük could survive in the difficult conditions of Turkey's early republic period. While İbrahim Fahreddin was sheikh of that lodge, he became caretaker (türbedar) of the lodge with closing lodges and he succeeded to carry on the activities of tariqah. He left his post to his successor Muzaffer Özak (d. 1985) in 1964.

In the period of Muzaffer Özak, the tariqah of Cerrahiye gained a considerable number of followers, especially in United States and Europe. After he died in 1985, Sefer Dal, who was another successor of İbrahim Fahreddin, replaced him. This tariqah now carries on its activities legally through the *Association of Investigation and Sustentation of Turkish Sufi Music*. As well as many foreigners, many famous musicians like Ahmet Özhan and Canan Ceylan are members of this tariqah. Religious sessions are organized on Monday and Thursday evenings in Karagömrük, headed by Ömer Tuğrul İnancı, and *zikir* ritual is made.

Şabaniye is another branch of tariqah of Halvetiye that is active in Turkey now. It was constructed by Şeyh Şaban Veli (d. 1569), coming from Kastamonu and survives to this day. Mustafa Özeren was sheikh of this tariqah up to 1982. He emphasized that people should live

according to Qur'an and Sunnah and avoid doing injustice to other people. After his death tariqah has receded.

Besides these tariqahs, tariqahs like as Uşşakilik and Ticaniyye of Halveti exist in different regions in Turkey. However, they do not have efficient activities nowadays.

### III. TARIQAH OF KADIRIYYE

Tariqah of Kadiriye, constructed by Abdülkadir Geylani (d. 1167) in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, is the most common tariqah in world of Islam. It entered Anatolia through Eşrefoğlu Abdullah Rumi (d. 1470?) in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and it came to Istanbul through Ismail Rumi (d. 1631) in the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Actually, this tariqah is very weak nowadays. Some dervish lodges of Kadiriye seems like touristic show groups, like Mevleviye and Cerrahiye, and they do not have a system of Sufi education in these lodges. Some of them even display mentioning God (*zikir*) in large places in Europe. Some of them have regional character. Today, the most important Kadiri group is tariqah of Hayri Efendi, which is headed by Sheikh Mustafa Hayri.

After his death, Haydar Baş superseded him. Kadiries has spread widely and they carry on activities by means of Fund of Scholarly Studies (*Ilmi Araştırmalar Vakfı*). Center of this fund is in Trabzon, but it works in different cities in Turkey with its more than hundred offices. The community publishes two journals named The Summary (*İcmal*) and The Advice (*Öğüt*), and it attracts attention with its educational activities, political tendency and opposition to dialog between religions.

### IV. TARIQAH OF RIFAIYE

This tariqah is one of the oldest tariqahs that was constructed in Iraq in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century by Seyyid Ahmet Rifai (d. 1182). It is also called Tariqah of Ahmediye because of its sheikh's name. This tariqah is famous for their playing with fire and snakes and inserting knitting needles and knives into the body. The aim of all of these weird actions is to increase the number of members of it. However, these actions are believed to take place after the death of the constructor.

The most efficient sheikh of Rifaiye was Kenan Rifai (d. 1950) in the late period of Turkey. Kenan Rifai was born in 1867 in Selanik, which was an Ottoman city at that time. His father was Abdülhalim Bey, who was the son of Hacı Hasan Bey, and his mother was Hatice Canan Hanim. According to Kenan Rifai, refinement of everything depends on the refining of the person. If one cannot resist one's bad manners of his nature, he cannot make fine contacts with other people. He who is of no use to his own is no use to others. One who has not love and faith is hungry forever. The base of all wisdoms is love of God, which is realized by loving all creatures. Kenan Rifai emphasized that pleasant worship is made as if one is seeing by God at that moment. So, Kenan Rifai did not esteem to turban cloth, cassock and prayer-beads, but the heart. He stated that no science is possible without wisdom; the aim of all sciences is knowing God and the aim of all actions is good ethics. He gave great importance to humility and silence, and mentioned that one can improve by science only. For him, a spiritual guide requires not only spiritual sciences, but also positive sciences, which were valid at that time. He thought that Sufism integrates views of Gazali, Ibn Arabi and Mawlana. Sufi moral means not to hurt and not to be hurt. Therefore, a plurality of *zikir* uttered without knowing their meaning is valueless.

Kenan Rifai gave importance to the construction of self-world of individuals. It has spread out among well-educated people, especially women, by its solutions and interpretations to problems of the modern age. After the death of Kenan Rifai in 1950, Samiha Ayverdi (d. 1993), who was one of his students, represented the community. Members of this group are mostly interested in lessons of religious music, calligraphy (*hüsn-ü hat*), art of illumination (*tezhip*), and scholarly discussions.

## V. TARIQAH OF BEKTAŞIYE

This tariqah is ascribed to Hacı Bektaş Veli (d. 1271). After he learnt sciences of religion in Nişabur, he received a Sufi education from Lokman Perende, who was raised in Ahmed Yesevi Association. He aimed to prepare people for a new life that is full of love and faith. Struggling to integrate Law of Islam and custom, traditions and religion, he accomplished the spread of Islam among Turkmens.

Accepting the Melamiye opinion, Bektaşîye has tied big masses of people to itself since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It began to spread in the Balkans by the 14<sup>th</sup> century and became the most common tariqah of that region. Bektaşîye took a new character through entrusting Balım Sultan with being the sheikh of tariqah in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. After the Çelebi Rebellion (1551), it divided into two branches: Çelebi and Babalar. The Çelebi branch considers that Hacı Bektaş Veli was married and had children and so chain of tariqah was maintained thus. As to the branch of Babalar, it is maintained by the agency of spiritual inheritors of Hacı Bektaş Veli. According to Bedri Noyan (d. 1997), who was a representative of this branch, Bektaşîye is not an ordinary tariqah; it is an apprehension which blends thinking, understanding and believing in a human's soul and heart. In Bektaşîye, a disciple dies before he converges to sheikh. That is to say, he is born within a new life by leaving his old life. Therefore, the ritual of recognition of a candidate (*talip*) is also called victimage. For Noyan, bases of Bektaşîye are cognition of self, leaving off self, being modest, abstinent, honest and kindhearted, helping others, being patient to troubles, and avoiding slandering, envy, arrogance, enmity and gossip.

According to him, one who wants to be accepted to Bektaşîye should be Muslim, at least 18 years old, and eager. He also should be clever, smart, morally upright and capable of learning. He should be discreet, should not back out of his recognition and should not despise his brothers (friends in tariqah). He should do all his work under the supervision of the sheikh and consult with him about everything. He should accept Prophet Muhammed and Caliph Ali as his principal sheikh. Women should take agreement from their husbands if they are married, or from their parents if they are single, about recognition and initiation to lodge. Old women are not required to do this.

The memorial ceremonies of Hacı Bektaş Veli are organized in Hacı Bektaş county of Kırşehir in August in every year. Some top-level politicians participate in these ceremonies and give messages about the necessary of solidarity; on the other hand, they also show an opposite attitude against tariqahs. In our opinion, this situation shows that politicians take advantage of tariqahs and use them for their own benefit.

## VI. TARIQAH OF MEVLEVİYE

Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi, who was the father of Mevleviye (d. 1273), was born in Belh, Horasan. He learned religious sciences from his father Bahaeddin Veled, whose famous name is Sultanü'l-Ulema. Mevlana, who came to Anatolia with his family after an intense

education period, tended to Sufism blended with the Sufism of Belh, a monotheist view of Endülüs and divine love of Horasan that appeared in poems. Mevlana's

Sufism is more than rules and beliefs; it is an experience which is live and can be understood by love only.

The most important characteristics of this tariqah are music, *sema* (a whirling dance performed during a Mevleviye ritual), and suffering. In this tariqah, *sema* has a central role. Each movement of *sema* has symbolical expressions. Suffering in Mevleviye lasts 1001 days. He who completed his suffering period is called Çelebi, as if he descended from Mevlana; others are called *Dede*.

Mevleviye came into prominence in place of Bektaşîye, which was closed in 1826 by Sultan II Mahmud in the Ottoman Empire. Politicians did not show opposition against Mevleviye because the sheikhs of Mevleviye kept up with social and political conditions, avoided political and religious rebellions, and carried on their activities parallel with governments. Today this community is largely about art and culture. Thus, Mevlevies on one hand educated dervishes and on the other hand survived our cultural heritage. So, lodges of Mevleviye (*mevlevihane*) became high-level cultural centers that exclusive people lived in. There are a lot of poets, calligraphers and musicians from these places. Our national poet Arif Nihat Asya, the famous calligrapher Süheyl Ünver, Tahir Olgun, and composer Çinuçen Tanrıkorur are some of them. Activities of Mevleviye are proceeding now. As a matter of fact, congresses and symposiums are organized in the name of Mevlana and rituals of Şeb-i Arus (*sema*) are presented to the public in Konya annually.

As a result, it can be said that only tariqah of Nakşibendiye is active nationwide. On the contrary, some tariqahs like as Halvetiye, Kadiriye, Rifaiye and Mevleviye are active only in Istanbul and around. However, it can be said that many tariqahs maintain their existing in present Turkey.