



Gott ist schön  
und Er liebt die Schönheit

God is beautiful  
and He loves beauty

Festschrift für Annemarie Schimmel  
zum 7. April 1992  
dargebracht von Schülern, Freunden und Kollegen

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BISHR IBN AL-HĀRITH AL-HĀFĪ (st. 841), Lob der Genügsamkeit  
*qat'u l-layālī ma'a l-ayyāmī fī khalaqī*

Daß ich in Lumpen laufe durch die Welt,  
die Nacht verbringe in der Armut Zelt,  
erscheint mir würdiger als einst der Vorwurf:  
"Du hast verruchtem Reichtum nachgestellt!"  
Ob ich zufrieden bin? Wer sich begnügt, ist reich,  
nicht der, der um sich anhäuft Gut und Geld!  
In Gott bin ich vergnügt, in Wohl und Wehe  
auf Pfaden wandelnd, die Sein Licht erhellt.

as-Sulamī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt as-Ṣūfiya*, Texte arabe avec une introduction et un index, ed. J. Pedersen, Leiden 1960, 36.

IRAJ ANVAR AND PETER J. CHELKOWSKI

"If you are merciful, o bounteous one, full of compassion, why make hell, punishment, and the need to account for each action?"

This is a question posed to God by a wandering dervish of the desert in an Iranian *ta'ziyeh* play entitled *Darvish-e Biyabani*, known also as *Moses and the Wandering Dervish*. This *ta'ziyeh* is seldom performed as an independent play or *majles*, rather it serves as an overture or prologue to the main play, and as such it is called by the *ta'ziyeh* performers a *pish vaqe'eh* or a *gusheh*. When it is employed as a *pish vaqe'eh*, it is followed by one of the major *ta'ziyeh majleses* such as the *Martyrdom of Imam Hussein* or a martyrdom of any of the Imam's relatives or companions on the plain of Karbala.<sup>1</sup> In Gilan on the shores of the Caspian Sea it is commonly performed at night, contrary to tradition. The play requires three very good singers. A dervish lives in the solitude of the desert. This is staged on barren ground surrounded by the spectators. In the middle of the audience, in front of a fire, sits the dervish and sings in ecstasy beautiful arias in praise of God and His creation.

1 The known manuscripts of this *ta'ziyeh* are: numer 249 and 603 in the Cerulli collection, Ettore Rossi, Alessio Bombaci, *Elenci Di Drammi Religiosi Persiani*, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1961. The #249 manuscript is incomplete and it is intended as an overture to the *ta'ziyeh* of *The Martyrdom of Imam Hussein on the Day of Ashura*. Other versions are to be found in a collection of Parviz Sayyad. The Anasori version, Jaber Anasori, *Ta'ziyeh Namayesh-e Mosibat*, Jahad-e Daneshgahi, Tehran, 1986, pp. 40-51. A Turkish version of this text appears on pp. 52-59. Two very interesting versions are published by Reza Khaki, *Iran Nameh*, Vol. IX, No. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 264-292. The manuscripts of these versions belong to the Ketabkhaneh Malek. Two other known manuscripts are to be found in the Ketabkhaneh Majles. A pocket version published by Danesh, in Mashhad, no date, pp. 5-10.

The glorification of God is, however, suddenly overshadowed when the dervish remembers the misery and destitution that he saw in his meager contacts with people of villages and towns. If the world that surrounds us is the reflection of the Face of God, then human poverty and distress must be part of that reflection.

Perplexed and disturbed by such a thought, he falls asleep and has a dream of Heaven and Hell. The dream is staged. Heaven is represented by a group of boys dressed as angels who carry lamps and sing cheerful arias. This scene appears behind the audience on the balcony or the roof of a house: if there is no house, then in a tree or on a specially erected platform. Soon the lights of the lamps begin to dim and the chorus fades away. Then the dervish sees Hell. A group of men, smeared with blacking and chained, with fires burning on their heads, circle the performance area two or three times in complete silence: only moans can be heard. Devils accompany them, bearing torches in one hand and whips in the other with which to flay them. Soon they disappear in the darkness of the night. The dervish awakens, moved and horrified by the vision, and starts to ask the same question again and again: why so many must suffer the everlasting fire. Man is not at fault since he is not perfect. Only to God belongs perfection, mercy, and love. Now the dervish's hymns of adoration turn into blasphemy. This creates tumult in Heaven. Gabriel, on behalf of the Almighty, dispatches Moses to Earth in order to lead the dervish back to the path of truth. Moses, carrying an umbrella which serves a double purpose as a sign of dignity as well as a parachute, lands in front of the astonished dervish and introduces himself. The dervish demonstrates hospitality by serving Moses tea and offering him his pipe. They begin to talk. The dervish is dissatisfied with Moses' answers. Moses is unable to justify the existence of Hell or the great privations in the world.

Not having convinced the other by his arguments, Moses hands the dervish the Bible, the New Testament, and the Koran. But the dervish throws them aside, saying there are no answers to his questions in them. Infuriated, the revered Moses strikes the blasphemer on the head. The dervish falls to the ground. In the next scene, Gabriel reprimands Moses for his behavior and

sends him back to the Earth, ordering him to use the argument of the martyrdom at Karbala in reply to the dervish's doubts. As soon as Moses reappears on the stage in the next scene, the dervish begins to curse him and threatens to beat him up. But Moses apologizes and asks the dervish to peep through his fingers to see the battle of Karbala.<sup>2</sup> Now Moses recreates before the eyes of the confused dervish the massacre of Karbala. A place in today's Iraq, where in the year 61 A.H./680 A.D. horrible atrocities were committed on Hussein the beloved grandson of the Prophet of Islam, Mohammad. At Karbala, Hussein and his male children and companions were put to death by Caliph Yazid's men, and his women were taken into captivity to Yazid in Damascus.

Now at the rear of the audience in subdued light the martyrs of Karbala pass in review, all blood-stained, with missing limbs and contorted bodies. The dervish, deeply moved by this procession, inquires about each martyr as he files by and finally cries out

O! O! By the Prophet, my heart now flames with fire!  
With what injustice here this army of infidels conspire!  
If a thousand times a thousand fires filled up a thousand  
Hells, still that  
would not be enough for such vile infidels!<sup>3</sup>

This digression from the story of a dervish to the Karbala tragedy is a *ta'ziyeh* mechanism known as *goriz*. The *goriz* provides the *ta'ziyeh* repertory with possibilities ad infinitum.

Any story, as long as it is compared with the tragedy of Karbala visually or orally is stageable. That digression could be in the form of a full length representation of one of the Karbala

2 The open space between the index and the middle finger of Moses is like a "magic cup of Jamshid" or a "world reflecting mirror of Alexander" used often in Persian literature.

3 This performance was observed by P. Chelkowski in a village of Luleman in Gilan in 1964.

*ta'ziyehs* or it could be a short allusion, in a form that is seen in the above mentioned play of *Moses and the Wandering Dervish*.

In the spring of 1988 the Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, organized a drama festival with the title "Ta'ziyeh Ritual and Popular Beliefs in Iran." During this festival the first Western production of a *ta'ziyeh* took place. The director of the Trinity College *ta'ziyeh* performance, Mohammad B. Ghaffari, chose the play of *Moses and the Wandering Dervish*. There were reasons for choosing this peripheral play and not one of the major *ta'ziyehs*. The play was to be performed in the United States, outside of the community of believers. The audience at the Trinity performance couldn't participate in a collective ritual which would bind them with the performers as it does in Iran. The function of the *ta'ziyeh* is to confirm the Shi'i ideology, for an informed audience. *Moses and the Wandering Dervish* is not a central play in the *ta'ziyeh* repertory. *The Dervish...*, *ta'ziyeh* with its mystical undercurrent could be understood by those whose knowledge and feelings about Shi'i Islam are limited or minimal. What follows is an English translation of a Persian text from Gilan, especially prepared for the Trinity College performance:

#### MOSES AND THE WANDERING DERVISH:<sup>4</sup>

- DERVISH: 1. From your trumpet the wide world with ecstasy ringing!  
From your song, the whole world in harmony singing!  
1a. This bloom is the envy of David's own songs;<sup>5</sup>

4 This is a translation of a Gilan manuscript which P. Chelkowski received in 1964 from Abol Qassem Salari, a leading performer of the *ta'ziyeh* troupe headed by Meftah of Lahijan, special credits are overdue to David Parry for his poetic touch in this English translation.

5 Verses 1a-11 belong to another *ta'ziyeh* play with a very strong Sufi undercurrent called *Mansur Hallaj, Shams of Tabriz and Mulla of Rum*. The

- To all in this world, Lord, your beauty belongs!  
1b. To the blind you give sight; to the fair maids of paradise,  
Dust from your feet is a balm to their eyes.  
1c. What use when the Last Judgement trumpet-call rings,  
When all is eternal that Gabriel brings?  
1d. You are God's own religion, the outpouring sun,  
The most Manifest Truth, manifested as One.  
1e. The image is made visible again;  
The witness has appeared to us again;  
1f. The One who holds the veil, and bides behind the veil serene,  
Let's fall the veil, and as the Virgin Mary now is seen.  
1g. Sometimes as the candle, and sometimes as the moth,  
He has revealed Himself to the beholders' eyes in both.  
1h. O You who said, "whoever dies shall surely then see me,"  
In these words, there are many points which speak of Moses, he  
1i. Who looks for proof of your existence in the burning bush;  
Demands your light be manifest, illumining the Truth.  
1j. But I am "there is no God but He."  
One prides himself upon his glory;  
1k. Another prides himself on perfection;  
Another boasts of his looks and fashion;  
1l. The wealthy, of what his possessions may be; but I am "there is no God but He."  
2. The realm of the spirit your image replenishes;

manuscript of this *ta'ziyeh* belongs to the Cerulli Collection and is listed under number 721. Moving parts of the *ta'ziyeh* from one play to another is a standard practice.

- The world hears your word, and it fills and it flourishes;
3. Your face's beauty illumines the sun,  
And the sun of your face gives its light to the moon.
  4. All of existence is but a reflection  
Of your beauty – this is the whole of Creation.
  5. Of what you are, only the speechless are speaking;  
For your essence, only the sightless are seeking;
  6. All of Creation is dancing in knowing  
The joy of your service – a joy overflowing!

*Pause*

7. To you, O Creator of each living thing,  
Each morning and evening our praise we must bring.
8. Now on my sheepskin, here I shall  
The secret, of my heart reveal.
9. Listen to my whispering, for I am not my own being;  
Like Oveys of the Qaran, drunken with ecstasy I am.
10. Listen to me with your heart then,  
My words are the pearl of Eden:
11. "This my word throughout the night, and this  
my thought throughout the day:  
Why am I so ignorant of my heart in every way?"<sup>6</sup>
12. Sing a sad song, O singer: in the music you play,  
My mind will envision the nest, fly away.
13. I came to this world travelling,  
But I shall go back to the king.

6 From *Divan-e Kabir* of Rumi.

14. "I came not here by my own will; of my own will shall not return;  
Whoever brought me here, that one will surely take me home."<sup>7</sup>
  15. From the outer darkness an infidel I am, not of the earth;  
A believer from the seventh heaven, I am not of earth;
  16. My nest is in the heaven: I am not of the earth;
  17. "A bird from heaven's garden, I am not of the earth;  
But for a little I am caged within my body here."<sup>8</sup>
  18. I do not vainly seek a seer;  
I am thirsty: I seek water clear;
  19. In the faces of old and young I am searching,
  20. I travel this world; for a friend I am looking;  
Who will wrap and enshroud me, and carry my coffin.
- He goes to sleep and wakes up.*
21. O Lord, what a vision of woe I have seen –  
I saw a man burning in Hell in my dream!
  22. I saw some there being led to Hell's pains,  
Crying "Moses, help!" – and their necks were in chains!
  23. Others with clubs of fiery flame were beaten on their heads,  
And all were crying out for Jesus' help in their distress.
  24. And there were others too, I saw, sitting in happiness  
In Paradise, and worshipping the only God, in bliss.

7 From *Divan-e Kabir* of Rumi.

8 From *Divan-e Kabir* of Rumi.

25. I have no choice, but to wilderness I must depart,  
And there in solitude with my Creator share  
my heart.

*After a circumambulation*

26. O just God, why did you make Hell, and  
Eden's garden fair?  
The pool, the maidens and the young boys - O  
why are they there?
27. Oh most holy God, what is the Fountain of Ka-  
four?  
The water of Salsabil, Zoghoun, and serpents?  
- O what for?
28. If you are vengeful, and you wish to burn your  
creatures all,  
Why are you then named "Compassionate" and  
"Merciful"?

*Pause*

29. I am a dervish, O my Nourisher, and powerless;  
And of your Mystery Divine, I am in awe of  
this.
30. If you are Merciful, O Bounteous One, full of  
Compassion,  
Why make Hell, punishment, and accounting  
for each action?
31. Although we have no choice in this, as we may  
plainly tell,  
What did the Merciful intend, making Paradise  
and Hell?
32. Because of this heart-burning wound, my soul is  
all on fire;  
Come, burn my body now instead of those poor  
people there!

*Pause*

33. Both in the world invisible, and in the world we  
see,

Through all your attributes, your essence, Lord,  
is manifest.

34. O, The description of your perfection, the light  
of your beauty,  
Has brought illumination to my heart in deep  
darkness.
35. Before your mercy, all the problems of the soul  
depart,  
And each heart is made luminous by your love;
36. For your love is the ornament of each and  
every heart,  
And your dear name is on my tongue each  
moment that I live.
37. Sometimes you may appear to us, then disap-  
pear again;  
Sometimes are visible, sometimes invisible,  
truly.
38. To please you now my soul would suffer burn-  
ing fire's pain;  
And my desire to find you is like the surging  
sea.
39. You give your thought to every creature under-  
neath the sky;  
Your beauty is of Paradise the fountain and the  
well.
40. Your honored name is "Merciful"; O then tell  
me why  
In this your creation there should be a Hell?

*Pause*

41. Goal of heart and soul, Huwallah, Huwallah;  
Amazement confounds me, Huwallah, Huwal-  
lah.
42. No words to describe you, Huwallah, Huwallah,  
In this world of existence, Huwallah, Huwallah.

*Pause*

43. All are bound in bewilderment; none know  
your essence,  
So I seek the eternal attributes of your presence.
44. All of your lovers show their amazement,  
O Compassionate Maker, Huwallah, Huwallah.
45. You moulded me, O Lord, of your own Magnanimity,  
Instilling your compassionate name within my soul, truly.
46. Then what is it - the name of Hell? - and  
Paradise? Tell me,  
O Knower of all reasons, Huwallah, Huwallah.
47. And being Merciful, how then could you create  
that Hell?  
Or in creating Hell, how then be Merciful as well?
48. What happened to your everlasting magnanimity?  
O God exalted, praiseworthy, Huwallah, Huwallah.
49. This mystery perplexes me, bewildering my  
brain;  
Why do you claim compassion, and deny it then again?
50. How goes Compassion hand in hand with the  
Inferno's flame?  
O tell me this, Judge Merciful, Huwallah, Huwallah.

*Pause*

51. From the joy in my heart I say "ya hu";  
From all but God I part, "ya hu."
52. "Huwallah-u Ahad," is the Goal, that is true;  
With my prayer beads a hundred times I say  
"ya hu."
53. Every moment I invoke you, every moment  
seeking you,

Crying out from my heart's madness, crying out  
to you, "ya hu."

54. O my soul is searching, like a bird up in the  
blue,  
To be nourished by you, as a bird seeks food,  
"ya hu."
  55. How I wish to tear my body's garment here for  
you;  
Tear this garment of my body; die in your way  
thus, "ya hu."
- He falls unconscious*
56. Drunken with delirium, in the dust I lie in view,  
Come, O come, help this insane one, come and  
help me now, "ya hu."

*Hatef to Moses:*

- HATEF:<sup>9</sup>
57. O traveller of the world, O Moses, O son of  
Emran,  
This is the message sent to you from that  
Praiseworthy One:
  58. One of our worshippers there lives in wildness  
afar,  
Whose only utterance is this: "Huwallah, Huwallah."<sup>10</sup>
  59. You must go, and with a hundred smooth  
words must restore  
Our worshipper, release him from his ignorance once more.
  60. Speak gently, knower of logic, telling him these  
things that are;

<sup>9</sup> In some manuscripts Hatef replaces Gabriel. Hatef means a voice from Heaven bearing messages from God. In the ta'ziyeh this character usually appears as a female covered by a veil. Usually we see a veiled apparition somewhere distant from the performance area.

<sup>10</sup> Huwallah means He is God and this is a common Sufi invocation of God.



Speak gently when you call him to us, Huwallah, Huwallah.

- MOSES: 61. O to the almighty God be ever praise and glory,  
But to fulfil his word Divine, alas, I am unworthy.  
62. But nonetheless I will obey, and to it set my hand,  
And instantly set out now to accomplish God's command.

*After one circumambulation by Moses.<sup>11</sup>*

- DERVISH: 63. O who are you, whose face I see shining?  
For this poor, mad one you seem to have linking.  
64. Why do you knock at this mad one's door here?  
I heard your knocking in my ear!  
65. With kindness, by God, you appear in this place,  
And you have both kindness and love in your face.

- MOSES: 66. You, with only your song and "Huwallah"  
In your mind, know your song has reached God afar.  
67. The angels shook in rapture from your melody;  
Indeed you have a place in the plain of purity.  
68. I am Moses, the son of Emran;  
He, named by God "Kalimu-llah," I am.<sup>12</sup>

- DERVISH: 69. Let me be your ransom, Kalimu-llah; O, how sweet  
It would be to me just to kiss the dust beneath your feet.  
70. A knot of pain lies at my heart's core:

Help me untie this knot, I implore.

71. One night, Moses, I had a dream,  
And saw in the Hell and the Judgement Supreme.  
72. The agents of God's punishment  
With those faces you know well were sent;  
73. They stood in rows, a fearsome band,  
Each with a fiery mace in hand.  
74. On one side I saw flames of fire;  
On the other, the Paradise of desire!  
75. One group were led down to Hell,  
Enmeshed in chains and fire as well.  
76. I woke in terror with a start,  
And trembled to my very heart!  
77. If God's name is Merciful, as we know,  
Why did he make the Inferno?

- MOSES: 78. What do you wish now, Dervish, tell,  
From God Most Forgiving, Most Merciful?  
79. Your imaginings make you fly away:  
You must follow your mind, not your heart, I say.

- DERVISH: 80. What is the secret, O Kalimu-llah, tell:  
Why has the most Merciful, forgiving God made Hell?  
81. "Compassionate" and "Merciful" - yes, I know these names well;  
But why "Compassionate" - what does it mean, if He created Hell?

82. God forgives the worshipper who sins,  
So tell me what Hell's existence means?  
MOSES: 83. Be silent - all your words are crude! Be silent as you ought;  
For many a bird before it learned to fly was trapped and caught!  
84. Beware of this, for truly "in Creation there's no flaw":  
For the benefit of everyone is God's Mysterious Law.

11 There is no curtain in the *ta'ziyah*; passage of time or space is indicated by circumambulation of the performing area by the actors.

12 In Islamic tradition Moses has the title Kalimu-llah - "He to whom God speaks".

DERVISH: 85. What is refined, and what is crude?  
 And what if all my words are rude?  
 Say what you will - I do not mind  
 If names are marred by words unrefined.

MOSES: 86. Come, let us not fight, but make peace at this  
 chance;  
 Let us talk now from wisdom, and not igno-  
 rance.

87. Read in wisdom's book that God, to whom  
 honor and glory be,  
 Accounts with every creature for his actions  
 accordingly.

DERVISH: 88. I don't believe your reason and logic and all  
 these words you say;  
 Why talk to a madman about "accounting and  
 punishment" here in this way?

89. Go and ask Merciful God to tell,  
 If he's called "Compassionate," why he made  
 Hell?

90. He must banish that name, or banish Hell! -  
 If there is "this," why "that" as well?

91. I will only be quiet, if you will tell  
 Why He, the Most Merciful made Hell!

MOSES: 92. Do not speak vainly: you're mad, I say!  
 Why do you speak in this ignorant way?

93. You who are less than the beggar's dust,  
 Why do you question God's purpose thus?

DERVISH: 94. Since we can't make peace, let war begin!  
 Go! - and tell God I shall fight with Him!  
*They fight. Moses leaves.*

95. O God, be fair and take my part;  
 Be kind and soothe my bleeding heart.

96. O Munificent, Unique One, Maker of space  
 and time,  
 You know the anguish in my heart, my body,  
 and my mind;

97. If your own messenger becomes indignant at a  
 word,  
 What can a poor Dervish do with these "great  
 questions," Lord?

98. In tatters I will tear my robe; in pieces rip my  
 shirt;  
 At the gateway of your Glory put my face into  
 the dirt.

99. Till you give me an answer I shall not go on my  
 way;  
 Reproach me here a thousand times, and still,  
 Lord, I would stay;

100. But if you break my heart now with your anger,  
 then be sure  
 That while I live I shall not put one foot inside  
 your door!

HATEF: 101. O Kalim, God sends this order to you:  
 Treat my worshipper with the love he is due.

102. I did not tell you you should break his heart  
 with anger there;  
 I told you, call him back with all Compassion,  
 and with care.

103. Go, and bestow upon him now our generosity:  
 That balsam for his heart which is the Karbala  
 story.

MOSES: 104. O what can I say for myself? - for the advice I  
 gave  
 Did not reach him in his distress, and that  
 made my heart grieve.

105. By God's command I go again to seek that  
 wayward man,  
 And waken his awareness of God's secret if I  
 can.

*After one circumambulation*

106. O chosen worshipper of God, look now at  
 God's compassion:

I have come back with love; look at his gentle benefaction.

107. Why do you still remain angry with me?  
Do you not like the good words I bring now, truly?
108. Come, O broken-hearted dervish of the desert, come,  
And look on the creation of the Lord, the Peerless One.  
*He opens his two fingers in front of the dervish's eyes, and a parade of the characters of Karbala begins.*
109. Behold the Mystery of the creation here, of Hell,  
And then tell me which one is right: which one is right, now tell?

DERVISH: 110. What is happening, Moses, Emran's son?

MOSES: 111. What do you see, O grieving one?

DERVISH: 112. A carnage before my eyes is spread.

MOSES: 113. The "King without army" is he you see dead.

DERVISH: 114. Who is that king who inspires love - the slain?

MOSES: 115. He is the "King without army," Hussein.<sup>13</sup>

DERVISH: 116. O son of Emran, who can this "Hussein" be?

MOSES: 117. Of the "Seal of Prophecy," the offspring is he.

DERVISH: 118. Will there be a prophet when you have gone?

MOSES: 119. Yes, he will guide the people on.

DERVISH: 120. And will his offspring be slaughtered thus?

MOSES: 121. Yes, his blood will mingle with dust.

DERVISH: 122. Has he no brother who may him defend?

MOSES: 123. See here his brother beloved, at his end.

DERVISH: 124. A man without head and arms I see pass.

MOSES: 125. The carrier of water for the family, Abbas.

DERVISH: 126. I see a youth with a torn body.

13 "King without army" is an honorific attribute of Imam Hussein who according to the tradition faced gallantly together with seventy two family members and companions an overwhelming army of the enemy.

MOSES: 127. Now tell more of what you see.

DERVISH: 128. The shadow of whiskers on the face of this man.

MOSES: 129. Ali Akbar, of Shi'as the sacrificed lamb.

DERVISH: 130. I see a sad youth in his own blood drown.

MOSES: 131. That Youth is Qassem, the bridegroom cut down.

DERVISH: 132. I see a body here, by many spears and arrows slain.

MOSES: 133. The "King without an army" - he is indeed Hussein.

DERVISH: 134. O! O! By the prophet, my heart now flames with fire!

With what injustice here this army of infidels conspire!

135. If a thousand times a thousand fires filled up a thousand Hells,  
Still that would not be enough for such vile infidels!

There is no doubt that this *ta'ziyeh* was inspired by the story of "Moses and the shepherd" in the *Masnavi* of Rumi as well as by "Mehmani kardan-e sang tarash Khodavand-ra az sar-e sedagha" of Obeyd-e Zakani. What follows are some verses from Rumi:

Moses saw a shepherd on the way, who was saying,

'O God who choosest (whom Thou wilt),

where art Thou, that I may become Thy servant

and sew Thy shoes and comb Thy head?

That I may wash Thy clothes and kill Thy lice and

bring milk to Thee, O worshipful one;

That I may kiss Thy little hand and rub Thy little foot,

and when bedtime comes I may sweep Thy little room,

O Thou to whom my goats be a sacrifice, O Thou in

remembrance of whom are my cries of ay and ah!

The shepherd was speaking foolish words in this wise,

Moses said 'Man, to whom is this (addressed)?'

He answered, 'To that one who created us; by whom

this earth and sky were brought to sight.'

'Hark!' said Moses, 'You have become very backsliding (depraved); indeed you have not become a Moslem, you have become an infidel.'

Moses goes on in this fashion, calling him blasphemous, irreverent and so on, to which the shepherd's reaction is:

He (the shepherd) said, 'O Moses thou hast closed my mouth and thou hast burned my soul with repentance.'

He rent his garment and heaved a sigh, and hastily turned his head towards the desert and went (his way).

The second common element is that after Moses scolds the shepherd, God reproaches him and sends him back to the shepherd to comfort him and bring a message from God:

A revelation came to Moses from God: 'Thou hast parted My servant from Me.

Didst thou come (as a prophet) to unite, or didst thou come to sever?'

God's reprimand to Moses continues for more than twenty verses and:

When Moses heard these reproaches from God, he ran into the desert in quest of the shepherd.

And when he finds him:

At last he (Moses) overtook and beheld him; the giver of glad news, 'Permission has come (from God).

Do not seek any rules or method (of worship); say whatsoever your distressful heart desires.

Your blasphemy is (the true) religion, and your religion is the light of the spirit: You are saved, and through you a (whole) world is in salvation.<sup>14</sup>

It must be said that improvisation has been a major dynamic in the *ta'ziyeh* performance during the last two hundred years. Grafting one *ta'ziyeh* text on another, additions and contractions, are the organic parts of the *ta'ziyeh* performance. The *ta'ziyeh* style of writing is anti-literary as *ta'ziyeh* scripts are almost never

intended for reading but for performing. They are written as separate parts for each of the dramatis personae on loose narrow strips of paper, which the actors can hold in the palms of their hands when they perform.

The Trinity College *ta'ziyeh* director Mohammad B. Ghaffari followed the improvisation tradition fully. His Western adaptation of *Moses and the Wandering Dervish* departed, however, from the convention in the *goriz* part of the play. In addition to the Karbala *goriz*, Ghaffari added two other *gorizes*. All three were staged almost like tableaux or vignettes. In addition to the Karbala tableau there was one portraying the execution, with a pistol point blank at a Vietcong by a Vietnamese officer in the streets of Saigon. That indelible picture, flashed throughout the world at the height of the Vietnam war has been haunting us ever since. Another tableau is that of a pregnant woman being whipped and executed by the thugs of a fundamentalist tribunal. Milla Riggio, who produced the Trinity College *ta'ziyeh* calls them "the tableaux of cruelty and victimization which provide analogies to the cruelty of Hussein's assassination but which do not have the same culture-specific connotations."

These scenes of victimization do not mobilize the spectators as they do in the traditional *ta'ziyeh* performed for the homogeneous Shi'i audience in Iran. But they provoke revulsion from human cruelty and a desire for more harmony among humans. If the Trinity College *ta'ziyeh* departed somewhat from the Shi'i *Weltanschauung*, it remained in the tradition of Islamic mysticism.

To conclude, it may be of interest to the reader that in Ghaffari's *ta'ziyeh* performance, the role of Gabriel was played by a black gospel soprano and Moses by a black American basso. The dervish's part was played by a Korean dancer and singer.<sup>15</sup>

14 Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnavi of Jalalu'ddin Rumi*, translation of book II, pp. 210-314.

15 Ghaffari departed from the text in many instances with a substitution of verses taken directly from Rumi.