The Mystical Experience in Doris Lessing's Early Fiction

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Résumé : In her later career, the British woman writer Doris Lessing (1919-2013) becomes interested in Sufism, which "believes itself to be the substance of that current which can develop man to a higher stage in his evolution"[1]. This interest in Sufi philosophy provides a template for the protagonists' reconstructive journey in Doris Lessing's novels. In fact, the heroines transcend the limits of ego-centeredness and gain the kind of superior knowledge beyond immanence—"the limits of the matter, the body, sensibility, being worldliness."[2] This article therefore sheds light on this specific dimension and reveals how Martha Quest, the protagonist of *Children of Violence*, manages to escape her solipsistic world through spiritual assent and best incarnates the concept of awakening central to Sufism. No longer individualistic and self-centered, the heroine of Doris Lessing's novel stands as a witness of and reflector upon the surrounding selves and their life conflicts.

Mots-clés : Sufism-mystics-higher consciousness-transcendentalism

1 Introduction

Doris Lessing is recognized as one of the major British women writers of the twentieth-century. Voicing at first her dissent against apartheid and colonialism, early espousing leftwing causes, then growing fascinated with psychology and Sufism, dealing with controversial themes and writing in a variety of forms and techniques, she was always interested in the problematic issue of the quest for female selfhood and self-knowledge. From the 1960s on, Lessing persistently and enthusiastically proclaimed her mystical inclinations ; she made use of Sufi tenets—especially those drawn from the writings of the Sufi thinker Idries Shah, whom she regarded as her teacher—to enhance her own perception of human beings. Sufi writings also quenched her thirst for answers and inquiries into altered states of consciousness and the evolutionary potential of the human being, which she could not find in other philosophies or ideologies or even

1. Doris Lessing. *A Small Personal Voice : Essays*, Reviews, Interviews. New York : Knopf, 1974.p. 133.
2. Patrice Haynes. *Immanent Transcendence : Reconfiguring Materialism in Continental Philosophy*. New York : Bloomsburry, 2012. p. 1.

in psychology. In her novels, female characters often follow the path of the mystics, whose development of their inner consciousness is the fruit of a long wrestle with themselves. How can we explain this shift in Lessing's aesthetic vision ? Does her interest in Sufi studies mean an abandonment of her earlier political, psychological or social stands ? Or is it rather a development of a deeper understanding of the human being ? To what extent do her mystical inclinations influence her writings ?

2 From psychoanalysis to mysticism and Sufism

Doris Lessing's later interest in mysticism and Sufi teaching comes at a period when she acknowledged the failure of science and psychiatry to explain certain phenomena accounting for the evolution of human consciousness like telepathy or intuition. In her article "The Evolution of Doris Lessing's Art from Mystical Moments to Space Fiction," Nancy Topping Bazin suggests that while writing *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing's faith in rationalism shifted to a faith in Sufism, which values the "mystical and the non-rational." [3]

David Bohm, past Professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of London, has also written and spoken of the implications of the tenets of Eastern philosophies, religious mysticism and the prevalence of metaphysical themes in Lessing's works. In a radio interview published in 1979, David Bohm spoke in terms bordering upon the mystical, and which are echoed in both Lessing's *oeuvre*, as well as her own statements to interviewers. Bohm insists that scientific progress heralds an imminent need for a shift in paradigm within humanity :

> There has to be a very big change in our way of thinking. I believe that quantum mechanics and relativity both point, to some extent, to what step is needed. Fundamentally, the step is to be free of this division between the self and the world, the observer and the observed. I think al1 our thinking tends to be based on the idea that thinking is carried out by an entity, who could be called a thinker, a self, or an 'I.' [. . .] Once you have introduced this idea of separation and fragmentation, you must inevitably come to fragmenting the thinker from his thoughts, and from the world that he is thinking about.
>
> But that separation is false and illusory : and the notion that there is a thinker who is producing the thought is merely imagination. What would be closer to the point would be to say that there is nothing but thought, and no 'thinker' to produce it. [4]

From the 1960s on, Lessing persistently and enthusiastically proclaimed her mystical inclinations ; she made use of Sufi tenets—especially those drawn from the writings of the Sufi thinker Idries Shah, whom she regarded as her teacher—to enhance her own perception of human beings. As she once said : "I had an inclination towards mysticism

3. Nancy Topping Bazin. "The Evolution of Doris Lessing's Art from Mystical Moments to Space Fiction." *The Transcendent Adventure : Studies of Reunion in Science Fiction/Fantasy.* Ed. Robert Reilly. West port, CT : Greenwood Press, 1985. p. 161.

4. Paul Buckley, and F. David Peat. *A Question of Physics : Conversations in Physics and Biology.* Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1979. p. 144.

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(not religion) even when being political. It is not an uncommon combination."[5] Sufism refers to the core of Islamic mysticism. Doris Lessing became a student of Idries Shah who lived in England in the 1960s. Around the time she read his book, *The Sufis*, she wrote :

> I heard about Idries Shah during my inquiries, as a Sufi from Afghanistan with the sort of education that enabled him to be at home both in the East and in the West. I had found what I read about Sufism exotic [...], but was told that our Western ideas about Sufis tended to be ill-informed and that the situation was being made worse by charlatans claiming to be Sufi teachers. Idries Shah was genuine, in the opinion of my informants, who had experience of cults, sects, and various kinds of teachers. They said he was writing a book. I felt this book might turn out to be what I was looking for. You could say I had a "hunch" about it. It was *The Sufis.* I read it feeling it was for me. I was also amazed at the robustness of its claims.[6]

Lessing's orientation to interest in Sufism is in line with her preoccupations with her heroines' quest their selfhood and their evolving consciousness. The central tenets of Sufism and mysticism met her concern with breaking through the conventional ways of thinking and being, the urge she felt to understand and extend the parameters of consciousness, the search for an "equilibrium between the rational and non-rational modes of consciousness,"[7] the mystical intimations expressed in her characters the desire to highlight a synthesizing vision of wholeness. In his book *The Sufis,*[8] Shah says that Sufis "believe themselves to be taking part in the higher evolution of humanity" (19). They know the importance of "we" attitude for people to realize their potential for personal and social wholeness.

Sufi writings also quenched her thirst for answers and inquiries into altered states of consciousness and the evolutionary potential of the human being, which she could find in other philosophies or ideologies or even in psychology. Lessing expresses her inclination for Sufi ideas in a letter to Roberta Rubenstein : "When I read *The Sufis,* I found that it answered many questions that I had learned—I feel too belatedly—to ask of life. Though that book was only the beginning of a different approach.[9] Referring to her experience in reading in Sufi philosophy, she repeats :

> [F]or people like myself, unable to admire organized religions of any kind, this philosophy shows where to look for answers to questions put by society and by experience – questions not answered by the official surveyors of knowledge, secular or sacred. (*SPV...* 90)

5. Doris Lessing. Stated in the introduction to Idries Shah's *Learning How To Learn.* London : Octagon Studies, 1978.

6. *Ibid.* p. 13.

7. Shadia S. Fahim. *Doris Lessing and Sufi Equilibrium : The Evolving Form of The Novel.* New York : St. Martin's Press, 1994. p. 13.

8. Idris Shah. *The Sufis.* London : The Octagon Press, 1999.

9. Roberta Rubenstein. "The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing." *Breaking the Forms of Consciousness*, 1979. p. 121.

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The philosophy of Sufism impregnated Lessing with the idea that human beings are evolving towards "higher consciousness"[10] through the development of extrasensory perception, intuition, dreams, and journeys into "inner space." In *The Sufis*, Idries Shah writes :

> Sufis believe that, expressed in one way, humanity is evolving to a certain destiny. We are all taking part in that evolution. The human being's organism is producing a new complex of organs in response to such a need. [...]. What ordinary people regard as sporadic and occasional bursts of telepathic or prophetic power are seen by the Sufi as nothing less than the first stirrings of these same organs. (p. 61)

Inspired by Shah, Lessing reflected that "we all have extra-ordinary, non-rational capacities that we use to communicate in a very subtle way."[11] According to her, the knowledge of our potential leads to oneness through the most intense mystical experience.

3 Distancing oneself from psychiatry

The fact that psychiatry is a scientific field of study implies that the works of Laing and Jung had not dealt with the realm of higher consciousness. It is this realm of higher consciousness explored by Sufi philosophy which I am going to consider as the motif of ascent. By this term I therefore mean the ascent to higher levels of perception, to a transcendental realm referred to by the Sufis as "divine light" or "tajalli"[12]—a state "indicating a breakthrough of the limitations of time and space."[13]

The move to the transcendental and mystical realms becomes clear if we understand why Lessing created a distance between herself and the psychoanalytic findings in the domain of inner consciousness and personal development. Robert E. Ornstein's study of the intrinsic differences between Western psychology and the esoteric traditions is useful here. The difference is that according to Ornstein,

> Both types of psychology begin from common ground and develop in complementary directions. Both characterize normal consciousness as selective and restrictive, as a personal construction. Modern psychology then proceeds to analyze the accomplishment of this construction [...]. The traditional esoteric psychologists proceed in another direction, to practical techniques [...] for suspending the normal, analytic, linear mode [...] then tune the intuitive mode by working in its own tacit language.[14]

10. MugeGalin refers to this higher consciousness as a "higher state of being—not higher as in "superior," but higher in the sense of becoming more than what one already is. Galin, Muge. *Between East and West, Sufism in the Novels of Doris Lessing.* Albany : State University of New York Press, 1997. p. 266.

11. Nissa Torrents. "Testimony to Mysticism." [1980]. *Doris Lessing : Conversations.* Ed. Earl G. Ingersoll. Princeton : Ontario Review Press, 1994. p. 42.

12. The technical term "tajalli" means "luminizing and the word *nur* (light- plural : anwar) are both associated with the process of activating which is carried out on the way towards independent reality through the force contained in the power of activating special new organs of perception and communicative love." Idris Shah. *The Sufis.* London : The Octagon Press, 1999. p. 297.

13. *Ibidi.* p. 298.

14. Robert Ornstein. *The Psychology of Consciousness.* Oxford, England : Penguin, 1972. p. 110.

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According to Ornstein, Western psychology seeks to analyze and control repressed elements buried in the unconscious. These elements, projected in dreams or brought out through therapy, are generally negative but have to be acknowledged and accepted as part of the total personality in order to restore the individual's balance. The esoteric traditions, on the other hand, based on the assumption that man's essence is spiritual, believe that there are modes of consciousness essentially "intuitive" and that man can transcend the limitation of his understanding by cultivating and developing these modes.

However, whereas the basic tenet of psychology is to restore the balance of the psyche, Sufism aims at evolution. Ornstein explains that according to Sufis, "ordinary consciousness" is a state of "deep sleep" or "blindness" which can be overcome by the process of meditation, which awakens "fresh perception." [15]

Shah reveals how the state of divine light or illumination e ndows the Sufi with "a dynamic forward movement." [16]In this state, the individual transcends the limitations of normal perception. That process is achieved through stages of contemplation, referred to as "states and stations," [17] in a conscious attempt to actualize the perceptions achieved—the aim being to obtain a vantage point outside the dominant structures of the mind.

It is precisely that aspect of Sufi philosophy—the faith in the individual's potential for further evolution, "to serve mankind"—which was of particular interest to Doris Lessing. Man has the possibility of conscious self-development, becoming able, with his own efforts and under a certain kind of expert guidance, to transcend ordinary limitations. Idries Shah revealed the different ends of psychiatry and Sufism :

> When Western psychologists use, say, catharsis to explode emotions or release it, they may apparently fail. If they seem to succeed, they cannot be said to have done more than make the patient more socially acceptable. As far as anyone can tell, he is less troublesome than he was before. This may suit the present phase of society well enough. It is not enough for the Sufi, who considers the human being as something which is 'going somewhere,' not something which is being kept at, or restored to, some sort of a norm assessed by purely logical or mainly expedient criteria. [18]

Thus, whereas psychiatry considers the descent into the unconscious as an end in itself, the Sufis consider it as an initial step :

15. *Ibid.* p. 113.

16. Idris Shah. *The Sufis.* London : The Octagon Press, 1999. p. 121.

17. Sufis envision seeking a way, a path of conduct towards God, which begins with engaging the self, morally. Seekers of this journey, or this way, progress through several stages defined by them as *maqamat* (spiritual station on the Sufi path) and *ahwal* (spiritual states which the mystic experiences on his way to God) and one concludes one's *maqamat* and *ahwal* with *ma'rifa* or gnosis in the Divine, or of God ; and, this is the end of the path, the journey. Sufis mean by *maqam,* the station in the journey of ascension in which the believer, the adherent and servant of God stands before God and places himself in the hands of God and, in which the adherent and servant of God performs acts of worship, toils strenuously and maintains his spiritual exercises and practices. Al-Taftazani, "madkhalilla al-tasawwuf al-islami" (lit., "An Introduction to Islamic Sufism"). Cairo-Egypt : Dar Al-thakafa for Publishing and distribution, 1979. p. 38-39.

18. *Ibid.* p. 339.

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> It is in this field more than any other that occultists and fragmented schools [...] go astray and in the end peter out or merely become self-propagating systems for the self-struggle, without the benefit of the experience, the *tajalli*, which tells them that they are capable of the development which they seek. [19]

As demonstrated in the afore-mentioned analysis, Lessing's interest in mysticism is not a retreat into a mode which is "regressive, irrational and religious" as claimed by Ingrid Holmquist (1943-now), but indicates on the contrary the seriousness of her commitment, because it is a means to deepening her understanding of "the nature of the world we live in" and strengthening hope in the potential of the individual "to serve mankind." We can conclude that Lessing's move into Sufi studies, far from an abandonment of her earlier political, psychological or social stands, was a development of her interest in the human being as a seeker of truth, wholeness and unity within humanity at large.

Inspired by the concepts of Sufism, the following analysis will firstly deal with the evolution of the female consciousness towards a sublime plane—what Shah calls "higher consciousness—" after much struggling and suffering. It will then show how such an evolution, in the quest for selfhood, contributes to a universal growth. We shall examine the "careful attention to one's self" in the long process of Martha's quest, from South Africa to Post-war London, towards an emergent self connected to the life of the collective.

4 The mystical self and the transcendental consciousness

The influence of mysticism and Sufism palpable in the last book of the series suggests the novelist's ambition to transcend the limitations of an exclusively personal or ego consciousness and achieve a transcendental consciousness. But Lessing's mystical propensity is clear even before *The Four-Gated City* (1990).The seeds of Sufi and mystical inclinations can be traced in the first book of the series, *Martha Quest* (1965), in which the protagonist experiences a mystical moment akin to a Sufi experience of meditation in nature and oneness with the environment, and of "separate things interacting and finally becoming one, but greater :"

> During that space of time (which was timeless) she understood quite finally her smallness, the unimportance of humanity. In her ears was inchoate grinding, the great wheels of movement, and it was human... and no part of that sound was Martha's voice. (*MQ.* p. 22)

This mystical experience—the "slow integration," during which she and all her environment "became one, shuddering together in a dissolution of dancing atoms" (*MQ* p. 52)—provides firsthand knowledge of the deepest sense of the dissolution into the collective. Kaplan makes the following comment "the evolution towards a universal consciousness in Doris Lessing's novels appears to begin with an approach to reality

19. *Ibid.* p. 299.

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centered in the physical body and its relationship with nature."[20] Martha's openness to and integration into the natural world of the veld outside herself, her sense of being invaded by an external reality and the accompanying experience of ego-loss culminate in the portrait of the psychically sensitive Martha of *The Four-Gated City*. As Roberta Rubenstein observes, this experience "anticipates the sensitivity that will [...] enable her to enter other people's consciousness empathetically and even telepathically."[21]

Besides, a number of scholars like Barnouw, Du Plessis and Labovitz (1917-2010) argue that Martha's relationship with Thomas Stern, in *Landlocked*, plays a major role in the process of her developing consciousness. Martha's love affair with the peasant gardener occurs in the immediate proximity of nature, reenacting one of the mystical and spiritual moments, as their union enables her to develop new intuitive powers. At this moment, "the conscious marries the unconscious, the dark mates with the light, the animus joins the anima in complete psychological unity."[22] Martha transforms her sexual experience with Thomas from a kind of physical entrapment into a wellspring for a stage in her selfhood that emerging out of a collective energy. In this context, Fand points out that "sexual union is only one form of nature's process of merging, dissolving the old, to reformulate the new."[23] It takes her to the new dimension she had been seeking, a dimension that recalls her visionary moment in the veld when she was an adolescent. Thomas endows her with the spiritual knowledge and the energizing force that will become the instrument of change, in part through madness, in *The Four-Gated City*, and which is seen for the first time through this relationship :

> But she did not know what had taken place between her and Thomas. Some force, some power, had taken hold of them both, and had made such changes in her—what, soul ? (but she did not even know what words she must use) psyche ? being ?—that now she was changed and did not understand herself. (*LL.* p.222)

Martha's ego started falling apart in *Landlocked*. She has now learnt to expose herself to this man and to break down with him. She realizes that "even the long process of breaking-down—as they both learned to put it—for the other ; of learning to expose oneself, was something they did together, acknowledging they had to do it" (*LL* p. 223).

These mystical moments of perception prepare the Martha of the first book for moments of "disintegration" and dissolution into the collective as well as her psychic and spiritual breakthrough. Such growth cannot be achieved without undertaking a necessarily complex and lengthy processes because, according to the Sufis, "true

20. Sydney J. Kaplan. "The Limits of Consciousness in the Novels of Doris Lessing." *Contemporary Literature.* 14 Autumn 1973. p. 546.

21. Roberta Rubenstein. "The Novelistic Vision of Doris Lessing." *Breaking the Forms of Consciousness*, 1979. p. 39.

22. Evelyn J. Hinz. "Hierogamy *versus* Wedlock : Types of Marriage, Plots and their Relationship to Genres of Prose Fiction." *PMLA*. vol. 91. N° 5. October, 1976. p. 906.

23. Roxanne J. Fand. *The Dialogic Self : Reconstructing Subjectivity in Woolf, Lessing, and Atwood.* London : Associated University Presses, 1999. p. 114.

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knowledge cannot be attained through books" but comes from "experience."[24] This idea is enhanced in 1980s particularly by Catherine R. Stimpson (1936-now) when she mentions that Lessing used Sufism because it is a kind of "evolutionary theory" whose "tropes and theory reinforce[...] the sense that growth has the force of natural law. It transcends individual choice."[25] Though at "a loose end," Martha knows that she must "take one step after another : this process in itself held the keys" (*FGC* p. 642). Martha's experience in London has unexpectedly displaced the initial goal of the quester, which lies in her search for autonomous selfhood. Draine suggests that "the condition of her growth has been a willingness to move in response to the rhythms of life, a fluid sort of patience."[26] Lessing comments in chapter four of *The Four-Gated City* that

> elsewhere was the sense of sharp change, of old thought breaking up, of flow and of movement ; in life that is—in what one experienced, in where one learned. There was a prickling challenging liveliness, a vitality at work. (*FGC* p. 533)

In chapter four of *The Four-Gated City*, Martha walks along the river and is reminded of the young Martha wandering alone in the city at the beginning, along the Thames. At this contemplative moment, however, the images of nature and the flowing river accompany the progression of psychological development from ruins to new growth :

> She walked beside the river while the music thudded, feeling herself as a heavy, impervious, insensitive lump that, like a planet doomed always to be dark one side, had vision in front only, a myopic searchlight blind except for the tiny three-dimensional path open immediately before her eyes in which the outline of a tree, a rose, emerges then submerged in dark. (*FGC* p. 614)

The fact, indicated by the "tiny three-dimensional path," that Martha is now only able to look forwards seems to reflect the questions she asks herself, "But where ? How ? Who ?" (*FGC* 615). Even in the darkness, the aroma of the flowers implies hope. Draine concludes that Martha learns that "it is possible for her to live with dignity in harmony with the will of evolution."[27]

It is through experience and various "states and stations" that Martha reaches higher consciousness or what Shah refers to as a state of light and awakening. The Andalusian Sufi Muhyi'd-Din Ibn 'Arabi (1165-1240) defines this state of light and awakening, in a chapter entitled "The Definitions of Sufism," as "the secret illuminations that are revealed to the hearts [of the believers.]"[28] Both the heroines of *Children of Violence*

24. MugeGalin. *Between East and West, Sufism in the Novels of Doris Lessing.* Albany : State University of New York Press, 1997. p. 40.

25. Catherine R. Stimpson. "Doris Lessing and the Parables of Growth." *The Voyage In : Fictions of Female Development.* Eds. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsh, and Elizabeth Langland, Hanover and London : UP of New England, 1983. p. 190-191.

26. Betsy Draine. *Substance Under Pressure : Artistic Coherence and Evolving Form in the Novels of Doris Lessing.* Madison : University of Wisconsin Press, 1983. Print. p. 65.

27. *Ibid.* p. 65.

28. Stated in William C. Chittick. *Sufism : A Short Introduction.* London : One world Press, 2007. p. 12

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and *The Golden Notebook* have reached this state of spiritual awakening, which the artist Anna Wulf fails to translate into words. It is what she refers to as "illumination" or "knowing" but which actually resists any kind of verbalization :

> During the last weeks of craziness and timelessness, I've had these moments of "knowing" one after the other, yet there is no way of putting this sort of knowledge into words. Yet, these moments have been so powerful, like the rapid illuminations of a dream that remain with one waking, that what I have learned will be part of how I experience life until I die [...]. The people, who have been there, in the place in themselves where words, patterns, order, dissolve, will know what I mean and the others won't. (*GN* 633-634)

In *The Four-Gated City*, after periods of "fasting, lack of sleep and walking in a world full of the drugged cripples who were one's fellow human being" (*FGC* 531), Martha, in a state of supremely heightened awareness illumination), goes out into the world and voices this monologue :

> Let me keep this, let me not lose it, oh how could I have borne it all these years, all this life, being dead and asleep and not seeing, seeing nothing ; for now everything was so much there, present, existing in an effulgence of delight, offering themselves to her, till she felt they were extensions of her and she of them, or at least, their joy and hers sang together. (*FGC* 554)

Martha's monologue evokes one of the basic tenets of Sufi philosophy related to the idea that man can be physically alive but perceptively dead. Through this moment of wakeful insight ("effulgence of delight"), the female protagonist comes to understand that she has been throughout her life in a state of spiritual death and sleep. After the stay at the Coldridge household, Martha tastes the bliss of being with others : They are "extensions of her and she of them." This interconnectedness which was rejected by Martha in the first books of the series is now fully admitted and embraced. The sharpened perception achieved by the heroine, like that of the Sufi, enables her to experience things which are imperceptible to others. This idea is confirmed by the epigraph to part four of *Landlocked* in which Lessing inserted an intertext consisting in a teaching story by Idries Shah (1924-1996) in his book *The Sufis*, a motif central to Sufi writings :

> The Mulla was thinking aloud. 'How do I know whether I am dead or alive ?
>
> 'Don't be such a fool,' his wife said. 'If you were dead, your limbs would be cold.'
>
> Shortly afterwards Nasrudin was in the forest cutting wood. It was midwinter. Suddenly he realized that his hands and feet were cold.
>
> 'I am undoubtedly dead,' he thought ; 'so I must stop working, because corpses do not work.'

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> And because corpses do not walk about, he lay down on the grass. Soon a pack of wolves appeared and attacked Nasrudin's donkey, which was tethered to a tree.
>
> 'Yes, carry on, take advantage of a dead man,' said Nasrudin from his abject position ; 'but if I had been alive I would not have allowed you to take liberties with my donkey.' (68)

Mulla (master) Nasrudin [29] is the classical figure devised by Idris Shah for the purpose of highlighting certain states of mind in the gradual building of inner consciousness and intuitive illumination. By analogy with the previous quote, Nasrudin, like Martha Quest, realizes that he has been blind to truth because being alive does not entail perception. His wife's logic does not help him in attaining perception. But experience has taught Mulla Nasrudin about the truth of life and death. The Sufi intertext illustrates the new visionary perception acquired by the female protagonist through her journey for selfhood. These wakeful insights reflect her transcendental consciousness. We can understand with this example that Lessing sought to strike a balance between the detached transcendent self and the immanent self of material experience.

5 Conclusion

The basic premise underlying Lessing's interest in Sufism rests in the Sufi belief in the possible transcendence of the ordinary limitations of the human mind. Whereas old discourses such as science, Western humanism, logocentrism and Marxism offer a one-dimensional mode of cognition that would distort a broader understanding of reality, Sufism offers methods of going beyond that one–dimensional mode of perception. Lessing explained in the "Sufi Way" that "it is all about growing in consciousness, in self-awareness, all about seeking the light beyond all our humanly-constructed (and often arrogantly and fearfully defended) screens." [30]

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29. Mulla Nasrudin was believed to born in the 13th century and dead in 1275/6 or 1285/6 CE. Fiorentini, Gianpaolo (2004). "Nasreddin, una biografia possibile". *Storie di Nasreddin.* Torino : Libreria Editrice Psiche. ISBN 978-88-85142-71-8. Archived from the original on 7 April 2004. Retrieved 28 December 2006.

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