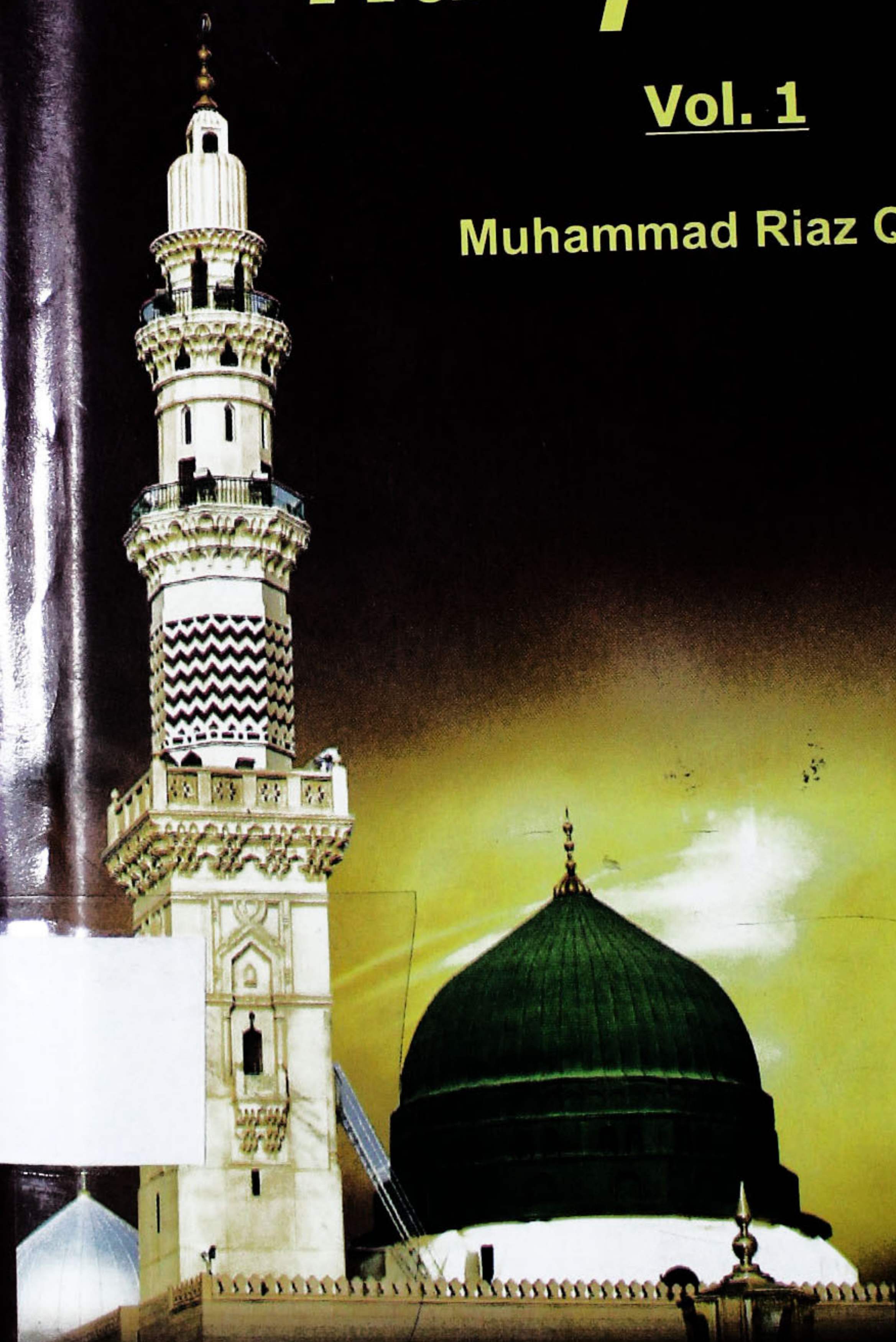


**Islamic Sufism: An account of the mysterious lives
of the great saints and mystics of Islam**

Former Auliya Allah

Vol. 1

Muhammad Riaz Qadri



ISLAMIC SUFISM

© *An account of the mysterious lives of the great
saints and mystics of Islam.*

Vol. 1

Content Area

Former Auliya Allah

Compiled by

Muhammad Riaz Qadri

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

To

***The Total Theophany of Divine Light
The Luminous Totality of the Universe***

RASULULLAH

Sallalloho alaihe wa sallam!

***The Celestial Winebearer of the Kausar
The Sole Source and Fountainhead of
Islamic Mysticism (Tasawwuf)
Whose heart is the seat and source
of mystical Union with God.***

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Preface

Mystic thought, ideologies or doctrines are found in almost all the religions of the world whatever their forms and sources of inspiration might be but Islamic mysticism (Tasawwuf) is entirely different from them in many aspects except identity in some concepts. It entirely falls in the ambit of the Holy Qur'an, the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sunna and Shariah. Beyond this whatever is conceived is either occulticism being operated on commercial level portrayed by the imposters and pretender mystics or something unislamic.

In Islam Sufis rightfully believe that nothing exists absolutely but God and that human soul is an emanation from Divine Essence and though temporarily separated from its heavenly source on the Day of Alast-the Day of Primordial covenant, will be finally reunited with it or we can say that a drop will submerge in the ocean of Divine Light. Thus its ultimate goal is to attain to unitive life or one can say 'going back to the realization of the Day of Alast.' This reunion causes highest possible bliss for the Sufi saints who spend entire life in the pursuit of Eternal Spirit by undergoing agonizing type of 'trial and test', hardships in the process of self-annihilation. He loses all the worldly interests and celestial attractions, all kinships; even the eight paradises weigh no more than the wing of a gnat in his eyes. How blissful is the absolute identity with the Lord, is ineffable for the privy.

Other religions of the world derive their spiritual inspiration from acquisitive knowledge, ungodly realities and occult sciences which are human creations and attached with the matter (hayula) not the soul. On the other hand in Islamic mysticism theological knowledge is considered imperfect.

Also rational knowledge gained through human reason is not perfect. Some Sufis gain intuitive knowledge, but it does not reveal Godhead because it is associated with the human faculty of understanding or perception which is regarded not a perfect means of knowledge, It is *marifat* (gnosis) or knowledge of God which is real in all respect because it completely transcends the barrier of humanity. Divine knowledge is gained through spiritual communion with God, vision of God, revelation of God, contemplation on Divine Attributes and abiding in Divine Essence. For instance, we can quote 'Ilhamat-e-Ghaus-e-Azam, 'The Mawaqif and Mukhatabat of Niffari', the works of Ibn Arabi', and enigmatic utterances of so many Sufi saints to illustrate esoteric state of them.

There is, indeed, a serious dearth of literature in the domain of Islamic mysticism in English tongue. For centuries on end attention was not paid to make English-Knowing people acquaintant with sublime wealth of Islamic spirituality. Biographies of some individual Sufi saints did appear on the scene in some countries but a comprehensive work on the memories of Sufi Mashaikh remained still a dream. My brother Muhammad Riaz Qadri has made a maiden attempt and painstaking effort to produce such a remarkable piece of work in three volumes covering sixty-eight towering Mashaikh. He remained impersonal and depicted their lives as an impartial analytical researcher without making interpolation. Depending solely on the well-known authentic primary and secondary sources, he has transmitted the smallest poriton of great spiritual legacy of Islam. This work is neither characteristically philosophical nor doctrinal in nature, but projects practical life-sketches of the radiant saints of classical Sufism. It reveals wonderous illuminative eternal truth, the

secrets of mystic way and divinity through the lives of spiritual luminaries of Islam. He divulges astounding facts, amazing account especially the remote corners of their spiritual lives to assert eternal truth beneath them which has made the study fascinating. The language and mode of expression is very simple and easy; it does not warrant pre-knowledge of the readers in the domain. The author has avoided the use of complex terminologies in order to facilitate the understanding of Sufism by a layman. I have supervised the work to some extent and believe that the book will go a long way to shatter the barriers of illusions and misconceptions which hinder the process of purer perception. Also it will be dilating to the English readers, welcomed by all the religious-minded, peace-loving people of the world. The students of comperative religions will learn a lot from the present study.

Dr. Nazir Ahmad

Former Auliya Allah

An Introduction

Islam, the religion of Love, has been giving message of peace and tranquillity to mankind right from its advent to present day thus making the people God-wary according to the injunction of the holy Qur'an:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُنِي

(And I created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me.) 51:56

A comparative study of world religions reveals that Islam is the most practical religion in the world that suits all human requirements. It is a complete code of life and enjoins upon its followers to adopt best of conduct and behaviour in the light of *uswa hasana* (the excellent model) of Rasulullah ﷺ. It gives message of divine adoration, simplicity, refinement, realistic attitude, tolerance and moderation in all walks of life. At every step in life, a Muslim is always guided by the canonical law of Shariah embodied in the Holy Qur'an and expounded by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is the religion of Islam which since its advent has given the lesson of detente and international brotherhood. It recognizes no racial and political barriers, atrocity and violence in any shape. It stands alone for human freedom from the domination of priestly class except the clergy who provide right guidance and interpret Shariah. All the tenets, principles and injunctions of Islam are based on Tawhid (Divine Unity). Islamic mysticism (Tasawwuf) is nothing but interiorising Tawhid quite contrary to the concepts and understanding or the name given to it by the non-Muslim thinkers and writers.

It is historical fact that it were the Muslim saints and mystics who propagated peaceful promotion of Universal Brotherhood of Man. They played a most glorious role by their exemplary conduct, noble teachings of the Qur'an and following sunna of the Holy Prophet ﷺ for fourteen hundred years after his demise. His celebrated companions and rightly guided Sufi saints communicated the true message of Islam by their conduct and spiritual power throughout the world without using any force or exerting any pressure. The stories of their fascinating and awe-inspiring personalities, and spiritual domination in saving Islam and serving humanity in the critical junctures of history, form one of the most glittering chapters of not only on the history of Islam but also of the progressive civilisation of the world.

Right from the first divine revelation to present day, Islam has been totally against aggression, oppression, savagery and colonization of the weaker and poor nations as the Super Powers do today in the name of 'protection of human rights' liberty of the subjects or for the enforcement of European brand democracy. Their sole intention is to destroy and distort civilization of the backward nations and force them to adopt the values and norms of imperialist countries, and finally to occupy their natural resources. They attack them on lamb-excuses or stage mock terrorism in their own countries to beguile the world.

It would not be out of place to examine briefly hostile attitude of the West towards Islamic religion in the past. Philip K. Hitti's latest book *"Islam and the West"* contains a graphic account of the false propaganda set-up against Islam in Christendom during the Middle Ages. The chapter "Islam in Western Literature" of his book refers to historic record of the defamatory tales about the Holy Prophet's life, mission and

character, and of the numerous falsehood invented by the Christian writers of those time especially to disparage Islam. Hitti writes: "Throughout medieval and early modern times, while that war of words was being waged in the West against the East, the East went its own way unmindful of the West and unaware of its attacks. It was a one-sided cold war. To Muslims the West simply did not exist. Their own religion was far superior, their language, the language of the angels was matchless and their way of life left nothing to be desired. What did Western Europe then have to offer? We know of no Muslim scholars who made a serious study of Latin or any of its successor languages. We know of no important works translated into Arabic by such scholars from those languages. One of their greatest minds ibn-Khaldun argues magisterially against the acquisition of any non-Arabic tongue on the ground that that would be a deterrent to the mastery of the language of the Qur'an. The Ottoman Turks did not wake up to the new realities of life until their repeated defeats by the Russians. The Arabs did not realize that they had been overtaken and far surpassed scientifically and technologically by Westerners until after the Napoleonic invasion of 1798." *(Hitti. Islam and the West)*

George Sale translated the Qur'an into English in 1734. He avowedly with a view of helping Christian missionaries attacked Islam. In the first two chapters of his translation, he did much mischief, by prejudicing the minds of his readers against Islam. This attempt on his part brought discredit to his name as he quoted in them the same distorted reports and false versions to misrepresent Islam. Sir Denison Ross felt ashamed of Sale's writings. Ross says: "For many centuries the acquaintance which the majority of Europeans possessed of Muhammadanism was based almost entirely on

distorted reports of fanatical Christians which led to the dissemination of a multitude of gross calumnies. What was good in Muhammadanism was entirely ignored, and what was not good, in the eyes of Europe, was exaggerated or misinterpreted."

"Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and other less highly developed religions were never subjected to such a barrage of abuse and condemnation as Muhammadanism was. They posed no threat to the medieval West and offered no competition. It was, therefore, primarily fear, hostility and prejudice that colored the Western view of Islam and conditioned its attitude. Islamic beliefs were enemy's beliefs and, as such, suspect if not false."

"Then there was the linguistic barrier. For some six centuries after military and political contacts between Christendom and the world of Islam had been established, Europe lacked organized facilities for the formal study of the language of the Koran. Throughout that period any Latin scholar in Europe with a mastery of Arabic and first hand knowledge of Islam remains unknown to us. This gave legend its chance to provide what knowledge lacked."

"Of all the world's great historic figures, none has been so much maligned in the Christian world as the Prophet of Islam. The books of such writers contained scandalous stories about the Holy Prophet ﷺ imputed to Islam ridiculously foolish teachings—all fabrications of the writers' own prejudiced mind. Why the false propaganda was set up against Islam in Christendom during the past fourteen centuries owes to many reasons. Firstly owing to the linguistic barrier, Christendom remained unacquainted with the teachings of Islam for centuries. Secondly the rapid spread of Islam and the powerful influence it exercised on the political, social and

economic affairs of the world became a constant cause of anxiety and annoyance to the Christian missionaries of the past centuries. How to impede its propagation and progress worried them. Thirdly owing to their ignorance of Arabic tongue in which Islam was preached, and also their inability to know what Islam taught, they were unable to challenge its doctrines and call in question its divine origin. Thus the only course open before them to prevent its spread was to fabricate false reports on its teachings and concoct scandalous stories about Muhammad's ﷺ life and character. They thought to serve Christianity, it was their best religious duty to counteract the influence of Islam by fair means or foul, and keep the Christian mind perpetually prejudiced against its teachings. Hence they painted dark picture of Islam. This campaign of slander, vilification and calumny against Islam and the Holy Prophet ﷺ continued in full swing during the periods of the seven principal crusades extending from 1096 to 1271. The main objective of the campaign was to inflame the feelings of the Christian world and provoke the crusaders to inflict atrocities on the forces of Islam. The same phenomenon of provocations by the Christian and aggression against the peaceful Muslim world is witnessed in the present century.

(Excerpted from Hitti's work)

Islamic mysticism (Tasawwuf) is pure, unalloyed, and unadulterated mystical dimension of Islam right from its advent fourteen centuries ago to present day. But unfortunately it is still the custom with the Western Orientalists (exception apart) to project it as merely a late entry or importation into Islam and an altogether alien element in it. They don't believe in the divinity of this esoteric system. They hold that it has been derived from Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Neo-Platonism, and Buddhism etc. In other words, they

believe Islamic Sufism developed under alien philosophy, doctrines and mystical ideologies. In true sense, the term 'Philosophy' cannot be applied to Godhead, The holy Qur'an, the life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Shariah, Sunna, and Sufism. They all come in the ambit of Providential grace and mercy to mankind whereas history of Philosophy is replete with contradictions, inconsistencies, and speculations. Philosophy concerns Intellectualism, Sufism concerns esotericism. Thus Islamic Sufism (Tasawwuf) is not human creation or philosophy, it is entirely based on divine source whose fountainhead and well-spring is the court of Rasulullah ﷺ. Although the word Sufi did not exist in the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ but the reality did. The Qur'an addresses auliya Allah as Muqarrabin i.e. the elect. The Prophet of Islam conferred this rite to some of his companions, they in turn passed it on to coming generations. This is an unbroken chain of succession and initiation. The companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were the greatest Sufis. No later Sufi saints of any order with highest spiritual ascension can be equal to anyone of them. Thus all Sufi fraternal orders trace their chain of sainthood to the revered Imam Ali (except one) who in turn links the chain back to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and ultimately to Allah the source.

When the Orientalists study Islamic mysticism and trace its history and origin, their eyes fall on pseudomystic, imposters, and pretenders Sufis who are parasitical creatures and all the times remain on banditry in different garb. The Clairvoyant Sufis are not easy to locate nor the West could ever get their ocular testimony or a glimpse of them. Some Western scholars are seen giving narrow-view of Islamic Sufism (sainthood). For instance, R.A. Nicholson identified ecstasy as the necessary qualification for sainthood. He says,

"Neither deep learning in divinity, nor devotion to good work, nor asceticism, nor moral purity makes the Muhammad a saint; he may have all or none of these things, but the only indispensable qualification is that of ecstasy or rapture which is the outward sign of passing-away from the phenomenal self."

This is not the whole truth. Ecstasy is no doubt there, but this is not always the case with all the consummate mystics. They rarely go into ecstasy; they are ever seen in sobriety. Study the life of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani and Junaid of Baghdad and many of their followers. Miracles are also vouchsafed; but it is not the necessary condition nor hereditary factor is always demanded.

Turner suggests 'a necessary but not sufficient condition for Islamic saintship is descent from an established holy founder and ultimately from the Holy Prophet (PBUH)' (1). This too is misleading. There are many top-ranking saints (Auliya) who have no such claims.

O Brien says: "It is not essential that saints should be of known piety. They are approved because of their magical power and not for their spiritual quality." (2)

It is more funny and ridiculous argument that O Brien equates saint of Islam with magician. Only quacks or pretender mystics are jugglers who display such magic.

Temple agrees with O. Brien and says: "It does not matter who your pir or saintly guardian is, or what is his personal character, as long as you can rely on his magical power to help you in distress and look after you generally." (3)

Another study is given by Westermarck in these words: "There is... a class of holy men and women that is recruited from idiots and madden. Derangement of the mind is in any case attributed to supernatural influence... Harmless

lunatics are venerated as saints, whose reason is in heaven while the body is on earth. They are not held responsible for any absurdities they commit."(4)

These examples amply demonstrate the concept of saintship (wilayat) held by the Orientalists, and give us knowledge as how far are they from understanding the spirit of Islamic spirituality.

But there are some Orientalists who hold positive view and understanding of Sufism. For instance, F.A.D. Tholuck, a German professor of divinity, declared that the Sufi doctrine was both generated and must be illustrated by Muhammad (PBUH)'s own mysticism. (5)

William Stoddart testifies to the Islamic genesis of Sufism in these words: "One cannot be a Benedictine without being a Christian, or sufi without being a Muslim. There is no Sufism without Islam. (6)

Martin Lings appears to have much better experience of Sufism. He says: "From time to time a Revelation 'flows' like a great tidal wave from the ocean of Infinitude to the shores of our finite world; and Sufism is the vocation and the discipline and the science of plunging into the ebb of one of these waves and being drawn back with it to its Eternal and Infinite Source... Sufism is a kind of mysticism. By definition concerned above all with 'the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven.' The Ocean is within as well as without; and the path of the mystics is a gradual awakening as it were 'backwards' in the direction of the root of one's being, a remembrance of the Supreme Self which infinitely transcends the human ego and which is none other than the Deep towards which the wave ebbs... And by spiritual realization means center of consciousness. (7)

Lings also quotes a definition of an early Sufi: "Nearly

1000 years ago a great Sufi defined Sufism as 'taste', because its aim and its end could be summed up as direct knowledge of transcendent truths, such knowledge being, insofar as its directness is concerned, more comparable to the experiences of the senses than to mental knowledge." (8)

Annemaire Schimmel, too affirms that definitions merely point out way. For the reality, that is the goal of the mystic and ineffable, cannot be understood or explained by any normal mode of perception, neither philosophy nor reason can reveal it. Only the wisdom of the heart, gnosis may give insight into some of its aspects. A spiritual experience that depends upon neither sensual nor rational method is needed. Once the seeker (of Truth) has set forth upon the way to this Last Reality, he will be led by an inner light. This light becomes stronger as he frees himself from the attachments of this world. Only after a long period of purification, he becomes endowed with love and gnosis. From there he may reach the last goal of all mystical quest-the union. She thus defines mysticism as love of the Absolute. Love is not to be learned from men or books, it is one of God's gifts and comes of His grace." (9)

Regarding mystical experience A.Schimmel says, "To analyze the mystical experience itself is next to impossible since words cannot plumb the depth of his experience." (10)

Burckhardt (Ibrahim Izzuddin) has said that Tasawwuf, which is the esoteric or inward aspect of Islam, is to be distinguished from the exoteric or external Islam just as direct contemplation of spiritual or Divine realities is distinguishable from the fulfilling of the laws which translate them in the individual order in connection with the conditions of a particular phase of humanity. Next he says this "Central" role of Sufism at the heart of the Islamic world may be veiled

from those who examine it from outside. The Orientalists were anxious to bring everything down to the historical level; it could hardly be expected that they would explain this double aspect of Sufism otherwise than as the result of influence coming into Islam from outside, and according to their various pre-occupations, they have indeed attributed the origins of Sufism to Persian, Hindu, Neo-Platonic or Christian sources. But these diverse attributions have ended by cancelling one another, the more so because there is no reason for doubting the historical authenticity of the spiritual "descent" of the Sufi masters, a descent which can be traced in an unbroken "chain" (silsilah) back to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) himself. The decisive argument in favour of the Muhammadan origin of Sufism lies, however, in Sufism itself, and that the integral part of the spiritual method of Sufism is constantly and of necessity drawn out of the Qur'an and from the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH)." (11)

And Louis Massignon in respect of Tasawwuf said, "The study of Islamic mysticism is not like the study of other disciplines such as law, philosophy, and theology in which it is sufficient to absorb through hypothesis the fundamental axioms in order to reconstruct and even extend the rational deductions implied in their premises. To understand mysticism one must have experience, and willingly the trials and sufferings of the most humble life. Junaid had said forcefully, "We have not learned this science (of mysticism) by means of "it is said (*qil wa qal*), but by privations and separation from the dear ones:" "It is this initiation in mental scouring" which is the axiom not theoretical but practical of mysticism." (H.W. Mason, Al-Hallay. Surrery, p.80)

S.H. Nasr says, "One cannot speak in an ordinary historical sense about the origin and sources of the ways of

any Sufi writer because the Sufi who has realized the goal of the Path (Suluk) receives inspiration directly and 'vertically' and is not dependent upon 'horizontal' influence." (12)

Prof. Nicholson some time later, in his work '*Literary History of the Arab*' has rightly quoted saying: "I do not think that we need to look beyond Islam for the origin of the Sufi doctrines... The early Sufis are still on orthodox ground; their relation to Islam is not unlike that of the medieval Spanish mystics to the Roman Catholic Church." (13)

Since Islamic mysticism is an eternal truth, not based on academic study of world-wide knowledge and sciences, there has been no decline or decadence whatsoever from centuries on end. The Sufi message is ideal for the humanity; it is eternally fresh and enduring. Time and vicissitude of eras could never eclipse or obliterate it. Alexander Knysh admits its sublimity in the following words: "Unlike Christian mysticism which was overshadowed and marginalized by the secularizing and rationalistic tendencies in Western European societies that culminated in the Enlightenment, its Muslim counterpart, Sufism, retained its pervasive influence on the spiritual and intellectual life of Muslims until the beginning of our century. At that point, Sufi rituals, values and doctrines came under the criticism of Islamic reformers, modernists, liberal nationalists and somewhat later Muslim socialists also. These groups accused Muslim mystics of deliberately cultivating "idle superstitions".. indulging in outdated customs, ritual excesses and of exploiting the uneducated and superstitious masses to their advantage... On the whole by the 1950s the vigorous anti-Sufi campaigns were launched by various groups and parties within Muslim societies... And yet against all odds not only did Sufism survive, but also in recent decades has been

making a steady comeback. Sufi lodges sprang back to existence in many countries of the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa as well as in Europe, United States and in the republics of the former Soviet Union. Basing themselves on the spiritual genealogies, doctrines, moral precepts and training techniques of the traditional Sufi Orders they are working towards what may soon turn into a full-blown Sufi survival." (Islamic Mysticism, by Alexander Knysh, pp 1-2)

It is ironic that some quarters made allegation against Sufism (Tasawwuf) that it breeds stagnation, inaction, laziness and escape from the stark realities of life. It is totally baseless charge since eyes of the alterities (lay-men) fall on the imposters not on the luminous Sufi saints, whose life is full of struggle and hardships right from their initiation, to their departure to the next world. They are bound to lead a disciplined life repleted with varied responsibilities enjoined on them from the court of Rasulullah ﷺ. The imposters, who are predators, operate on commercial basis don't have glimpse of their mysterious esoteric life.

In the history of Islam, says Saiyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi, we find at the helm of every crusades a Sufi saint who not only himself struggled hard but inspired his followers and co-workers with the spirit of sacrifices, conviction and devotion to the causes. The annulment of the conquest of a sizeable part of Muslim empire by Tartars and their conversion to Islam were done by the Sufi saints. In India apostasy and irreligiosity of King Akbar's reign was checked and Islam revived by the heroic efforts of Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Sani. The revolt against French occupation of Algeria, against Russian occupation of Tajakistan, against Italian invasion to occupy Tripoli were led by Sufi masters. The heroic effort and untiring zeal of Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, that of Shaikh

Muhammad Abdhu and his predecessor Shaikh Hassan al-Benna in Egypt are well-known to everyone. In India the revolt against the British in 1857 and later on again led by Syed Ahmed Shaheed and other spiritual masters are historical facts the history has recorded. The criticism that is often voiced is not against Tasawwuf but its pretence practised by fakes and professionals. There is no activity in the world more sublime, more meaningful and more rewarding than Tasawwuf. (*Excerpted from Islamic Mysticism by Syed Athar Husain*)

Likewise in the first quarter of 20th century, Hazrat Imam Ahmad Riza Khan Brelwi fought against heretic beliefs, Wahabiyat, Qadianiat, and other malacious elements who were challenging the true spirit of Islam. He wrote over one thousand books in refutation of heresy of all kinds and earned honorofic title of Renewer of Religion (مجددین) bestowed unanimously on him by the great Mashaikh and Ulama of Haramain Sharifan.

Many a great Mashaikh like Junaid, Najmuddin Kubra and so many other took active part in the holy wars. Especially Qadri and Naqashbandi Sufi saints fought heroically in Afghanistan against Russian occupation.

It is thus evidently clear that Sufism is an inspired system and esoteric truth not attainable through acquisitive knowledge or rational acumen from seminaries. Only Khanqahs of radiant Sufi masters have been the training centres. Spiritual sublimity cannot be captured in even the most subtle verbal or literary exchange. It is a felt experience, inner sublimation and illumination veiled from bodily eyes shared relationally and transmitted generation after generation from spiritual masters to his disciples. That is why it is often said that Sufism (Tasawwuf) is an intuitive discipline rather

than doctrinal approach. It does not concern with the external juristic aspect, or canonical law, it is the esoteric Truth or Reality. Those who have interiorized Tawhid say: Islamic spiritual science (*marifat*) is oceanic in character and is attainable by the grace of holy men. It is an endless esoteric journey which is made through divine attraction with the help of an enlightened spiritual guide and that it is not solely inner-consciousness but inner illumination that matters.

To embark upon spiritual journey, systematic initiation (Bait) at the hand of preceptor is indispensable. The rite of initiation may be compared to planting of a seed. It imparts on the disciple a special spiritual influence which creates spiritual kinship in the order and from here start the beginning of inward journey. No initiation, no rebirth no sanctification no illumination. The rite of initiation from a Sufi master links the traveller ultimately to the court of Rasulullah ﷺ which is the source and fountainhead for the transmission of spiritual benediction. The Holy Prophet ﷺ in true sense is the celestial winebearer (ساقی ازل) and the Master initiator of the Sufis. Therefore the construction of initiatic genealogies (*salasil*) was a device meant to ensure continuous transmission of esoteric teaching from the Holy Prophet ﷺ through an unbroken chain of master-disciples relationship.

Before the advent of English language and Western influence in the East, the sacred life-accounts of Sufi dervishes and their noble teachings were confined only to Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages, and Islamic Sufism, in true sense, remained unknown, obscure, and misunderstood in the English speaking world. Some studies on the subject did appear, but their approach was either doctrinal, academic or highly sophisticated that the readers could not get at the meanings of the spiritual treasure of Islamic life. It was,

therefore, envisaged to produce a study directed solely to the spiritual lives and teachings of some selected great Mashaikh of Islam who are well-acquaintants across the world through their writings, discourses or authentic memoirs and hagiographies compiled on them. Therefore attempt is not made to dwell on the theoretical, and doctrinal discussion, or on the tenets, principles, and creeds of Sufism. Depiction of their simple spiritual lives is enough to demonstrate divinity of Islamic Sufism.

Western writers and non-Muslim scholars have tended to concentrate on the evolution of Sufi thoughts, doctrines, and history of Islamic mysticism (*Tasawwuf*) which hardly help to comprehend veritable Islamic spirituality. My motives to compile this study are as follows:

1. Let the English-speaking Muslims and non-Muslims throughout the world become aware of the splendid illuminative lives of the Sufi saints of Islam. It also helps understand the divinity of Islamic mysticism and the contribution of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in supervising the inner dimension of Islam.

2. To read the life-sketches of the holy men is blessing in many ways. Their radiant souls reflect divine grace on the readers, enlighten them, causing purgation of the self and purification of the heart and illumination of the spirit and put them on the way of God. Let the believers dilate their hearts by explaining the hidden meanings of this Aya of the Holy Qur'an

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبُّكُمْ اللَّهُ (3:31)

3. By hearing the accounts of the saints, a desire to seek God and to renounce the mortal world is born and also a friendship grows for the Lord and desire to do good deeds for

the humanity.

4. Junaid Baghdadi said 'These accounts placate the broken hearts.' He also said 'The speech of the Prophets ﷺ gives information concerning presence (*huzuri*) while the speech of the saints alludes to contemplation (*mushahdat*). He also said "The saying of auliya Allah are one of the armies of the Lord whereby He confirms and reinforces the disciple, if his heart is dejected.

5. Someone asked Junaid: Is it good for the disciples to listen the pious tales?" He replied: "Pious tales are one of God's legions, and the hearts are strengthened by them." He was asked: "Is there any proof for what you say?" He affirmed: "Yes! The words of God, 'All that we relate to you of the tales of the Messengers is to strengthen your heart.'" (11:20)

6. Shaikh Bu Ali Diqaq was asked: "will it profit us merely to hear the discourses of saints without acting upon them?" He replied: "Yes! by merely hearing, the desire to meet God is automatically developed in a devotee and consequently egoism and pride relinquish and he is enshrined in humility.

7. Shaikh Bu Ali Sina says: "I cherish two desires: to hear nothing besides the life-sketches of the saints and to meet none but the beloved of the Lord, the saints."

8. Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya used to advise his followers: 'Books of Mashaikh (spiritual mentors) should be regularly studied for enlightenment and culture.'

9. Imam Yusuf Hamadani advised some people who asked him 'what they should do when the Sufi saints had passed away from the world?' 'Read eight pages of their sayings everyday', he replied.

10. Attar busied himself in recording life-sketches and sayings for years on end in the hope that he might make himself to resemble them.

11. The saints and mystics believe that the words of auliya Allah are profitable even to those who cannot put them into practice inasmuch as they strengthen aspiration and annihilate self-conceit and pride.

12. Since an idle word often excites keen resentment and ill-feelings, the word of Truth by the veridical tongue of auliya Allah always creates spiritual insight and purgatory effect in the heart of reader.

13. In the present time auliya Allah are not easily accessible, their parlours are non-existent, their hagiographies are the best substitute, the best companions and eye-opener. Remember, their mysterious lives is the reflection of the esoteric life of the Holy Prophet, which causes entire irradiation at all levels.

14. Attar has said: The sayings of the Saints dispose men to renounce the world, meditate on the future life, love God and get ready to set out on last journey. "One may say that there does not exist in all creation a better book than this (Memorial) for their words are a commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith, which are the best of all words. Anyone who reads it properly will perceive what passion must have been in the souls of those men to bring forth such deeds and words as they have done and said.

15. The Holy Prophet has said: "He that makes himself akin to a party either in conduct or in belief, is one of that party." Thus the compiler of this work (M. Riaz) cherishes that the Lord, on account of His Grace and Mercifulness write his name in the list of attendants of auliya Allah.

There are various means to study Islamic Sufism but the best and the most effective and profitable method is to study it through the mysterious and illuminating lives and teachings of the great saints, so that the readers come to know

under whose influence Islamic spirituality grew. The studies produced by the Orientalists won't enlighten the readers in true sense as they dwell on the philosophical, academic and theoretical side of the subject. Some of their works such as *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* by Annemarie Schiimmel and *Mystical Islam*, by Julian Baldick serve as textbooks in both graduate and undergraduate courses on Islamic mysticism in English-speaking universities. These books are primarily concerned with the history of Sufism in the eastern parts of the Muslim world. These works only impart them information, whereas the present study, being an eye-opener, shall enlighten their inmost-beings and disclose the glory and eternal truth of Islamic Sufism.

The work is divided into three volumes. The first volume starts with a comprehensive introduction, and then incorporates life-sketches of nineteen selected former great Mashaikh of Classical Sufism before the beginning of systematic Sufi Orders. It also includes names of some founders of Sufi Orders such as Shadhiliyya, Kubrawiyya, Firdawsiyya, Mawlawiyya Nimatullahiyya, etc. The second volume gives study of twenty-two Qadiriyya and six Suhrawardiyya Mashaikh. The third volume gives account of thirteen eminent figures of Chishtiyya and eight Naqshbandiyya Sufi Orders. Owing to the limitations of the study it has been impossible to include all the Sufi saints. So the writer had to make a selection to delimit the study to reasonable extent for efficacy.

Names in the first volume are arranged in Chronological order, but in volume two and three the arrangement is chronological according to the names of Sufi Fraternities (*salasil*). Each article in the work concentrates on the ancestry, parentage, birth, education quest for spiritual

guide, training, appointment as spiritual successor (*sajjada-nishin*) service to humanity, guidance to disciples under training, marriage and domestic life, teachings, and departure to celestial abode for an eternal life.

Every effort is made to write life-sketches, utterances, and teachings of Mashaikh in simple and lucid English. The material excerpted from the English sources is documented almost immediately after the information. The sources used in the production of the work are authentic and well-known in the area of Sufism. The study will go a long way to shatter the misconception of alien influence on Islamic Sufism. I haven't discussed their creeds in detail or their various methods of litanies or other like ascetic practices. Nor have I dwelled in detail on the miraculous power of sufi saints, since their own lives is charismatic not less than a miracle.

I hope this work will dispel age-old unfounded doubts and exterminate intangible prejudices impounding the heart of non-believers and secular scholars in visualizing the veritability of Islamic Sufism. Should the readers approach this book with open mind and without pre-conceived notions, the inherent messages of the blessed saints of Islam are bound to penetrate into their inner souls.

I am indebted to the Lord Most High and his Holy Prophet who impuled me to attempt this neglected phase of Islamic spirituality, to make it understandable to the humanity at large across the world. Secondly I am extremely grateful to Syed Ameer Ali Shah Bukhari Naqvi Qadri who rendered tangible help in the research work. My brother Doctor Nazir Ahmad deserves many thanks who not only patronized the study but made revision and improvement in some parts of the manuscript. I am also grateful to Mian Zubair Ahmad Alvi Qadri Ganj Bakhshi Ziai and his assistant Saiyyidi

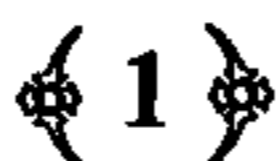
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Hazrat Khwaja Hasan Basri

Islamic Sufism which came into existence from the Day of Alast i.e. the Day of Primordial Covenant has its origin by the advent of Adam, completed its glory in the court of Rasulullah ﷺ who is the first Sufi in Islam and then his Companions, their followers and then the followers of the followers. The Companions of the Prophet were top-ranking Sufis although the term like Sufi-science or Tasawwuf emerged on the scene in the second and third generations in Muslim Ummah when it was systematically institutionalised. Hazrat Khwaja Hasan Basri, who was disciple and a Khalifa of Hazrat Ali (R.A) relates to the generation of the "sucessors" or the followers who came after the Prophet's Companions (*sahaba*). No saint or Sufi of any Sufi order can be compared to the Companions in respect of rank and sublimity. The Orientalists have been groping in the darkness of history to search documentary proof of its origin. Its proof is in your within not without but for those who understand. It concerns the transcendental reality of mankind.

Hasan Basri was born in 21 A.H (642) at Madinah, the Radiant in Arabia. His father, whose name was originally Peroz was taken prisoner during the Arab conquest of Iraq and is said to have been brought to Madinah where he was released from slavery by his owner who was most probably an Arab woman whose identity could not be established by the historians. While in Madinah, Peroz married a girl named Khayra who gave birth to Hasan Basri in 21 A.H. (642) His mother who had been brought as a captive, was sold to Umm Salma, one of the wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In his infancy when his mother was busy in some work, Umm Salma

used to feed him from her breast. Once in his childhood he drank water from the bowl of Rasulullah ﷺ. When the Prophet inquired about it, his wife Umm Salma replied "Hasan has drunk water," whereupon the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: He has absorbed my divine knowledge in the measure he took water from my bowl." One day while the Holy Prophet ﷺ was present in the house of Umm Salma, Hasan was given in his lap upon which he prayed to God to shower His blessings and boon on Hasan with spiritual ranks in his life. Once in his childhood he was taken to Hazrat Umar Farooq (R.A). He said: "since the child is very handsome, name him Hasan (the beautiful). "Umm Salma brought him up under her own care and training and would always pray: "O my Lord, make Hasan leader of the mankind." Thus he attained to eminent position in the top most celebrated mystics of Islam.

Hasan grew up in Hijaz (Madinah). In 42 A.H. (662) after the famous Battle of Siffin, he moved to Basra. There he joined an Arab expeditionary force and took part in the conquest of eastern Iran. In the following year in 43 A.H. he returned from the military expeditions and settled in Basra where he lived until his death in 110 A.H. (728) He had systematic initiation by Hazrat Ali (R.A.). He was also benefitted by one hundred and twenty Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ including seventy martyres of Badr.

Hasan Basri's conversion to ascetic life was brought about by an interesting incident. When he was a young man he was a lapidary (jeweller) and had gone to Rum (in Asia Minor) on business trip. There he lived with minister of the Sultan. One day the minister said to him: "We are going out of the city with Sultan to certain place; will you accompany us?" Hasan gave consent and went in the company of the Sultan and minister. Hasan relates next: We came to a plain where there

was vast tent the rope of which was of silk and its stakes of gold. I saw there a large number of soldiers. They entered the tent, repeated some words and then came out. Then they made circuit round it and went away. Then came about four hundred Ulama. They too did the same thing and left. They were followed by some old respectable citizens who also entered the tent, said few words, made circuit of it and went away. Afterwards about three to four hundred beautiful maidens, each holding in their hands a dish containing rubies, pearls, and other precious stones appeared there. They also entered the tent in the same way and acted as the previous groups had done and went away. Lastly the Sultan accompanied by ministers, entered the tent, uttered the same words, then made circuit round the tent and went away.

Hasan says: "I was surprised at this phenomenon and asked the minister to tell me what all that was about. The minister replied: The Sultan had a very beautiful son of happy disposition who fell ill and died. His tomb is inside this tent and they all visit it likewise once in a year. First come the soldiers and say: O the son of Sultan, if by our arms we could save thee from the death, we would have done it even at the cost of our lives, but we were helpless. Then come the Ulama and say 'If our knowledge and experience could save thee we would have averted death, but before divine decree, we were helpless. Then come the old citizens and cry 'If we could have saved thee by groaning and prayers, we would have done so. Finally come the young maiden who say, 'If we could have ransomed thee at the price of beauty and wealth, we would have done it, but we cannot change predestined fate.' After this the Sultan and ministers enter the tent. The Sultan say: O my son, I have done all that I could do. I have brought here, the soldiers, the Ulama, the old venerable citizens, and the

beautiful maidens bearing treasures of wealth, and yet I cannot restore life to you. It depends not on me, but on God Almighty and Glorious before whom all powers are immaterial. May mercy of the Most Merciful be multiplied upon thee for another year.' Having spoken these words they return by the passage they came."

Khwaja Hasan Basri having heard all this account stirred to the depth of his heart. He vowed that he would never smile thenceforth and concentrate to earn Hereafter life by withdrawing from the worldly occupation. It is well known that he lived in ablution for seventy years and gained eminent position amongst his contemporary spiritualists.

Khwaja Hasan Basri having heard and seen the pathetic event by the Sultan and his ministers was hurt too much and repaired to Basra where he practised the severest type of asceticism and austerity and many people would come to hear his sermons and discourses. He used to say: "I feel delight when I see a person inflamed by divine love and longing to have come to me in quest of Ultimate Truth."

Hasan's fame rests on the sincerity and uprightness of his religious personality which made a deep impression on his contemporaries and won him many followers. Especially he was famous for his fiery sermons in which he not only warned his fellow citizens against committing sins, but also commanded them to regulate their whole life in anticipation of the Day of Resurrection, as he did himself. His sermons of which only fragments have been preserved are among the best surviving specimens of early Arabic prose.

Al-Hasan's vivid images of hell and his striking antitheses are masterpieces of religious rhetoric. Many of his sayings are included into the dictionaries of the greatest Arab quotations. For instance, he said "Re-polish these hearts, for

they are quick to grow rusty. And make this world a bridge over which you cross but upon which you do not build."

Hasan had least concern or allegiance to political party. He criticized fearlessly the Umayyad Caliphs of his time as well as the Umayyad governors of Iraq. When the fearsome Hajjaj sought to achieve complete control of the restive Muslim population of Kufa and Basra, he was forced into hiding until Hajjaj's death in 96 A.H (714). In his sermons Hasan constantly warned against worldly attitudes and attachments to earthly possessions: men are on the way to death and those who are already dead are only waiting for the others to follow. He was suspicious of those who amassed riches and even rejected a wealthy suitor for his daughter's hand. He did not accept uncultivated land which was being distributed free by the government among the inhabitants of Basra. Hasan referred to the worldling whose faith sat lightly on him and who sinned without concern as "hypocrite"--one who hovers midway between faith and unbelief. He judged sins strictly and considered the sinner to be fully responsible for his action. Duly respectful of the caliphal authority, he reserved the right to criticize it for what he saw as violations of the divinely ordained order of things. He exhorted his listeners to practice humility and self-scrutiny. The latter was necessary in order to bring out the real motives of one's words or actions and thus to make them more sincere. This psychological analysis became cornerstone of Sufi self-discipline and introspection which were brought to fruition in the work of al-Muhasibi. Hasan's brotherly feeling towards his contemporaries and his altruism were also appropriated by later Sufis as an attribute conducive to the mystical goal. They became the foundation of the doctrine of chivalry. (futuwwa) No wonder that his name appears in the spiritual genealogies

of many Sufi orders and he is cited innumerable times in moral works of exhortation. The influence of his ascetic piety persisted in Basra and beyond. Abu Talib Makki has stated in his "Nourishment of the Hearts" (*Qut al-qulube*) that Hasan was "our leader (Imam) in this doctrine... and we walk in his footsteps and we follow his ways and from his lamp we have our light." (*Excerpted and summarised from Islamic Mysticism, by Alexander Knysch pp. 10-13*)

Hasan had a disciple who was in the habit of casting himself on the ground and uttering groans when he heard the Qur'an recited. One day Hasan said to him: "If you are unable to restrain these groans, then they will prove like a destructive fire to you (it is better for you to control); but if they are really out of your power of control, I declare that I am six stages behind you in the way of spiritual excellence. Such groaning are generally the art of Iblis."

Hasan used to sermonise the public frequently and Rabia Basri would also attend. But when she did not come, Hasan would not deliver lecture that day. The audience once asked him why he postponed lecture in her absence? Secondly they asked: when you deliver lecture we fully understand what you say but when Rabia enters the scene, the nature of your discourse is entirely changed which is beyond our comprehension." Hasan said: 'the food which is given to elephant cannot be given to ants.' During the discourses when Hasan would go into rapture, he expressed thanks to Rabia saying: I am grateful for the blessing you have conferred on me which led me to ecstasy."

One day when Hasan Basri was preaching, Hajjaj bin Yusuf, the blood thirsty and formidable governor of Iraq, holding naked sword in his hand, and accompanied by army and retinue entered the mosque. A person of spiritual

distinction in the audience thought that Hasan would face challenging situation today; whether he stands up to welcome the governor or continues his lecture fearlessly. Hasan Basri without paying the least attention to him, far from shortening his discourse, prolonged it. When he finished the discourse, the said person who was watching him exclaimed: "Bravo Hasan!" when Hasan came down from the pulpit, Hajjaj came forward and taking Hasan by the hand addressing the people said: If you wish to see a man whom the Lord has distinguished among you, come and look on Hasan Basri."

Hasan had such a fear of God in his heart that like a man seated near an executioner, he was always in a state of apprehension. Seeing one day a man who wept, he asked him what was the matter? The man answered: Today I heard a preacher saying that there were a great number of the Muslims who by the reason of their sins would remain several years in the Hell and then taken out. "May God grant," said Hasan, "that I be one of those who will be liberated from the Hell in the last. May I be even as that man who, as the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, will come out Hell eighty four years after all the rest of people."

It is related that Hasan saw a person weeping and groaning and asked him the reason of it. He said: I have heard that a believer, on account of his sinful life shall remain in the Hell for years on end. Hasan said: "Would that I am thrown into the Hell in place of that person and be he saved from it, because I don't expect to have come out of Hell even after one thousand years."

Once Khwaja Hasan spent full night in weeping and moaning. When the people said: You are counted amongst the people of penitence, then why do do weep and cry so much? He replied: I weep thinking that perhaps today I have set my

foot on an unlawful place or allowed an evil word escape my lips which may cause God to take me to task and say: O Hasan Go away, you have no access here, your works of piety smack hypocrisy. Thus we reject all of your prayers and adoration."

Once Hazrat Umar bin Abdul Aziz through a letter sought his advice to help to run government administration. Hasan replied: "If the Lord is not your helper, than don't expect help from anyone." Through another letter he advised the king: "consider that Day (Day of Judgement) nearest to you on which the entire phenomenal existence shall perish; and only the Hereafter shall last long."

One day on the bank of river Tigris, Hasan saw a man seated with a young lady and a bottle of wine placed in front of him. A thought came into his mind, "How depraved is this man! would that he were like me." All of sudden, he saw a boat on the surface of water slowly sinking deep. That man immediately jumped into the water and saved six of the seven men in the boat who were drowning and looked towards Hasan and said: "If you are superior to me, then for God's sake save the seventh man. You save only one man, whilst I saved six." Hasan could not do so. The man, then addressing Hasan said: "Sir, this woman seated by my side is my mother and the bottle contains water. This scene was staged just to put you to test." Hasan fell on his feet and said: Just as you have saved six people, save me also from drowning in the water of pride and conceit. Hasan felt it as his desire was fulfilled. Since then he became so humble that seeing a dog one day, he remarked: O Lord, for the sake of this virtuous dog, accept me as Thy slave."

Once Hasan, accompanied by many people, was destined to holy Kaaba. En route they saw a well. They were thirsty and had no rope and bucket to draw water. Hasan said:

I am going in prayer. The moment I am engaged in His worship, water shall rise. You then drink it and slake your thirst. So it happened likewise. But a person, after drinking water to his fill, filled a big glass to keep by his side for use in future. The water in the well rank deep to its original level. When the people asked Hasan the reason of this strange occurrence, he replied: It was due to lack of your faith to depend solely on the Lord Most High."

Hasan Basri had a neighbour named Shamaun who was a fire-worshipper. He fell ill and his last hour approached. Someone asked Hasan to go and see his dying neighbour. Hasan went and saw that, by the reason of his fire-worship, his entire body had blackened by smoke. Hasan said to him: "Come, Shamaun, fear the torment of Hell-fire which the Lord prepares for thee who has spent seventy years of life in infidelity and fire-worship, embrace Islam." Shamaun said: I see in the Muslims three characteristics which prevent me to be Muslim: You never cease to repeat daily that the world is perishable, yet you amass and heap its wealth day and night. 2. You claim that death is certain and inevitable, and yet you ignore thought of it and do none of the good works that might benefit you in the world Hereafter, (3) You assert your belief that in that world it will be possible to contemplate the face of God Most High, and yet you commit sins which He abhors." "You speak like one who is initiated in the divine path," said Hasan. But although the Muslims commit sins, nonetheless they confess and believe in Divine Unity (Tawhid) and the existence of the Lord Most High, while you spent life in infidelity and fire-worship. On the Day of Resurrection, if Allah casts us both into the Hell, the fire will carry you away at once, but if the grace of God is accorded to me, not one hair of my eyebrows will sustain heat. Moreover you have

worshipped fire for seventy years whereas I never did so."

These words made such a deep impression on Shamaun, that he said: I am ready to become Muslim but on certain conditions: "You give me in writing that God will forgive all of sins and infidelity." Hasan gave him a written statement (a covenant) to this effect. Shamaun then said: Ask some spiritualists of Basra to attest this statement, which was done. After this Shamaun embraced Islam and requested Hasan to give him burial bath with his own hand and lower him in the grave. And also place this statement in my hand so that I may produce it on the Day of Judgement. Saying this he surrendered his soul to Almighty God. Hasan Basri fulfilled all the promises made with him. The same night Hasan saw him in dream wearing ornamented dress, and a gold crown on the head walking in Paradise. Hasan asked him: "what happened to you in the celestial world?" He said: God by His mercy forgave me. He conferred so much rewards and blessings on me which I cannot explain. You also get back written statement (covenant) you gave me at the moment of death, as I don't need it now." When Hasan got up in the morning, he found that piece of paper in his hand. He thanked God and said: Divine mercy needs no cause. When a fire-worshipper, who spent seventy years of his life in fire-worship, is pardoned just by reciting once *Kalima Tawhid* (Profession of faith) then how a man, who has spent seventy year in His Praise and adoration can be deprived of His compassion and grace.

Once in childhood, Hasan had committed a sin. In order to remember it always, he used to write it on the collar of every new shirt. He would see it daily, weep and groan to such an extent that he would faint.

On one occasion, Hasan Basri said: I have been startled by the sayings of four persons:

(1) a drunkard, (2) an eunch, (3) a child, (4) a woman." How was it, the people asked Hasan. He said: I saw a drunkard staggering in the midst of mire. I asked him, be careful lest you should stumble and fall down. The drunkard replied: If I fall in the mire, no great harm is done, I can get rid of it by washing myself. But, O Hasan you walk firmly in the way of God. If you fall in the pit of pride and self-conceit, you will never come out clean and cause your entire community ruined. These words pierced into my heart. (2) When I tried to evade an eunch lest he should touch me, He said: O Hasan, why do you draw your robe away from me; only God knows what will be the end of each. (3) At another time I saw a child coming towards me holding a lighted lamp in his hand. I asked him: whence have you brought this light? He immediately blew it out and said to me: O Hasan, you tell me where the light has gone before I tell you whence I fetched it. (4) One day a beautiful woman with her face unveiled came to me. As soon as she met me, she started complaining against her husband for his maltreatment. I asked women: You first cover your face and then speak. She answered: "O Hasan, don't you know that in my anxiety, I lost reason and I did not even know that my face was uncovered. If you had not told me I would have gone thus to the bazaar. But you who claim to have cultivated friendship with the Lord Most High, and see all through His light, yet you are able to sustain your consciousness and see my face whether covered or uncovered." Her words pierced deeply into my inmost being."

Once Malik bin Dinar asked Hasan: what thing lies in the destruction of the people? He replied: In the unconsciousness of the heart. Then he asked him to explain 'what is unconsciousness of the heart?' He replied: Drifting towards worldliness.

An Arab visiting Hasan asked him to define 'patience'. He said: there are two kinds of patience; one kind consists in bearing afflictions and calamities boldly and in abstaining from what the Lord has forbidden. The other kind consists to avoid listening suggestions of Satan." Hearing this the Arab said: "I have never seen anyone more retiring from the world and more patient than thyself." "Alas", answered Hasan, "My renouncement of the world and my patience carry no weight." Then the Arab exclaimed: Why do you say like this? "Because if I practise renouncement it is only for the fear of Hellfire, and if I keep patience, it is only because I hope to enter paradise. Now that man deserves appreciation who without self-regarding motives practises patience for the sake of God Most High and whose renouncement of the world is not for sake of paradise but only to please the Lord. Such line of action is a clear sign of sincerity of the heart."

Hasan said: "Association with the wicked produces suspicion of the good." Hujwiri says this saying is very apt and suitable to the people of the present age who all disbelieve in the honoured friends of God. The reason of their disbelief is that they associated with pretenders to Sufism who have only its external forms; and perceiving their actions to be perfidious, their tongues false, their ears listening to idle quatrains, their eyes following pleasures and lust and their hearts set on amassing unlawful or dubious lucre, they fancy that aspirants to Sufism behave in the same manner, or that this is the doctrine of the Sufis themselves whereas, on the contrary, the Sufis act in obedience to God, and speak the word of God, and keep the love of God in their hearts and the voice of God in their ears, and the beauty of divine contemplation in their eyes and all their thoughts are fixed on gaining holy mysteries in the place where vision is vouchsafed

to them. If evildoers have appeared among them and have adopted their practices, the evil must be referred to those who commit it. Anyone who associates with the wicked members of a community does so through his own wickedness, for he would associate with the good if there were any good in him. *(Kashf al-Mahjub)*

He said: whosoever recognises God, considers the world as his enemy and he who loves the world turns enemy of God.

He who gives up his devotional exercises to work for the benefit of the world, trying to mould its evil away, is ruined at the end. He once said: Accumulating wealth is worse than drinking wine which is prohibited in the law of Shariah.

Whoever loves gold and silver is humiliated by the Lord, and he who considers himself the leader of the nation is misled and belittled.

Someone asked Hasan: what is your spiritual state of condition? He replied: My state is like that of a man shipwrecked in the sea who is clinging to a solitary plank for his survival.

In respect of Renunciation, Hasan said "Renunciation of the world is that you loathe its devotees and all it contains.

Someone asked Hasan 'what is humility'? He said "Humility is constant fear accompanying the heart".

Backbiting is a great sin. A man told Hasan that "so-and-so has slandered you." He sent a tray of halva (sweets) to the man, noting, "I hear that you have bestowed upon me your good deeds. I would like to repay you." Interpreting God's words, "And you garments you must purify (74:4), Hasan Basri explained that He (God) means, "And your character you must beautify."

Someone said to Hasan, "So much has been said

concerning the various sciences of correct behaviour which of them are most beneficial in the world and most effective for gaining reward in the Hereafter?" He replied, "Learning religion, moderation in the world and knowledge of what constitutes your duty towards God Most High." (*Principles of Sufism, by Qushayri*)

Hasan Basri was indeed the founding father of the Sufi movement and himself Sufi of sublime luster. His passionate preaching of high moral and ethical standards won him numerous followers such as Yazid b. Aban al-Raqashi, Muhammad b. Wasi, Malik b. Dinar, Farqad al-Sabakhi, Abd al-Wahid b. Zayd, Dawud al-Tai, and many others. Coming from a wide variety of backgrounds, these men are described in the sources as professional Qur'an-reciters (qurra), pious fighters for religion and frontier warriors, a small-time traders, weavers, scribes and Qur'an copyists. All of them shared a strong repugnance to worldly delights, social injustice, oppressive powers-that be, luxury, and hypocrisy. Their actions and utterances exhibit a common fear of divine retribution for the slightest moral lapse and an exaggerated sense of sin that they have sought to alleviate through constant penance, mortification of the flesh, contrition and mourning. This self-effacing, God-fearing attitude often found an outward expression in constant weeping which earned some of the early Sufis the name "weepers."

Sometime later, his disciple Abdul Wahid ibn Zaid founded Khanqah for ascetically inclined people in Abbadan in the Persian Gulf. He is described as a typical representative of the virtue of *wara* (abstinence) and of permanent sadness. Through him, Hasan's ideals reached Syria, where Abu Sulaiman ad-Darani and his disciple Ahmad ibn Abi l-Hawari were the best-known members of the Basrian ascetic

movement.

Hasan never laughed. But at the moment of death, he smiled once and called out "what sin! what sin!" After his death, someone saw him in dream and asked: O Hasan, you were never in the habit of smiling, but when dying why did you smile?" Hasan answered: when I was dying I heard a hidden vice saying: O Izrail hold back his soul a little longer, it still has one sin, and in my joy I exclaimed, 'what sin, what sin!'

In the night of his death another friend of Basri had a dream in which he saw the gates of heaven open and heard a voice proclaim: "Hasan Basri has come to his Lord who is pleased with him." He died in 110 A.H. (728).

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Hazrat Ibrahim bin Adham

Ibrahim bin Adham was originally Prince and Sultan of Balkh and had dominion over many provinces full of wealth. He is regarded as an excellent spiritual figure in the history of Islamic mysticism about whom once Junaid of Baghdad said: "Ibrahim is the key to the illuminative knowledge of all the radiant mystics of Islam." He was born in 179 A.H with silver spoon in mouth to the royal family. He remained in the company of Hazrat Imam Abu Hanifa for some time. Once friends of Abu Hanifa cast abominable glance at him. Imam Abu Hanifa immediately took notice of it and addressed Ibrahim bin Adham as "Sayyedna". The friends got embarrassed and asked Imam "Whence did he get this sublimity?" Imam Abu Hanifa replied: "He all the times remains engrossed in prayers and devotional exercises but we are occupied in worldly affairs."

While Ibrahim was governor of Balkh, fortune dawned upon him. One night when he was in bed, he heard a sound of footsteps on the roof of his palace. He shouted and asked 'who is on the roof?'. An answer came: I have lost my camel and I am searching it on this roof. Ibrahim said: Well, you must be a fool to have lost camel somewhere in a desert, but now looking for it on the roof." "And you witless king", returned the voice, "how do you expect to find God Most High while seated on the throne of gold and dwelling in a kingly palace." Hearing this alarming censure, fear seized the heart of Ibrahim. He spent rest of the night in prayer till early morning.

Next day when he was sitting in his throne in his royal court encircled by grandees of his kingdom, and his guards in the usual manner, all of sudden a majestic figure entered there.

He advanced towards Ibrahim but was invisible to the rest of people sitting there. Ibrahim asked him: "Who are you and what caused you to come here?" The man replied, "I am a stranger and I want to stay at this inn." Ibrahim answered: "But this is not an inn; it is a royal palace of mine. "Who lived here before you", the stranger asked. "My father", said Ibrahim. And before your father who lived here? The stranger again asked: My grandfather answered Ibrahim. The stranger continued asking him up to his many ancestors who had lived in that palace. Then he asked: who will live here after you? Ibrahim said: My sons and children. The stranger said: The place where so many lived and passed away, and could not make it their permanent residence, then if it is not an inn, what is it? Saying this the stranger left the place. Ibrahim ran after him, and asked him, "please tell me who are you?" The stranger replied: I am Khidr, and he disappeared. This event lit fire of divine love in the inmost being of Ibrahim.

Next morning mounted on horseback, he went out of his palace. He heard a hidden voice which said: "O Ibrahim, you are not created for this purpose. You get up before death causes you to awake." The voice struck to his heart; he realized 'it is the Lord who commands.'

Thereupon, he dismounted, exchanged clothes with a shepherd whom he found close by, took leave of his companions and attendants and adopted life of wandering *dervish*. He arrived near Nishapure, and finding a cave there, he repaired to it and occupied himself in divine worship for nine years continuously. Only on Fridays in the week, he would come out of it to collect fire wood from the jungle and to sell it in the market. He would give half of the proceeds to the poor in charity, and keep half with him to buy food. After saying Friday prayer, he would go back to the cave and

engross in His adoration. Shaikh Abu sa'id leaving his kingdom and turning a *dervish*, several years after, visited the solitary cave of Ibrahim Adham. He found that the place was still filled with aura of musk and amber.

One day Ibrahim met a luminous figure in the desert who taught him the great Name of Allah. He then used to iterate that name day and night during which he met Khidr. He told Ibrahim that the person who had taught him the great Name of Allah was my brother Hazrat Ilyas.

One day Ibrahim while wandering in the desert met a group of seventy *dervishes* wearing Khirqahs of whom sixty-nine had died and one was breathing his last breath nearing death. Ibrahim asked the surviving member of the group to explain the strange tragic phenomenon of sixty nine persons. The said person remarked: know we were a group of Sufis who had vowed before God to observe discipline and never talk to anybody, nor fear anyone except God, and that we should concentrate only to our initiatic journey without seeking help of anyone. However when we reached Makkah, we met Khidr. We all offered our salutations to him and felt that our efforts were rewarded by meeting with him. Scarcely had we expressed our words of gratitude, when we heard hidden voice of the Lord reprimanding us in these words: O you disobedient, defaulters and breakers of your vow, was this your decision that you forgot the Lord, and felt delight in the company of a creature? For this negligence all of you are deprived of your lives. Thus all those who are dead are burnt in love of God. O Ibrahim divine path is very difficult to tread. Provide for yourself a jug of water and a roof for shelter. Depart not too far from, nor approach Him too near. Beware lest you become indiscreet or negligent in observing His commandment. Ibrahim you decide just now if you are ready

to tread divine path further or would like to return home?" Ibrahim expressed thanks to him but asked him to tell "how did you escape death and still you are taking last breathes?" He replied: those who are dead were stalwarts in the Path full ripe and mature, while I was still a novice and unripe mystic." Saying this he too passed away.

After some years Ibrahim left for Makkah to perform pilgrimage. He joined a caravan which was destined to that holy city. The news of his coming reached Makkah. The chief men of the city came out to welcome him. Some of their servants having gone ahead met Ibrahim and asked him if Ibrahim bin Adham was approaching? They did not know him prior to this event. Ibrahim inquired of them: Why do you ask about him? They replied: "The chief men of the city are coming to welcome him." Ibrahim, not disclosing his identity, said: Why do you take trouble to welcome a man who is heretic, sinner and an infidel?" The men said: what right you have got to speak ill of such a spiritualist of high rank." They seized him, gave good beating and left. Here Ibrahim said to himself: "This is what you deserve in true sense." Afterwards, when he was recognised by the people, they came to apologise and conducted him to Makkah where he remained for several years, and initiated many people during his stay there. In Makkah it was his practice to go to jungle and collect fire wood, and sell in the market and feed his disciples and associates or sometimes served as guard at the farm lands of different landlords.

When Ibrahim abdicated throne and left Balkh, he had a little son. When the child came of age and learnt about the whereabouts of his father, he determined that he would try to find him. Accompanied by his mother and four hundred subjects including some retinue, he set out to Makkah. On

reaching there he immediately inquired about his father from his disciples who were sitting in the precinct of Kaaba wearing Khirqahs and tattered clothes. He was told that he had gone to jungle to cut wood which he would sell, and buy bread to feed his disciples. Hearing this the prince immediately proceeded to jungle in quest of his father. There he met an old man carrying firewood on his back bent due to heavy load. At this sight tears began to flow from his eyes. He started following the old man hidingly. He was sure that the old man was his father. On reaching market place he heard his father crying: "who will for honestly-earned money buy this honestly-gathered bundle of firewood from me?" A man bought from him and gave him some loaves in return. He came back and distributed the loaves amongst his disciples and the poor sitting near holy Kaaba. When they had finished the food, Ibrahim accompanied by his disciples went to circumambulate the Kaaba. On the other hand, his son was looking all this but did not disclose his identity to anyone lest his father should disappear.

As Ibrahim was circumambulating the Kaaba, his eyes unintentionally fell on the young boy. The disciples were surprised to see how it was against his own precept that he was looking at the young boy. After finishing circumambulation (*Tawaf*) the disciples asked Ibrahim about his looking at the young boy contrary to his own teaching. He replied: "when I left my kingdom of Balkh, I had a child who, if he were living now, would look very much like that young boy. Also inwardly I felt as if he were my son."

Next morning the disciples of Ibrahim located his son who was busy in reading the Qur'an and tears flowing down onto his cheeks. The disciple inquired who he was? The young boy replied: "I am the prince of Balkh son of Ibrahim bin Adham. My father turned a *dervish*. I have come out in search

of him. Yesterday, I saw him circumambulating Kaaba, but I did not approach him lest he should run away and hide himself somewhere."

The disciples took the prince and his mother to Ibrahim. The moment she saw her husband, she cried out: 'He is my Sultan'. Tears gushed out in the eyes of the queen, the prince and all the disciples. The prince shrieked and fainted. When he recovered his senses, he saluted his father who returned his greeting, embraced him and asked: what is your religion?" The son replied: "I am believer in Islam." He again asked: "Do you know the holy Qur'an?" The son replied in the affirmative. The father again asked: Do you recite the Qur'an? "Yes, I read it daily", said the son. "God be praised!" exclaimed Ibrahim. After this he got ready to depart from family. His wife and son stood up and did not let him go and began to weep. Ibrahim lifted up his eyes towards heaven and prayed: "O my Lord, come to my help". The son immediately fell and died. The assembled disciples were struck at this pathetic incident and inquired of Ibrahim why it happened. Ibrahim replied: when I saw my son, paternal love aroused in me. But immediately I heard a hidden voice which said: "Do you pretend to love Us while your heart is attached to someone else? How can two loves co-exist in one heart?" On hearing this I prayed to God: O my Lord, if my love for my son withdraws my love for you and distracts me from your sanctuary, take his soul or mine immediately. My prayer was granted and soul of my son was seized."

On another occasion, Ibrahim is reported to have said: "Many a night in succession I sought to find the Kaaba unoccupied. One night it was raining heavily, I found the Kaaba vacant. So I entered it and supplicated to Almighty: O my Lord wipe out my sins upon which I heard a voice which

said: O Ibrahim, all over the world people ask me the same thing; but if I wipe out sins of everyone, whom shall we cause to invoke the ocean of our mercy?"

On another occasion, Ibrahim was asked: why did you abdicate your throne and kingdom?" He replied: one day when I was sitting in my throne, I looked at a mirror and saw reflected in it my last resting place (grave) which was an obscure tomb wherein I had no one to keep my company. The road whereby to reach the celestial abode was endless and I had no provision for the journey. I also saw an upright judge who questioned me so rigorously that I could not answer him befittingly. Behold why my worldly rank and my kingdom lost all values in my eyes and why I abandoned them." "But why did you leave Khurasan, and why you did not marry again?" They kept on putting questions. I replied them: Is there any woman who would be ready to marry a man like myself who is always hungry, naked and destitute? If I could I would divorce myself; then how can I attach anyone to myself?"

Once Ibrahim asked a *dervish*: "Have you a wife and children?" He answered in negative. Ibrahim said: "It is all good for you." The *dervish* asked in what sense it was good? Ibrahim answered: "Because everytime a *dervish* marries he is like one who embarks on a vessel, but when children are born to him, he is like one who is drowning."

Once Ibrahim saw a *dervish* groaning and asked "it looks as if you have bought Faqr at a low price." The *dervish* said: How is it! can anyone buy state of *dervish*-hood at some price?" Ibrahim replied: Yes! I have bought it at the price of kingdom of Balkh and I find I have concluded a good bargain."

One day a man brought a sum of one thousand dinars which he had vowed to offer him. Ibrahim said: "But I don't

take anything from the wretched or the destitute." The man said, 'but I am rich man and have a lot of wealth with me.' Ibrahim asked "will you increase your money by earning more?" He said: Yes I will do this. Ibrahim replied: well, then you are more deserving and wretched than anyone else." After these words, Ibrahim continued to say: Listen! I possess nothing and ask nothing of anyone. I have aspired after the condition of a *dervish* and found total richness in it; while others aspire after worldly richness and find poverty in return."

It was the practice with Ibrahim when he would finish his prayers and dhikrullah, he covered his face with the palms of his hands fearing lest the Lord dissatisfied with his worship reject it and throw it onto his face.

Ibrahim once said: I would often pray to Almighty in these words: "O my Lord, you are the All-knowing and Aware. Eight paradises carry no weight compared to your conferments and bestowels on me. Likewise eight paradises are immaterial compared to the award of your love. Thus O my Lord, securing me from all kinds of abasements, ennoble me with the grace of your obeisance."

One day a man approached Ibrahim and said: O Ibrahim I have committed grave sins and sent great deal of harm to others, for God's sake advise me." Ibrahim said: Listen then, there are six rules for you. First: when you have committed a sin, do not take food which the Lord sends you." But I cannot live without food," said he. Second, when you are about to commit a sin, quit the kingdom (world) of the Lord Most." "But how can I go out of it," said he. Third, "when you are about to sin, hide yourself at a place where God cannot see you." He said this too is not possible. Fourth, "when Izrail i.e. the Angel of Death comes to seize your soul, request him to give you time to repent." The angel will never give respite, he

answered. Fifth, "Don't let *Munkir Nakir* enter your grave to interrogate you." This will be impossible for me to do. Sixth, when, on the Day of Resurrection, you are conducted to enter Hell, you refuse to go there." This is also not possible, said he. Hearing all these alarming advices, the man said "I cannot act upon any of your suggestions. Then Ibrahim said: "If these things are not possible for you to implement, then never go to commit sin, and offer repentance to the Pardoner who is Forgiver and Most Merciful. The man immediately repented of his sinful life and died on the spot.

Ibrahim relates his own story in these words: one night I saw Gabriel in dream with a book in his hand. I asked him: what are you doing? He said: I am writing names of the friends of God in this book. "Will you write my name also in the list" said Ibrahim. But you are not one of His friends, said the angel. 'If I am not one of His friends, at least I am a friend of His friends', said Ibrahim. Immediately a hidden voice was heard which said: "O Gabriel write down name of Ibrahim in the first line of the page of the book for he who loves Our friends is also Our friend."

If anyone desired to join company of Ibrahim, he would extend three conditions to the new-comer: "First, I will live like servant to all. Second, I will call for prayer myself. Third, whatever shall I get, I will distribute it equally to all." And when a person said 'I cannot fulfil all these conditions, Ibrahim said: I am surprised at your sincerity.

One day while Ibrahim was walking in the city, a soldier on horseback met him and asked to direct him to the nearest dwelling place. Ibrahim pointed him to the cemetery. When the hoseman got near the cemetery, he was annoyed to see and immediately came back and struck Ibrahim on the head so severely that blood began to flow. Then he tied a cord

round his neck and dragged him to the town nearby. The people cried out: O you madman, it is Ibrahim bin Adham. The horseman alighted, bowed before Ibrahim and implored his pardon. Then he asked Ibrahim, 'I asked you to guide me towards a dwelling place, but you directed me towards a cemetery instead, why you did so? Ibrahim replied: the cemetery is a permanent place of residence where the people are brought daily whereas towns and cities are continually falling into ruins.'

Once someone asked Ibrahim: How do you spend your times? He replied: "I have four mounts to ride on: when I get boon from the Lord, I ride on the mount of thankfulness. When I extend my service to Him, I go before the Lord riding on the mount of sincerity. When I commit sin, I ride on the mount of contrition and repentance."

Ibrahim relates: once I purchased a slave. I asked him his name. He said: It is that by which you call me. I asked him what he would like to eat. He replied 'that which you would give me.' I asked him what garments he would like to put on? He replied, 'The ones that you would bestow on me.' I asked what work he would do? He replied, 'that which you will ask me to do.' I asked him what is your desire? He replied, 'I am but a slave, how can I have a separate will of mine. I thought myself: would that I were a slave of the Lord and surrender totally to His will and wish like this slave of mine!'"

One day the people asked Ibrahim: Did you ever experience happy moment in your *dervish-hood*. Ibrahim replied: I felt happiness on two occasions. Once with dishevelled hair and tattered clothes I was sitting in a boat when a joker appeared and in sheer fun he began to give blow on my face and made fun of me. I enjoyed this state too much because my ego was humbled. On another occasion, I was

very tired and slept in a mosque. People pulled me by the feet and hurled me down the stairs in sheer wrath. As I was falling down the stairs step by step my skull was injured and my feet broken. But at every step of the stairs as I was falling, I experienced great wealth of spiritual bliss. When I reached the floor, I was sorry that there were no more steps for me to enjoy more delight.

Ibrahim earned his livelihood by reaping, gleaning or grinding corn, or tending orchards. When he was unable to produce a licit livelihood, he fasted. Sometimes when he could not find a food, he walked hungry or ingested clay and sand. Once a rich man, whom the identity of Ibrahim was not know, engaged him to work as caretaker of his garden against wages. After sometime one day he asked Ibrahim to fetch some sweet pomegranates from the garden. He brought several, but all of them were sour. Thereupon the owner remarked: "You have been in my service for months together and yet you cannot differentiate between sweet and sour fruit." Upon this Ibrahim replied: I was employed to look after the garden and not to eat and taste fruit." The owner of the garden said: "It looks you are Ibrahim bin Adham." Hearing this Ibrahim left the job and disappeared immediately.

Once Ibrahim was travelling in a boat accompanied by a spiritualist. All of a sudden sea-storm overtook them and the people on board trembled in fear. At once a hidden voice was heard which said: "No need to worry since Ibrahim is travelling with you." Once again when Ibrahim was crossing a river by boat, a storm set in. The people on the board feared death. Ibrahim took out the Qur'an from his pocket and said: If the boat sinks, the Book will also be lost, but this cannot be done." Instantly, divine voice was heard: "We shall not let the boat sink." Likewise, one day Ibrahim was crossing a river in a

boat. The boatman demanded fare, but he had nothing with him to pay. Ibrahim said prayer and supplicated in divine sanctuary: O my Lord, the boatman demands the fare, but I have no money to pay him." The entire sandy region around changed into gold instantly. Ibrahim got handful of the gold and paid the fare.

One day Ibrahim was sewing his patched frock sitting by the bank of Tigris. A person came and asked: What have you gained by abdicating your kingdom of Balkh?" Ibrahim threw his needle into the river and commanded the fish to bring it. Thousands of fish came out with gold needles in their mouths. But he said 'I want my own needle.' At this command a small fish brought the needle that belonged to Ibrahim. Thereupon Ibrahim asked the man: See, this is the smallest grace of my Lord, which He has conferred on me as a result of my renouncing the kingdom of Balkh.

Ibrahim used to say: unless a man renounces the people and his family and sleeps like a stray dog on a dung-heap in the night, he is unfit for the company of Sufi saints.

He said: Not until you exchange sleeplessness for sleep, richness for poverty, humility for honour, you are not worthy to travel mystic path.

He said: He who fails to achieve contentment on three occasions, should know that door of divine mercy is closed upon him. First when he recites the holy Qur'an, second, when he offers prayers, third, when he is engaged in devotional exercise (*awrad*).

In his teaching Ibrahim emphasized a constant meditation contrition, sadness, divine friendship and gnosis. He used to say 'whoever wishes to repent must abandon his oppressive ways, and cease mixing with the people. His

asceticism as described by R.A. Nichalson was quietist and practical type," which "had not crossed the borderline that divides asceticism from mysticism." (*Alexander Knysh. Islamic mysticism*)

It is related that whenever he would experience influx of inspiration from the Invisible, he used to say: "O the kings of the temporal world, come and see spiritual visitations (inner illumination) I gain from the Abode of Light, and be repentant over your worthless grandeur and glory. A man who is subservient to his carnal desires can never establish relationship with God Most High since it warrants purity of intention, and sincerity of efforts."

When Ibrahim's last moments of departure arrived he disappeared from the sight of people and no one was able to say on what date or time he died, what ailment he sustained which caused his death or where his tomb locates. Some say he is buried in Baghdad, other say in Damascus or in Pentapolis. However when he died a hidden voice was heard saying: "World peace is wrecked today; the man who excelled all others in faith is dead; Ibrahim bin Adham has passed away." Some writers have given 18 Jamadi ul Awal, 281 A.H date of his death, while other record 261, or 263 A.H or in other works as 265 and 267 A.H.

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Rabia Basriyya

In Islam, there is neither monasticism nor priesthood, nor any priestly caste to prevent woman from attaining highest religious rank in the hierarchy of Muslim saints and mystics. In the history of Islamic mysticism, there have been a large number of women saint on whom sublimity of sainthood was conferred parallel to the men. This inner dimension of Islam gives equal opportunity to women to come forward like men, tread the divine path, attain self-denial, and advance towards total annihilation and absorb in unitive life. In this dominion Rabia al- Basriyy or al-Adawiyya achieved pre-eminent glory and provided beacon-light to all women to devote themselves to divine worship. Jami relates how someone was asked: "How many are the 'Abdal'?" and he answered "Forty souls", and when asked why he did not say "Forty men", his reply was: "There have been women among them." Therefore the biographies of the Muslim saints such as those compiled by Abu Nuaym, Fariduddin Attar, Ibn al Jauzi, Jami, and Ibn Khallikan and many others are full of accounts of Muslim Sufi women.

History does not give clear account of Rabia's exact date of birth and her early life. We find material only in '*Memoir of the Saints*' of Attar who lived more than four hundred years after Rabia. She was born about 95 or 99 A.H. (717) in Basra where she spent the greater part of her life. She was born into an extremely poor home where some miraculous events took place at the time of her birth. Attar relates that in the night of her birth, there was no oil at home, no lamp to light, no piece of cloth to wrap the new-born babe. Her father had already three daughter, and so she was called Rabia (the

fourth). The mother asked her husband to go and borrow some oil from a neighbour, but he had made a vow that he would never ask anything from anyone except the Creator. So he pretended to go to the neighbour's door, gently knocked it so that he might not hear it, and returned home empty handed. In the very night the Holy Prophet ﷺ appeared to him in dream and said: "Don't worry. Your new born daughter is a great saint whose intercession will cause deliverance of seventy thousand people of my Ummah on the Day of Judgement." The Prophet ﷺ further said: "To-morrow send a letter to Amir of Basra, reminding him that every night he offers Durood Sharif to the Holy Prophet ﷺ one hundred times and on Friday night four hundred times, but this Friday night he neglected me, and thus he must pay you four hundred dinars forthwith to atone for his negligence."

Rabia's father got up, wrote letter to Amir and sent it through the chamberlain. The Amir, when he read the letter, he ordered: "Distribute two thousand dinars among the poor as a token of gratitude that he is in the eyes of Rasulullah ﷺ, pay four hundred dinars to the father of Rabia." Afterwards, the Amir in person went to visit her father at his residence to rub his beard on his threshold and requested to inform him whenever he required anything in future.

In spite of this assistance from the governor of the city, misfortune befell this family. When Rabia was still a little child, her mother and father died and she was left an orphan. A famine engulfed Basra in which the sisters were scattered and separated from her. Rabia too walked towards unknown destination. An evil-minded tyrant saw her and seized upon her and sold her as a slave for six dirhams. The man who bought her, put her to hard labour.

One day while she was going somewhere, an evil

mindful stranger pursued her. She ran to avoid him and slipped on the road and her arm broke. She prayed to God in these words: "O my Lord! I am stranger, and without father and mother, an orphan and a slave, and I have fallen into slavery and my arm is broken, still I am not grieved by this. I only desire to satisfy You. I would like to know that You are pleased with me or not." She heard a heavenly voice saying: "Be not aggrieved, for on the Day of Resurrection you will be given such an elevated rank that those who are nearest to God in Heaven shall envy you."

After this Rabia returned to her master's house and continually fasted in the day time and carried out her appointed tasks and at night she engrossed in His adoration standing on her feet till the day. One night while she was engaged in prayer and worship, her master awoke from sleep and peeped through a window of the house and saw Rabia bowed down in worship, and she was saying: "O my Lord! You know that the desire of my heart is to obey You, and that the light of my eye is in the service of Your court. If the matter rested with me, I should not cease from Your worship for one hour, but You have made me subject to a creature." While she was still praying, her master saw a lamp above her head suspended without a chain and the whole house was illuminated by the rays of that light. This phenomenon was a state of tranquillity (i.e., Divine presence) descended there which opened the eyes of her master.

The master was afraid to see this strange spiritual sight. He rose up and returned to his own room and pondered over the matter until day break. In the morning, he called Rabia and spoke to her kindly, rather apologetically and set her free. Rabia sought leave to go away which was granted immediately. She left that place and journeyed towards desert.

Afterwards she left the desert and obtained for herself a cell for a time where she would engross herself in His adoration and devotional exercises.

Next she set out on journey to Makkah to perform pilgrimage. She had an ass with her to carry her luggage. In the heart of the desert the ass died. Her companions volunteered to carry her luggage, but she refused their offer. She said to them: "Go on your way for I am not dependant upon you," i.e., she placed her trust in God and not in the creatures.

Thus the people went and Rabia left alone, and bowing her head she said: "O my Lord! Do kings deal with women, stranger, helpless and weak like this? You are calling me to Your own house (Kaaba), but in the midst of the way You caused my ass to die and left me alone in the desert." She had hardly completed her prayer, when life revived in the ass and he stood up. She put her luggage on it and resumed her journey to Makkah. When she neared Kaaba, she sat in prayer and said: "O my Lord! I am but a handful of dust and the holy Kaaba is only a stone-wall for me. Show me Yourself in this very sanctuary." So she prayed until God Most High spoke to her in secret communion: O Rabia! When Moses desired to see My face, I cast a particle of My effulgence on the mountain, and it rent into dust and Moses fell swooned. Be content here with My Name."

For the second time when she was on the way to Makkah and had covered half of the distance, she saw the holy Kaaba coming to visit her. She said: "It is the Lord of the house whom I need, what have I to do with the house? I need to see Him Who said: "whose approaches Me by a span's length, I will approach him by the length of a cubit. The Kaaba which I see has no power over me; what joy the beauty of the

Kaaba can bring to me?"

Rabia received a number of offers of marriage, but she rejected all on the ground that celibate life provides better opportunity to get nearness of the Lord. Among them was Abdul Wahid bin Zayd who was renowned for his asceticism, and sanctity of his life, a theologian and a preacher of the time. He was also founder of a Khanqah near Basra and died in 793 A.D. Rabia hatefully refused his offer and in reply said: "O sensual one, seek another sensual like yourself. Have you seen any sign of such desire in me?"

Muhammad bin Sulayman al-Hashimi who was Abbasid Amir of Basra sought her hand in marriage. He offered a dowry of a hundred thousand dinars and cleared that he had an income of ten thousand dinars a month and that he would bestow it all on her. Rabia in reply wrote: "I don't like you to be my slave and that all you possess should be mine or that you should distract me from God Most High for a single moment."

People tried to motivate Rabia to marry the most learned mystic of Basra. She inquired who was the person in their eyes to marry with. They recommended the name of Khwaja Hasan Basri. She said: "The marriage contract can be entered into by those who hold free-will. As for me, I have no will of my own. I belong to the Lord, and I rest in the shadow of His commandments counting myself as nothing." On this stand Hasan inquired: "How have you achieved piety of such higher degree?" She said: "By annihilating myself completely in Him."

Being asked on another occasion to marry Hasan Basri, she replied "I am ready willingly, but let him answer my four questions: I would like to know, whether at the time of my death, my faith and belief in Islam will remain intact?

Second, when I am put in the grave shall I be able to answer the interrogation of *Munkar* and *Nakir* (noble recorders of deeds) satisfactorily? Third, on the Day of Resurrection, shall the scroll of deeds be given into my right hand or left? Finally, when the mankind is summoned on the Day of Resurrection, some to enter Paradise and some to Hell, where shall I be directed to go? Hearing all these inquisitions Khwaja Hasan Basri said: "These are all among the hidden things which are known only to God Most High." She said to Hasan: How the person who is fully occupied by these anxieties, can think of marriage. In response to the offer of marriage, she is also reported to have replied Hasan in these words: "The contract of marriage is for those who have a phenomenal existence. Here in my case, existence has ceased, since I have ceased to exist and have passed out of self. My existence is in Him, and I am altogether His. I am in the shadow of His command. The marriage contract must be asked for from Him (God), not from me."

One day Rabia went to see Hasan Basri and found him bitterly weeping in the fear of God. His tears were flowing down the drainpipe of his house. Seeing this she rebuked Hasan and said: "withhold the display of ostentation. This weeping is the show off pride of the self; rather interiorise your weeping into your heart so that tears become river and your heart drowned in it, i.e. your selfhood might disappear and the Lord of Might appear to you."

One night she saw the Holy Prophet ﷺ in dream who asked her: "O Rabia! Do you love me?" She replied: "Is there anyone who does not love you? Yet the love of God Most High has overwhelmed my heart to such a degree that there is no room for love or hatred towards anyone else."

Once she was asked: "Do you see Him whom you

serve?" If I do not see Him, I will not serve him, she replied. She was frequently found with tears in eyes, and when asked the reason why, she replied: "I fear that at the last moment a voice might say: 'Rabia is not worthy to appear in Our court.'

Someone asked Rabia: "Does the Lord Most High accept the repentance of the sinner?" She said: "As long as God does not grant repentance, how one can repent. And if He grants it, there is no doubt that He will accept it."

One day Sufyan al-Thawri said in the presence of Rabia: "O God! Are you satisfied with us!" She immediately said: "Are you not ashamed of God to ask Him to be satisfied when you are not satisfied with Him?" And Sufyan said: "I seek forgiveness of God."

Rabia had many disciples and associates who used to come to her house day and night to seek her counsel or prayer or to listen to her teachings. They were mostly men not the women of her kinsfolk. Attar has given many names of mystic who very frequently visited her house. One day some learned saints came to her and said: "God Most High has crowned His chosen saints with the bestowal of miracles to perform, but such conferments have never been given to a woman how did you attain such elevated rank of sainthood? Rabia replied: what you say is correct, but tell me if there has been any woman who claimed Godhead (ربوبیت) and said, 'I am the Truth.' Besides this, there have never been female eunuchs as are found among men."

One day Rabia fell ill. People asked her the reason for her illness. She said: My heart had one day leaned towards the attainment of Paradise, so the Lord inflicted affliction as temporary punishment. On another occasion when she fell ill, Sufyan Thawri came to inquire of her health. He asked her: "Why don't you pray to the Lord for the recovery of health?" Rabia replied: "How can I complain to Him for His gifts? Will

He not dislike it? Besides this, it does not behove a friend to desire contrary to the will of the Friend."

Malik bin Dinar relates: "I went to see Rabia and found her drinking water out of a broken pitcher. She was lying stretched on an old mat with a brick for her pillow. I was disturbed to see this sight and said: "O Rabia I have rich friends; if you allow me, I will go and ask them something for you." She replied: "You have spoken ill. It is the Lord who gives sustenance to me and to them. He who provides for the needs of the rich, shall He not provide for the necessities of the poor? If He wills that it should be thus with us, we shall gladly submit to His will."

All sorts of illness and sufferings Rabia accepted as divine gift enduring them with fortitude. She even showed herself oblivious to pain, until others reminded her of it. It is related that one day her head was struck with some boughs and began to bleed, but she paid no attention to it. Someone pointed out to her: "Don't you feel pain?" She said: "My concern is to surrender before His will; He has made me occupied with something other than the tangible things which you see."

One day the maid-servant of Rabia said: "Mistress, come out and see the beauty of creation in this spring season." Rabia replied: "sit within like me in solitude and contemplate the Creator. I see Him and not His creation."

Once Rabia fasted for eight days. On the last day she felt a little hungry. A man appeared and offered sweet drink in a tumbler. She took it and placed it in a dark corner on the floor and wanted to light the lamp. A cat came and overturned the pot. She next thought to pass the night by taking water only. As she went in search of an earthen pot, the light went out, the earthen jar fell and broke, and the whole water spread on the floor. She heaved a sigh and said: O Lord! why do you

deal with me like this?" A heavenly voice said: "Rabia if you seek the gifts of the temporal world We are willing to offer them to you but you will be deprived of Our longing and yearning. The gifts of this world and Our anguish cannot go together and lodge simultaneously in one and the same heart. Rabia you wish one thing and we another. Two separate wills (or wishes) cannot co-exist in one and the same being."

She was asked: "Why are you constantly in tears?" Rabia replied: "Because the cure of this ailment is only the union with the Lord."

On one occasion, Malik bin Dinar, Khwaja Hasan Basri, and Shaqiq Balkhi came to visit Rabia. Discussion started on the issue of sincerity of heart towards God. Hasan Basri said: "He is not sincere in love with God who does not bear with constancy the affliction sent by the Lord to him." Rabia said: "This remark savours of pride and self-conceit." Shaqiq observed: "He is not sincere in love who does not offer thanks to God for afflictions." Rabia remarked: "There is a higher degree of sincerity than this." Malik bin Dinar said: "He is not sincere who does not feel delight in the affliction sent by the Lord." That is not the purest form of sincerity", said Rabia. After this all the three friends asked Rabia to define sincerity. She said: "He is not sincere who does not forget the pain of affliction through his absorption in God."

One of the learned theologians of Basra, once visiting Rabia, began to revile the world. She said: "You seem to love the world too much. If it were not the case, you would not have talked too much about it. If you were disentangled in true sense from it, you would not care about its merits or demerits."

Once while supplicating to the Lord, Rabia said: O my God! If on the Day of Resurrection You send me to Hell, I shall reveal a secret which will cause the Hell run away from me." O Lord, give all that You have destined for me of the

goods of this world to Your enemies, and all that You have reserved for me in Paradise to Your friends, for it is only You whom I seek." My God if I worship you for the fear of Hell, throw me into it; and if I adore you for the sake of Paradise, forbid my entrance there; but if I serve you only for your sake, deny me not the vision of Your glorious countenance.

Rabia also used to pray in these words: "O my Lord my concern and my desire in this world is that I should remember You above all the things of this world and in the next, that out of all who are in that world, I should meet with You alone. This is what I would say, "Thy will be done."

Among Rabia's Karamat it is related that she had sown corn and the locusts fell upon it. She prayed: "O my Lord! This is my provision upon which I have spent money, and if You willest, I will give it as food to Your enemies or Your friends." Then the locusts flew away as if they had never existed."

One day Hasan Basri saw Rabia near the river side. He cast his prayer-mat on the surface of the water and said, "O Rabia come and let us pray two Rakats of prayer together," evidently counting on her power to keep the carpet from sinking. Rabia said: "O Hasan was it necessary for you to attract the people to gain worldly popularity by displaying spiritual power. This is necessary for weak people like you." Then Rabia threw her prayer-mat into the air and flew up onto it and said: "O Hasan come up here i.e., join me so that people may see us." But Hasan could not do that and became silent. Rabia, in order to comfort him said: "O Hasan what you did, a fish can do just the same, and that what I did, a fly can do. The real task lies beyond both of these two actions, and it is necessary that we occupy ourselves with the real work. (*dhikrullah*).

Rabia communed with her Lord in these words:

..."O my Lord, the stars are shining and the eyes of men are closed, and kings have shut their doors and every lover is alone with his beloved, and here am I alone with Thee..."

..."O God, the night has passed and the day has dawned. How I long to know if Thou hast accepted (my prayers) or if Thou hast rejected them. Therefore console me for it is Thine to console this state of mine. Thou hast given me life and cared for me and Thine is the glory. If Thou wert to drive me from Thy door, yet would I not forsake it, for the love that I bear in my heart towards Thee."

Rabia was the most blessed soul enflamed by love and longing who lost herself in union with God. It was for the first time she emphasised the concept of love of God, love for sake of love, not out of fear of Hell or hope of Paradise. This is her historical role until her name became synonymous with love, piety and devotion. An Egyptian philosopher Abdur Rehman Badawi devoted a book to her entitled: *Rabia, shahidat al-ishq al-ilahi* (Rabia, the Witness of Divine Love). There is a most famous legend about Rabia: "One day she was seen in the streets of Basra carrying torch and pitcher with her. The people asked the meaning of this action of which she answered: "I want to pour water into Hell and throw fire into Paradise so that these two veils disappear, and it become clear who worships God out of love, not out of fear of Hell or hope of Paradise." Her legendary biography has served as the ideal pattern for the way of someone who strives for unconditional love of God and surrender to the will of the Divine Beloved, and the absoluteness of her devotion has inspired thousands of men and women travellers of mystic path. Rabia is also praised by Maulana Jami as a true *mard* "a manly man of God,"-the ideal of the Sufis. She serves as an inspiration for Western women and men to become God wary. It is true that

not many will be able to emulate her absolute self-effacement, her poverty and her austerities; but one may be able to apply to one's own life the quintessence of her life, that is the deep love of God without fear of Hell and without hope of Paradise. Her prayers still serve as paradigms for the prayer life of anyone hoping for spiritual progress and elevation.

Like so many saints, Rabia lived upto an old age and must have been nearly ninety when she died. She faced long period of illnesses and suffering from weakness. Her health was frail on account of ceaseless asceticism and perhaps because of hardships she had been facing since her youth. It is related that her shroud was always before her in her place of worship. When the time of her departure came near, she called her servant Abda bint Abi Shuwal and said to her: "O Abda, don't inform anyone of my death, but shroud me in this gown of mine of hair."

Rabia died in 185 A.H. (801) and buried in Basra.

After her death, she was seen in a dream and the dreamer said to her: "Tell us of your state and how you escaped from *Munkar and Nakir*." She said: "These holy beings came to interrogate me and asked: Who is your Lord? I said, "Return and tell you Lord, notwithstanding the thousands and thousands of Your creatures, You havn't forgotten a weak old woman. I, who have only You in all the world, have never forgotten You, that You should ask, Who is your Lord?"

Sources

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Hazrat Dhu n-Nun Misri

He is one of the celebrated earlier spiritualists who had strongest spiritual state not known to the world until he departed. His original name was Thauban, surnamed Dhu n-Nun, "he with the fish,". He was born of Nubian (native of Nubia) parents in Ikhmim in Upper Egypt. His father Ibrahim was a slave, liberated and adopted by the tribe of Quraish. He studied religious sciences and is reported to have transmitted traditions (*Ahadith*) from Malik bin Anas, the founder of the Maliki law school. He was unique of his time in exoteric knowledge and strong inner state. Being a hidden spiritualist, he trod the path of affliction and travelled on the road of blame (*malamat*). All the people of Egypt were lost in doubt as to his true state and did not believe in his sainthood until he died. Little is known about his early life and attainment of his education in religious sciences. However his teachings are scattered in the hagiographic books like *Tadhkarat ul-Auliya* and *Kashf al-Mahjub*.

Dhu n-Nun was asked how his conversion to mystic life took place? He said: one day someone informed me that a young ascetic had hung himself upside down from a tree at such and such place. I approached him and heard him saying himself: O my body so long as you would not conform to the spiritual mandate to engross in divine worship, I shall continue to torment likewise till you are dead." Seeing this pitiable condition of the man, I began to weep. When that ascetic saw me crying, he remarked: "who is there to take pity on this shameless sinner who is shedding tears? Hearing this I approached him, offered him salutations and inquired of him the cause of tormenting the body. He replied: "Since my body

was not ready to engage in the worship of the Lord, I thought to punish it severely." I said to him: I thought you had committed a murder or any other heinous crime." He said: There is no sin more serious than associating with the people of the world and all sins are born out of such relationship, that is why I avoid associating with the people." I (Dhu n-Nun) said to him: "You are really a pious saint." He remarked: No! If you want to see a true pious saint, go and visit him on the yonder hill." When I went to see the other saint, I noticed that one of his feet was severed from his body and lying withered in front of his door and his body was being eaten by the worms. Surprisingly I asked him to disclose the reason for this state of condition. The saint said: One day I was busy in divine worship. Meanwhile a young beautiful lady passed by this way. My sensual passion stirred and I rose up to cast a glance at her. Divine voice was heard within me which rebuked me in these words: Are you not ashamed of to serve the Devil now after having served Me for thirty years? Thereupon, I cut my erring foot immediately that had moved me forward with evil purpose." The saint asked Dhu n-Nun why had he come to see him? Dhu n-Nun said: "I wanted to see a real saint." In response to this that saint asked Dhu n-Nun "if you want to visit a real saint you should climb the hill a little higher to visit him." As it was difficult for Dhu n-Nun to climb more high the hill, he asked the saint to tell him detailed account of that particular saint. He related: "For years together a saint had been dwelling at the top of that hill. One day a person came to see him and remarked that he should not live on the alms given to him; rather he must earn livelihood by working hard. From that day, the saint decided not to accept alms from anyone. He passed sometime without food. Afterwards the Lord bade the bees to feed him with honey. Now they would

come to him regularly and let fall honey on him which he eats and slakes his hunger."

While Dhu n-Nun was descending the hill, he saw a blind bird seated under a tree. He thought whence this bird would get food in the wilderness. Instantly he noticed that the bird dug the earth with its beak and from the earth appeared a gold and silver basins, one full of corn and other with water. The bird ate, and drank, then covered the place as it was before and went back to perch on the tree. These events were enough to teach him lesson. Thereupon Dhu n-Nun withdrew from the worldly affairs and devoted his life to divine adoration and busied in quest of Ultimate Truth.

It is custom with God that He sometimes teaches lesson to His elect through some anecdotes. One day Dhu-n-Nun went to a canal to perform ablution. His eyes fell upon a beautiful woman standing on the balcony of her palace situated close to the bank of the canal. Dhu n-Nun went close to her and asked her to talk with him. She said: "when I saw you from a distance, I felt you were mad, when you came closer, I thought you were a learned man, and when you got closest, I considered you to be a radiant mystic. But now that you have spoken to me, I consider you none of these." Dhu n-Nun asked her why she felt like this about him? She replied: "If you were mad you would not have performed ablution; if you were learned you would not have looked at me, and if you were an enlightened saint, you would have cast glance at the Lord Most High and none besides Him." Saying this she disappeared. Dhu n-Nun gathered that it was all a whip of warning to him from the Unseen, and that she was no mortal, but an angel.

One day the sister of Dhu n-Nun heard him reading in the holy Qur'an that the Lord sent to the people of Isreal

Manna and quails. (من وسلوی) She immediately sat on her prayer-mat vowing she would not leave her seat till she received food likewise from the Lord. At once food began to rain from the sky. She got up and left for the wilderness and was heard or seen no more thereafter.

Once Dhu n-Nun was voyaging in a boat. A merchant lost his pearl and all the passengers thought he had stolen it. Just on the basis of suspicion they started beating Dhu n-Nun. He raised his eyes towards heaven and appealed: "O my Lord, you know I never committed theft in my life." Instantly thousands of fish holding a pearl in their mouths appeared on the surface of water. He got one pearl from the mouth of fish and gave it to the merchant. Seeing this all the passenger repented and begged pardon of Dhu n-Nun. Thenceforth he was given the title of Dhu n-Nun.

Dhu n-Nun narrates another event of his life: "Once I went to a hill and saw a large number of patients there waiting for a saint who dwelt in a cave close by. That saint used to appear from the cave once in a year. He would then look towards heaven and cast breath on the patients which cured them. I also waited his arrival: When the saint with his radiant face came out, I noticed that though enfeebled with age, his features seemed terrifying, the mountain causing awesome dignity to have appeared on his countenance. He looked towards heaven and then all the patients came to him one by one. He breathed on them and they were cured of ailments. While he was going back to his cell, I approached catching hold of his skirt and said: You have cured people of their physical ailments I sustain an inner spiritual malady, please treat me as well. He replied: "O Dhu n-Nun, you leave my skirt as the Lord Most High is looking that you, forsaking His mercy, run after His creature to seek help, and that He might

not commit me to your care and you to mine. Saying this he disappeared."

Dhu n-Nun once said: "I preached sermon for over thirty years but only one man was benefitted of it. He was a prince, and one day while I was delivering sermon, he passed by the mosque and heard me saying: "None is more foolish than the person who fights with One stronger than himself." The prince asked me to explain the statement further. I said "It means that he is fool who fights with the Lord." He went away and came next day to ask me, what way leads to divine union?" I told him: There are two paths, one is longer and the other is short. The longer route demands renunciation of the world, abdication of carnal desires and shunning of sins; and to fast and the shortest way to Him is to renounce all that is non-God. He said: 'I adopt the short route', and saying this he threw away his rich garments, wore a blanket and retired to jungle and gained illumination.

One day Dhu n-Nun was sailing with his disciples in a boat in the River Nile. Another boat was coming up filled with merry makers whose unseemly behaviour so disgusted the disciples that they begged Dhu n-Nun to imprecate God to sink their boat. Dhu n-Num raised his hands in supplication and requested: "O Lord as You have given these people a pleasant life in this world, give them blissful life in the Hereafter too!" The disciples were astonished by this prayer. When the boat came nearer and those in it saw Dhu n-Nun, they began to weep and ask pardon, and broke their lutes and repented unto God seeking forgiveness. Dhu n-Nun said to his disciples: "A pleasant life in the next world is repentance in this world. You and they are all satisfied without harming anyone." He thus acted following the example of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who not withstanding the ill-treatment which he

received from the infidels, never ceased to say: "O God, direct my people for they know me not."

Dhu n-Nun relates that, once he was travelling from Jerusalem to Egypt, he saw in the distance someone advancing towards him and impulsed to ask a question. When the person came near he perceived that it was an old woman carrying a staff and wearing a woollen cloak. He asked her whence she came. She answered: "From God." "And where are you going now?" "To God," she replied. Dhu n-Nun drew forth a piece of gold from his pocket and offered it to her, but she shook her hand in his face and cried: "O Dhu n-Nun, the idea which you have formed of me smelt feebleness of your intelligence. I work for God's sake and accept nothing unless from Him. I worship Him alone and take from Him alone." Saying this, she went on her way.

Dhu n-Nun had a disciple who had performed pilgrimage to Kaaba forty times and during these forty years he passed all his nights in prayers and devotional exercise. One day he came to Dhu n-Nun and said: "During the forty years that I have practised austerity, nothing of the unseen world was revealed to me. The Friend (God) has not spoken to me, nor cast upon me a single look. I fear lest I die and leave this world in despair. You are the physician of the sick souls, kindly devise some means for my cure." Dhu n-Nun said: "Go, this evening omit your prayers, eat much as you like, and go to sleep. Doubtless if the Friend does not look upon you with an eye of mercy, He will certainly look upon you with an eye of anger." The *dervish* went away. He ate to his fill, but did not like to omit night prayers. He offered the prayers as usual and went to sleep. In dream, he saw the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said to him: "O *Dervish*, the Friend sends you his salutations and says, "Surely that man is unfortunate who after having

arrived at our sanctuary, gets dejected and hastens to return. Tread this path like a brave man and then, We will give you the reward for all the austerities which you have practised for forty years and make you reach the goal of your desires. But you also convey Our message to Dhu n-Nun that we shall abase him in the city so that he might not deceive our friends in future." When this message was delivered to Dhu n-Nun, his eyes shed tears of happiness.

Dhu n-Nun relates: "when I was making the circuit of the holy Kaaba, I saw a man with a pale face and emaciated frame. I asked him: Do you love Him in true sense?" He said, Yes! Is He near to you or not? "Yes, He is near to me," he answered. Then I asked, "is He kind to you?" "Yes He is very kind to me" he answered. I inquired: If he is near to you, loves you and is very kind to you, then why your body is looked in wretched state and you highly distressed? He replied: O simpleton! Don't you know that whom the Friend loves and approaches most nearly, are the people more severely tried than those who live afar." He means to say the people of access are tried most severely than those who are ignorant.

Dhu n-Nun relates: "One day when I was travelling, I arrived at a plain covered with snow. I saw a fire-worshipper who was strewing seeds of millet there. I asked: O infidel, why are you strewing this millet?" He replied: Today, it is snowing heavily. I thought that the birds would find nothing to eat, and I thus strewed this millet that they might find food and I hope that God Most High would have mercy upon me." I replied: "The grain which an infidel sows does not germinate and you are a fire-worshipper." "Well", he answered, even if God does not accept my offering, may I not hope that He sees what I am doing?" "Certainly He sees it, I said. If He sees it, he remarked 'that is enough for me.' Dhu n-Nun relates: Long afterwards I

met this infidel in Makkah making the circuit of Kaaba. He recognised me and exclaimed, O Dhu n-Nun, Allah Most High witnessing my act has accepted it. The grain I sowed has indeed sprung up, for God has given me faith and brought me to His House (*Baitullah Sharif*). "Seeing him", said Dhu n-Nun, I rejoiced and cried: O my Lord, You give paradise to an infidel for a handful of millet seed, how considerate You are! Instantly, I heard a voice replying: O Dhu n-Nun. the mercy of the Lord is unlimited."

Dhu n-Nun was well-versed in the knowledge of Islamic sciences and had strong inner state. He was disciple of Schakran who lived on the eastern bank of the river Nile near Cairo and earned his livelihood by ferring passengers across to the western side. Like divinely learned figures Dhu n-Nun strongly held the belief in the doctrine that the holy Qur'an is uncreated i.e., divinely revealed scripture. Thus during Mutazilite persecution of the orthodox Ulama he too was imprisoned. The Caliph Mutawakkil summoned him from Egypt to Baghdad to appear before him. On entering into his presence, he addressed a pious exhortation to the Caliph who shed tears and set him free honorably. After this, whenever men of piety were spoken about before the Caliph, he would weep and say: "speaking of pious men, let me have Dhu n-Nun."

However Dhu n-Nun was accused of being a philosopher and an alchemist and also sometimes as heretic and magician. The genuineness of his mystical state was more often doubted. At Cairo Dhu n-Nun did not come off so easily. He openly rebuked the vices of the inhabitants and especially of the local governors who caused him to be beaten and imprisoned. "All this is as nothing, so I be not separated from thee O my God," was his exclamation while being dragged

through the crowded street with blows and insult by the soldiers of garrison. It is said that he "travelled the road of blame." But when he died, legend asserts, "it was written on his forehead: "This is the friend of God, he died in love of God, slain by God." His love of God has been expressed in one of his saying: "O God! Publicly I call Thee 'My Lord', but in solitude I call Thee O my Beloved!"

According to the tradition, Dhu n-Nun formulated for the first time a theory of *marifat* i.e. intuitive knowledge of God or gnosis as opposed to *ilm*, i.e., discursive learning and knowledge. But he never gave in his life time pantheistic bent to Sufism. In a famous passage, he describes the gnostic (*arif*) the true mystic with spiritual insight, but there is no traces of philosophical approach in his words. Thus he says:

"The gnostic becomes more humble every hour, for every hour is drawing him nearer to God. The gnostics see without knowledge, without sight, without information received and without observation, without description, without veiling and without veil. They are not themselves, but in so far as they exist at all they exist in God. Their movements are caused by God, and their words are the words of God which are uttered by their tongues, and their sight is the sight of God, which has entered into their eyes. So God has said: "When I love a servant, I the Lord, am his ear so that he hears by Me, I am his eye, so that he sees by Me, and I am his tongue so that he speaks by Me and I am his hand so that he takes by Me."

This *hadith qudsi* forms one of the cornerstones of Islamic mystical teaching in Sufism. Another saying of Dhu n-Nun also negates 'the philosophical-gnostic' character as some alleged to him. He said: "I knew God by God and I knew what is besides God by the Prophet of God." The sign of lover of God is to follow the Friend of God i.e. Rasulullah ﷺ in

his moral, and his deeds and his orders and his customs."

Someone said to Dhu n-Nun: "Show me the Greatest Name of God." He said: "Show me the smallest one!" and rebuked him. This answer indicates his illuminated inner state not the alleged magical practice. He like most of the mystics often juxtaposed the divine qualities and names. *Jamal* "eternal beauty" and *jalal* "eternal majesty", coinciding in *Kamal* "eternal perfection" are the attributes of Him. God, the eternal perfection to which no created being has access, reveals Himself to man under the aspects of beauty, fascination, kindness, and mercy, or under the attribute of majesty, wrath, power, and revenge. Dhu n-Nun frequently dwelt upon the quality of majesty *jalal*, the tremendous in God. That is why he believed affliction to be indispensable to man's spiritual development; it is the "salt of the faithful, and when the salt lacks, the faithful becomes rotten." The faithful lover enjoys the afflictions sent by his beloved as Dhu n-Nun has said, but the great mystic disliked those who turned this attitude into a mere show. "When one of his brethren, a so-called lover boasted during his illness saying: "who suffers from the pain which God sends him, does not love God." To this Dhu n-Nun replied: "I would rather say: He who boasts of his love of God, does not love Him."

Dhu n-Nun believed firmly in what the holy Qur'an asserts that everything created worships and adores God Most High; everything utters His praise and thanks to its Creator in its own tongue, which may be the human voice, the humming of the bee, the hissing sound of the leaves, the fragrance of the flower, or just the *listen ul-hal* (tongue of the state) by itself.

Thus Dhu n-Nun felt and uttered: O God, I never hearken to the voices of the beasts or the rustle of the trees, the splashing of the waters or the song of the birds, the whistling

of the wind or the rumble of the thunder, but I sense in them a testimony to Thy Unity (*wahdat*) and a proof of Thy incomparability, that Thou are the All-Prevailing, the All-Knowing, the All-True."

One of the most attractive aspects of Dhu n-Nun's life is his poetic talent and his wonderful command of the Arabic language. He composed small, charming poems. He praised the Lord in long, hymnlike poems and popularized a kind of romantic mystical story.

Dhu n-Nun would ask three things daily in his supplicatory prayer to God. The first was never to have any certainty of his means of subsistence for the morrow. The second was never to be in honour among the people. (He liked to live contumely). And the third was to see God's face in mercy at the hour of his death. Near the end of his life, one of his intimate disciple ventured to ask him on this triple prayer and what had been its result. "As for the first and second petitions" answered Dhu n-Nun, "God has liberally granted me and I trust in His goodness that He will not refuse me the third."

At the hour of death Dhu n-Nun was asked if he desired to have anything. He replied: I wish that if I have only one more breath, let it be spent in extolling the Lord Most High. Then he repeated the following couplet:

*"The fear of God has made me fall ill
The yearning to meet Him has consumed me,
Love has killed me,
And God has enlivened me."*

At the last moment before his departure to celestial abode Hazrat Husain bin Yusuf arrived and sought spiritual instructions. He replied: Engage me not in talks at this time for I am in the Valley of Bewilderment seeing the graces of the

Lord falling on me. Saying this he passed away. He died in 859-60 A.D (245 A.H) and his tomb is still an object of popular veneration at Cario.

At the time of his death the people saw written in Arabic script on his forehead: He is the friend of God, died in love of God, and slain by the sword of God."

As the people were carrying his bier through the street, large number of birds in the sky spread their feathers and made shadow over it. And as from the mosque voice of the Muazan was heard, from out of the coffin his finger was raised. People were taken aback and wanted to see if he was still alive, but he had passed away. His finger remained in the raised position even after the body was lowered into the lateral niche (*lahd*).

After his death, people recognised that whom they called a heretic was a great radiant saint of the time.

Dhu n-Nun said:

1. Who loves creatures, God does not love him.
2. When an honest sinner repents, his sins are forgiven.
3. Spiritual music (*sama*) is a specific cure of all desires. Who hears it faithfully finds the way to God; who hears it to satisfy his sensual passions turns a heretic.
4. He who loves the creatures is really a follower of the heretic Pharaoh. He who attains the nearness of God, never seeks help of the creatures.
5. He is saved who remains silent.
6. If anyone is afflicted and remains patient, it is not so praiseworthy. Rather, it would be surprising that should affliction befall anyone, he is satisfied with the Lord.
7. Never be claimant of gnosis (*marifat*) failing which you will be held liar.
8. Someone asked: "what is the end of the gnostic?" He answered: "when he is as he was where he was before he was."

9. Divine Attributes are revealed in their (gnostics) heart through the process of negation. He says: "what- ever you imagine, God is the opposite of that."

10. Pursuit of Shariah is necessary for the follower of the spiritual path. The sign of love of God is to follow footsteps of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in his manner, deeds, orders and customs.

11. For everyone there is a certain form of punishment, and the punishment of the gnostic is being cut off from His remembrance. A sign of God's displeasure with a servant is that the servant fears poverty.

12. Dhu n-Nun divides mystical journey into the stations of faith, fear, reverence, obedience, hope, love, suffering and union with God.

13. Servitude is that you be His slave every instant just as He is your Lord every instant.

14. Someone asked him "who is the true lover?" He answered: when you see a man who wears a worried look, has lost his heart and has no control over reason, sheds tears very often and is desirous of death and extinction and with all that is modest and well-behaved and finds time for devotion, know that he is true lover!"

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Hazrat Bayazid Bistami

Hazrat Bistami was one of those God-intoxicated saints who did not know what is other than God. He presented himself as a typical reclusive mystic who shunned the company of men and spent most of his time in isolation in his home or cell or wandering in desolate places engaged all the time in reflection, meditation, and rigorous ascetic exercises. His parents appear to have exerted a major formative influence on his personality. He was born at Bistam in the northwestern part of Iran. His exact date of birth is not known. The Chroniclers give date of his death as 260-261 A.H. His grandfather was zoroastrain (fire-worshipper) converted to Islam. His father was eminent saint of Bistam. Bistami was distinguished for his piety while he was still a child. For his early education his mother sent him to a nearby mosque to read the Qur'an. When he reached the Sura "Luqman", he read the verse: Show your gratitude in serving Me, and show your gratitude to your parents in serving them." Bayazid asked his teacher the meaning of this verse. No sooner did he hear the explanation, than he immediately ran home. When his mother saw him, she inquired why had he come back so earlier? Bayazid replied: "I have just read in the verse of Qur'an, that the Lord commands me to serve Him and to serve you, but I cannot serve both at a time. I have come to propose you that you request the Lord to give me to you in order that I may serve you, or that you yourself give me to the Lord so that I may serve Him." The pious mother divined his intention fully and said: "I give you up to the Lord Most High and renounce all my rights in favour of Him." History is silent about his further education in religious sciences. However after a few

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years, Bayazid left his native village Bistam, and for thirty years lived as a bare-footed wandering *dervish* (ascetic) in the deserts of Syria. This is considered most important formative phase of his spiritual life. It is related that during this period Bayazid once came home to see his mother. When he entered, the house he heard his mother's voice saying in prayer: "O' God bless my poor exile, may the hearts of the pious be rejoiced by him and accord him grace." Embracing her son with tears in her eyes, she said: "O my son separated from you, as I have been, my eyes have lost the power to see, and my back is bent," and they both mingled their tears together.

Sometime later, the people asked Bayazid: "How did he achieve this glory?" He replied: "whatever I achieved in the realm of *wilayat*, it is all due to serving my mother." He continued to say: "One night when my mother asked for water, as there was none in the pitcher, I went to the canal to fetch. It was a winter night terribly cold and frost everywhere. While I had gone for water, my mother slept. I brought water and stood waiting with the pitcher full of water close to her head until she woke up. She asked for water, but when I wanted to give her, I found that water had frozen out, the handle of the pitcher stuck fast to my hand. My mother asked: "Why you did not put it down? I said: "I feared, I might not be ready when you ask for water. The same night the Lord Most High revealed to me all that I wanted to be revealed."

Bayazid once said to the theologians of the day (as quoted by Imam Ghazali) "You have taken your knowledge from these learned in outward ceremonial, a dead thing from the dead, but we have taken our knowledge from the Living One, Who does not die." But the "learned" western orientalisists such as R.C. Zaehner trace the possibility of Indian influence (Hindu monistic philosophy) upon Bayazid. They also name

Abu Ali as- Sindhī (from Sindh) as his spiritual master as if he had been roaming about in Indus valley. On the other hand author of *Tadhkarat ul-Auliya* quotes Bayazid's words: "In the mystic path the greatest wealth is that which is innate, (pre-destined) then intuitive eye, and then waking sensory perceptions inner and outer, but above all divine grace. If these are not available to the traveller, then it would be a sudden end of his journey." During his long formative phase of life expanded over many years, Bayazid practised austerity, asceticism, self-abasement and self-effacement. He gained spiritual benediction from one hundred and seventy accomplished saints of Islam including Hazrat Imam Jafar Sadiq (R.A.).

One day Imam Jafar Sadiq asked Bayazid to bring a book that was lying on the shelf of his room. Bayazid asked him where the shelf was located? He replied: "You have been attached to me for so many years in the room and yet you cannot find the place of the shelf." Bayazid said: "During all these years, I never raised my head above or cast my eyes at the ceiling or sideways." Imam was pleased and said: "Now you are sufficiently advanced; go back to Bistam, and there you will attain to great spiritual glory."

Once Bayazid was travelling to Makkah that a man came to see him and asked him where he was going. Bayazid said: "I am going to Makkah to perform pilgrimage. He inquired: "How much money you have?" Bayazid replied: "Two hundred dinars." The man said: you give all the money to me and make circuit of me seven times. By this charity you will gain greater reward and recompense than that you could obtain at the Kaaba." Bayazid did accordingly and gained his spiritual experience immensely through this deal.

One day a thought came into Bayazid's mind that he

was the greatest Sufi of the time. But no sooner did he think of it, then he felt it was a stray thought on his part. He rose immediately and left for the desert of Khurasan where he sat down with the resolution that he would not move from that spot until God should send someone to make him see the reality of himself. There he waited for three days and three nights. On the fourth night a rider on camel approached him. Bayazid narrates: "I perceived from his countenance sign of penetrating mind, spiritual insight. He halted and fixing his gaze on me said: You desire something doubtless. I have the power that in the twinkling of an eye I should cause the village of Bistam to be swallowed up, and all its population together with its riches and Bayazid himself." At these words Bayazid was seized with an indescribable fear and asked him "whence you came from?" The man said: "O Bayazid! while you have been sitting here, I have travelled three thousand miles. Be careful, O Bayazid, place curb on your heart and don't forget road (mystic path) else you shall infallibly perish."

Bayazid relates: "One day I heard a hidden voice which said: 'O Bayazid, our treasure-house is full to brim with the act of adoration and devotion offered by the creatures; bring Us something which is not in our treasure.' I cried: 'O God what then shall I bring?' The voice commanded: 'Bring Me tears, sorrow of the heart, humility and contrition.'"

At another time Bayazid said: "After having endured the rigours of austerity and asceticism for forty years, one night I found myself before the doors and curtains which veil the Divine Throne. Groaning I exclaimed: 'Let me pass.' The voice said: 'O Bayazid you still possess a pitcher and an old cloak, you cannot go ahead.' Then I cast away the pitcher and the cloak, and I heard the voice again addressing me: 'O Bayazid, go and say to those who do not know: "Behold, for

forty years I have practised rigorous asceticism, till I cast away my broken pitcher and torn cloak, but still I could not find access to God, and you are entangled in the ties of worldly interests how shall you discover the way to Him"

Bayazid said once: "When I had arrived at the station of Proximity I heard a voice saying to me: 'O Bayazid ask what you have to ask.' My Lord, I answered, 'You are the object of my desire.' The voice replied 'O Bayazid, if in your inmost lingers an atom of worldly desire, and till you are reduced to nothing in the station of annihilation, you cannot find Me.' My God, I answered, 'I shall not return from Your court empty-handed; I wish to seek something from You.' God said, 'Well ask it.' I asked, 'Grant me mercy for all men.' The voice said, 'O Bayazid, lift up your eyes.' I lifted them and saw that the Lord Most High was far more inclined to have mercy on His creatures than I.'

In a remarkable passage Bayazid has said: At the beginning I was mistaken in four respects: I concerned myself to remember God, to know Him, to love Him and to seek Him. When I had come to the end, I saw that God had remembered me before I remembered Him, that His knowledge of me had preceded my knowledge of Him, His love towards me had existed before my love for Him and He had sought me before I sought Him." There is another version in this regard wherein Bayazid is reported to have said: "For thirty years I sought God. But when I looked carefully, I discovered that in reality God was the seeker and I the sought."

There is another version he said: "For thirty years God was my mirror, now I am my own mirror and that which I was I am no more, for "I" and "God" represent polytheism, a denial of His Unity. Since I am no more, God is His own mirror. Behold, now I say that God is the mirror of myself, for with

my tongue He speaks and I have passed away."

Someone asked Bayazid: "What did you find as the most difficult obstacle in your initiatic journey?" He said: without His grace and mercy it is difficult to turn the heart to Him, and with His grace it runs effortlessly in the path."

Ahmad bin Khadrawiya saw God in a dream and the Lord said to him: "All men seek Paradise from Me except Bayazid who seeks Me from Myself."

Bayazid used to say: "The learned man is not he who studies from a book, for in that case, (since the Prophet did not study) he would be ignorant-but he who takes knowledge from the Lord, when He desires it, without study or instruction: this is the men learned in spiritual things." One day some literalist scholars (Ulama) came to visit him and said: "We have heard strange things about you." Bayazid immediately said: "Those which are still unheard to you are more strange than that." Hearing this they left silently.

Hazrat Yahya bin Maadh Razi once wrote to Bayazid: "What do you say about a person who has drunk from the cup of eternity and is so intoxicated that its effect shall last till eternity?" Bayazid replied: "There is a person (himself) here who drinks the sea of two eternities and yet craves for more." Thereafter Razi sent a message: "I have to communicate something to you and that I shall do when we are both seated in the garden of Paradise, and I am also sending you a cake kneaded with the water of paradise for you to partake of it." Bayazid wrote back in reply: "wherever God is constantly remembered that is Paradise and all talks carried on there is more worthy than the greatest secret told under the tree of Paradise. As the cake, I refuse to eat it for I know not whether the flour with which it is prepared is honestly earned. I doubt its purity."

One night Bayazid did not feel relish in his prayers. He asked his servant what was amiss in the house. The servant answered that there was a bunch of delicious grapes in the house. Bayazid ordered: Throw it away. After this the distraction disappeared and he began to enjoy his prayers.

Bayazid once said: when I first went on a pilgrimage to Makkah, I saw the House (Kaaba) and visited it. The next time I went there I met the Owner of the House. But when I visited it the third time I did not see Kaaba nor the Owner of Kaaba. i.e. he had lost himself in His Oneness.

It is related once he said: "Paradise has no value in the eyes of lovers, and lovers are veiled (from God) by their love, "i.e., Paradise is created, whereas love is an uncreated attribute of God.

A disciple of Bayazid was in his service for thirty years. During this period every time when he would come before him, he asked him name. One day the disciple said: "Sir! Do you make joke with me? I am in your regular service for the last thirty years yet you do not remember my name." Bayazid who was ever in spiritual absorption replied: Since the name of my Lord has permeated my heart I have ceased to remember any other name except His."

Someone asked Bayazid "what is your age?" He said: "I am four year old." How is that he inquired of him? He said: "For seventy years I have been indulged in the veils of this dull world; it is only four years since I was liberated from the entanglement of it and gained unitive life in Him."

Being asked to define Sufism, he said: "Sufism consists in giving up repose, and accepting suffering."

One night Bayazid left his house and went to graveyard to engage himself in reflection and devotions. There he saw a youngman playing on guitar. Bayazid, considering

music an unlawful thing exclaimed:

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

(There is no might or power except in God)

The young man was annoyed at it and struck the guitar with full force on Bayazid's head. The instrument broke and the head bitterly injured and bled. Bayazid returned home. Next day early in the morning, he placed some sweetmeat and piece of gold in a dish and sent it to the young man with a message: "Last night your guitar was broken when struck with my head; you accept the money and buy a new one, and accept also sweetmeat so that no rancour might exist in your heart." When the young man received the message, he came straight to Bayazid and apologized. He repented and became close friend of the Shaikh.

Once Bayazid said prayer in congregation in a mosque behind Imam. After the prayer the Imam asked Bayazid: We don't find you ever engaged in earning livelihood; tell us which is the source of your sustenance?" "Wait a little and let me repeat the prayer which I have said behind you before I tell you who is the Sustainer." The Imam said why? Bayazid said: "It is unlawful for me to pray with a man who does not know Who is the Bestower of daily bread."

The ascension of Prophets takes place outwardly and in body, whereas that of saints takes place inwardly and in spirit. Bistami relates his spiritual ascension in these words:

While I was asleep, it seemed to me that I ascended to the heavens in quest of God, seeking union with God Most Glorious, so that I might abide with Him for ever, and I was tested by a trial. God displayed before me gifts of all kinds and offered me dominion over the whole heaven, and yet I turned aside my eyes from this, because I knew that He was testing

me thereby, and I turned not towards it, out of reverence for the holiness of my Lord and I said in regard to it all: "O my Beloved, my desire is other than that which is offered to me." Then I ascended to the Second Heaven and saw winged angels, who fly a hundred thousand times each day to the earth, to look upon the saints of God, and their faces shone like the sun. I travelled on and when I had reached the seventh Heaven, one called unto me: "O Abu Yazid, stop, stop, for you have reached the goal," but I paid no heed to his words and I pursued my quest. And when God Most High realised the sincerity of my desire to seek Him, He turned me into a bird, and I went on flying, past kingdom after kingdom, and desert after desert, and plain after plain and sea after sea, and veil after veil, until the angel of the footstool of God met me with a pillar of light and said to me. "Take it," and I took it. And lo, the heavens and all that were therein sought refuge in the shadow of my gnosis, and sought light in the light of my longing, yet all the angels seemed but as a gnat, compared with my all-absorbing concern with the search for God.

So I continued to fly, until I reached the footstool of God, and lo, I was met by angels, whose eyes were as the number of the stars of heaven, and from each eye shone forth light and those lights became lamps and I heard sounding forth from each lamp, "Glory to God" and "There is no God but God." Then I went on flying until I arrived at a sea of light, with waves beating against one another, and beside it the light of the sun looked dark, and upon the sea were ships of light, compared with which the light of those waters appeared to be darkness. I continued to cross sea upon sea until I reached the greatest of seas, upon which stands the Throne of the All-Merciful. I went on swimming therein, until I beheld, looking from the Empyrean to the earth beneath, the cherubim

and those who bore up the Throne, and all whom God has created both in heaven and earth, as less than a mustard-seed floating between the heavens and the earth, in comparison with the flight of my spirit in the quest for God.

And when God Most-Glorious perceived the sincerity of my desire to seek Him, He called to me and said: "O My chosen one, approach unto Me and ascend to the heights of My glory and the plains of My splendour and sit upon the carpet of My holiness, so that thou mayst see the working of My grace in My appointed time. Thou art My chosen and My beloved and My elect among the creatures." Then I began to melt away, as lead melts in the heat of the fire. Then He gave me to drink from the fountain of Grace in the cup of fellowship and changed me into a state beyond description and brought me near unto Him, and so near did He bring me that I became nearer unto Him than the spirit to the body. I continued thus until I became even as the souls of men had been, in that state before existence was and God abode in solitude apart, without created existence or space or direction or mode of being-may His glory be exalted and His Name sanctified. *(Excerpted from Islam and the West, by Sir Philip Hitti)*

In the ascension Bistami was revealed the sublimity and glory of Rasulallah ﷺ concerning mystery of Divine Path (Suluk) and fountain-head of Islamic spirituality. He narrates: "I saw that my spirit (*sirr*) was borne to the heavens. It looked at nothing and gave no heed, though Paradise and Hell were displayed to it, for it was freed from phenomena and veils. Then I became a bird, whose body was of Oneness and whose wings were of Everlastingness, and I continued to fly in the air of the Absolute (*huwiyyat*), until I passed into the sphere of Purification (*tanzih*), and gazed upon the field of

Eternity (*azaliyyat*) and beheld there the tree of Oneness. When I looked I myself was all those. I cried: 'O Lord, with my egoism (*mani-yi man*) I cannot attain to Thee, and I cannot escape from my selfhood. What am I to do?' God spake: 'O Abu Yazid, thou must win release from thy "thou-ness" by following My beloved i.e. (Muhammad). Smear thine eyes with the dust of his feet and follow him continually.'" This is a long narrative. The Sufis call it the Ascension (*mi'raj*) of Bayazid; and the term "ascension" denotes proximity to God (*qurb*). The ascension of prophets takes place outwardly and in the body, whereas that of saints takes place inwardly and in the spirit. (*Kashf al-Mahjub*, p 238)

Bayazid once uttered the call to prayer and fainted. When he recovered, he said: "It is amazing that man does not die when uttering the call to prayer." Someone asked him: "When does man reach God?" He replied: "O you miserable one, does he reach Him at all?" When Bayazid grew old, someone sent him a prayer-mat on which to say prayer. He answered: I have put together the worship of the inhabitants of the heavens and seven earths and put it into a pillow and put that pillow under my cheek. You had better send me a cushion to recline instead of that gift."

One day someone knocked at his door to see Bayazid. He replied: I am too searching Bayazid for the last thirty years but havn't found him till now."

In rapturous state Bayazid used to say: '*Subhani ma-azamu Shani*' -Praise be to Me, how great is My Majesty. Once Bayazid in his ecstasy cried out: "Look to my majesty and glory." When he recovered his senses, his disciples asked him why did he utter such blasphemous words against Shariah in his ecstasy. He replied: I do not know what did I say. If I repeat the same words again, you kill me with sword." At

second time when in ecstasy he repeated the same words, his disciples rushed with swords to kill him but found there were hundreds of Bayazids before them. So they struck all those forms with the swords, but felt they were striking in the air. However when Bayazid recovered, they narrated the whole account to him. They found that there was no sword-cut on his body and all the different forms had merged into the body of Bayazid. They requested him to explain that mystery. Bayazid said: "The real Bayazid is the one you see before you^u now; it was neither the first Bayazid you saw nor the various forms that you witnessed."

His other ecstatic utterances (*shatahat*) comprise: "Thy obedience to me is greater than my obedience to Thee;" "I am the divine throne (عرش) and the footstool;" "I saw the Kaaba walking around me;" "I am I, and there is no God but I, "etc. In short Bistami professed intoxicated mysticism contrary to sober" type of mystical school of Junaid of Baghdad. Intoxication denotes the rapture of love for God while the term 'sobriety' expresses the attainment of that which is desired. Bistami and his followers called Tayfuris, prefer intoxication to sobriety. On the other hand Junaid and his followers prefer sobriety to intoxication.

Bistami, while describing his mystical elevation in an encounter with the Lord in his rapturous state said: when the Lord released and separated me from all the creations, He descended on me His effulgence (نور) and made me aware of the secret of His divinity. Then I saw the Lord with my own eyes. And when I compare His effulgence (nur) with mine, the latter looked like a dark spot, and before His Majesty and Glory I looked like worthless dwarf. Before His Glorious Being, I was filthy. I learnt that He is the real Doer of all acts. When the Lord annihilated my ego, and enlivened me with His

eternity i.e. gave me immortality and revealed His unveiled Self to me, I saw the Lord through His instrumentality, and at that moment I turned mute, devoid of the sense of hearing and was totally illiterate. The veil of my selfhood (ego) being removed, I stayed in that state for long while without the help of any sensory perceptions. Then the Lord bestowed divine eyes and divine ears to me and I found everything was in Him. Thereafter I petitioned to be permitted to dwell with Him. I was ordered to come out of the realm of scriptural ordinances... Then I prayed to Him that He might keep me near Him and away from the persons and things of the world and from everything non-God and alien from Him. Thereupon He conferred His grace and I entered the Palace of Divine Unity (Tawhid) where I was told that henceforth my will shall be His. I have now entered a life that knows no death and my existence is eternal, and imperishable."

Bayazid used to pray: O Lord remove the veil of mine and Thine that exists between Thee and me, that I may have no existence separate from Thy Essence. O Lord poverty and fasting have brought me close to Thee, I recognise Thee only through Thy grace.

In the last moments of his life, Bayazid put on a girdle (belt round his neck) and seated himself in the niche (*mihrab*) of the mosque. Then turning his cloak and cap inside out, he said: "O my Lord, I ask for no reward for the austerities I have practised in all my life. I say nothing of the prayers which I prayed during whole nights, of the fasts I kept during the day, the number of times I recited the holy Qur'an. You know that I think insignificant of such works done, I would rather forget them. Besides, is it not Thou who hast covered my nakedness with the raiment of these good work? As for me, I consider myself a fire-worshipper who has grown too old age in a state

of infidelity. But now I say: Allah! Allah! and I cut the girdle (*zunar*) of the idolater. I enter Islam as a new proselyte, and I repeat the profession of Islamic faith (*Kalima*) I reckon all that I have done nothing. I invoke your mercy to wipe out all of my evil deeds, lapses and transgressions." When he was dying, he again ejaculated "Allah! Allah!" Then he cried: "My God, I have passed my life in utter neglect of Thee. I have not served Thee faithfully," and he surrendered his soul to God Almighty. He died on 9th July 874 A.D (260-261 A.H.)

After his departure to celestial abode, a saint saw him in dream and inquired: "Bayazid, how did *Munkar and Nakir* (Noble Recorders of deeds) deal with you? He said: "They asked me who is your God? I replied, 'God and ask God, for if I say I am His slave and He does not recognise me as such, what weight shall my statement carry?" Hearing this the angles left.

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Hazrat Sahl Abdullah Tustari

Tustari, a pioneer of ascetic-mystical school of Basra and a celebrated saint of Islam, is the founder of Sufi Order named Sahliyya. He was born at Tustar in Khuzistan (present day Iran). He is still considered a wonder spiritualist of the time. He studied *hadith* with his maternal uncle Khalidu Muhammad bin Sawwar who transmitted Traditions (*hadith*) on the authority of Sufyan Thawri. He would remain engaged in divine worship at the age of three with his maternal uncle. Once he said to his uncle: "When God said: **أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ** (Am I not your God), I still remember my reply (**بَلَى**) Yes! why not! One day he said to his uncle: "I behold myself prostrating before *Arish* (Throne) since eternity to this date." The uncle advised him to be silent and don't disclose it to anyone. He also advised to recite this prayer once every night:

اللَّهُ مَعِيَ اللَّهُ نَاطِرِي اللَّهُ شَاهِدِي (Allah is with me, Allah is looking me, Allah is my witness)

When Tustari had made it regular practice to recite once daily, his uncle asked him to recite this prayer seven times daily; after sometime he asked him to increase it fifteen times daily. Thus Sahl continued this litany throughout his life. Then his uncle admitted him in a school to learn religious sciences. Sahl relates: "Then I studied the holy Qur'an and from the age of seven I started keeping fast permanently and break it with bread of barley." Then at the age of 12 he confronted a spiritual problem. He travelled to Basra and met Hazrat Habib Hamza who was a great scholar of the time. He resolved his problem and after staying with him for some days he came back to Tustar. His austerities were great and devotions excellent. He had made practice to fast in day time

and take smallest barley bread at night. Then he started to fast breaklessly for three days and nights, then for seven days and then for twenty five days without breaking. It is also related that he had fasted for seventy days and night without breaking and sometime took one almond after forty days. He has related, "That I experienced hunger and food both. At the beginning hunger caused me weakness and food provided energy, but with the passage of time I found it contrary. I observed fasts for the complete month of Shaban and in the month of Ramadan I would take food once in the whole month."

One day Tustari uttered: "Repentance is obligatory on all the servants of God. The sinful folk should repent of their sins, and the worshippers of their worship." The exoteric theologians (Ulama), hearing this turned severely against him and declared him a heretic. Tustari's heart was injured and felt too much dejected. He distributed all his assets and wealth amongst the people and left nothing with him. Afterwards he left for Makkah and performed pilgrimage. Here he met Dhu l-Nun Misri who initiated him in his Sufi order. Tustari remained in his company for sometime and attained to perfection in his sainthood.

But the first twenty years of his life are marked by his arduous ascetic practices and self-imposed austerities. The exoteric scholars say that he combined the Law of Shariah and the Truth (*haqiqat*). Ali Hujwiri asserts that it is wrong. These two entities were never separate to have been integrated by anyone later. Rather the Law is the Truth and the Truth is the Law. As God has joined the Law to the Truth, it is impossible for the saint to separate them. If they be separated, one must inevitably be rejected and the other accepted. Rejection of the Law is heresy, and rejection of the Truth is infidelity and

polytheism. If any (proper) separation between them is made, it should not be to establish a difference of meaning but to affirm the Truth as when it is said: "The words *there is no god save Allah* are Truth, and the words *Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah are Law*." No one can separate the one from the other without impairing his faith, and it is vain to wish to do so."

Tustari's doctrines regarding initiatic journey were based on endeavour, ascetic practices, austerities, and self-mortification. He too observed them till his death. It is related in a well-known anecdote that he said to one of his disciples: "Strive to say continuously for one day: Allah! Allah! Allah! and do the same next day and the day after that, until he becomes habitual to saying these words. Then he bade him repeat them at night also, until they became so familiar that he uttered them even during his sleep." Then he said: "Do not repeat them any more, but let all your faculties be engrossed in remembering God." The disciple did this, until he became absorbed in the thought of God. One day, when he was in his house, a piece of wood fell on his head and injured it. The drops of blood which trickled to the ground bore the legend "Allah! Allah! Allah!"

Thus the path of Sahlis is to educate disciples by acts of self-mortification and austerities. The object of all this is resistance to the lower self (*nafs*) and until a man knows his lower-self, his austerities are of no use to him.

The way of mystic life of Tustari attracted a big crowd of devotees especially Muhammad bin Salim (d. 297/909) his companion of sixty years who remained by his side until his death. Muhammad bin Salim, along with his son Ahmad bin Salim and Abu Tablib Makki, became the foremost exponents and propagators of Tustari's legacy which their master did not care to present fully in systematic way. His teaching was

continued by his disciple Ibn Salim: hence their school was known as the Salimiyya. Another eminent student of Tustari was Mansoor Hallaj who became his disciple at the age of sixteen and stayed with him for two years.

In 263 A.H. (877) Tustari was expelled from Tustar on political or doctrinal ground. His admission that mystic man can experience contemplative vision of God (مكاشفة) in this temporal life through "the light of certitude" (*nur al-yaqin*), which God grants to him as a reward for his loyalty and self-effacement (*fana*), caused his indictment of blasphemy. The accusers held that the concept of '*nur al-yaqin*' is contrary to Islamic teachings that a beatific vision (رويت الهى) cannot be experienced by the faithful until the Day of Resurrection. In view of these upheavels Tustari left Tustar and took up residence in Basra. There he developed friendship with the famous Hanbali scholar Abu Dawud Sijistani. His claim to be "the proof of God" caused Shafii doctors of the city to denounce him as a heretic.

The central idea of Tustari's mystical teaching was constant *dhikrullah*, and that such ceaseless *dhikr* guarantees the seeker easy passage to Divine Presence. He regarded it as a means for the aspirant to realize again the experience of the Primordial covenant of the Day of Alast (*yaum al-mitaq*) between God and humanity when the human race in its entirety was made to bear testimony to his Lordship. Eventually the seeker reaches the point at which God begins to effect his own recollection (*dhikr*) in the heart of his perfected saint. On the practical side Tustari recommended ceaseless repentance and complete trust in God which to him, were to divest the mystic from occupying himself with any mundane concerns. His theology and mystical ideas take their origin in a thorough contemplation on the Qur'anic word in an attempt to

bring out its hidden meaning.

God had bestowed marked miraculous power on Tustari which he always endeavoured to conceal. A few such events are translated here:

A man came to see Sahl on Friday before prayer and saw a snake sitting coiled near him. When the visitor got near him after having sought permission, the Shaikh said: "who is unaware of the reality of the heaven, fears the creatures of the earth." Then Shaikh asked him about Friday prayer. He said mosque for Friday prayer is situated at the distance that can be covered in 24 hours. Hearing this he caught the hand of visitor and in blinking of an eye reached the mosque. After the prayer, seeing the public, the Shaikh said: "The sincere faithful are scanty although the believers are so many."

One day Tustari met an old woman in the wilderness who looked very poor. The Shaikh tried to offer her a gold coin. She immediately raised her hand upward and lo! a gold coin came into her hand. She smiled and said to the Shaikh: "You take out coin from your pocket while I get it from the unseen Power." Saying this she disappeared. When the Shaikh arrived at Makkah and started circumambulating Kaaba, he saw that Kaaba was very much circumambulating her. When the Shaikh got near her, he inquired the reason of that strange occurrence. She replied: "who comes to visit Kaaba by his own sweet-will must circumambulate Kaaba, but who is driven towards it in state of anxiety, Kaaba circumambutes him or her."

Sahl relates that once he met a spiritualist who used to live beneath the water of river day and night. He would come out of water just to offer five times obligatory prayers in congregation. The Shaikh lived with him for a few days in the same way. That spiritualist never ate anything and always

lived without food but he was very affectionate to Sahl.

Sahl once saw in dream that Day of Judgement had set in, and a bird was carrying the people to Paradise. When he was astonished to behold this phenomenon, he heard a hidden voice to say: "This bird symbolises pioussness of the world, and the pious and virtuous are entering Paradise by the grace of this bird."

Sahl dreamed that he was in Paradise inquiring the three-old men, 'what the most horrible thing they met in the world?' They replied: "we were afraid of our end." Then in the dream, Sahl asked Iblis: "what thing in the world creates anxiety to you to the maximum?" He replied: "The secret communion of the servant with the Lord." Once Sahl caught Iblis and asked him "I will not let you go unless you tell me about the Unicity (وحدانیت) of the Lord." Thus Iblis eloquently explained the secrets of divinity to such an extent that no gnostic (*Arif*) could ever do so.

Tustari wrote an extensive commentary on the Qur'an in which he discussed four levels of meaning of each verse. He gave exoteric meaning for the common folk and esoteric meaning for the mystic men. i.e., he reduced it to two levels-the literal and moral meaning as opposed to allegorical and analogical meaning. He concludes his statement with the equation of "understanding (*fahm*)" and "intended meaning (*murad*)" making them both the domain of spiritualists, whereas he grants common man access to the literal meaning. He also speaks about the pre-existent light of Rasulullah ﷺ and also pillar of light, the souls of those who are predestined to become saints of Islam. According to him only the saints are predestined to attain to the mystery of His Lordship (*sirr ar-rububiyat*). Some salient features of his theories translated by Gerhard Bowering are mentioned here in nutshell.

1. The Transcendent (God in His Essence) cannot be pierced, but He is mystically perceived and described in His manifestations which are grasped as events.
2. Muhammad, the Muhammad of pre-existence was created of divine light. When he stood as a column of light before God for a million years in primordial adoration, (Divine worship) "God created Adam from the light of Muhammad (or from the clay of divine might from the light of Muhammad).
3. Not only Adam is formed from Muhammad's light, but the whole universe participates in this emanation of light: The light of the prophets is from his (Muhammad's) light and the light of the heavenly kingdom is from his light, and the light of this world and of the world to come is from his light.
4. The spiritual masters (*auliya*) and divinely-desired (*murddun*) and the spiritual disciples and God-seekers also take part in this successive light-emanation.
5. When the pre-existential and temporal universe as well as the prophetic and spiritual prototypes (*auliya Allah*) had completed the emanation of light ultimately from Muhammad's light, Muhammad was shaped in body in his terrestrial form, from the clay of Alam. This clay of Adam in turn had been formed from the column of light in which Muhammad had served his Lord in pre-existence.
6. On the Day of the primordial covenant (*yaum al-mitaq*), when in pre-existence, God asked the human race to acknowledge Him as their Lord, "God took the prophets from the back of Adam. Then He took from the back of every prophet his progeny. By this covenant God established His command (*amr*) and interdiction (*nahy*) before the prophets and summoned them all to profess His Lordship. He asked them: "Am I not your Lord?" and made manifest to them His Omnipotence. Both their primordial beginnings and their

ultimate destiny are included in their answer of *bala* (yes we testify) in the presence of God's manifestation.

7. Then God entrusted the prophets with the mission to remind mankind of His compact (*ahd*) and His covenant (*mitaq*). The Day on which they made their profession He in His knowledge was aware of those who would deny Him and those who would believe in Him.

In essence, Tustari affirms four primordial events prior to the creation of man on the face of earth. Firstly the human race issues from the light of Muhammad in the state of luminous particles that take corporate form in the primal man, Adam. Secondly, the human race, in the shape of specks endowed with intellects, emanates from the prophetic prototypes who are embryonically enshrined in the primal Adam. Thirdly, God enters into primordial covenant with the prophets by accepting their profession of His Lordship and commissions them to their prophetic task. Fourthly, God summons mankind from the loins of the prophetic prototypes and presents the human race with the proof of their intellectual nature in their act of comprehending the divine address.

8. To Tustari, the light nature of Muhammad (*nur Muhammad*) constitutes, as the luminous reflection of divine light in pre-existence, permeates the total living reality of Muhammad (*qalb Muhammad*), transforming its physical and spiritual nature into a receptacle of the divine iridescence of light. Therefore the heart of Muhammad is the seat and source of mystical union.

9. Tustari continues in the *Tafsir*: "Did we not exalt thy fame (94:4) means We linked your name with Our Name in the recollection (*dhikr*) and the profession of God's Oneness (*tawhid*) so that man's faith is not (divinely) accepted until he believes in you."

10. Tustari believes that Muhammad's heart fortified by divine knowledge and saturated with divine love, becomes the well-spring for the illumination of the hearts of men and a treasure mine of God's revelation to mankind. Dailami comments on Tustari's idea of the emanation of divine light in these words: "According to this (Tustari's) statement, the love of every mystic lover is bound to come from that mine which is the heart of Muhammad. For his heart is the mine of the precious substance (*gauhar*) which is the mystical union of those who experience God's unification. It is the font of the intuitive knowledge of God of the gnostics and the well-spring of the saturation of the hearts of the lovers of God."

11. Tustari used to say: "The breast is the footstool (*Kursi*) and the heart is the Throne (*Arish*). Thus the heart and breast enclosed in Muhammad's body would have to be understood as seat and locus of the manifestation of the divine reality in its temple which is the total body of Muhammad with its organs and limbs. As Throne and Footstool serve as the support which holds the presence of the monarch, so Muhammad's heart and breast are viewed as the receptacle of the divine manifestation.

Thus Muhammad's heart is seen as the fount of man's mystical union with God, as the treasure mine of scriptural revelation, and as the well-spring of mystical knowledge from which mystic man draws his knowledge and love of God. Therefore from Muhammad's heart, which enshrines the divine reality of light, breaks forth the flood of light which illuminates the hearts of men. God in his inaccessibility has become accessible in the heart of Muhammad in which He is made manifest through his divine attributes, symbolized by the image of light. (*Excerpted from the Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam, by G. Bowering*)

Abuy Nuaim Ahmad in *Hilyat al-auliya* has mentioned Tustari's views on the elevated position of the spiritual elite among God's servants. He summarizes the excellent qualities and characteristics of the friends of God as given by Tustari; the passage is structured in the form of God's address to Adam. In this address Adam is perceived as a corporate personality who enshrines mystic man within his loins. The passage reads as follows:

"O Adam, I am God, there is no god save Me. Whoever puts his hope in other than My favour and fears other than My justice has no knowledge of Me. O Adam, among my servants I have those who are chosen, cherished, and choicest whom I have lodged within your loins. They are like (apple) of my eye among My creation. I make them mighty through My might. I draw them near to union with Me. I grant them My mark of honour. I disclose to them My favour. I make their hearts the treasure troves of My scriptures. I shield them with My mercy. I prepare for them a (place of) safety in the midst of My servants. So through them I make rain fall from the sky, through them I make sprout the earth, and through them I turn away affliction. They are My friends (*auliya*) and My beloved. High are their ranks and lofty their stages. Attached to Me are their spiritual aspiration (*himam*) and sound are their resolutions. Constant is their meditation upon the kingdom of My mystery and dedicated to My remembrance are their hearts. So I give them My pure love to drink with (Me) the cup of intimacy. Persistent is their longing for encounter with Me, even stronger is My longing for them. O Adam, whoever among My creation seeks Me finds Me, and whoever seeks any other than Me, does not find Me. For, O Adam, theirs is thrice a blessed resort and a beautiful recourse. O Adam, when I behold them, it becomes easy for Me to forgive the sins of the sinners because of the honour in which I hold them."

Tustari considers the *auliya* as the real and true believers, who exist as a reminder of God, and who achieve a total harmony of action. But he also discerns a gradation of perfection among these "friends of God", who as "substitutes" (*abdal*) are in persistent progress towards perfection, and as "pegs" (*autad*) have accomplished their spiritual attainment. Tustari views the *abdal* and *autad* as ranks of perfection of mystic man. He associates himself with a group which makes this spiritual gradation a point of doctrine.

Tustari continues: "All good is included in these four (points) by which they become substitutes (*abdal*): empty bellies, seclusion from mankind, nightly vigils, and silence." Asked why the substitutes are called substitutes (*abdal*), he answered: "Because they keep substituting the mystical states (one after the other). They subdue their bodies with vigour in their inmost being (*sirr*). Thereupon they do not cease to move from state to state and from one knowledge to other knowledge. Thus they are always increasing in the knowledge concerning that which obtains between them and their Lord. However *autad* have attained more excellent spiritual rank than *abdal*-who keep turning from state to state.

Tustari differentiates between the prophets and *auliya*. He discovers the basic criteria for the distinction in their degree of proximity to divine Throne, and in their spiritual function in the world of creation. He says both participate in the primordial emanation of divine light, both penetrate to the divine circumference of God's throne and both represent reminders of God among mankind. (*Excerpted from G. Bowering's "The Mystical vision of Existence in classical Islam"*)

A number of mystic men have recorded discourses of Tustari, a few of them are summarised here:

1. Knowledge of God requires abandonment of

forethought (*tadbir*) and abandonment of forethought is resignation (*taslim*) whereas perseverance in forethought arises from ignorance of predestination.

2. There are three kinds of divines (Ulama): the literalists, the esoteric scholars who explain hidden knowledge to the spiritualists; the divine who has inspired knowledge not known to anyone except he and the Lord.

3. Never look down upon the *dervishes*, more often they are the vicegerents of Prophets.

4. It is a great conferment of the Lord to honour one's heart by His remembrance and the greatest calamity is to be oblivious of God.

5. The most blest is the heart of gnostic since it entails knowledge of God in it. If there were more worthy thing than the heart, then gnosis would have descended there. And remembrance of God increases in the heart of gnostic every moment.

6. Trust (*tawakkul*) in God is thing very much liked by the Prophets. The followers must adhere to it. Trust means to remain before God as a dead body is before the washer.

7. To eat once in 24 hours is the practice of righteous, and twice is the custom of common believers, and three times eating is the habit of beasts.

8. No saint whose saintship is true can get absent from the holy Kaaba every Friday night or become negligent of it.

9. He said 'we observe seven principles: Adherence to Qur'an, Sunna, earning livelihood by fair means, avoiding to tease others, to shun sin, to repent and to fulfil obligations enjoined by the Lord.'

10. He used to say: contemplative witnessing of God is always the result of austerities and asceticism.'

When Sahl was about to depart to celestial world, about four hundred disciples, ulama, and spiritualists were

present near him. One of them asked the Shaikh "who will be your successor to guide us?" A Zoroastrian (guebre) lived in his neighbourhood. His name was Shad Dil. The Shaikh opened his eyes and said: "Shad Dil will step into my shoes i.e. he will be my spiritual heir." The people thought it might be due to imbalance of his mind in the state of agony. The Shaikh said: "Ask Shad Dil to present here before me." The Shaikh advised him: "Three days after my death and after *Asr* prayer, you come to the pulpit of mosque and sit in my place and preach." Saying this he died. The people gathered in the mosque after three days. Shad Dil came and ascended the pulpit. All were surprised to note what he will do now. He broke cincture, took off cap of the fireworshipper from the head, and reciting *Kalimat-ush-Shahdah* (professing faith) said to the audience: "I have become Muslim. If you are in doubt as what will happen on the Day of Resurrection, you too witness it just now." Thus he raised his hands in supplication saying: "O my Lord, show my state of condition on the Day of Judgement to these people." The people saw the Day of Judgement had set in and such phenomenon prevailed there that pen cannot encompass it. Sahl died in Muharran 283 (896) at the age of eighty.

Sources

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Hazrat Abul-Hasan Nuri

Nuri is one of the most eminent and illustrious Sufi Saints of Baghdad. He had been a disciple of Sari Saqati and an associate of Junaid and Kharraz. He was born in Baghdad. His real name was Ahmad bin Muhammad but was known by the title ibn-Baghboor since he father belonged to Baghboor, a city situated between Merv and Harat. He studied Hadith under Sari Saqati. Four friends formed a single group were: Nuri, Sumnun al-Muhibb, and Abu Bakr Shibli, who shared single-minded concept on Divine love. Nuri especially inherited from Sari bent to the most rigorous forms of self-deprivation, an essential prerequisite to gain Divine love. The principle of his doctrine is to regard Sufism (Tasawwuf) as superior to poverty. In the matters of conduct he agrees with Junaid. He holds that companionship (*suhhat*) of the spiritual guide is obligatory on *dervish* but not without self-sacrifice, and that seclusion is not praiseworthy and that everyone is bound to prefer his companion to himself. It is related, says Ali Hujwiri, that Nuri has said: "Beware of retirement (*uzlat*)! for it is in connexion with Satan; and cleave to companionship for therein is the satisfaction of the Merciful God."

He was called Nuri because when he spoke in his dark lodge, the whole room was illuminated by the light coming from his mouth. Or the cottage where he would engross in divine adoration remained illuminated through-out the night. And also by the light of the Truth, he used to divine the inmost thoughts of his disciples upon which Junaid said: "Abul Hasan is the spy on men's hearts (*jasus al-qulub*)" But all the great mystics (Mashaikh) designated him as *Ameer ul-Qulub*. Shaikh Fariduddin Attar says he was jurist in the area of

Sufism. He spent most part of his life in the companionship of Ahmad bin Hawari through whom he was acquainted with the Syrian ascetic tradition exemplified by Ibrahim bin Adham, and other Sufis of Baghdad. Junaid held him in high esteem and once referred to him also as "Commander of the Hearts."

Nuri was critical of the outward show off piety that was characteristic of some self-professed Sufis. His attitude in definition of Sufism was "abandoning all pleasures of the carnal soul." Throughout his life he sought to implement this precept by adopting austerities and self-imposed sufferings. He passed his days in worship and meditation in a humble roughly built hut on the outskirts of Baghdad. He left it only once a week for the Friday prayer.

Attar records that in the beginning of his ascetic life, he used to take food from the house in the morning, but distributed it amongst the poor and reached his shop after saying noon prayer. He would often say: "My austerities expanded over many years have gone waste and when I pondered over the precept of the Prophets, I came to know that my baser-self had conspired with the soul. But when I started to oppose it i.e. subjugated the baser-self, secrets of divinity began to reveal to me. When I asked my lower-self the reason behind, it said: "None of my desire was fulfilled." After this Nuri cast fishing net into the river Tigris and requested the Lord: "I will not withdraw from here until a fish is entrapped in it." Instantly a fish came into it. Afterwards when he narrated his incident (miracle) to Junaid, he said: "Had you hunted a snake instead of a fish it would have been your *Kiramat*, but since you are still in the middle of the mystical path, this incident cannot be regarded your miracle, it is rather your deception."

Nuri, a true proponent of highly emotional type of

divine love—a love that rejoices in suffering and subordination of his own interest to the interest of others was not theoretical. He demonstrated it when Ghulam Khalil and the Qadi of Baghdad Abu Ishaq Hammadi brought charge of heresy against the Sufis of Baghdad in 885. Ghulam Khalil was religious adviser to the Caliph and deadly against Sufis. He instituted trial against seventy five proponents of divine love. He was especially enraged, among other things, by Nuri's use of the words "desire", or passion (*ishaq*) to describe God's relationship with the select creatures, and his symbolic and allegorical utterances. He took the words of Nuri and his companions a pure heresy that called for punishment. Using his influence with the Caliph and his womenfolk, he succeeded in bringing them to trial on charges of blasphemy.

In nutshell, Nuri, Raqqam and Abu Hamza were immediately arrested and conveyed to the Caliph's palace. Ghulam Khalil urged the Caliph to put them to death saying that they were heretics and the Caliph immediately gave orders for their execution. When the executioner approached Raqqam, Nuri rose and offered himself in Raqqam's place with the utmost cheerfulness and submission. The people were astounded. The executioner said: "O young man, the sword is not a thing that people desire to meet so eagerly as you have demonstrated; and your turn has not yet arrived." Nuri said: "Yes; but my doctrine is founded on preference. Life is the most precious thing in the world, I wish to sacrifice it for my brethren's sake the few moments that remain. In my opinion one moment of this world is better than a thousand years of the next world, because this is the place of service and that is the place of proximity, and proximity is gained by service. The tenderness of Nuri and the fineness of his saying astonished the Caliph (who was informed by a courier of what had

passed) to such a degree, that he at once suspended the execution of these three Sufis, and charged the Chief Justice Abul Abbas bin Ali to inquire into the matter and report. Abul Abbas took them to his house and questioned them concerning the ordinances of the Law (Shariah) and the Truth, found them perfect and felt remorse for his own indifference to their case. Then Nuri said: "O Qazi though you have asked all these questions, but you have not yet asked anything to the point, for God has servants who eat through Him, live through Him, sit through Him, and abide in contemplation of Him: if they were cut off from contemplating Him they would cry out in anguish." The Qazi was taken aback to listen the subtlety of his speech and the soundness of his state. Thus he wrote to Caliph: "If the Sufis are heretics, who in the world is a unitarian (وحدة)?" The Caliph remorsefully called them to his presence and said: "Ask a boon." They replied: "The only boon we ask of you is that you forget us, and neither make us your favourites, nor banish us from your court, as your favour and displeasure are alike to us." The Caliph was moved much, he wept and set them free with great honour and respect. However, afterwards Nuri was forced to leave Baghdad for Raqqa where he spent some fourteen years before returning to the capital. Characteristically in this event which involved the leading Sufi masters of Baghdad, Junaid the leading Sufi theologian was not among the accused. He is said to have avoided arrest by posing as a jurist (*faqih*).

Nuri firmly believed that intuitive knowledge was incumbent on every believer to attain as he denied that God can be fully apprehended by the rational faculties. In the process of realization of Truth, he said, the heart (inner most being) has to pass four principal stages which correspond to four names for the heart, or its parts mentioned in the holy

Qur'an: *Sadr*, *qalb*, *fu'ad* and *lubb*. In Nuri's scheme, the *sadr* corresponds to the first stage of spiritual attainment, which he identifies as a mere outward submission to God's will (Islam); it is at the level of the *lubb*, the innermost heart that a complete realization of God's unity (Tawhid) is effected. According to Nuri, the heart of the believer is the temple of God where divine and human nature lodge in perfect union. This union leads to a life of true gnosis (*marifat*) that removes from the heart the veils of passion, lust and ignorance. At another place he symbolically likened the heart of the mystic to the seat of the king of certitude who is aided by two wiziars named Fear and Hope, and is surrounded by ten chiefs which are the main duties of a pious Muslim.

Nuri also speaks of the two-fold rain, one of grace and mercy and one of divine wrath and revenge; the first one is revealed by thunder of majesty in the hearts of those who repent, by the lightning of desire in the hearts of the ascetics, by the showers of generosity in the hearts of the lovers and by the breeze of appeasement in the hearts of the gnostics. But the thunderstorm of revenge sends the thunder of dissolution into the hearts of the idolaters, the lightning of hatred into the hearts of the hypocrites, the rain of enmity into the hearts of oppressors, and veiling screen into the hearts of transgressors of the law. His work entitled *Maqamat al-qulub* "The stations of the Hearts," contains fine analysis of different stages and their 'seats' in the human heart.

Once Nuri was found seated on a stone engrossed in *dhikr*: Allah! Allah consecutively for three days and nights, and had stopped eating anything. But he would say obligatory prayers regularly. The disciples of Junaid thought it was a sign of consciousness and not ecstasy. When the matter was reported to Junaid, he said: "No, this is not the case, rather he

is in rapturous state, and God protects whoever is absorbed in this state. Then Junaid went to see him and said: "If you seek divine approbation then why do you make noise?" Hearing this Nuri stopped his loud voice, became silent and said: "O Junaid, you are my best spiritual guide."

Nuri would often say that once during circumambulation of Kaaba I prayed to God to confer on me that rank and attributes which are not subject to change. A hidden voice came from Kaaba: "O Abul Hasan do you want equality with us, for these are our attributes and there occurs no change in them ever. But in our servants we make change and alteration so that our servitude (*ubudiyyat*) and Lordship remain evident eternally.

Jafar Khuldi says: "One day when Nuri was praying to God in solitude, I went to overhear him for he was very eloquent. He was saying: "O my Lord in Thy eternal knowledge and power and will Thou punish the people of Hell whom you have created; and if it be your inexorable will to replete Hell with mankind, you fill it with me alone and send the sinful-folk to Paradise." I was amazed by his speech, but I dreamed that someone came to me and said: "God bids you tell Abul Hasan Nuri that he has been forgiven on account of his compassion for God's creatures and his reverence for God.

Once Shibli saw him engrossed deeply in meditation so much so that even hair of his body were still. And Shibli enquired of him: "How did you get perfection in the art of meditation and reflection?" He answered: "From the cat whom I saw once sitting motionless near the hole of rat."

A traveller's donkey died during the journey. He was weeping to think how he would carry his luggage. By chance Nuri passed by that way. He noticed the helplessness of the traveller. Taking pity on him, Nuri kicked the donkey saying:

"It is not the time to sleep." The donkey immediately got up. The traveller loaded his luggage on it and left.

Once Junaid visited Nuri to inquire of his health and also brought some fruit. After sometime Junaid fell ill. Nuri alongwith his many disciples went to see him. Before he entered his house, Nuri asked his disciples to divide Junaid's illness amongst themselves. By saying these words Junaid recovered his health. Then Nuri asked him: "One should inquire after a sick person like this instead of presenting fruit and flowers."

Some people were beating and dragging an old man towards prison. He was enduring the persecution with utmost patience and silence. Nuri met him in the prison and asked how he could endure beating despite his old age and weakness. The old man answered: "Patience concerns aspiration and boldness and not physical strength." Nuri then asked: "what is the meaning of patience?" He replied: "One should bear distress and affliction with delight like the people who feel pleasure after ridden from tribulation and pain."

Nuri said: "Gnosis (*marifat*) is attainable only after crossing seven seas of fire, and when it is attained, one gets knowledge of pre and post eternity. i.e., the beginning and the end of existence."

"The servant should preach only after he has gained cognition of the Lord, and has the ability to do so otherwise without these qualities, the cities will be afflicted", said Nuri.

He said: "To express the reality of ecstasy is forbidden on the ground that it is a flame which rages in the head and articulates through longing and yawning."

He said: "without following Sunna, one cannot practise Islamic faith. Sufi is one who is not in the prison of anyone, nor anyone is in his prison. The souls of Sufis are free

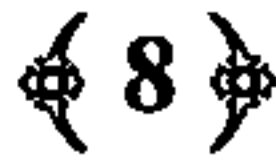
from the defilement of humanity, sensual passion, and carnal desires of the baser-self, so that they are at rest with God in the first rank and in the highest degree."

He said: "Sufism is neither a custom nor mere mundane knowledge. If it were a custom, it could be achieved by austerities and if it were a knowledge, it could be acquired by learning. It is rather good moral and can be attained by assimilating traits and habits of God."

A blind man sitting on the roadside was repeating the Name of Allah. Nuri asked him: "what do you know of Allah? If you know Him, how can you survive in His separation?" After reprimanding him Nuri himself went into rapture and fell unconscious. On regaining consciousness he rushed barefooted to jungle where the reeds had just been cut. The razor like edges of reeds injured his feet bitterly without his being aware of the pain. He was brought back home in that rapturous state. Soon afterwards he died of the wounds in 295 A.H. (907)

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Shaikh Hussain Bin Mansur Hallaj

He was ^{introduction} born around 244 A.H. (858) in the village of Tur, district of Baiza in the Arabicized south-western province of Persia (Iran). His father was wool carder (hallaj)-a profession which his son also practised for sometime intermittently and followed his trade in textile centers as Ahwaz and Tustar. He finally settled with his family in the traditionalist Sunnite Arab town of Wasit in southern Iraq in about 255 A.H. (868) He ^{Early education} completed his early education in the Hanbalite Qur'anic school of that center. Here in Wasit was a famous center named "Darul-Hafaaz" where Hallaj frequented his visits for twelve years so much that he committed the holy Qur'an to his memory from the same school. Here he also decided to approach the intrinsic meanings of the holy Qur'an. From here he moved to Tustar at the age of sixteen and stayed there for two years. At Tustar, he ^{His attraction towards Sufism} turned his attention to Sufism. He became disciple of famous celebrated mystic of Islam named Sahl Abdullah Tustari. Under the supervision of his Pir, his education and training was more and more esoteric for inward spiritual enlightenment. After spending two years with Sahl, he ^{His journey toward Basra} moved to Basra (Iraq) and joined school of Khwaja Hasan Basri for education. In Basra, he came under the direct influence of Umar bin Uthman Makki who was a close friend of Junaid of Baghdad. Hallaj stayed for a year and a half in the company of Uthman and got cloak of discipleship from him and became spiritual guide himself. There he ^{by Marriage} married Umul Hussain, the daughter of Hazrat Yaqoob Aqta Basri and spent whole life with her. From this wife, he had three sons and one daughter. One of these sons, Hamd left on account of his father's later life and martyrdom. Uthman

Makki did not like marriage of Hallaj. A quarrel took place between the two Sufis (Aqta and Uthman) which caused Hallaj to travel ^{Trevel towards north} north to Baghdad to consult Junaid in the dispute. Here in Baghdad he sought nearness of Junaid who advised him to adopt ascetic and solitary life. He remained in his company patiently for some time. From here, he went to Hijaz and stayed there for one year. It was roughly around this period that he engaged in discussion with three notable Sufis in Makkah with Uthman Makki, in Kufa with Ibrahim Khawwas and in Baghdad with Junaid on the subjects of political extremism, quietistic Sufism, God's transcendence and his own position on personal inspiration from God. Hamd son of Hallaj mentions meeting at this time between his father and Junaid with a group of Sufis from Hijaz in which a question was posed concerning "the desire for a personal mission." But Junaid did not answer his questions; he rather advised him to be patient and calm.

Ali Hujwiri records an anecdote when Hallaj in his rapture broke off all relations with Amr bin Uthman Makki and came to Junaid who asked him for what purpose he had come to him. Hallaj replied: "For the purpose of associating with the Shaikh." Junaid said: "I do not associate with mad man. Association demands sanity; if that is wanting, the result is such behaviour as yours in regard to Sahl Tustari and Uthman Makki. Hallaj said: "O Shaikh, sobriety and intoxication are two attributes of man, and man is veiled from his Lord until his attributes are annihilated." "O son of Mansur" said Junaid, "you are in error concerning sobriety and intoxication. The former denotes soundness of one's spiritual state in relation to God, while the latter denotes excess of longing and extremity of love, and neither of them can be acquired by human efforts. O son of Mansur, in your words I

see much foolishness and nonsense."

Amr Makki said of Hallaj: "If I could meet him, I would kill him with my own hand." When asked the reason for his anger, he replied: "I was reading a verse from the holy Qur'an and Hallaj said: 'I, too, can speak like that.'" Hallaj's teachings were very similar to those of Junaid and the Sufi School of Baghdad. But he presented Junaid's doctrine of Unification (Tawhid) with such an excessive realism that it shocked many Muslims. *Relation of Hallaj to the Baghdad School*

Al-Khatib gives a very important quotation expressing the relation of Hallaj to the Baghdad School. The following words were written in a letter of Hallaj to one of his friends: "From the most gracious, most merciful (Al-Rehman, Al-Rahim) to so and so." When this letter was placed before him, he said: "Yes, this is my handwriting and I have written this." He was questioned: "You have been proclaiming your prophetic power and now you proclaim your divinity?" to which Hallaj replied: "I am not proclaiming my divinity, but it is what we mystics call the complete unification with the Divine Will. God is the Writer and I am only an instrument." When asked: "Are there others who hold these principles?" He said, "Yes-Ibn Ata, Muhammad Jurayri, and Abu Bakr Shibli. Jurayri and Shibli keep their thought concealed, but not so Ibn Ata." Thus Jurayri and Shibli as witnesses were questioned, but they both denied Hallaj. Ibn Ata however, declared his agreement with Hallaj's doctrine and later on in consequence was executed.

Hallaj had begun to give out expression exposing divine secrets. One day Junaid said: "O Mansur, very soon the point of a piece of wood shall be coloured with your blood." On hearing this Mansur said: "Then you will also give up your Sufi cloak and wear layman's dress." This attitude and remarks

of Junaid distressed Hallaj too much. He left his Khanqah and went to Tustar alongwith his wife and brother in law without his permission where he stayed for one year. Here he preached (in Arabic) to Arabicized audience with considerable success and gained much popularity among the people. But he would also criticise the religious pretenders who were then annoyed with him. They were helped by Umar bin Uthman who wrote letters to them to harass Hallaj with result that he broke relation with his Pir (Uthman Makki) and other Sufi masters. He also discarded the Sufi's Khirqah and wore the layman's dress. At this time he had attained to very high spiritual state but no peace of mind. Thus being dejected he set out on long journey. He travelled to Sistan, Kirman and Nimroz where he used to sermonize the public and earned acclaim. To the audience, he would disclose secrets of divinity. He wrote some illuminating works and his discourses were so illuminating that the people styled him "the master of secret knowledge." After travelling to many regions and countries, when he returned to his native place, people of those lands addressed him with different appellations in their letters addressed to him.

1st Pilgrimage

It is related that Hallaj performed first pilgrimage in 270 A.H at the age of twenty six. He intended that he would fast, keep silent and perform Umra continuously for one year. During this period, he attained piety and inner sanctification to the highest level. He says:

لَوْ أُلْقِيَ مِمَّا فِي قَلْبِي ذَرَّةٌ عَلَى جِبَالِ الْأَرْضِ لَدَابَتْ

(Whatever is in my heart, if cast unto the mountains, all will be melted.)

جَبَلَتْ رَوْحَكَ فِي رَوْحِي كَمَا يَجْبَلُ الْعَنْبَرُ بِالْمِسْكِ الْفَتَقِ

(Your Spirit entered into my spirit in such a way as

fragrance is absorbed into musk and amber)

In his Diwan

مَزَجَتْ رَوْحَكَ فِي رَوْحِي كَمَا تَعْرِجُ الْغَمْرَةَ بِالْمَاءِ الزَّلَالِ
فَإِذَا مَسَّكَ شَيْءٌ مَسَّنِي فَإِذَا أَنْتَ أَنَا فِي كُلِّ حَالٍ

(Your Spirit entered into my spirit such as wine is mixed up with pure water. Thus whenever anything touches you, it touches me too. In this state You become I.

وَتَحَلَّ الضَّمِيرُ جَوْفَ فَوَادِي كَمَلُولِ الْأَرْوَاحِ فِي الْإِبْدَانِ

(You infused secrets of divinity into my innermost being in such a way as spirits are permeated the bodies)

أَسْرَارُنَا بِكُرٍّ لَا يَخْطُوهَا إِلَّا خَاطِرُ الْحَقِّ

(Our secrets are like virgin girl and unique; nothing but thought of the Truth can enter there)

The following quatrain is attributed to Hallaj:

I am He Whom I love and He whom I love is I

We are two spirits indwelling one body.

When thou seest me, thou seest Him

And when thou seest Him, thou seest me.

All the people of mystical persuasion would relish the ecstatic utterances and tumultuous words, but shunned to express them publically. It was a custom with the Sufis of that time that they would talk secretly about Tawhid and divinity by closing doors of their house and keep such discourses hidden from the common people. *(Hallaj's Teaching)*

It is universally admitted that Hallaj's life, teaching and his tragic death was seen by the Muslims and Western Orientalists as turning point in the history of Islamic mysticism but he also left indelible imprints on the doctrine and philosophy of alien religion. Basic theme of his cult remained the same 'the union of man and God' with no

compromise to anyone. But this union leading to a unification did not represent a union of two substance, but as an act of faith and divine love. He also made the following bold statements: Thy spirit has mingled itself with my spirit as amber mixes with fragrant musk;" "We are two spirits that reside in a single body. This line of thinking reached its culmination in the poetic lines that became emblematic of Hallaj's entire teachings:

*Glory be to Him whose humanity manifested
The secret of His piercing Divinity's radiance
And who then appeared openly in His creation
In the form of one who eats and drinks*

In around 281 A.H. (894) Hallaj intended to perform ^{2nd Pilgrimage} second pilgrimage. He left for Makkah via Basra and the Persian Gulf centres of Qarmathianism. He arrived at the holy city of Makkah alongwith his four hundred disciples, all dressed in rags and patched garments. He was accused this time by local Sufis of being possessed by jinn.

The following years he returned to Ahwaz and after a brief stay in Tustar, he left the region for ever with his wife and family and disciples settling them in the Tustari textile quarter of Baghdad. He remained there for one year in the capital city during which he resumed Sufis contacts, especially with Nuri and Shibli. Thereafter he travelled by sea to India. This marked the beginning of his second long 5-year journey. Crossing Multan and through mountain of Kashmir he reached China. During these voyage and travel, he kept on teaching and preashing especially against dualism. His emphasis was focussed on the cultivation of the spiritual state of love leading through desire to union with God's Essence (*ishq dhati*) extending the teaching of earlier mystics such as Rabia, Muhasibi as well as the elder Abu al-Hasan Nuri.

It is related that on the occasion of second pilgrimage to Makkah, he stayed there as attendant of Baitullah Sharif for two years. A great esoteric change took place in him. His words were replete with esotericism which were beyond the understanding of common people. Thereafter wherever he went, he was expelled from that places. It is related that he was driven out about some fifty cities. It was extremely a difficult time that passed over him.

In the days of his ^{intense spiritual} state Hallaj lived in one cloak for full twenty years. One day people forcibly took it off his body. They were surprised that in it a scorpion had made home and as they wanted to kill it Hallaj asked them to replace it in his garment as he had befriended him for the last twenty years.

Once four thousand ^{pilgrimage for} people accompanied him to Holy Makkah on a pilgrimage. There he stood before Kaaba bare-foot and bare-head for complete one year as a result of which sweat would continuously flow from his entire body down to the stone. His skin was split, but he did not move from that place. A man would come with a loaf of bread and jug of water for him, but he would hardly take a morsel out of it.

In his prayer there he would say: "O Lord, you are the guide of those who are passing through the valley of Bewilderment. If I am heretic, enlarge my heresy." When the people left him, and he was alone, he would pray again: "I know Thee alone and worship none besides Thee, and I am grateful for the gift that Thou has conferred on me. I am Thy slave and countless are your gifts on me with the single tongue that cannot express my gratitude for them. So Thou thank yourself on my behalf."

When he returned to Baghdad in about 290-1 A.H.

(902-3) opposition against him emerged on the scene reaching a higher level of seriousness in the person of leading Zahirite expert (Ulama) in canonical law and sophisticated neo-Platonist writer on the subject of love. M. Ibn Dawud initiated a legal denunciation against him. It was, however, thwarted by another canonist, the Shafiite Ibn Surayj who claimed that issue of "ecstatic love mystics" is beyond the competence and jurisdiction of canonical law. (Shariah)

Thus Hallaj was spared ^{3rd Pilgrimage} from official inquest, he therefore undertook third pilgrimage to Makkah lasting for two years of pious retreat, continued meditation and reflection, purification of heart, sanctification of soul leading him to ecstatic utterance "*Ana l-Haqq*" (I am the Truth). This was the final testimony of his eternal love with the Eternal, and his expression at Arafat of his readiness to become a powerless victim and to suffer condemnation and divine wrath. He even appealed to God to let him die accursed and brutalized by Islamic community, even to become an infidel (*Kafir*), in order to be put to death, so that the word of thankfulness to be uttered by him should not be indebted to anyone except God.

Hallaj left the holy cities ^{with Holy City of Makkah} of Makkah and Madinah for the last time returning to Baghdad via Jerusalem where he reached in 293 A.H. (905) He resumed his life among his family, friends and followers in Tustari quarter of capital, where he built a miniature Kaba in which he introduced symbolically in private the *tarif* and the ritual feasts of Makkah pilgrimage. He was accused by his enemies and then faced eventual trial for preaching against Islamic law. In this period Hallaj's teaching became more vehement focussed precisely on his desire for martyrdom. Hallaj was also called as an agent of the Qarmathians. For the next ten years, 301-308-9 (913-921-2) Hallaj was confined in the palace in

effect under protective custody of the government. Towards the end of this protective custody and on account of political upheavels, his apponents like Hamid ibn al-Abbas and Nasr built a *private* cell within the palace in which Hallaj could receive visitors but in which he was more effectively confined. In 308 A.H. (921) he was shifted for about a year' to a prison.

and As stated ^{Travelling through Khurasan,} before, Hallaj after travelling through ^{Khurasan,} Khurasan, Seistan and Turkestan when he returned to Baghdad, the number of his followrs largely increased, he used to give utterance to many strange sayings repugnant to Islamic law which excited suspicions among the government circle and the people. At last he began to say frequently: 'I am the Truth', "I am the Truth". These words were taken in pantheistic sense, and as an incarnation of Godhead and as vagaries of Hallaj's self which were not acceptable to exoteric theologians, nor to the mystics nor general public. These words also became known to the people at the helm of political affairs and detested. The Ulama of Shariah rose up against him and eventually secured the support of Hamid ibn Abbas, the Prime Minister of the court of Baghdad and managed to issue *fatwa* of infidelity (Kufr) against him and a decree for his execution. *Case submitted*

It is related that when the case was finally submitted for the consent of Abbasid Caliph Muqtadir- Billah, he refused to give consent for execution unless the *fatwa* (verdict) was signed by Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi. Thus the *fatwa* was sent to him six times for approval, but was returned without signatures. The Caliph, on the seventh time sent it to him with a explicit request that he should say clearly yes or no'. On this royal request, Junaid threw off his Sufi cloak and put on the robe of Ulama and thus wrote on it: "According to the law of Shariah, Hallaj is liable to death sentence; but according to the

doctrine of "Secret Truth" God-knows the best." Still Caliph kept Hallaj in prison for one year more in the course of which he would shout **Ana l-Haqq Ana l-Haqq** at intervals; but he was very conscious and constant in his obligatory and voluntary prayers for whole nights in prison. *Hallaj sent*

It is related that when Caliph sent Hallaj to prison, the people visited him in the jail cell on the first night of his internment but they could not find him in the cell; he had disappeared bodily. On the second night of their visit, they found him at the spot, but the jail cell had disappeared. On the third night they met him seated in the jail cell. They inquired of him about this strange experience. He said: "On the first night I was in the presence of my Lord, on the second, the Lord had come here on a visit to me, and now I have been sent here to verify the words of scripture, viz, 'A man in his sense should never utter "I am the Truth', for as long as he is a being (man) he can never be God. If he utters those words, it is heresy."

Voluntary
Hallaj used to offer one thousand cycles of voluntary prayer daily in addition to his five-time obligatory prayers. When people asked him: "when you claim yourself to be God why do you offer so much service to Him?" He replied: "I know my worth very well."

Last days
During the last days before his execution, Caliph forbade anyone to see Hallaj in jail. In consequence no one went to see him for five months except Abdullah Khafif. Another time Ibn Ata sent someone to say to him: O Shaikh, withdraw what you said so that you may escape death." "Nay, rather he who sent you to me should seek forgiveness", said Hallaj. Ibn Ata hearing this shed tears and said: Alas! He is irreparably lost!"

execution of Hallaj
It is said there were three hundred prisoners at that

Incident of 127 opening lock.

time in jail in which Hallaj was kept. He asked them if they wanted to be released? When they replied in affirmative, Hallaj made a sign and their fetters fell down and the gates of their jail cells lay wide open. They asked him to accompany them as they left precincts to which Hallaj replied: "I have a secret matter with my Lord which shall be revealed when I have been consigned to the scaffold for execution. I am prisoner to the Lord who is my Master (God) and I must show respect to His scripture." In the morning people saw all the locks of the jail broken and the prisoners fled away. They inquired of Hallaj about the incident. He narrated all that had happened. They asked him why he did not run away? He replied: "My Lord is angry with me, and He has inflicted punishment on me; so I am here."

When the Caliph came to know of this incident, he ordered Hallaj to be executed immediately, lest he should create further trouble. In order to force him to retract, he was first of all whipped three hundred times, but in vain. One hundred thousand people had assembled there round the gallows on which he was to be hanged. As he looked round on them, he remarked: "Haqq, Haqq, Anal Haqq".

It is related ^{Adv} that among them a *dervish* asked Hallaj to define "what is love?" Hallaj replied: "You shall see today, and tomorrow and the day after tomorrow." He was crucified on 24th *Dhul qada* 309 A.H.

^{last moment} Last moment, his servant asked him for his last advice. Hallaj instructed him: "Never yield to your carnal self; if you shall do so, it shall lead you to evil deeds." His son sought a last advice." He said: The world runs after worldly life, you seek the life Divine. That is better even if you gain a particle of it; it is superior to all the virtuous deeds performed by men and angels."

As he walked lightly, and alertly though loaded with many chains, fetters, the people asked him the reason of his over confident bearing all this. He said: "It is because I am going in the presence of the King who is my Host." He also read a couplet to the following effect: (Translation)

"My friend is never tyrant. He gave me that wine to drink which the Master of the House offers to His guests. When several rounds of the wine had run, He called forth for the sword to punish one who was drunk thus in this prohibited month with seasoned wine."

When he reached the gallows, he turned his face towards the western gate to Baghdad and set his foot on the first rung of the ladder. "The first step towards heaven", he said. Then he girded himself with a girdle and lifting up his hands towards heaven, turned towards Makkah and said blissfully, "Let it be as He has willed." When he reached the platform of the gallows, a group of his disciples called out to him, "what do you say regarding us, your disciples, and regarding those who deny your claims and are ready to stone you?" He replied: "They will have a double reward, and you only single one, and you hold good opinion of me, while they are carried on by their zeal for the unity of God and for the law of Shariah. Doctrine of Divine Unity is fundamental, while good opinion is merely accessory."

At this moment Shibli got chance to aske him what is Sufism? Hallaj said: "The scene you are looking now is just the lowest degree of it." Shibli asked again: "what is the highest degree of it?" Hallaj said: "Tomorrow you will see it, but you are incompetent to attain it for it is a part of divine mystery."

Thus the mob gathered there began to stone him in compliance with the order of the Caliph. Shibli struck him

with a flower which caused Hallaj to shriek because of pain. Asked the reason for this strange behavior? He replied: "The people who are stoning me are ignorant; so I did not mind, but when Shibli struck me, he is not excusable as he is my confidant."

When his hands were cut off, he laughed and said "To cut off hands of a fettered man is easy but to sever links which bind me to the Divine would be a task indeed." Then they cut off his two feet. He said smiling: "with these I used to accomplish my earthly journey, but I have another pair of feet with which I can traverse both the worlds." Then with his bleeding stumps, he rubbed his cheeks and arms. "Why do you do that?" he was asked. he replied: "I have lost much blood, and lest you should think the paleness of my countenance reflects fear, thus I have reddened my cheeks. "But why your arms, they asked. "The ablutions of love must be made in blood", he replied.

Then the executioners plucked out his eyes from the sockets. A tumult arose in the crowd. Some burst into tears, other cast stones at him. An old woman shouted, "what right has this little wool-carder to speak of God?" When they were about to cut his tongue, he exclaimed: "Wait a little; I have to say something." Then lifting his face towards heaven, he said: "My Lord, for the sake of these sufferings, which they inflict on me because of Thee, do not inflict loss upon them nor deprive them of their share of felicity. Behold upon the scaffold of my torture, I enjoy the contemplation of Thy Majesty and Glory." His last words were, "Help me, O Thou only One, to whom there is no second!" and he recited the following verse of the holy Qur'an: "Those who do not believe say, why does not the Day of Judgement hasten? Those who believe tremble at the mention of it, for they know that it is

near." Then they cut off his tongue and he smiled. Finally by the time of evening prayer, his head was cut off. It is related that every drop of blood that fell from his body on the ground assumed the shape of the word **Anal-Haqq**. When some portion of the blood-stained mud was thrown into the Tigris, the river resounded with the words **Anal-Haqq**. His body was burnt, and the ashes taken to the minaret beside the river Tigris and dispersed in the air.

The day on which Hallaj was crucified, a saint sat overnight under the gallows in reflection and meditation during which he heard the Divine voice saying: "We had entrusted Hallaj with one of our secrets. He revealed it to others. We therefore punished him for having revealed the Royal Secret."

Hallaj always talked in metaphysical sense in public and parlour fearlessly. A few words are translated here:

1. ✓ The sign of the gnostic (*Arif*) is that he is empty of both the worlds: the temporal and the Hereafter.
2. ✓ He was asked: "Does gnostic have any specific time?" He said: "No! Time is the attribute of the man of time, and he who is satisfied with span of time, cannot be an Arif. He means to say that an Arif is never oblivious of the Lord for a single moment. He is always present with Him.
3. ✓ When a servant arrives at gnosis (*Marifat*) he is endowed with revelation from the Hidden; he becomes silent so that no thought other than God enters in his inmost being.
4. ✓ Best of conduct is that when you have cognition of the Lord, ill-treatment of the people becomes immaterial to you.
5. When the servant reaches the station of gnosis, God makes even his stray thoughts a means of inspiration. When God wishes to conquer a heart, He entrusts it with secrets which the heart then perceives and proclaims.

6. ✓ The self-awareness proceeds from Him and returns to Him, operates in Him; but these are not logically necessary.
7. ✓ Love is the very essence of God. It is love which lies at the root of all things. It is the cause of the origin of the phenomenal existence.
8. In His Perfect isolation God loves Himself, praises Himself and manifests Himself by love. It was this first manifestation of love in the Divine Absolute which determined the multiplicity of His attributes and Names.
9. ✓ Sufi is solitary by nature. No one accepts him nor he accepts anyone.
10. Divine love is realized through suffering and affliction. The servant can be united with Divine will by accepting distress and even longing for it.
11. ✓ Suffering is He Himself, whereas happiness comes from Him.
12. ✓ The compensation, for having offered to God unconditional love, is the Beatific vision (Husan-e- Elahi) without an intervening "I".

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Hazrat Abul-Qasim Muhammad Junaid

The most original, penetrating intellect, theologian, jurist and mystic of sublime rank and an acknowledged leader of Islamic mysticism, Hazrat Junaid was born most probably in 210 or 215 A.H. in Baghdad. His father Hazrat Muhammad Qawariri was an accomplished spiritualist who traded in glassware. Junaid himself earned his livelihood as a dealer in raw silk. The ancestors of Junaid were the residents of the old and beautiful city of Nihawand located at the distance of fifty miles from Hamadan in the province of Jibal. This city was conquered by the Muslim army in the reign of Hazrat Umar, the second Pious Caliph. When Caliph Mansoor of Abbasid dynasty built the city of Baghdad in 150 A.H and made it capital, the father of Junaid migrated there. The tribe of Junaid was fireworshipper, the followers of Zoroaster-(a guebre). After the fall of Iran to Muslim forces, Islam began to spread across the country. The grandfather of Junaid of Baghdad named also Junaid was the first person in Nihawand who embraced Islam. The mother, uncle and the grandfather of Junaid jointly gave him this name which literally means a small army. This name turned to be highly blessed, as later Junaid proved to be a part of great army of God Most High leading the masses to mystic way of life. That is why the world of Islamic mysticism bestowed on him the honorific titles of Peacock of the divines, Lord of the Sufi community (*Sayyid al-taifa*), Master of the Masters (*Shaikh al-Mashaikh*). This indicates high esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries and the later Sufi communities.

The holy men of Baghdad had noted great promise in Junaid even in his childhood. It is related that once there was a

gathering of the Ulama at the residence of Hazrat Sari Saqati, the uncle of Junaid. Heated debate was going on the issue of Thankfulness (*shukr*). At that time Junaid aged seven was playing in the courtyard of the house. Every mystic was expressing his own opinion on this issue. Hazrat Sari saw Junaid playing near him, called him and asked: O son, you tell us 'what is Thankfulness, to Allah Most High.' Everyone sitting there was surprised to hear putting this question to a small boy. Junaid in serious mood replied: "Gratitude to God means that man must not deny divine conferments on him. He must not use his limbs, God given energies and wealth contrary to His commands. Rather spend all these things in His obeisance." Hearing this answer Sari said: "O my son, would that you are not restricted to these words only." He meant 'Your eloquence might not invalidate you to go beyond your discourse.'

On another occasion Junaid relates: "I came to Sari one day and found him different from usual, and I asked him: 'What is the matter?' He replied: 'A young man came to me and asked about repentance. I answered: "Repentance is not to forget your sin." The young man objected and said: "On the contrary, repentance is to forget your sin." Junaid said to Sari: "What the young man has said is my own view." Sari asked me: "Why?" and I replied: "If you have been on bad terms with God and afterwards raised to being on good terms, to think of your former state is bad." Sari was silent.

Hazrat Junaid was brought up in highly pious and educated family. His father, although a trader, was God fearing man who is said to have traversed Divine path and was an acknowledged eminent spiritualist. Likewise his mother was kind-hearted, pious and God-wary woman who would spend most of her time in divine adoration. She was the sister

of Hazrat Sari Saqati who was not only considered adept of elevated spiritual rank, but chief of the Sufi community of the time. Sari was highly learned divine, interpreter of the holy Qur'an, a renowned *muhaddith*, and Pole (*qutb*) of the time to provide guidance to the people. He was also the founder of the school of Tasawwuf in Baghdad which was spreading light of saintship across the Islamic world. Baghdad on account of his efforts, and that of persons like him, had become centre of divine knowledge and wisdom.

Right from the beginning Junaid started taking education from his uncle Hazrat Sari Saqati far more than from his father. Initially, he memorized the holy Qur'an, got education in the areas of Sunna and Hadith. He received juridical (*Fiqh*) education under the guidance of Abu Obaid and Abu Thawr and was well qualified to issue legal opinions on various juridical issues. Junaid also attained education and training in Sufism from his uncle Sari Saqati and developed mystical ideals and ascetic ethos under his spiritual glance and eventually succeeded his uncle as the leader of the Baghdad school of mysticism. He also cultivated friendship with Harith Muhasibi with whom he had long theoretical discussions of questions relating to mystical experience and divinely life. Muhasibi later wrote up his answers to these questions in the form of books. The influence of Muhasibi spiritual experience and introspection on young associate (Junaid) is abundantly affirmed by the latter's epistles (*Rasail*)

It is related that Junaid used to offer four hundreds rakats of voluntary prayer daily in his shop by hanging a curtain in front. After some time he left the shop and settled at home and would only go to Sari for spiritual training. He spent forty years in seclusion and for thirty years he offered dawn prayer with the ablution performed for Isha (night) prayer.

After spending forty years, he realized that had achieved his goal. But a hidden voice warned him 'O Junaid you are sinner.'

Junaid relates that one day, as he was leaving his uncle, Sari asked him to whose *majlis* (assembly) he was going. He replied: "To that of Harith Muhasibi." To this Sari said: "Yes, go and accept his teaching and his discipline, but beware of his speculative reasoning and his refutation of the Mutazilities." "And as I was going out," adds Junaid, "I heard Sari to have said, 'May God make you a traditionist who is a Sufi and not a Sufi who is a traditionist!'"

Thus we see Junaid devoted himself at the beginning to orthodox studies, the Hadith and Sunna which contributed strong influence to this thought of mysticism. Therefore the roots of his Sufism were laid deep in the orthodox tradition and, as a result his teaching was acceptable to *Sunni* and Sufi alike in his day and a prized heritage for posterity.

The biographers of Junaid rightly affirm that if he had not inclined to Tasawwuf he would have become jurist of highest rank. Subki writes, 'when Junaid came as a student to Abu Thawr who was an expert in *Fiqh* he was a young man of twenty, even then his (Junaid) juridical decisions were considered as authentic and authoritative.

Junaid had also continuous contact with the Iraqi scholar and Sufi Abu Jafar al-Karanbi of Baghdad. He frequently visited Qantari's house where he would engage in discussion with him. One day when Junaid went to see him at noon, Qantari asked him: "Have you no work to do that you come to me at this hour?" to which Junaid replied: "If my visits to you are not work... then what is work?"

Junaid also met Abu Hafs al-Haddad of Nishapur in Baghdad. He held him in high esteem and said to him: "He was one of those who understood the meaning of divine

reality... one had but to meet him to feel satisfied and enriched.

Junaid (as young men) also met Yahya bin Muadh Razi, a distinguished visitor of Baghdad. There remain some fragments of a correspondence of great importance between the two. Junaid did not meet Bistami but knew him through his books and many friends. Junaid had written a commentary on the sayings of Bistami which are couched in recondite and obscure language. Another distinguished Sufi who visited Baghdad in that period, and who carried on a correspondence with Junaid was Yusuf bin al-Husayn Razi who was then the Shaikh of Rayy and Jibal.

Baghdad was the centre of travel and trade and the centre of spiritual life, so that Junaid had the opportunity of meeting many distinguished people in his home town. As stated before Junaid was a silk merchant by trade and had considerable means which he used in entertaining his friends and guests. His house in Baghdad was centre for the Sufis of the town and for those from other countries passing through the capital, a meeting place where they gathered and stayed as guests. He was an excellent friend, loyal, his friendship continued throughout his life.

After attaining regular education Junaid entered into married life. He had one son named Qasim. His domestic life was quite peaceful. He fulfilled all domestic responsibilities in accord with Shariah and Sunna.

Junaid did not travel much. The only journey he undertook was his pilgrimage to Makkah. He was not in favour of making numerous pilgrimages to Makkah; he rather felt that pilgrimages to Makkah should be on a spiritual plane.

Junaid disliked involvement in country politics; he did not teach in public nor he mixed with Qarmathians and others.

He always referred himself to be a jurist at the time of Sufi trials, and remained in the background. As a consequence of continual trials and prosecutions, the popularity of the Sufis in the public life of Baghdad waned and Junaid in his declining years, experienced a phase of disappointment and resignation and seems to have withdrawn himself more and more from public life.

He was most considerate and cautious regarding what should and should not be taught to the masses. To large number of students he would teach exoteric Islamic sciences (ظاہری علوم) with utmost care. But his lessons or discourses in the area of Unification (Tawhid) were programmed not for all but for a few disciples and mystic men of initiatic journey in a highly concealed manner. It is said that when his pupil Shibli wrote to him a daring mystical letter, Junaid returned the offending letter to him and on it he wrote: "Oh Abu Bakr, be careful with the people. Always we devise some means of camouflaging our words, splitting them and discussing them between ourselves, yet here you come along and tear away the veil!"

SUFI TEACHINGS

Believing in orthodox theology, Junaid held that Sufi teachings were based on the fundamentals of the tradition of Islam. Thus he raised sufism to the level of orthodoxy and made it acceptable to the orthodox representatives of Islam. He was afraid to break with the orthodox accepted tradition of Islam. He himself always led a full and regular devotional life. He continued this style of life of prayer and mortification even in his old age when he was very weak, right up to the day of his death.

ACCOMPLISHED SCHOLAR / LEARNED

He was an accomplished scholar of religious sciences endowed with a subtle intellect. He was familiar with the various branches of learning of his time. He spoke with

authority on jurisprudence, theology and ethics. Yet inspite of his learning, he was inwardly of a retiring and reticent disposition and lived in a state of mystical awareness and self-concentration. It is related that when someone asked Junaid about a certain mystical state of the mind, he would retire to his home where he concentrate in devotion (dive into himself), and later come out and give the questioner an account of what had been his experience. (*Extracts from "The Life and Personality and Writings of Al-Junaid, by Dr. Ali Hussain Abdel-Kader)* Religion feeling of Sufi

According to Junaid the starting point of the religious feeling of the Sufi saint is the sense of the tremendous distance between man and God. He always sustains the feeling of gulf between the powerless human being and the Omnipotent God. Then the feeling of longing is created in him as how to bridge the gulf by striving to achieve unitive life. It is the *Tasawwuf* (mysticism) which helps bridge the gap. A large number of definitions of ^{Tasawwuf} Tasawwuf have been given by the mystics. Junaid defines it as follows:

1. "Tasawwuf is to be with God without attachment to ought else."
2. "Tasawwuf is an attempt wherein man abides." Junaid was asked: "Is it an attribute of God or of man?" and his reply was: "In essence it is an attribute of God, but by image it is an attribute of man."

The first definition means that to bridge the gulf is to detach oneself from everything else and to be with God.

The second definition means: in the state where the gulf is bridged, the sufi realizes that his own attributes vanish. He realized that all attributes of man are only attributes in image-but in reality they are divine attributes.

Junaid has described the state of Sufi in one of his

letters as follows:

"In this state of absolute purity, he has lost his personal attributes; by this loss he is wholly present in God, he is wholly lost to himself. And thus he is present before God while absent in himself; absent and present at the same time. He is where he is now, and he is not where he was." (*Risala no 10*)

Concept of Tawhid

During Junaid's lifetime in the third century A.H., the Doctrine of the Unity of God was particularly discussed by all the religious groups. Junaid too participated in the discussion and was considered the first exponent of the Oneness of God (Tawhid). He was proficient in the knowledge of mystical states and stations and gnosis. He has therefore given authoritative opinion on the subject of Unity of God, *Mithaq* (covenant), *Fana* and *Baqa*, Sobriety (*sahw*) and Intoxication, and gnosis i.e. knowledge of God (*marifat*).

The Sufis maintain that the Unity of God is indefinable. reason cannot comprehend this metaphysical subject. Junaid has said: "The noblest saying referring to Tawhid is the word of Hazrat Abu Bakr: 'Praise be to God, who has vouchsafed to His creatures no other means of obtaining knowledge of Him except through their impotence to attain knowledge of Him.'" This clearly shows that to Junaid Tawhid is far beyond the sphere of any intellectual cognition. The same is probably the meaning of these words of Junaid: "Tawhid is a reality in which the traces disappear and the signs fade away, and God is as He always was."

Junaid has given more intimate approach to the conception of Tawhid in its specific significance for the Sufi. He has expressed it in his famous phrase: "Unification is the separation of that which has from that which was originated in Time." That means:

1. To separate the Eternal Essence from the originated essence i.e. to fix or hold fast to this Essence of God and to disapprove or reject all others.
2. To separate the Attributes contained therein from all other attributes i.e. to fix or hold fast to the Attributes of God and to disapprove or refute all others.
3. To separate action, i.e. to separate the actions of God and to disapprove and refute all others.

All of these, His Attributes and His Actions are so completely absorbed in His Essence that he who is in the state to comprehend this Unification sees that the Essence, Attributes and Actions are all completely absorbed in the Essence of God. He comes to this as he himself in this state is absorbed in God.

Junaid has illustrated Tawhid in its various aspects in many of his letters. He says in one of his letters: "know that Tawhid is found in four stages in people. The first is the Tawhid of the ordinary people; the second is the Tawhid of those who are well versed in formal religious knowledge. The third and fourth stages are experienced by the elect who have esoteric knowledge (*marifat*). *various aspect of Taw*

This highest stage of Unification as Junaid witnesses it, is based on two theories of his system: *Junaid theory of*

1. The theory of *Mithaq* (ميثاق) which means the relation between God the creator, and the human creature.
2. The theory of *Fana*, obliteration which means that man fulfils the Unity of God through losing his individuality and being present only in God. (*Extracts from the life, personality and writing of Junaid*) *Junaid*

Both Junaid's theory of *Mithaq* (covenant) and his theory of *Fana* (annihilation) show the road to the same destination i.e., the highest state of unification. The former (covenant) explains the state of Return to God, and the latter

(Fana) describes the way, method, training and successive steps to attain this state.

How difficult and hazardous is the valley of *Fana* to cross, Junaid recounts his own mystical experience he gained during formative phase of his life, in these words:

"This that I say comes from the continuance of calamity and the consequence of misery, from a heart that is stirred from its foundations, and is tormented with its ceaseless conflagrations, by itself within itself: admitting no perception, no speech, no sense, no feeling, no repose, no effort, no familiar image; but constant in the calamity of its ceaseless torment, unimaginable, indescribable, unlimited, unbearable in its fierce onslaughts."

In the realm of mysticism, two states of the mystics-one being Intoxication or Ecstatic Drunkenness and the other Sobriety, are discussed by the great saint. Bayazid Bistami preferred mystical intoxication because it obliterates the human attributes and annihilates man completely in the object of adoration taking him out of himself. The school of Bistami holds sobriety the greatest veil between God and man, whereas intoxication involves the destruction of human attributes like foresight and choice and the annihilation of man's self-control in God, so that only those faculties survives in him that do not belong to the human genus, and they are the most complete and perfect.

On the other hand Junaid and his followers prefer Sobriety to Intoxication. They say that intoxication is evil, because it involves the disturbance of one's normal state and the loss of sanity and self-control; and, inasmuch as the principle of all things is sought, either by way of annihilation or subsistence, of effacement or affirmation, the principle of verification cannot be attained unless the seeker is sane. Blindness will never release anyone from the bondage and

corruption of the phenomena. Therefore Junaid considered Sobriety the highest and preferable state: after the ecstatic intoxication man becomes once more aware of himself in the "life in God", when all his attributes are restored to him, he is bidden to serve humanity. Thus *Fana* (annihilation) is not the ultimate goal but *baqa* "remaining" a new life in God.

Hujwiri chooses to follow the school of Junaid. He says: "My teacher who followed the doctrine of Junaid use to say that Intoxication is the playing-ground of children, but Sobriety is the battle-field of struggle and death of men.

The combination of the two states of *Fana* and Sobriety in one and the same person is difficult to achieve and uphold. It is possible only to those whom God grants His continued grace. To be present and absent at the same time means a continual strain on the self. Junaid says about himself in one of his short poem:

*"I have realized that which is within me.
And my tongue has conversed with Thee in secret.
And we are united in one respect.
But we are separate in another,
Although awe has hidden Thee from the glances of
mine eye
Ecstasy has made Thee near to my inmost parts."*

The mystic in the state of sobriety will often feel at liberty; he will neither care nor worry; whether he is alone or amidst the multitude will be a matter of indifference to him. Junaid on looking at his earlier and his present life said:

"For a time I was such that the inhabitants of heaven and earth wept over my bewilderment. Then again I became such that I wept over their absence. And now my state is such that I have no knowledge either of them or of myself."

Junaid says: "I was asked about knowledge of God (gnosis) and how to acquire it, and I answered that, since the

object of this knowledge is one, knowledge of God, both by saints and by ordinary men, is the same nature. However, it differs in degree. Clearly the saint has more profound knowledge, but complete knowledge is impossible, because of the infinite nature of God. Knowledge of God cannot be complete, since the instrument of knowledge is the intellect, and both mind and imagination are limited by their very nature.

This highest state of enlightenment is called by Junaid Tawhid-Unification, yet in this state a new kind of knowledge *marifat* (gnosis) is revealed to him. This revealed knowledge is not additional knowledge about God, but a part of God's knowledge which He gives to the *muwahhid*.

Junaid experiences that the knowledge of the unity of God (*marifat*) may be reached by the seeker and he still may not be in the state of Unification. If and when he reaches the state of unification, he will do so entirely without knowledge. Junaid says further: "The knowledge of Unity of God is different from the finding and feeling of unification itself, and the finding and feelings of Unification is different from the knowledge of Unity."

Junaid defines the word of *arif* (gnostic) in this sense: "The *arif* could not be an *arif* until he is like earth upon which the pious and impious walk; and like the clouds that are spread over everything, and like the rains that descend upon all places quite without any likes and dislikes." Once he was asked about the *arif*, he replied: "The colour of his vessel is the colour of water." (*Extracts from The Life and Personality and Writings of Junaid, by Abdel-Kader*)

Junaid was not prolific writer as his teacher Muhasibi was. His works are relatively small in number and only few of them have survived. Ibn Nadim has mentioned the following works:

Kitab Amthal al-Qur'an

Kitab Rasail.

Sarraaj in his work "*Kitab al-Luma*" has mentioned some passages from Junaid's work "*Sharh Shathiyat Abi Yazid Bistami*" and also referred to a book called *al-Munajat*. Ali Hujwiri has spoken of another book of Junaid called "*Tashih al-Irada*" Actually what has survived of his works is only his *Rasail*, and his *Risala Dawa at Tafrit* and a few other *Rasail* in *Hilyat al Awliya*.

The reason behind his less literary heritage is explained by the fact that Junaid rarely used the medium of paper when teaching his pupils; instead he preferred to teach orally through lectures and conversation with those around him. However his unwritten teachings in considerable volume are preserved in many classical sufi books. It seems that Junaid did not intend that his writings should reach a wide public. Khatib relates that, when Junaid was dying, he requested that all of his books should be buried with him.

Someone asked Junaid regarding the speech of the Sufis, and he answered: "The Sufis have no speech." Ibn Khafif was asked to elaborate this reply, he said: "What Abul Qasim has said is true... a Sufi is concerned with nothing but the invisible world...when his tongue is loosened and God allows him to speak, he will speak, otherwise he will remain silent. Eloquence is the prerogative of those who study the sources and learn them by heart."

It is reported that when Junaid was asked to repeat what he had already said, he replied that he could not... "God put those words into my mouth and made my tongue overflow, they are not from books or from learning, but only from the favour of God." On another occasion, on being asked to dictate what he had spoken, he replied: "If it had come from my tongue I could dictate it to you." Thus we can gather that

Junaid's speech was entirely inspired. He did not express his Sufi convictions as a man of letter could or a scholar would expand on a subject, but it is obvious that he opened his heart and put forth what was in the innemost depths of his soul.

It is related that Junaid used to discourse on the subject of Sufism (Islamic mysticism) in a highly concealed manner to his select devotees in his private chamber by closing the door and keeping the keys under his thigh. They were around twenty people highly advanced in mystical science and state.

It is related that Junaid said: "The speech of the Prophets give information concerning presence (*hudur*) while the speech of the saints alludes to contemplation. True information is derived from sight and it is impossible to give true information of anything that one has not actually witnessed, whereas allusion (*isharat*) involves reference to another thing. Hence the perfection and ultimate goal of the saints is the beginning of the state of Prophets."

Junaid although equipped with rational, traditional Islamic sciences and gnosis, did not deliver speech to the public as long as Sari was alive until one night he saw the Holy Prophet ﷺ in dream who said to him: "O Junaid, speak to the people, for God hath made your words the means of saving a multitude of mankind." When he woke up, the thought occurred to him that his rank was higher than that of his master Sari Saqati, since the Prophet had commanded him to preach. At daybreak Sari sent a disciple to Junaid with the following message: "You did not discourse to your disciples when they urged you to do so, and you rejected the intercession of the Mashaikh of Baghdad and my personal request. Now that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has commanded you, obey his orders." Junaid said that fancy went out of my mind. I perceived that Sari was acquainted with my outward and

inward thoughts in all circumstances, and that his rank was higher than that of mine, since he was acquainted with my secret thoughts whereas I was ignorant of his state. I went to him and sought his pardon and asked him how he knew that I had dreamed of the Apostle. He answered: "I dreamed of God who told me that He had sent the Apostle to bid you preach."

Junaid states: "For ten years I had to protect my heart from straying away and kept on watching it. Thereafter for the next ten years my heart took care of me. Now my condition is such that my heart does not know me and I do not mind it. For the last twenty years the Lord is speaking through me, I am not in between, although the world is not acquainted with it. I am narrating only formal Sufism for the last twenty years. I am warned against uttering the mysteries in public."

One day when Junaid was delivering a sermon, a man from the audience said that he could not understand his lecture. Junaid asked him to place 20 years of worship under foot and bow down in humility and then he would be able to follow it. Junaid is reported to have said: "I was eagerly desirous of seeing Iblis. One day when I was standing in the mosque, an old man came through the door and turned his face towards me. Horror seized my heart. When he came near, I said to him: who are you? for I cannot bear to look on you or think of you." He answered: "I am he whom you desired to see." I exclaimed: O accursed one! What prevented you from bowing down to Adam? He answered: O Junaid, how can you imagine that I should bow down to anyone except God? I was amazed at his saying this, but a secret voice whispered: "Say to him, 'Thou liest. Hadst thou been an obedient servant thou would not have transgressed His command.'" Iblis heard the voice in my heart. He cried out and said: "By God you have burnt me!" and disappeared.

For forty successive years Junaid kept awake the

whole nights engrossed in his devotional practices. It created element of pride in him and he thought that had achieved absolute perfection in saintship. The divine voice reprimanded him and said: "O Junaid, you are sinner; time has arrived to declare you heretic." Junaid cried: O my Lord, what is my sin?" The reply came: "Could there be a greater sin than that I-ness (ego) still survives in your heart." Junaid shocked and sighed and bowed down his head in submission and penitence and said: "he who gained not Divine union, all his virtues and excellences are sin."

One day during illness Junaid cried: "O Lord cure me of this ailment." A hidden voice said: "If you are not content with the ailment that we have conferred on you, you are out of our sanctuary."

Junaid performed pilgrimage in his youth. Hazrat Abu Bakr Khatani relates: During Hajj days heated discussion on the subject of Divine Love was going on amidst the Mashaikh of Makkah. Every one present there expressed his opinion on the subject. Junaid too was present in such assembly and was younger than all the savants. At the end of discussion, one of the Mashaikh asked Junaid: "O young man if you want to say something on the subject, you are allowed to express." Hearing this tears came into his eyes and he said:

"Lover of God is that who abandons his sensual desires. Be consistent in the remembrance of his Nourshier. Be ever ready to fulfil divine obligations. He must have eyes of intelligence (باطنی آنکھ) to contemplate divine effulgence in his inmost heart. Divine light may have burnt his heart to ashes. Such person drinks primordial cups of divine love every moment. Almighty God rends all kinds of veil of hiddenness from that person. Thus when such person talks, he talks by divine source by His permission. He moves about by His permission. If he rests, he is with God. In sum, he is always in

the company of his Lord and does everthing for His pleasure." When the Mashaikh heard this definition of the Divine Lover, they unanimously uttered: O Junaid, happy tidings to you, you are congratulated. You have said the last word, no addition can be made to it."

Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya has related that Junaid used to say: I found God in the street of Madinah-the Radiant. He was asked how? He replied: one day I was walking in the street of Madinah. I saw some poor and indigent people whose pitiable condition was ineffable. I took pity on them and decided to live in their company for some time. Thus I remaind in their service for a period and my faith reaffirmed that God, Indeed is with the indigent folk. (تذكرة الاولياء)

Once Junaid was asked: "Is it beneficial to narrate the anecdotes of sufi saints to the disciples?" He replied: "stories are highly beneficial for the novices, since they are army of God's armies which strengthen the hearts of the disciples." He was asked the reason of this stance. He said: "Anecdotes given in the Qur'an in respect of the Prophets reinforce our inmost beings."

Junaid actively took part in Jihad (the holy wars) many a time against Roman forces and proved his valour. Junaid says "while he took part in one campaign the chief of our army sent him some money to meet personal expenditure, but he did not like to use for his own sake; he rather distributed it amongst other Muslim soldiers. One day he was offering noon prayer, a thought came into his mind that he had made mistake to have distributed the money. After the prayer, when he was in the same predicament, he slept, and saw in dream that many grand and beautiful palaces were being built fully furnished with all kinds of luxuries. He asked someone in dream 'what

they are for'? He was told 'these are being built for those who distributed money amongs the Muslim soldiers for the pleasure of God. He was pleased to learn this, and he asked the person again 'is there any palace for me also?' At this Junaid was shown a highly splendid and decorated palace, more beautiful than all others. Being astonished he asked 'why I was being given such grand palace better than that of others?' He was told: "The people (chief of the army) spent money for sake of reward, whereas you spent and distributed it to the warriors in the way of God. Still you were not sure and worried whether it would be acceptable or not in the divine sanctuary. Thus you are being given double reward.
(تذكرة الاولياء)

Once Junaid participated in the holy war (Jihad) against Roman alongwith his eight select devotees. They all reached the front of battle-field of Rum and fought to the best of their might and proved valour during which all the eight disciples fell martyred. Junaid narrates that he saw litters hanging in the air. When any of his disciple was martyred, the angels putting his soul in the litter, took him to the celestial abode. When all the eight litters had been used and one left, he thought that it was now his turn to die and that one litter was left for him and that he would be conferred martyrdom by the Lord. Meanwhile he saw an infidel Rumi soldier coming to him. When he got near to him he asked him to make him Muslim. Then Junaid asked him to recite *Kalimat-ush-Shahdah*. He recited and became Muslim. After this he said to Junaid: "Please keep this litter reserved for me; you go to Baghdad and guide the people to straight path." Saying this that new Muslim turned towards his army and fought severe battle with them singlehandedly. After killing eight infidels he laid down his life as martyre. Junaid saw the remaining litter

was waiting the best soul of that new Muslim. The angels put his soul in that litter and ascended to heavenly sphere.

(تذكرة الاولياء)

Some of the salient teachings and thoughts of Junaid are summarised here:

1. Gnosis is the hovering of the heart between declaring God too great to be comprehended, and declaring Him too mighty to be perceived. It consists in knowing that whatever may be imagined in the heart, God is the opposite of it.
2. When asked to say about the sign of the gnostic (*Arif*) he replied: "One state does not hold the gnostic back from another state and one station does not veil him from changing stations." He also said: "God speaks out of the innermost being of the gnostic while he is silent." Abu Sulaiman Darani observed: God reveals for the gnostic in his bed what He does not unveil for another who stands in prayer."
3. When Junaid was asked about the gnostic, he replied: The colour of the water is the colour of its container." That is, the nature of the gnostic is always determined by the nature of his state at a given moment.
4. God gives the gnostic the ardent desire to behold His Essence, then knowledge becomes vision and vision revelation, and revelation contemplation, and contemplation existence with and in God. Words are hushed to silence, life becomes death, explanation comes to an end, signs are effaced. Mortality is ended and immortality is made perfect. Weariness and care cease, the elements perish and there remains what will not cease as time that is timeless ceases not.
5. About gnosis he said: Gnosis is thy realisation of the ignorance when His knowledge comes. He continued to say: He (God) is at once the subject and object of gnosis.
6. About affliction he said: "It is a lamp for the knowers,

an awakening for the novices, and a destruction for the heedless.

7. Whosoever repeats the Name of the Lord merges into the Name and Name merges into the Lord.

8. He who depends on his efforts in remembering God, does not reap full reward of His worship.

9. Whatever I gained spiritually was through three practices, viz. renouncing the world, fasting and night vigils.

10. The heart is the temple of God; let none dwell therein besides God.

11. Forgetfulness of the remembrance of the Lord is worse than the pangs of Hell. One moment of forgetfulness of the Lord ruins a thousand years worship.

12. A thousand years' obedience cannot annul a moment of disobedience to God.

13. Greed is the greatest evil.

14. Ecstasy enlivens and vivifies whilst His vision killeth. Ecstasy destroys the ego.

15. When God loves anyone, He gives him the company of saints.

16. Purity of heart is achieved by five practices: dwelling in the company of saints; studying the Qur'an; offering prayers in the night; shedding tears in morning orisons.

17. When Ibn Kullab asked Junaid to explain his doctrine, he replied: "Our doctrine is the separation of the eternal from that which was originated in time; abnegation of fellow-men brethren and native places, and no thought of the past or the future."

18. The highest state of enlightenment is called by Junaid as Unification (Tawhid). In Unification he himself experienced a new thing, a vision and revelation from God for which he has no word so that for lack of a term he calls it

marifat (Gnosis).

19. Someone asked Junaid regarding the speech of the Sufis, he answered: "The Sufis have no speech."

Junaid spent entire life in good health. At the age of 90 or 91 he fell ill. But he continued observing obligatory and voluntary prayers, *dhikrullah* litanies regularly without break till last days. He used to recite "*Subhan-Allah*" thirty thousand times daily. During illness he sustained swelling on the face which troubled him to much. Despite this he would place his face upon the pillow and say prayers. Once a young man asked him: "Prayers can be skipped in such condition." After finishing the prayer, he replied: "whatever I attained in life, it was all due to my prayers and devotions to the Lord Most High. How can I skip them."

Hazrat Jurayri relates: At the moment of death, I was standing near the bed of Junaid. It was Friday. He was continuously reciting the holy Qur'an. I asked him: "You are still reciting Qur'an ceaselessly." He said: "It is the most appropriate time to remain engaged in recitation. I am the most needy as my scroll of deeds is being closed now." Hazrat Abu Bakr al-Altawi relates: At the moment of death, I was present near him. When he finished the recitation of Qur'an, he started it again. When the recitation reached at verse seventy of Surat 2 *Al-Baqarah*, Izrail (angel of death) arrived and seized his radiant soul.

Junaid appointed Jurayri as his spiritual successor. Before departure to eternal abode, he had advised him to give him burial bath, shroud him, and place his body in the lateral niche (*lahd*). Jurayri obeyed and implemented all the instructions of his Shaikh. However when time for funeral prayer arrived, Qasim, the son of Junaid moved forward and acted as precentor (*Imam*). Around sixty thousand people

participated in the funeral prayer. He was laid to rest in the graveyard of Shuniziyya near the tomb of Sari Saqati. He died most probably on Friday in 298 A.H (910) and buried on the same day or on Saturday.

Junaid had highest regard for his nearest disciple Abu Muhammad Jurayri, so much so that he is reported to have said about him: "Teach my pupils discipline and train them." When Junaid was at the verge of death, he was asked by those around him: "Who will succeed you?" He replied: "Abu Muhammad Jurayri." Thus after Junaid death, Jurayri took his place as a teacher of Junaid's circle of pupils.

Jurayri saw Junaid (after his death) in dream and asked how he was treated by the Lord in the heavenly world? Junaid said: "All of my teachings, learning and writings proved futile. Only recollection, devotions, litanies (*wazaif*) and night vigils benefitted me."

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Shaikh Abu Sa'id ibn Abi l-Khayr Fadlullah

One of the greatest mystics of Islam of the tenth and eleventh centuries Shaikh Abu Sa'id was born on 7th December 357 A.H (967) in the city of Mayhana, the district of Khurasan in the northeastern of Iran. Today nothing is left of this ancient city but his tomb and the building that houses it. His father Abu l-Khyar known as Babu Bu l-Khayr was druggist, a pious and religious man well-versed in sacred law of Islam (Fiqh) and well acquainted with path of Sufism He used to attend Sufi gatherings to listen music and singing (*sama*). One night when he was going to attend such gathering, the mother of Abu Sa'id asked her husband to take along the son with him in the hope that the grace of the Sufis might benefit him. So Bu l-Khayr took his son with him. There the singers (*qawwal*) chanted the following quatrain:

God gives the dervish love-and love is woe;

By dying near and dear to Him, they grow.

The generous youth will freely yield his life;

The man of God cares naught for worldly show.

The song moved the *dervishes*. They fell into ecstasy and continued dancing throughout the night. The *qawwal* sang this quatrain so often that Abu Sa'id learned it by heart. When he returned home, he asked his father the meaning of the verses that had put *dervishes* to ecstasy and dance. "Hush", said the father, "You cannot understand what they mean; and what does it matter to you?" Afterwards when Abu Sa'id had attained to higher spiritual rank, he used sometimes to say: it was really his father who did not understand the poem," which expresses the basic Sufi teaching that to unite with God, who is Love itself, the aspirant must be willing to allow his or her

self to be annihilated.

Fire of divine love was raging in the bosom of Abu Sa'id since his childhood. His father had built a new house and got painting (mural) of King Mahmud on its wall. Abu Sa'id asked his father a separate room for himself. Abu Sa'id painted the word Allah on its walls. When his father questioned why he had done this, he replied: Everyone writes the name of his king on the walls of his house. To me Allah is the real sovereign-the king of all the kings. The father was amazed at the reply of his son and gave order that all the paintings of king Mahmud be removed from the house. This incident affected his father deeply and he decided to educate his son by the best possible means.

Once on Friday Abu Sa'id and his father were going to pray. They came across Pir Bishr Yasin-a great sage of the period. At the sight of Abu sa'id, Pir Bishr became ecstatic and told his father: "We could not have left this world because our seat would have remained empty for the *dervishes* (disciples) to roam about in quest of Guide, but I am now dead assured the problem has been solved. Then he asked both to visit him in the lodge. When they got into the lodge, they conversed with Pir Bishr for a while. Then Bishr asked Abu Sa'id's father to lift his son so that he could reach a loaf of bread that was lying on high shelf. Years later when Abu Sa'id described this incident, he said: "The loaf was warm to the touch, and when Pir took it from me, he got excited and cried. Then he broke it into two pieces. He ate one piece and gave the other to me. My father was surprised that he was not given a share of this divine grace." Bishr told Abu Sa'id's father: "It is now thirty years since I put this loaf on that shelf. I was promised that the person whose touch warms this loaf will give life to the world."

From then onward, Abu Sa'id studied under the supervision of both Bu Al-Khayr and Pir Bishr. He learned the Qur'an and grammar from the former, and the principles of Islam and the doctrine of disinterested love from Pir Bishr. Disinterested love means loving the Lord for His own sake, because He alone is worthy of being loved, not for the sake of any reward or fear of punishment.

One day Pir Bishr said: "O Abu Sa'id endeavour to remove self interest (*tama*) from thy dealing with God. So long as that exists, sincerity cannot be attained. Devotions inspired by self-interest are work done to love God, but devotions inspired by sincerity are work done to serve God." He explained that to perform obligations means "to serve God", while to do work of supererogation means to love God".

On another occasion Bishr taught Abu Sa'id how to practise "recollection" (*dhikr*). "Do you wish," he asked him, "to talk with God?" Abu Sa'id said: Yes, of course I do want." Bishr told him that whenever he was alone, he must recite the following quatrain, no more and no less:

*Without Thee, O Beloved, I cannot rest;
Thy goodness toward me I cannot reckon.
Tho'every hair on my body becomes a tongue,
A thousandth part of the thanks due to Thee I cannot
tell.*

Abu Sa'id was constantly repeating these words. "By the blessing which these verse brought," he says, "the way to God was opened to me in my childhood. Bishr died in 380 A.H (990). Whenever Abu Sa'id went to the graveyard of Mayhana his first visit was always to the tomb of the venerated teacher Pir Bishr who had given him his first lesson in Sufism.

After the death of Pir Bishr Abu Sa'id continued

studying religious sciences travelling from city to city and from teacher to teacher. At Merv he studied theology under Abu Abdullah Husri for five years and also with Abu Bakr Qaffal for five years. From Merv he moved to Sarakhs where he attended the lectures of Abu Ali Zahir. From him he studied the sciences of interpretation (exegesis) of the holy Qur'an, the principles of Islam and the traditions (Ahadith) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Abu Ali was the doctor of Divinity.

One day as Abu Sa'id was going to see his teacher, on the way he met Luqman sitting on heap of ash sewing a patch on his Sufi cloak. He went upto him and stood looking at him. As soon as he sewed the patch on, he said: "O Abu Sa'id I have sewn thee on this sufi cloak alongwith the patch." Then he rose and took the hand of Abu Sa'id to the Khanqah of Pir Abul Fadhl Hasan. When Abul Fadhl appeared, Luqman placed his hand on his shoulder saying: "O Abul Fadhl watch over this young man, for he is one of you." That day Abul Fadhl informed Abu Sa'id: All the 124000 prophets were sent to preach one word. They bade the people to say Allah! Allah, and devote themselves to Him. Some heard this word in one ear and let it go out by the other ear; but those who heard this word within their souls imprinted it on their souls and repeated it until it penetrated their hearts and souls and their whole being became this word and they no longer needed to repeat it, that is they became so absorbed in it that they were no more conscious of their own non-existence.

Next day Abu Sa'id after saying morning prayer and recitation of litany, went to see his teacher Abu Ali to attend his lecture on Qur'anic exegesis. The teacher began his lecture with the verse: *Say Allah! then leave them to amuse themselves in their folly.* Upon hearing this word a door was opened in his heart and he fell into ecstasy. When the teacher

saw this change, he asked Abu Sa'id: "Where were you last night?" He said with Pir Abul Fadul. Abu Sa'id relates: The teacher ordered me to rise and go back to Pir saying: "It is unlawful for you to come from that subject (Sufism) to this discourse." Thus Abu Sa'id returned to his Pir disappointed and bewildered. When Abul Fadhl saw him, he said: "Abu Sa'id! Thou art drunk, poor youth! Thou know not head from tail."

After serving Abul Fadhl for some time, one day he said to Abu Sa'id: the doors of the letters of this word have been opened to you. Now the hosts (spiritual grace) will rush into your breast, and you will experience diverse kinds of discipline." Then he exclaimed: "You have been transported, transported, transported! Go and see a place of solitude, and turn aside from men as you have turned aside from yourself, and behave with patience and resignation to God's will." Abu Sa'id relates I abandoned my academic studies and came back to Mayhana and repaired into the niche of my private room in the house. There I sat for seven years saying continually, "Allah! Allah! Allah!" whenever drowsiness or inattention, out of my human weakness, overpowered me, a soldier with a fiery spear appeared in front of the niche and shouted at me saying: "O Abu Sa'id say Allah!" The dread of that apparition used to keep me burning and trembling for whole days and nights, so that I did not again fall asleep or become inattentive; and at last every particle of my body began to cry aloud "Allah! Allah! Allah!"

Abu Sa'id had many books and papers which he used to turn them over and read one after the other, but could never find any peace in them. He says "one day I prayed to God saying: "O my Lord nothing is revealed to my heart by all this study and learning; it causes me to lose Thee, O God! Let me

be able to do without it by giving me something in which I shall find Thee again."

Muhammad ibn Munawwar, the compiler of *Asrar ul-tawhid* relates that after seven years of solitary retirement Abu Sa'id came back to Shaikh Abul Fadhl who gave him a cell opposite to his own room and prescribed him such moral and ascetic practices as were necessary. Sometime afterwards, he transferred him to his own cell for closer supervision. At last Abul Fadhl bade him return to his mother. Here he lived in a cell in his father's house. Among the ascetic practices in which he was now constantly engaged, the following are recorded in nutshell:

1. He showed excessive zeal in his ablutions using many jugs of water for every single *wudu*.
2. He was always washing the door and walls of his cell.
3. He never leaned against any door or wall or rested his body on wood or on cushion or reclined on a couch.
4. All the time he wore only one shirt which gradually increased in weight because, whenever it was torn, he would sew a new patch on it.
5. He never quarrelled with anyone nor spoke to anyone except when necessary to do so.
6. He ate no food by day and broke his fast with nothing more than a piece of bread.
7. He did not sleep by day or night but shut himself in his cell, where he had made a hollow in the wall just as high and wide as enough to stand in it and which could be closed by means of a door. He used to stand there and close the door and engage himself in recollection (*dhikrullah*) stuffing his ears with cotton-wool in order that no disturbing sound might reach him. At the same time he never ceased to watch over his inmost self in order that no thought except of God might cross

his mind.

After sometime he became unable to bear the society or even sight of men. He wandered alone in desert and hilly places and would often disappear for a month or so. His father used to go in search of him to find out his whereabouts. To please his father, he would come home, but before long he would feel the presence of human creatures to be unendurable and again flee to the mountains and wilderness, where he was seen sometimes roaming with a venerable old man clad in white raiment. Many years afterwards when Abu Sa'id had achieved eminence, he disclosed that the old man was prophet Khidr.

Once his father noticed that Abu Sa'id entered *Ribat-i Kuhsan* and shut the gate behind him. There he slung himself into the pit head down-wards and began to recite the Qur'an. He remained in that posture until daybreak when having recited the whole Qur'an, he raised himself from the pit. It was the *Chillah maqluba* (inverted Chillah)

During this period of ascetic practices Abu Sa'id would often go to Mayhana to see Pir Abul Fadhl in order to seek spiritual guidance. According to the *Asrar*, he returned to Abul Fadhl for another year's training and was then sent by him to Abdur Rehman Sulami who invested him with the patched frock (Khirqah) that proclaims the wearer to be a recognised member of the Sufis Brotherhood.

On Abu Sa'id return, Abul Fadhl said to him: Now all is finished. You must go to Mayhana and call the people to God and admonish them and show them the way to the Truth." He came back to Mayhana, but instead of contenting himself with Abul Fadhl's assurance that all was now finished, he increased his austerities and ascetic practices which were more assiduous than ever in his devotional life. Finally he was fully accepted by Pir Abul Fadhl and invested him with Sufi cloak.

The spiritual lineage of Abul Fadhl was: to Abu Nasr Sarraj, to Abu Muhammad Abdullah, and to Junaid of Baghdad.

The following passages relates ascetic practices and formative phase of Shaikh Abu Sa'id's life wherein he faced vicissitudes of the Divine path, sometimes hailed and praised by the people and sometimes condemned by them. But he remained steadfast and continued his initiatic journey until God's grace illumined him entirely:

"When I was a novice, I bound myself to do eighteen things: I fasted continually; I abstained from unlawful food; I practised recollection (*dhikr*) uninterruptedly; I kept awake at night; I never reclined on the ground; I never slept but in a sitting posture; I sat facing the Ka'ba; I never leaned against anything; I never looked at a handsome youth or at women whom it would have been unlawful for me to see unveiled; I did not beg; I was content and resigned to God's will; I always sat in the mosque and did not go into the market, because the Prophet said that the market is the filthiest of places and the mosque the cleanest. In all my acts I was a follower of the Prophet. Every four-and twenty hours I completed a recitation of the Qur'an. In my seeing I was blind, in my hearing deaf, in my speaking dumb. For a whole year I conversed with no one. People called me a lunatic, and I allowed them to give me that name, relying on the Tradition that a man's faith is not made perfect until he is supposed to be mad. I performed everything that I had read or heard of as having been done or commanded by the Prophet."

Ascetic experiences passed over me of a kind that cannot be described in words, and God strengthened and aided me therein, but I fancied that all these acts were done by me. The grace of God became manifest and showed me that this was not so, and that these were the acts of divine favour and

grace. I repented of my belief and realised that it was mere self-conceit. Now if you say that you will not tread this path because it is self-conceit, I reply that your refusal to tread it is self-conceit. Until you have undergone all this, its self-conceit will not be revealed to you. Self-conceit appears only when you fulfil the Law, for self-conceit lies in religion, and religion is of the Law. To abstain from religious acts is infidelity, and to perform such acts self-consciously is dualism. If "thou" exists and "He" "two" exists; that is dualism. You must put your "self" away altogether."

I had a cell in which I sat, and sitting there I was enamoured of passing-away from myself. A light flashed upon me, which utterly destroyed the darkness of my being. God Almighty revealed to me that I was neither that nor this: that this was His grace even as that was His gift. So it came to pass that I said:

*When I mine eyes have opened, all Thy beauty I
behold;*

*When I tell Thee my secret, all my body is ensouled.
Methinks, unlawful 'tis for me to talk with other men,
But when with Thee I am talking, ah! the tale is never
told.*

Then the people began to regard me with great approval. Disciples gathered round me and were converted to Sufism. My neighbours too showed their respect for me by ceasing to drink wine. This proceeded so far that a melon-skin which I had thrown away was bought for twenty pieces of gold. One day when I was riding on horseback, my horse dropped dung. Eager to gain a blessing, the people came and picked up the dung smeared their heads and faces with it. After a time it was revealed to me that I was not the real object of their veneration. A voice cried from the corner of the

mosque, *Is not thy Lord enough for thee?* A light gleamed in my breast, and most veils were removed. The people who had honoured me now rejected me, and even went before the Qadi to bear witness that I was an infidel. The inhabitants of every place that I entered declared that their crops would not grow on account of my wickedness. Once, whilst I was seated in the mosque, the women went up on the roof and bespattered me with filth; and still I heard a voice saying, *Is not thy Lord enough for thee?* The congregation desisted from their prayers, saying, "We will not pray together so long as this madman is in the mosque." Meanwhile I was reciting these verses:

*I was a lion-the fierce pard was ware
Of my pursuit. I conquered everywhere.
But since I drew Thy love close to my heart,
Lame foxes drive me from my forest-lair.*

This joyous transport was followed by a painful contraction (*qabd*). I opened the Koran, and my eye fell on the verse, *We will prove you with evil and with good, to try you; and unto Us shall ye return*, as though God said to me, "All this which I put in thy way is a trial. If it is good, it is a trial, and if it is evil, it is a trial. Do not stoop to good or to evil, but with Me!" Once more my "self" vanished, and His grace was all, in all. (*Excerpted from 'the Study in Islamic Mysticism' by Nicholson pp. 15-17*)

After the death of his father and mother, Abu Sa'id is reported to have roamed for seven years in the deserts between Mayhana and Baward and between Merv and Sarakhs. He then returned to Mayhana. By this time Abul Fadhl had died. Abu Sa'id feeling the need of another spiritual guide set out for Amul in Tabaristan to visit Shaikh Abul Abbas Qassab. When he arrived at his Khanqah, the Shaikh gave him a cell in the

assembly- room. During the night Abu Sa'id kept his eyes continually fixed upon his navel and his mind upon the spiritual states (*ahwal*) and acts of the Shaikh. One day the Shaikh had some blood let from his arm. Abu Sa'id ran up to him, washed and bandaged his arm, and taking from him his soiled garment, offered his own which the Shaikh put on while Abu Sa'id clad himself in a Khashan (coarse garments made of grass) that he had. Then he washed and cleaned the Shaikh garment hung it on the rope to dry, rubbed and folded it and brought it to the Shaikh. "It is thine", said the Shaikh, "put it on!" "Nay," cried Abu Sa'id, "let the Shaikh put it onto me with his own blessed hand!" This was the second (or third) Sufi cloak (*Khirqah*) with which Abu Sa'id was invested, for he had already received one from Abdur Rehman Sulami of Nishapur.

On his departure from Amul, Abu Sa'id was directed by Shaikh Abul Abbas Qassab to return once more to Mayhana. The long discipline of the path, broken by fleeting visions and ecstasies brought him at least into the full and steady splendid illumination. In spite of this whenever Abu Sa'id fell into contraction (*qabd*) he would visit the tomb of Shaikh Abul Fadhl at Sarakhs. When he entered there, his desolate feeling of 'contractions' was dispelled. On arriving at Sarakhs, Abu Sa'id turned his face in the direction of the tomb of Abul Fadhl and bade the *qawwal* sing this verse:

*This is the mine of happiness
and the mine of mercy;
Our qibla is the sight of the Friend
and the qibla of others is Kaaba.*

During the *qawwal's* chant Abu Sa'id and the *dervishes* with bare heads and feet circumambulated the tomb, shrieking ecstatically.

This event took place short while after Abu Sa'id had reached perfection and had given up severe ascetic training and austerities that he had been following. Now he no longer needed to adhere to strick practices and rituals. His direct vision of God was his *qibla* whereas others still remained attached to the Kaaba in Makkah.

Now he left Mayhana and travelled to Nishapur where he probably stayed for several years. But he did not travel, he was accompanied by many disciples who had gathered round him at Mayhana while many new converts joined the party at Tus. In Nishapur he preached to big crowds and moved his audience to tears. The spectators raised a great cry and ecstasy prevailed upon them. On entering Nishapur Abu Sa'id was met by an influential patron of Sufis named Khwaja Mahmud who installed him and his disciples in the Khanqah of Abu Ali Tarasusi. Before Abu Sa'id entered Nishapur, Mahmud had a dream that the mountain near Nishapur split in half and a full moon came up. The moon travelled through sky and landed at the Khanqah of the Adanykouyan district. From this dream, Mahmud knew that a great spiritual figure was coming to Nishapur, for a perfect lover of God is symbolized by the full moon which has no light of its own but fully reflects the light of the Most Glorious (God). Thus Mahmud went outside the city to greet Abu Sa'id and hence brought him to the Khanqah.

From that day on Abu Sa'id delivered sermons daily that fascinated people who gave him their wealth for the Khanqah. His routine to engage in *sama*, to recite poetry and lyrics and to teach people, to seek Truth themselves continued. He also made it clear that he knew what went on in people's daily lives and private moments. This ability caused the exoteric religious Ulama to condemn him, for they believe that in sermons only the verses of the holy Qur'an, Ahadith and

words of Ulama were to be recited. They first tried to stop his activities, then conspired to murder him and his disciples. Abu Sa'id never seemed to mind his enemies' harsh treatment rather he always treated them compassionately.

In Nishapur Abu Sa'id faced formidable opposition by the Karramis whose chief was Abu Bakr Ishaq and Qadi Sa'id. These two tribal leaders considered Abu Sa'id a heretic and used every opportunity to stop him. When all else failed, they considered killing him. Then they wrote to king Mahmud saying: "A man from Mayhana has come who pretends to be a Sufi who, instead of reciting the Qur'an, and telling about Traditions, sings, dances and recites poetry. He hosts elaborate feasts, music is played by his order, whilst the young men dance and eat broiled chicken, sweetmeats and all kinds of fruit. He declares that he is an ascetic, but this is neither asceticism nor Sufism. A large number of people have joined him and are being led astray. This mischief will soon spread on wider scale if necessary measures are not taken to stop it forthwith."

The authorities at the court of Ghazna sent reply written on the back: "Let the leaders of the Shafiites and Hanafites sit in council and inquire into the case and duly inflict upon him whatever penalty the religious law of Islam demands."

Abu Sa'id asked his trusted servant Hasan to arrange most sumptuous feasts for all the eighty guests including forty the resident *dervishes* of his Khanqah. Next morning breakfast was arranged openly as planned. The Shaikh and *dervishes* came to eat. A large number of people gathered there to witness the Sufis' fate. Abu Bakr said: "Let them grease their bellies today for tomorrow they will grease the scaffold."

After breakfast, Abu Sa'id asked Hasan to prepare a

place for the Sufis in the first row of worshippers at the Friday prayer. The prayer was led by Sa'id-the enemy of Abu Sa'id. The prayer was to follow by a sermon. Abu Sa'id said the Friday prayer but did not stay for the lecture afterwards. As he was about to leave Sa'id wanted to curse him. Abu Sa'id simply turned and gazed at him. Sa'id fell silent and remained so until all the Sufis had left.

After they had left the mosque Abu Sa'id instructed Hasan to go to bazar and buy *Kauk* (a type of pastry) and *monnagha* (a kind of bean), and take them to Abu Bakr and tell him: "Abu Sa'id would like you to break your fast with these."

When Hasan arrived and delivered the message and the gift of food, Abu Bakr was puzzled at first and then amazed. On that day Abu Bakr had fasted, but no body knew. The same day while passing through bazar he had seen some tempting *Kauk* and *moonagha* on display. Since he was fasting he decided to wait and have these things for dinner. All this happened without anyone else being aware of it. So after a few minutes, he sent message to Sa'id saying he was not willing to cooperate in killing Abu Sa'id. The messenger returned with a reply message from Sa'id saying that when Abu Sa'id looked at him, he lost all his power. He felt as if Abu Sa'id were a hawk and he a sparrow. Thus he wanted nothing more to do against Abu Sa'id.

When Hasan was about to leave Abu Bakr's house, the latter told him: "Say to your master that Abu Bakr with 20 thousand soldiers, Sa'id with 30 thousand men, and king Mahmud with one hundred thousand men and seven hundred war elephants came to fight with him, but he defeated them all with some sweets and beans. Now we will leave him alone."

One day Abul Qasim Qushayri, who once did not

agree with Abu Sa'id, was passing by his Khanqah and saw him and his disciples engaged in *sama* dancing. He thought that according to the law, no one who dances like this is accepted as a witness worthy of credit. Next day he met Abu Sa'id on his way to a feast. After they had exchanged salutations, Abu Sa'id said to him: "When have you seen me seated amongst the witnesses?" Qushayri understood that this was the answer to his unspoken thought.

A few day later, he again passed by Abu Sa'id's Khanqah. He heard the *qawwal* sing:

*No shame in becoming an idol worshipper
for the sake of an idol.*

*You will not have an idol,
until you become an idol worshipper.*

He saw that Abu Sa'id was dancing in ecstasy. He thought that in no way could the Shaikh be interpreting these line in any way other than their literal meaning-the verse was clearly a call to pantheism which is detested in Islam. When he came to visit the Shaikh on the next day, Abu Sa'id turned to him and said,

*No shame in becoming an idol worshipper
for the sake of an idol.*

*You will not have an idol,
until you become an idol worshipper.*

He then went on to say that the meaning of this verse was that most people were unashamed to worship what was other than God, and that in doing so they had become idol worshippers. Abu Sa'id thus taught Abul Qasim that there is a monotheism in pantheism if one's eyes are open, and that without such vision, even worshipping God can be considered idolatry. To him to focus on one thing to the exclusion of every thing else is in itself a form of Unity.

Abu Sa'id used every event as an opportunity to teach. Abdul Samad was an elect disciple of the Shaikh. He relates: "I was travelling for while and regretted to have missed sermons of my Shaikh and enjoyed the lessons. When I came back to Mayhana and was able to attend his sermons, he told me "there should be no need to regret that you had missed lectures even if for ten years, because I always say only one thing and that 'one thing can be written on a fingernail: Sacrifice your ego (nafs), and no more."

Once Abu Sa'id set out from Nishapur towards Tus. While he was passing through a mountainous ravine his feet felt cold in his boots. A *dervish* who was then with him says: "I thought of tearing my waist-cloth into two halves and wrapping them round his feet; but I could not bring myself to do it, as my dress was a very fine one. When we reached Tus, I attended his meeting and asked him to tell me the difference between suggestions of the Devil and Divine inspiration. He answered: It was a Divine inspiration that urged you to tear your waist-cloth into two pieces for the sake of warming my feet; and it was a satanic suggestion that prevented you from doing so."

One day Abu Sa'id decided to join a religious gathering that was taking place in his city. In those days it was custom to introduce the guest as they arrived. When the announcer noticed that Abu Sa'id was present, he was at loss for a proper introduction. He asked the Shaikh's disciples but they could not help. Meanwhile the Shaikh heard the problem. He told the announcer: "Go out and say that 'Nobody, son of nobody, has arrived.'" The eminent and acclaimed people at the gathering were impressed and touched by the high degree of humility that Abu Sa'id has thus shown.

A *dervish* was sweeping in the courtyard of the

Khanqah. Abu Sa'id saw him and said: "Be like the dust-ball that rolls before the broom, not like the rock left behind." With these words the Shaikh showed the young disciple that to advance on the path, one must be like the dust, which has no will of its own but goes wherever the broom (the spiritual master) commands and must not be like the rock (ego) which asserts its own will and resists the direction of the perfect guide.

One day, Abu Sa'id was told that a certain person could walk on water. He replied: "This is simple, a frog and mosquito can also do this." Then he was told that another person could fly. He said: "That too is simple; a fly and a raven can also fly." Finally he was told about someone who could go from one city to another in the blinking of an eye. He replied: "Satan can also go from east to west in one breath. These faculties have no value whatsoever. A true human being is one who can mix and socialize with people but does not forget *dhikrullah* for even one moment."

Abu Sa'id was travelling with his companions when they came across a mill. He stopped his horse and listened to the sound of the mill. Then he asked: "Do any one of you know what the mill is saying?" They all shook their heads. The Shaikh said: "It is saying, 'Sufism is what I have. I receive the coarse and give it back fine. I travel around myself and in myself so that I drive off what I do not need.'"

One day in the middle of a talk Abu Sa'id said: "There are jewels spread all over the Khanqah, why are you not collecting them?" The audience began to look around, but nobody could find a single jewel. "We do not see my jewels," they said. "Serve, serve. That is what I mean!" (i.e., adore the Almighty and serve humanity).

One day a man asked the Shaikh about the ways of

reaching God. He replied: The ways to God are as many as there are created beings. But the shortest and easiest way is to serve others, not to inflict others, rather make others happy."

Once Abu Sa'id was asked to explain and elaborate intricate mystic path for the travellers and common folk to understand and follow. They put him some questions such as:

"When shall a man be freed from his wants?" "When God shall free him," he replied; "this is not effected by a man's exertion, but by the grace and help of God. First of all, He brings forth in him the desire to attain this goal. Then He opens to him the gate of repentance. Then he throws him into self-mortification, so that he continues to strive and, for a while, to pride himself upon his efforts, thinking that he is advancing or achieving something; but afterwards he falls into despair and feels no joy. Then he knows that his work is not pure, but tainted, he repents of the acts of devotion which he had thought to be his own, and perceives that they were done by God's grace and help, and that he was guilty of polytheism in attributing them to his own exertion. When this becomes manifest, a feeling of joy enters his heart. Then God opens to him the gate of certainty, so that for a time he takes anything from anyone and accepts contumely and endures abasement, and knows for certain by Whom it is brought to pass, and doubt concerning this is removed from his heart. Then God opens to him the gate of love, and here too egoism shows itself for a time and he is exposed to blame, which means that in his love of God he meets fearlessly whatever befalls him and reckons not of reproach; but still he thinks 'I love' and finds no rest until he perceives that it is God who loves him and keeps him in the state of loving, and that this is the result of divine love and grace, not of his own endeavour. Then God opens to him the gate of unity and causes him to know that all action

depends on God Almighty. Hereupon he perceives that all is He, and all is by Him, and all is His, that He has laid this self-conceit upon His creatures in order to prove them, and that He in His omnipotence ordains that they shall hold this false belief, because omnipotence is His attribute, so that when they regard His attributes they shall know that He is the Lord. What formerly was heresy now becomes known to him intuitively as he contemplates the works of God. Then he entirely recognises that he has not the right to say 'I' or 'mine'. At this stage he beholds his helplessness; desires fall away from him and he becomes free and calm. He wishes that which God wishes; his own wishes are gone, he is emancipated from his wants, and has gained peace and joy in both worlds.

(Translated by R.A. Nicholson, excerpted from 'The Sufi Path of Love, by Margaret Smith, pp 106-107)

Shaikh Abu Sa'id has also given several traits and definitions of Sufism which throw light on the various aspect of spiritual way of life of Sufi saints:

1. To lay aside what thou hast in thy head, to give what thou hast in thy hand, and not to recoil from whatsoever befalls thee.
2. Sufism is two things: to look in one direction and to live in one way.
3. Sufism is a name attached to its object; when it reaches its ultimate perfection, it is God.
4. It is glory in wretchedness and riches in poverty and lordship in servitude and satiety in hunger and clothedness in nakedness and freedom in slavery and life in death and sweetness in bitterness.
5. The Sufi is he who is pleased with all that God does, in order that God may be pleased with all that he does.
6. Sufism is patience under God's commanding and

forbidding, and acquiescence and resignation in the events determined by divine providence.

7. Sufism is the will of the Creator concerning His creatures when no creature exists.

8. To be a Sufi is to cease from taking trouble (*talkalluf*), and there is no greater trouble for thee than thine own self (*tu'i-yi tu*), for when thou art occupied with thyself, thou remainest away from God.

9. He said, "Even this Sufism is polytheism (*shirk*)." "Why, O Shaykh?" they asked. He answered, "Because Sufism consists in guarding the soul from what is other than God; and there is nothing other than God."

In respect on Divine Path (*suluk*) he says: Innumerable are the ways to God, yet the Way is but a single step: "take one step out of thyself, that thou mayst arrive at God." To pass away from self (*fana*) is to realise that self does not exist, and that nothing exists except God (*tawhid*). The Tradition, "He who knows himself knows his Lord," signifies that he who knows himself as not-being (*adam*) knows God as Real Being (*wujud*). This knowledge cannot be obtained through the intellect, since the Eternal and Uncreated is inaccessible to that which is created; it cannot be learnt, but is given by divine illumination. The organ which receives it is the "heart" (*qalb or dil*), a spiritual faculty, not the heart of flesh and blood. In a remarkable passage Abu Sa'id refers to a divine principle, which he calls *sirr Allah*, i.e. the conscience or consciousness of God, and describes it as something which causes God's communications to the "heart."

(Excerpted from 'Studies of Islamic Mysticism, by R.A Nicholson)

Some of the mystical teachings of the Shaikh are summarised as follows:

1. The first step in Sufism is the breaking of inkpot and the tearing up of books and forgetting of all kinds of intellectual knowledge.
2. Freedom from the lower-self in an essential prerequisite for spiritual elevation.
3. If you wish that God should dwell in your heart, purify your heart from all save Him for the king will not enter a house filled with stores and furniture. He will only enter a heart which is empty of all save Himself.
4. Take one step out of yourself that you may arrive at God.
5. Hell is where you are and Paradise where you are not.
6. Evil is thou', and the worst evil is thou', which thou knowest it not.
7. God bestows purity of self upon him who earnestly desires it and is eternally nourished by Him through His contemplation.
8. At first God implanted in man's heart a sense of need and a longing desire and sorrow. Then he looked upon that need and sorrow with favour and pity and placed His gift within the heart and that gift is called the mystic shrine (*sirr*) of God. It is immortal and cannot be destroyed, for it is continually contemplated by God and belongs to Him.
9. The carnal self is unreal since it believes in polytheism and remains sceptical about the existence of One God. The negation of this unreal self is necessary for knowing Divine Unity.
10. Knowledge of the Unity of God (*tawhid*) is revealed in the illuminated hearts of the saints.
11. God in His purity looks upon the inmost self (*sirr*) of man and help is given to it from that pure Divine contemplation. This Divine assistance is the guardian of that

inmost self, and he who acknowledges the Divine Unity is enabled to do so by that inmost self.

12. Almighty God had created two fires, one unto life and one unto death: the living fire is the fire of supplication which He has placed in the breasts of His servants in this world so that their carnal selves may be consumed: that fire burns brightly and when the self is consumed away, suddenly that fire of supplication becomes the fire of longing which neither dies in this world nor in the next.

13. The behaviour of a true saint of God towards His creation always remains friendly and affectionate. A spiritual recluse, who ignores mankind and remains involved merely in the ascetic practices, is not a true friend of God.

14. If men wish to draw near to God, they must seek Him in the hearts of men.

15. The true man of God is that who sits in midst of his fellowmen, and rises up and eats and sleeps and buys and sells and gives and takes in the bazaars amongst other people, and who marries and has social dealings with other folk and yet is never for one moment forgetful of God.

16. To bring joy to a single heart is better than to build many shrines for worship, and to enslave one soul by kindness is worth more than setting free of thousand slaves.

17. God created the souls four thousand years before He created their bodies and placed them near to Himself, and there he shed His Light upon them. He knew how much each soul received as its share from that light and He bestowed favours on the souls in proportion to the light they received so that they remained tranquil in the light and became nourished thereby.

18. Sufis are God's elect and are united by a spiritual affinity which is more binding than any ties of blood.

19. Divine love made him heedless of paradise and hell:
*Through love we're slain, the world's our slaughter
 house*

We've no food nor sleep, the world's our cookhouse.

We've no desire for paradise, because

Our hell's a hundred times loftier than that

(Excerpted from 'Studies in Islamic Mysticism by R.A. Nicholson)

The last years of Abu Sa'id were spent at Mayhana. He had left Nishapur at the age of 82. His departure was deeply regretted by the inhabitants. The chief men of the city urged him in vain to alter his decision. In his old age he could not rise without being helped by two disciples who took hold of his arms and lifted him from his seat. But at Mayhana he continued to give lectures daily. In each lecture he would predict that there would be a shortage of God in society-that is after his death, people would become absorbed in material affairs and ignore spirituality. He lectured for one year, and in the last sermon he said: "If anyone asks about your identity, do not say that you are believers, Sufis or Muslims; for you will be asked to prove whatever you say. Say instead that you are followers and that your leaders are elsewhere. Say, ask our leaders for they will have the answers. Find out who your spiritual leaders will be, for if you are left to yourselves, much mischief will occur."

Abu Sa'id live 1000 months (83 years and four months). He died at Mayhana on the 4th of Shaban 440 A.H (12th of January 1049). He was buried in the mosque opposite to his house. His tomb was maintained by his descendants for about 120 years after which the invasion of the Turcomans of the Ghuzz tribe began in 1180. They destroyed the city completely. Some 115 members of the Shaikh's family were

massacred. Only the tomb of the Shaikh and the building where it located survived.

When Abu Sa'id died in 1049, it is related that on his deathbed he bestowed his *Khirqah* to Ahmad-i Jam Zandapil who was just about to be born.

Sources

1. A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimension of Islam*.
2. Hujwiri, *Kashf Al-Mahjub*.
3. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*.
4. Majdeh Bayat, *Tales from the Land of Sufi*.
5. Margaret Smith, *The Sufi Path of Love*.

Saiyyid Ali bin Uthman al-Hujwiri

Hazrat Syed Ali bin Uthman Hujwiri popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh (Bestower of Spiritual Treasures) was born in around 400 A.H. (1009) at a place called Hujwer in the town of Ghazna in Afghanistan. He was Hasani Syed, a direct descendant of Hazrat Ali, the fourth Caliph. He was the son of Muhammad Uthman. Hujwiri was tenth in descent from Hazrat Ali.

Apparently Hujwiri was born in a family which lived in fairly affluent circumstances in Ghazni. An atmosphere of religious devotion, piety and Islamic sciences pervaded the house. The Hasanids were religious leaders and common people flocked to them for blessings and instructions. Hegemony of Tasawwuf has always been in the hands of the descendants of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Syed Ali Hujwiri has not made any reference to his father in *Kashfal-Mahjub*, but it is related that he received his early education under the supervision of his father who was himself a pious and a divinely learned person. By the time he completed his education, conditions in that country had greatly deteriorated. With the death of Mahmud Ghaznavi in 421 A.H. began a period of internecine strife. Amir Muhammad and Amir Masud sons of the Sultan, pitched themselves against each other in deadly battle for the throne. Although Amir Masud emerged victorious out of this bloody encounter, the Ghaznavide rule could not stabilise. Grieved over the sad state of affairs, Ali Hujwiri left Ghazni and arrived in Sindh. After brief sojourn in Sindh, he set out to visit Islamic countries during which he met his Shaikh Khuttali.

The ancestors (Hasanids) of Hujwiri were Arab, but

they had migrated to Iran for about three hundred years ago. During this period they married Iranian women, and thus family of Hujwiri was largely Iranianised. Before this period Hujwiri books on Sufism were written in Arabic. Afterwards Hujwiri chose to write his books in Persian as the spoken language of his family was Persian. Most probably the mother of Hujwiri was an Iranian lady. Though the Arab blood was running in the veins of Data Ganj Bakhsh, he was to all intents and purpose an Iranian.

The original name of Data Ganj Bakhsh was Abul Hasan Ali. When he became a saint and came to be known far and wide for his bounty and generosity, he was surnamed Data Ganj Bakhsh. In *Kashf al Mahjub*, he has referred to himself as "Ali bin Uthman bin Ali Jullabi Ghazanvi Hujwiri.

It is related that Syed Uthman bin Ali came to Ghazni from Arabia during the period of Ghaznavide rule and made it his permanent abode. Jullab and Hujwer were two well-known localities of Ghazni in those days. His father Syed Ali lived in Jullab while his mother was a resident of Hujwer, that is why both the places are suffixed to his name.

Muhammad bin Fauq records in his biography of Data Ganj Bakhsh that the saint was first married in his childhood and that after the death of his wife, he remained single for eleven years. Later on he was remarried in the lifetime of his parents. But this statement is not considered correct historically. In *Kashf al-Mahjub* he says: "God protected me from the dangers of matrimony, it was my destiny to fall in love with the description of a woman whom I had never seen, and during a whole year my passion so absorbed me that my religion was near being ruined until at last God in His bounty gave protection to my wretched heart and mercifully delivered me." The passage is interpreted to mean that for the first

eleven years after stepping into manhood, he did not think of marriage, the issue dissolves itself and the possibility of even the first marriage is thus ruled out. Matter of marriage or re-marriage is not discussed in his *book Kashf al-Mahjub* nor in any of his biographies. It is therefore safely presumed that he never married and preferred celibate life.

History is silent in respect of Hujwiri's childhood and education. However his father Hazrat Syed Uthman bin Ali was a scholar. He lived in Ghazni which was a seat of learning in those days. Hujwiri's contributions to mystical literature clearly assert that he was well educated in all the Islamic sciences-rational and traditional. He had complete mastery over Qur'anic exegesis, Hadith, Islamic law and jurisprudence, history, philosophy and logic, dogmatic theology (*Ilmul Kalam*), and Islamic mysticism. He had also committed the holy Qur'an to his memory in his early life.

Once in the presence of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi in around 421 A.H. Hujwiri debated with an India philosopher and completely routed and silenced him by his superior illuminative knowledge and irrefutable arguments.

Hujwiri's spiritual guide was Abu l-Fadl Muhammad b. al-Hazan al-Khuttali Ghaznavi a disciple of Abu l-Hasan al-Husri, who was disciple of Abu Bakr al-Shibli, the disciple of Junaid of Baghdad who stood strongly for sobriety contrary to the concept of Tayfuris (of Bistami) who preached intoxication. Khuttali used to say: "The state of intoxication is child's play but the state of sobriety is the place of Nirvana (illumination) for men."

About his spiritual guide (Khuttali) Hujwiri relates in *Kash al-Mahjub*: "He is the teacher whom I follow in Sufism. He was well-versed in the science of Qur'anic exegesis (*Tafsir*) and Traditions (*Ahadith*). In Sufism he was the follower of

doctrine of Junaid of Baghdad. He was a pupil of Husri and a companion of Sirawani and a contemporary of Abu Amr Qazwini and Abu l-Hasan b. Saliba. He spent sixty years in sincere retirement from the world spending most part on Mount Lukam. He displayed many signs and proofs of saintship. But he did not wear conventionad garb (Khirqah) or adopt the external fashions of the Sufis. It was he who inspired me with indifference to dress. "There are people", he said, "who are not troubled about distinctive clothing: if God has given them an *aba* they wear it; if a *qaba* they likewise wear it. If he has left them naked, they remain so. I approved this rule and have observed it in my journey.) I never saw anyone who inspired me with great awe than he did. He said: "The world is but a single day in which we are fasting", i.e. we get nothing from it and are not occupied with it, because we have perceived its corruption and its "veils" and have turned our backs upon it.) Once I was pouring water on his hands while he was making ablution. A thought occurred to me: "Inasmuch as everything is predestined, why should free men make themselves the slave of the spiritual directors in the hope of having miracles vouchsafed to them?" The Shaikh divined my thought and said: "O my son, I know what you are thinking. Be assured that there is a cause of every decree of Providence. When God wishes to bestow a crown and a kingdom on a guardsman's son He gives him repentance and employs him in the service of one of His friends in order that this service may be the means of his obtaining the gift of miracles." Many such fine sayings he uttered to me every day. He died at Bait al-Jinn, a village situated at the head of a mountain pass between Baniyas and the river of Damascus. While he lay on his death-bed his head resting on my bosom, he said to me: "O my son I will tell you one article of faith which if you hold it

firmly, will deliver you from all troubles. Whatever good or evil God decrees, do not in any place or circumstances quarrel with His action or be aggrieved in your heart." He gave me no more injunctions, but yielded up his soul.

Besides Khuttali, Hujwiri accrued spiritual benefit from a number of spiritualists who were followers of Junaid's school of thought. He thus travelled extensively in quest of meeting spiritual guides in order to obtain divine knowledge. By the age of fifty he had visited many countries such as Mawar al-Nahr, Turkistan, Khurasan, Kirman, Khuzistan, Tabristan, Azerbaijan, Kohistan, Persia, Baghdad, Syria and Iraq.

Hujwiri narrates an experience in Iraq where he had contracted debts. He says: "Once in Iraq, I was restlessly occupied in seeking wealth and squandering it, and I had run largely into debt. Everyone who wanted anything turned towards me, and I was troubled and at a loss to know how I could fulfil their desire. An eminent person wrote to me as follows: "Beware lest you distract your mind from God by satisfying the wishes of those whose minds are engrossed in vanity. If you find anyone whose mind is nobler than your own, you may justly distract your mind in order to give peace to him. Otherwise do not distract yourself; since God is sufficient for His creatures. These words brought me instant relief."

As regards his teachers Hujwiri makes mention a few names like Abul Qasim Gurgani, Abul Qasim al-Qushayri, Abu Saeed Abul Khair, Khwaja Muzaffar Hamadan, Ahmad of Sarakhs. In the field of fiqh, Hujwiri was the follower of Imam Abu Hanifa for whom he had great admiration.

Hujwiri relates his dream in praise of Imam Abu Hanifa as follows: once when I was in Syria, I fell asleep at the

tomb of Bilal the Muezzin and dreamed that I was at Makkah, and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ came in through the gate of the Banu Shayba tenderly clasping an old man to his bosom in the same fashion as people are wont to carry children; and that I ran to him and kissed the back of his foot, and stood suprisingly who the old man might be; and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was miraculously aware of my secret thought and said to me: "This is thy Imam and the Imam of thy countrymen," meaning Abu Hanifa. In consequence of this dream I have great hopes for myself and also for the people of my country. It has convinced me, moreover that Imam Abu Hanifa was one of those who, having annihilated their natural qualities, continues to perform the ordinances of the sacred law, as appears from the fact that he was carried by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. If he had walked by himself, his attributes must have been subsistent, and such a one may either miss or hit the mark, but inasmuch as he was carried by the Holy Prophet ﷺ his attributes must have been non-existent while he was sustained by the living attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The Apostle cannot err, and it is equally impossible that one who is sustained by the Apostle should fall into error.

Hujwiri states that in Khurasan alone he met with about 300 spiriutal guides and Ulama. He himself was so much devoted to study books that on one occasion while at Lahore, he earnestly deplored to have left his books in Ghazni and passing his days in unpleasant society.

Hujwiri relates some of his experiences having being met with great spiritualists of the time whose names have been given above. About Abdullah Gurgani he says: "One day I was seated in the presence of the Shaikh recounting to him my experiences, and visions in order that he might test them for he had unrivalled skill and marvellous power of revealing the

inward experiences of novices. He listened kindly to what I said. The vanity and zeal of youth made me eager to relate those matters, and the thought occurred to me that perhaps the Shaikh, in his novitiate, did not enjoy such experiences, or he would not show so much humility towards me and be so anxious to inquire concerning my spiritual state. The Shaikh perceived what I was thinking. "My dear friend," he said, "you must know that my humility is not on account of you or your experiences, but is shown towards Him who brings experiences to pass. They are not peculiar to yourself, but common to all seekers of God." On hearing him say this, I was utterly surprised. He saw my confusion and said: "O my son, man has no further relation to his Path except that when, he is attached to it, he imagines that he has found it, and when he is deposed from it he clothes his imagination in words. Hence both his negation and his affirmation, both his non-existence and existence are imagination. Man never escapes from the orbit of imagination. It behoves him to stand like a slave at the door and put away from himself every relation (*nisbat*) except that of manhood and obedience." Afterwards I had much spiritual conversation with him, but if I were to enter upon the task of setting forth his extraordinary powers my purpose would be defeated."

One day Ali Hujwiri came into the presence of Abu Ahmad Muzaffar when the weather was extremely hot and he was wearing a traveller's dress and his hair were in disorder. He relates that the Shaikh said to him: "Tell me what do you wish at this moment?" I replied that I wished to hear some music (*sama*). He immediately sent for a singer and a number of musicians. Being young and enthusiastic and filled with the ardour of a novice, I became deeply agitated as the strains of the music fell on my ear. After a while, when my transports

subsided, he asked me how I liked it. I told him that I had enjoyed it very much. He answered: "A time will come when this music will be no more to you than the croaking of a raven. The influence of music only lasts so long as there is no contemplation, and as soon as contemplation is attained music has no power. Take care not to accustom yourself to this, lest it grow part of your nature and keep you back from higher attainments."

Hujwiri relates: "One day I was in the company of my Shaikh Khuttali who set out from Bait al-Jinn to Damascus. Heavy rain had begun to fall, and I was walking with difficulty in the mire. I noticed that the Shaikh's shoes and clothes were perfectly dry. On my pointing out to him, he said: "Yes, God had preserved me from mud ever since I put unquestioning trust in Him and guarded my interior from the desolation of cupidity." Once an experience occurred to me which I could not unravel. I set out to visit Shaikh Abul Qasim Gurgani at Tus. I found him alone in his chamber in the mosque, and he was expounding precisely the same problem to a pillar, so that I was answered without having asked the question. "O Shaikh", I cried, "to whom you are saying this?" He replied: "O son, God just now caused this pillar to speak and ask me this question."

In Farghana at a village called Ashlatak, there was an old man who was said to be *Awtad* of the earth. His name was Bab Umar. He had an old wife called Fatima. I went from Uzkand to see him. When I entered his presence, he said: "Why have you come here?" I replied: "In order that I might visit the Shaikh (you) in person and that he might look on me with kindness." He said: "I have been looking for you continually since such and such a day, and I wish to see you as long as you are not removed from my sight." I computed the

day and year: it was the very day on which my conversion (novitiate) began. The Shaikh said: To traverse distance is a child's play: henceforth pay visits by means of thought; it is not worth while to visit any person (Shaikhs), and there is no virtue in bodily presence." Then he bade Fatima bring something to eat. She brought a dish of fresh grapes although it was not the season for them, and some fresh ripe dates, which cannot possibly be procured in Farghana.

On another occasion, while I was sitting alone, as was my custom, beside the tomb of Shaikh Abu Sa'id at Mayhana, I saw a white pigeon fly under the cloth covering the sepulchre. I supposed that the bird had escaped from its owner, but when I looked under the cloth nothing was to be seen. This happened again next day and also on the third day. I was at a loss to understand the mystery until one night I dreamed of the saint and asked him about my experience. He answered: "That pigeon is my good conduct which comes every day to my tomb to feast with me."

Once I set out from Damascus with two *dervishes* to visit Ibn al-Mualla who was living in the country near Ramla. On the way we arranged that each of us should think of the matter concerning which we were in doubt, in order that the venerable director might tell us our secret thoughts and resolve our difficulties. I said to myself: "I will desire of him poems and intimate supplication (Dua) of Shaikh Hussain Mansur Hallaj." One of my companions said: "I will desire him to pray that my disease of the spleen may become better." The other said: "I will wish for sweetmeat of different colours." As soon as we arrived, Ibn al-Mualla commanded that a manuscript of the poems and supplication of Hallaj should be presented to me, and laid his hand on the belly of the invalid so that his illness was assuaged, and said to the other *dervish*:

Multi-coloured sweet-meat is eaten by soldiers; you are dressed as a saint, and the dress of the saint does not accord with the appetite of a soldier. Choose one or the other."

Hujwiri relates another interesting incident he experienced during his extensive travels from one place to another. He says: "I journeyed towards Khurasan. One night I arrived at a village in that country where there was a convent (Khanqah) inhabited by a number of aspirants to Sufism. I was wearing a dark-blue frock such as is prescribed by the Sunna; but I had with me nothing of the Sufi's regular equipment except a staff and a leathern water-bottle. I looked very contemptible in the eyes of these Sufis who did not know me. They regarded only my external habit and said to one another: "This fellow is not one of us." And so in truth, I was not one of them, but I had to pass the night in that place. They lodged me on a roof while they themselves went up to a roof above mine, and set before me dry bread which had turned green, while I was drawing into my nostrils the savour of the viands with which they regaled themselves. All the time they were addressing derisive remarks to me from the roof. When they finished the food, they began to pelt me with the skins of the melons which they had eaten, by way of showing how pleased they were with themselves and how lightly they thought of me. I said to my heart: "O Lord God, were it not that they are wearing the dress of Thy friends, I would not have borne this from them." And the more they scoffed at me, the more glad became my heart, so that the endurance of this burden was the means of delivering me from the difficulty. Forthwith I perceived why the Shaikhs have always given fools leave to associate with them and for what reason they submit to their annoyance. (i.e. the value of abasement in the spiritual elevation of a saint was made clear to Hujwiri, also it is divine

strategy to conceal the identity of Auliya Allah from the non-confidants)

Maulana Jami has mentioned another name of Lal Baig Lalli as a teacher of Hujwiri who also said that Hujwiri met large number of auliya Allah and adopted their companionship for sometime. He has also affirmed that Hujwiri had close friendship with Hazrat Khidr and gained exoteric and esoteric knowledge from him.

Having attained perfection in Islamic science and mysticism Hujwiri was ordered by his spiritual guide Khuttali Ghaznavi to go to Lahore. Different stories are current about his arrival at Lahore. One is that he came to Lahore as a standard-bearer (flag) in the army of Sultan Muhmud of Ghazni. According to Syed Abdul Latif's statement, Hujwiri followed the army of Masud, the son and successor of Sultan Mahmud to Lahore where he settled down in 431 A.H. (*History of Lahore*). This was the time when Sultan Mahmud was engaged in fighting the heathen forces of India. Having failed in three successive attempt in making substantial progress, he approached Shaikh Khuttali the spiritual guide of Data Ganj Bakhsh to pray for his success. He directed Hujwiri to accompany Sultan Mahmud to Lahore in his fourth expedition as the flag-bearer of Islam and stay there to preach Islam.

In *Fawaid al-Fawd*, it is related by Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya that Hazrat Shah Hussain Zanjani and Hazrat Shaikh Ali Hujwiri were both fellow-initiate and disciples of Shaikh Abu l-Fadl Khuttali. Shah Hussain came from Damascus to Lahore. One day his spiritual guide asked Hujwiri to proceed to Lahore upon which he submitted that his brother Hussain Zanjani was already there. Shaikh Khuttali repeated his instruction whereupon Hujwiri had no alternative

but to obey. When he entered Lahore from the eastern side, he found a bier (coffin) being carried out of the city. On inquiry he learnt that it was bier of Hazrat Shah Hussain Zanjani. He participated in the funeral rites. His arrival at Lahore dates 431 A.H (1039-1041). However there is no consensus about the migration of Hujwiri to Lahore during the life-time of his Shaikh, as in *Kashf al-Mahjub*, he states that Khuttali died with his head on his lap.

When Hujwiri arrived at Lahore, he stopped near the bank of river Ravi outside the old city alongwith his two fellow-initiates named Syed Abu Saeed and Syed Lutfi. He planted the flag on the ground where now stands erected the shrine and said: "By God's grace, Islam has come to stay here." He also built a small mosque at this spot. He lived there for 34 years from 431 A.H. till he died on the 9th of Muharram 465 A.H. during the reign of Sultan Ibrahim and was buried in his own hutment (lodge) according to his will. It was Sultan Ibrahim bin Sultan Masud Ghaznavi who got the holy shrine constructed with bricks and mortar to perpetuate his memory. Sultan Shamusuddin also wrote a copy of the holy Qur'an during his reign and presented to Data's shrine.

The tomb of Shaikh Hujwiri is situated outside Bhati-gate Lahore and has been object of veneration and a place of spiritual inspiration for the last one thousand years. All sorts of men, kings, presidents, foreign Muslim royal visitors, and beggars resort to it to seek spiritual and temporal blessings. Most of the Muslim invaders and wandering *dervishes*, and hidden creatures including men and jinn attend to pay homage to the great saint of Lahore. Recitation of the holy Qur'an and invoking blessings and salutation on Rasulullah ﷺ continues ceaselessly twenty four hours at the shrine.

More often than not auliya Allah are reluctant to perform miracles owing to various reasons, except when they are compelled to do so. Hujwiri had built a small mosque. Some people objected to the direction of the mosque saying that its arch does not conform to the conventional angle facing Kaaba. Shaikh Hujwiri invited those who raised objections and led the morning prayer and caused them to see Baitullah Sharif in front of them with their own eyes. The spiritual power of the Shaikh was affirmed to them.

It is related that the first person who embraced Islam at the hand of Hujwiri was Raj Raju who was the then governor of Punjab and was considered an eminent sorcerer having deep knowledge of occult sciences. He made a number of talismanic attacks on the Shaikh before the final combat which he waged openly with challenge.

It is related that one day Shaikh Hujwiri saw a woman taking milk in a pitcher. He asked the women to sell milk to him, but she refused on the ground that she was taking it to Raj Raju. She also said: "if I fail to take milk to him, my cattle start giving blood instead of milk." The Shaikh said: "you need not worry, production of milk by your cattle will increase many time more." Hearing this the woman sold milk to the Shaikh and when at evening they milked the cattle, they produced abundant milk. The news spread here and there with the result that more-milk men and women approached the Shaikh to sell the milk and gain his blessings. When the supply of milk to Raj Raju disturbed, he inquired into the matter. He came to visit the Shaikh and said: "You have stopped supply of milk to us, if you have some more arts show me." The Shaikh said: "I am not an charlatan or sorcerer to show you jugglery but a humble servant of God. If you have any art of this sort, you show me." Thus he showed many

talismans through his occult charismatic power, the last one being, he caused himself fly in the air. The Shaikh caused his wooden clogs to go into the air which gave good beating on his head and brought him down to the ground. He bowed his head before the Shaikh, repented, and embraced Islam instantly. On behalf of Sultan Mahmud, Syed Ali Hujwiri gave him the title of Shaikh Hindi. He also became sincere disciple of the Shaikh and remained in his service till his death. He was so fortunate that his descendants continued to act as Mujavirs (attendants) of his holy shrine till 1960. Urs (death anniversary) of Hazrat Data Gunj Baksh is celebrated on the 18th to 20th Safar every year.

Maulana Abdur Rehman Jami in his *Nafahatul Uns* and Dara Shukoh Qadri in his *Safinatul Auliya* have paid glowing tribute to Shaikh Ali Hujwiri and his accomplishment as spiritual preceptor from the time of Ghaznavi to the present day.

The following saints stayed at the shrine of Syed Ali Hujwiri for forty days consecutively with a view to gain spiritual benefit: Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Hazrat Khwaja Fariduddin Ganj Shakar, Hazrat Sher Muhammad Sharaquri. The spot where Khwaja Moinuddin underwent spiritual retreat for forty day, was later transformed into a small cell by Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar, the Moghal Emperor of India.

After having attained spiritual illumination by spending forty-day in retreat, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti uttered the following verses paying glowing tribute to the great saint of Lahore:

گنج بخش فیض عالم مظہر نور خدا
ناقصان را پیر کامل کمالاں را رہنما

(The bestower of treasure in the phenomenal world is the locus of divine manifestation. He is an accomplished spiritual guide for those who are unripe novices and for the elect and consummate spiritualists, he is worthy preceptor.)

— Syed Ali Hujwiri was a prolific writer who wrote many books mostly in the domain of Islamic mysticism, but except for his monumental work entitled *Kashf al-Mahjub* none other could survive test of the time. History records a few names of his works such as: (1) *Diwan* (2) *Minhajuddin* (3) *Kitab-ul-Bayan* (4) *Kashf ul-Asrar* (5) *Wajdan* (6) *Kitab-ul-Fana Wal Baqa* (7) *Bahr-ul Qulub* (8) *Al-Riyat al-Haqooqullah*.

Some of his works were plagiarized by the plagiarists of the times. For instance, he states in *Kashf al-Mahjub*: "A shadow pretender whose words carry no weight erased my name from the title page and gave out to the public that he was the author notwithstanding that connoisseurs laughed at his assertions." About the fate of his *Diwan*, he makes mention in these words: "A certain individual borrowed my poetical works of which there was no other copy with me, and retained the manuscripts in his possession and circulated it and struck out my name which stood at its head and caused all my labour to ruin."

The greatest miracle of all the marvellous achievements of Ali Hujwari is the compilation of *Kashf al-Mahjub*. It is the first ever written compendium on Islamic mysticism in Persian language which has been translated in a number of world languages and published across the globe. Divided into 34 chapters it covers almost all the aspects of Sufism such as: Theory and practice, History and development, comparative study of doctrines, life sketches of the radiant mystics, rules of discipline and anecdotes exposing and elucidating spiritual

dimensions of Islamic faith and practices. This book is said to have miraculous power of blessings. He who does not have any spiritual guide, this book indeed serves as substitute for him. It is also said that this book fires volley of arrows of divine love and intimacy; he who is blessed falls victim to it. You may call it Islamic orthodoxy which illumines the interior of the votaries.

Kashf al-Mahjub is replete with teachings and discourses of Syed Ali Hujwiri. A few of his words are recorded here:

1. Every good and evil that happens in the world is decreed by God.
2. The spiritual path (*suluk*) is hard to travel except for those who are created for this purpose.
3. The universe is an abode of divine mysteries which are deposited in created things.
4. The animal soul (sensual passions) is the greatest of all veils between God and man.
5. The divine knowledge (*marifat*) penetrates that is hidden and comprehends what is manifest.
6. Knowledge of God is the science of gnosis, knowledge from God is the science of the sacred law; and knowledge with God is the science of Sufi path.
7. Creaturehood (*Bashariat*) is the greatest veil that separate man from divinity.
8. The glory of povery is this, that the poor man's body is divinely preserved from base and sinful acts, and his heart from evil and contaminating thought.
9. Dervishhood (saintship) in all its meanings is a metaphorical poverty, and amidst all its subordinate asepts, there is transcendent principle.
10. Formerly the practice of Sufism was known and the

pretence unknown; nowadays the prestence is known and the practice is unknown.

11. This world is the abode of trouble, the pavilion of affliction, the den of sorrow, the house of parting and the cradle of tribulation.

12. In the mystic path, who says 'I have arrived' has gone astray.

13. The way of God is like the blazing sun.

14. Covetousness renders *dervish* ignominious in both the worlds.

15. The heart is the seat of the knowledge of God and is more venerable than Kaaba.

16. Ignorant Sufis are the vilest creatures of God, just as the wise Sufis are the noblest.

17. Do not trouble yourself with destiny, for what is destined from eternity will not be changed by your efforts.

18. When a man is satisfied with God's decrees, it is a sign that God is satisfied with him.

19. Seeking is the cause of finding, but finding is not the cause of seeking.

20. There can be no contemplation without mortification.

21. Unless divine protection is predestined to a man, he cannot abstain from anything by his own exertion.

22. God had caused the prophetic evidence to remain down to the present day and has made the saints the means whereby it is manifested in order that the signs of the Truth and proof of Muhammad's veracity may continue to be clearly seen. He has made the saints the governors of the universe; they have become entirely devoted to His business and have ceased to follow their sensual affections. Through the blessing of their advent the rain falls from heaven, and through the purity of their lives the plants spring up from the earth, and

through their spiritual influence the Muslim gain victories over the unbelievers. Among them there are four thousand auliya who are concealed and do not know one another and are not aware of the excellence of their state, but in all circumstances are hidden from themselves and from mankind.

23. A miracle is a token of saint's veracity and it cannot be vouchsafed to an imposter except as a sign that his pretensions are false.

24. Miracles and saintship are divine gifts, not things acquired by man.

25. Saintship is divine mystery which is revealed only through conduct.

26. A saint is known only to a saint.

27. God created the body and committed its life to the spirit, and he created the soul and committed its life to Himself.

28. Unification (*Tawhid*) is a mystery revealed by God to His servants, and it cannot be expressed in words.

29. Although hunger is an affliction to the body, it illumines the heart, purifies the soul, and leads the spirit to divine presence.

30. God is not finite that the imagination should be able to define Him or that the intellect could comprehend His nature.

31. There is no flame of lust that cannot be extinguished by strenuous efforts, because when vice proceeds from yourself, you possess the instrument that will remove it.

32. The principle and foundation of Sufism and knowledge of God (*marifat*) rests on saintship, the reality of which is unanimously affirmed by all the Mashaikh, though every one had expressed himself in different language.

33. You must know that saintship is a Divine mystery which is revealed only through conduct (*rawish*). A saint is

known only to a saint. If this matter could be made plain to all reasonable men it would be impossible to distinguish the friend from the foe or the spiritual adept from the careless worlding. Therefore God so willed that the pearl of His love (wilayat) should be set in the shell of popular contempt and be cast into the sea of affliction, in order that those who seek it may hazard their lives on account of its preciousness and dive to the bottom of this ocean of death, where they will either win their desire or bring their mortal state to an end.

Sources

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Shaikh Abu l-Hasan Ali Kharraqani

Shaikh Kharraqani was one of those eminent celebrated mystics of Islam who had at all the times direct communion with the Lord Most High. His original name is Ali ibn Jaffar Sulaiman Kharraqani. Maulana Jami says, he was unique in his spiritual state, Ghaus of his time and an asylum and place of refuge for the entire creation. Shaikh Abul l-Abbas used to predict in these words: "the Kingdom of our spiritual realm shall fall into the hand of Kharraqani after our departure to the Hereafter." This prediction very much came true. The spiritual lineage of Kharraqani reaches Hazrat Bayazid Bistami through four links i.e., Shaikh Abu al-Muzaffar Turk Tusi, who was spiritual successor of Shaikh Abu Yazid Mekki, who was successor of Shaikh Muhammad Maghribi, who was disciple of Bistami. Shaikh Kharraqani was esoterically trained by the spirituality of Bayazid Bistami despite his initiation at the hand of Shaikh Muzaffar Tusi.

Shaikh Kharraqani was a typical charismatic visionary figure who had no formal education, and no interest in theological domain. Being an illiterate person he did not know Arabic, but has cast his intense mystical experiences in rhymed Persian quatrains and parables. His life was mysterious and discourses reveal his eloquence containing secrets of divinity, heart laden with mystical thoughts, his first experience of initiatic journey and life in union with Him. He left profound influence on Abdullah Ansari who considered Kharraqani to be the greatest mystic of all times.

It was a routine practice with Bayazid Bistami to visit the mausoleum of martyres every year. Whenever he passed through Kharraqan he would inhale deeply in such a way as if

he was smelling the odour of something highly fragrant. When his disciples asked him the reason, he said: he was drawing the fragrance of a saint who would be born in that town. He will be known by the title Abu al-Hasan Ali and would earn livelihood for his family by cultivating land. His spiritual rank would be three-time higher than that of mine."

After some years when Kharqani was born and attained the age of 20, he would go daily to visit the tomb of Bayazid after the night prayer. At the tomb he would pray: "O my Lord, confer on me that spiritual rank (or a fraction of it) that you have accorded to Bayazid." After this prayer he would come back covering distance of about 1500 kilometers mysteriously daily to Kharagan to offer his dawn prayer. On return he would not turn his face from the tomb out of extreme reverence, rather stride reverse facing it for long distance. After he had pursued this practice for twelve years, he heard a voice from the tomb saying: "O Abul Hasan now your time has arrived; whatever God bestowed on me, was all due to your grace and blessing." Abul Hasan replied: Sir I was born 39 years after you, how could your spirituality owe to me." The voice again said: "I was held up by an obstacle in my initiatic journey. Whenever I passed through the territory of Kharagan, I would see a light from this place ascending towards heaven. And I prayed for thirty years to Almighty to rid me of the obstacle in my way. I was advised to produce this light in our court to intercede for your release which will be granted. Thus by the virtue of the effulgence of your spirit my prayer was granted and my difficulty resolved." When Kharagan returned home after this incident, he miraculously committed the holy Qur'an to his memory within 24 days.

Abul Qasim Qushayri is reported to have said: "When I came to Kharagan, my eloquence departed and I no longer

had power to talk on account of the extreme veneration with which that spiritual stalwart inspired me; and I thought that I had been deposed from my own sainthood."

Once Abul Hasan was digging the earth of his garden when a silver piece appeared there. He covered the place and dug at another spot thereupon gold came out. He covered this spot and dug at third place and discovered diamonds out of it. He covered this spot and dug at fourth place and jewellery appeared out of it. In rapturous mood he prayed to God: "O my Lord, even if I get the wealth of the whole world and of the next world, I shall not barter it for a vision of Thee."

One day Shaikh al-Mashaikh Hazrat Abu al-Umar Abu Abbas wrought a miracle by bringing out a live fish from a big glass of water. Abul Hasan put his hand in the burning oven, in front of him, and brought out a live fish. Once Abu Abbas asked Abul Hasan, let us jump into the fire together and see who survives." Abul Hasan replied: "It is a child-play; let us dive into the ocean of non-existence and see who emerges alive from divine existence." Hearing this Abu Abbas got silent.

Shaikh al-Mashaikh would often say: "I could not sleep for the fear of Abul Hasan for twenty years continually. I always found him four steps ahead of me from wherever I reached Bistam. I also tried ten times to reach tomb of Bistami before him, but could not succeed since God had given him such spiritual power that he arrived at Bistam covering distance of three miles in single moment."

Once a disciple of Abul Hasan sought his permission to go to the mountain Lebanon to meet Pole of the world (*qutb-e-Alam*). The Shaikh gave him permission. When the man reached the mountain, he saw a coffin there and the people waiting for someone to come and lead funeral prayer.

He asked the people whom they were waiting. In response they informed him: "We are waiting for the Pole to lead the prayer; also he comes here daily to lead five time obligatory prayers. We all say prayer behind him." Thus the people drew up rows and there started prayer led by an unknown Imam. After the prayer, the man saw the precentor (Imam) who was no other than his own spiritual master Abul Hasan. Seeing him the man fell unconscious. When after a short while he recovered, he saw the people had buried the dead body and the Imam left. He asked the people the name of Imam. He was told 'he is named Abul Hasan Kharraqani, the Pole of the entire world.

A disciple of Abul Hasan sought his permission to go to Iraq in order to study Ahadith (Traditions). The Shaikh asked 'Is there no one here to teach Ahadith.' He replied: "There is no competent Muhaddith here to teach." Abul Hasan said: "I shall teach Ahadith to you as I have learnt them from the holy Prophet ﷺ himself, though I am illiterate." But the disciple still remained in doubt. The same night when the disciple slept he saw the holy Prophet ﷺ in dream who told him that what Hasan had said was quite true. In the morning the disciple approached Hasan to learn Ahadith. During the lesson Hasan remarked: "this and this Hadith is not true, and is wrongly ascribed to the Prophet." The disciple asked: 'How do you come to know that such a Hadith was fake?' Abul Hasan answered: "All the times I have vision of the holy Prophet ﷺ. When a fake Hadith is confronted, I see displeasure on the forehead of the Prophet, and when I recite true Hadith I see sign of pleasure on his countenance and I come to know that it is correctly recorded."

Hazrat Abdullah Ansari states: "I was arrested on account of an allegation of crime committed by me and in chain and fetter I was being driven to Balkh. On the way I was

thinking what crime my foot had committed which caused my arrest and abasement. When I reached Balkh, I saw people standing on their roofs with stones in their hands ready for pelting me. At that time it was revealed to me that on such and such day I put my foot on the prayer-mat of Abul Hasan and this was the retribution for that crime. Thus I immediately repented of my irreverent act. No one dared stone me; the chain and fetters broke automatically and the governor issued order to set me free.

Once Abu Sa'id alongwith his many disciples arrived at the Khanqah of Abul Hasan as guests. After the dinner Abu Sa'id requested the host to arrange *Sama* for them. Although Abul Hasan had no taste for *Sama*, he arranged a party of musicians to perform. In it Abul Hasan was lost in ecstasy and in that condition struck his foot thrice on the ground with such a force that it shook the walls of Khanqah. The people felt as if the walls were dancing with him and the earth as well. Hazrat Abu Sa'id in extreme anxiety said: "Please stop, the house might not collapse, and heaven and earth are dancing in ecstasy." At that time Abul Hasan said: "Sama is justifiable for those who can see from heaven to earth, and from holy Throne to beneath the earth and all the veils lifted for them."

Once Hazrat Abu Sa'id and Abul Hasan decided to exchange their condition of expansion and contraction. Thus they embraced each other which caused change of their inner states. On reaching home Abu Sa'id passed the whole night in meditation seated on his knees and often shrieking in ecstasy. In the morning Abu Sa'id came to Abul Hasan and requested him to take back his spiritual spark that he had kindled in him through embrace as he had no such inner state to endure it. Abul Hasan again embraced him and brought him to his normal condition. Then Abul Hasan asked Abu Sa'id: You

don't come to the plain of Doomsday before me as you have no power to endure yelling and howling of that Day. And after having arrived there, when I shall stop the tumult, then you come to the plain."

One day Abul Hasan asked Abu Sa'id: "I make you my spiritual heir inasmuch as you were bestowed by God to me on my request to give me a companion with whom I could discuss my spiritual experience, and he be my confidant. Now I thank the Lord to have given me a person like you."

Hazrat Abu Sa'id never talked in the presence of Abul Hasan. When the people inquired of the reason, he said: It is rewarding to be silent in the presence of the Shaikh since streams are worthless in contrast to ocean." He said again 'that when I arrived at Kharagan, I was a stone, but now on account of his glance, I have turned into radiant pearl.'

Once Shaikh Abu Ali Sina reached Kharagan to see Abul Hasan. When he knocked his door and asked his wife the whereabouts of the Shaikh his wife said: "You call that heretic a Shaikh. He has gone to jungle to cut fire wood. Abu Ali Sina proceeded to jungle in search of Abul Hasan and saw that a lion was carrying on its back the bundle of firewood which the Shaikh had collected. Abu Ali bowed his head in veneration and during the course of conversation, he asked Abul Hasan 'why his wife was so disrespectful as to call him heretic?' Abul Hasan replied: "if I fail to endure the burden of that sheep, this lion would not submit to my order." Both passed the night in spiritual talk. In the morning as Abul Hasan was repairing the wall of his house, the tool for cutting bricks fell down from his hand. Before he could get down to fetch it or Abu Ali Sina could give it to him, it flew and reached his hands. Seeing this Abu Ali Sina's faith in Abul Hasan was reaffirmed and all his doubts about his spiritual greatness vanished.

One night the Shaikh informed the people that some robbers have looted the caravan in that jungle and injured many travellers. But surprisingly, someone killed the son of Shaikh the same night and placed head of the murdered at the door of his house about which the Shaikh was unaware. When the wife of Shaikh came to know, she refused to believe in the sainthood of her husband on the ground that the Shaikh was aware of the incident which took place in the jungle but did not know the murder of his son at the door. The Shaikh replied: "when the caravan was being looted all the veils were lifted from my sight, but when the boy was murdered I was completely veiled. That is why I could not know about it."

Once the Shaikh heard a hidden voice saying: "O Abul Hasan why don't you fear *Munkar* and *Nakir*?" The Shaikh answered: "Like a young man who is not afraid of bell ringing round the neck of a camel, I too don't fear the deads." The voice again said: "why, are you not afraid of the horrors of the Day of Resurrection?" The Shaikh answered: "O my Lord, when you resuscitate me and make me stand in the plain of Doomsday, I will take off garments of Abul Hasani and dive into the sea of Your Unicity (*wahdaniyya*) so that nothing could remain but the Uniqueness of the Lord. Thus when Abul Hasan were cease to exist then whom the angels would torment on that Day."

Once during prayer, Abul Hasan heard divine voice saying: "If we disclose to the world what we know about you which is hidden from the people in respect of your spiritual attainment, they will stone you to death for your heresy." Hearing this Abul Hasan said: "O my Lord, do you want that I proclaim to the world the ambit of you mercy and compassion by which you deal with the creatures? If I do so no one will

worship you." The divine voice was heard again: "Do not reveal to the world what you know about us nor shall we reveal to the world about you."

The Shaikh would often relate: "when I arrived near the holy Throne (*Arsh*) the angels giving reception to me said: "We are cherubim (angels who surround the Throne or even more exalted)." Another group said: "We are spiritual beings." But I answered: "We are the people of divinity. Hearing this the angels became dumbfounded and the spiritualists rejoiced to hear my answer."

Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi alongwith his slave Ayaz and a number of entourage, retinue and female slaves reached Khanqah of Shaikh Abul Hasan. In order to test his spiritual status Sultan wore garments of slave and made Ayaz wear royal robe. He also sent message to the Shaikh to accord them befitting reception. He also sent instructions to Shaikh to visit his tent since it is incumbent on the subjects to offer protocol to the king. He advised his servant that if the Shaikh refuses to obey, then recite this verse of the holy Qur'an to him:

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

(Obey Allah and obey Rasulallah and those who are in power). When the messenger conveyed this message to the Shaikh, he replied: Tell the Sultan that I am so much engrossed in obeisance to the Lord that I am ashamed to direct my attention to the Prophet, not to speak of obeying the Sultan." On receiving this reply Mahmud realized that Abul Hasan was really a great saint. Accompanied by Ayaz in royal dress, and the Sultan in a countier's dress, when entered the Khanqah offered salutations to the Shaikh. Abul Hasan responded salutation to Sultan Mahmud but took no notice of

Ayaz in royal dress, rather engaged in conversation with Mahmud. Mahmud asked, "Sir why you did not honour the Sultan (Ayaz)? Abul Hasan said: "I understand your ruse; it is all fake show." After this Abul Hasan asked Mahmud to direct all the servants and entourage to go out of his cell. When both were alone, Mahmud asked the Shaikh to tell him something about Bayazid Bistami. The Shaikh related the words of Bistami who said: Whoever came to see me, shall never be doomed on the Day of Resurrection." On this Mahmud asked: "Who was superior, the Prophet ﷺ or Bayazid Bistami, because Abu Jihl and Abu Lahab, despite having seen the Holy Prophet ﷺ could not escape condemnation?" The Shaikh said: "Mahmud be cautious in using such expressions, because except the four pious Caliphs and some other companions, no one else could know the reality of Prophet in true sense." Mahmud was satisfied by this answer. Then he requested the Shaikh to give him some advice. The Shaikh said: Shun the prohibitions of the Lord, obey his commands, say five times obligatory prayers in congregation, adopt generosity and be kind to your subjects." Then Mahmud requested the Shaikh to pray especially for him. The Shaikh prayed: "O Mahmud, would your end be praiseworthy." Then Mahmud offered him a satchel filled with gold. The Shaikh offered Mahmud a piece of dry bread to eat. But Mahmud could not swallow; it struck in his throat. Then the Shaikh remarked: "O Mahmud just as you could not swallow the dry bread, so I won't be able to swallow your gold as I have long renounced the wealth of the world." Thus he returned the satchel to Mahmud. After this Mahmud requested the Shaikh to give him something as token of blessing. On his request, the Shaikh gave him Khirqah (Sufi cloak). Then the Shaikh stood

up to say good bye to Mahmud. On this Mahmud asked: "when I entered your lodge, you did not accord welcome to me, but now when I am leaving, you are giving me honour by standing up." The Shaikh said: "when you entered my lodge you had a regal pride to be a king, but now you are going out as a humble *dervish*, the sign of which is vividly shining on your forehead. Hence I honoured your departure."

After some years Mahmud invaded Somnath in India and in the battlefield feared defeat. He repaired to his cottage, and holding Khirqah of Abul Hasan in his hand prayed to God: "O Lord by the blessing of this dress of Abul Hasan grant me victory in the battle today, and all that I will get here as booty, shall distribute it amongst the poor." The prayer was granted and Mahmud won the battle. The same night Mahmud saw Shaikh Abul Hasan in dream who said: "You made mistake to have prayed just for victory in the battle. If you had prayed to the Lord to turn all the people of the world Muslims by the virtue of my cloak, the whole world would have converted to Islam."

Some pilgrims before starting their journey, approached Abul Hasan and asked him what they should do if robbers attacked their caravan. "Remember me on that occasion", said the Shaikh. When on the way the caravan was attacked by robbers, all the pilgrims were looted save one man who remembered Abul Hasan. On his remembering, the Shaikh appeared before that person, who instantly alongwith his goods disappeared from the sight of the robbers; and hence he was totally saved from pillage. On return, the pilgrims went to Abul Hasan and asked him how it was that they prayed to God but were not saved whereas one person who remembered you was saved? Abul Hasan said: "You people pay lip-service

to the Lord, but I remember Him with full consciousness. So if and when you remember me, I remember God Most High on your behalf with humility and pioussness and hence your wishes are fulfilled, whilst if you simply move your lips while your heart is not present, your prayers remain ineffective."

A wonder and top ranking saint of Islam, Shaikh Abul Hasan's discourses are unique in the sense that they reveal secrets of divinity every moment. Some of the discourses were uttered in sobriety while other in state of spiritual intoxication. However whatever be the case, all this refers to his inspired knowledge, and certainly not his education acquired in seminary. A few highly selective talks are translated here:

1. There are two ways, one is wrong and other is right. The wrong way is man's way to God, and the right way is God's way to man. Whoever says he has attained to God had not attained; but when anyone says that he has been made to attain to God, knows that he has really attained." It is not a question of attaining or not attaining, and of salvation or non-salvation, but one of being caused to attain or not to attain, and of being given salvation or being not given salvation.

2. Abul Hasan instructs his disciples thus: "Lord has so much engaged him in Himself that he has ceased to exist in himself, and his body is no more than phantom, a mere thought. The Lord has bestowed that divine anguish on me a drop of which, if manifested in the world could cause a greater sea storm in the world than that of Noah's deluge. I shall help my disciples in the agony of death. When the angel of death arrives to seize their souls, I shall stretch my hand from my grave to sprinkle divine grace on their faces so that they might not be oblivious of remembrance of God on account of pang.

3. In my seclusion, God sometimes gives me such spiritual power, that if I desire to pull down heaven by one gesture of my hand, I can do and if I desire to travel down to the antipodes I can do in blinking of an eye.

4. Since the time I aged four months prior to my birth to the present day I remember all the things and after my death, I shall be foretelling the coming events to the people till the Day of Judgement.

5. I can tell portents (predictions) more clearly than men, jinn, angels, birds and beasts as God has made open everything before me; nothing is hidden. If on the ends of earth a wood-splinter is pricked in the finger of anyone, I become aware of it. And if I disclose the secrets of divinity that have been unveiled unto me, no body will believe. And if I disclose divine conferments on me, the hearts of entire creation shall burn like cotton.

6. I don't disclose arcane secrets of divinity even to the people of access on the ground that they are unaware of them and don't disclose my ownself out of fear that I might not indulge in self-conceit. And also God hasn't given me power that I might divulge them. I had been annihilated to ashes even in mother's womb and born totally self-abnegated and dissolved and became old in my youth.

7. Things are first sought in the world and then achieved afterwards, but God is met first and then He is sought.

8. I feel more happy to pass night under a dry bush on earth engaged in adoration of the Lord than sit comfortably under the coveted tree of paradise in the forgetfulness of the Lord. I am lost to myself a thousand times every hour of the day.

9. By the grace of God, I know every creature's past,

present and future at all times. Whosoever is not equipped with such intuitive knowledge cannot be a spiritual guide.

10. Whosoever wilfully displays miracles is cast out of divine presence.

11. I wish that I may be called upon on the Day of Judgement to reckon for the sins of all the creations, and I shall be willing to endure the torment of all the sinners thereby causing the creatures safe from the agony and horror of the Day and their blissful entry into the paradise.

12. Reward and recompense for every kind of prayer is fixed. But reward for auliya Allah is neither fixed nor revealed. But the Lord Most High will give them as much as He likes. Thus the servants should worship Him out of love, not for reward and recompense.

13. I am in communion with the Lord for the last fifty years of which my tongue and heart are unaware. And I have spent 73 years in such a way that none of my prostration was repugnant to Shariah (Islamic law), and never I obeyed the command of my lower-self (*nafs*) and lived in the world with one step from the holy Throne to antipodes (beneath earth) and the second from the antipodes to the holy Throne (*Arsh*)

14. The entire creation is like boat and I am its sailor and live all the times in it. The Lord by His grace has bestowed such reflection and meditation on me through which I contemplate (see) the entire creation. I spend day and night in *dhikrullah* owing to which my meditation changed into vision then it converted into candle, then changed into pleasure, then into divine awfulness. Then I arrived at such station where my meditation became spiritual aspiration (*himmat*). When I became attentive to kindness towards creation, I found myself benevolent to it more than anyone else. At that time I desired:

"would that I have met death, and I be required to reckon for the deeds of the entire creation on the Day of Judgement, and for those who were found liable to punishment, I would be replaced for them to endure torment of Hell.

15. Once I prayed to God to die me. A hidden voice was heard saying: "O Abul Hasan I shall keep you live so that My servants visit you, and those who remain deprived of that, shall establish relationship with you esoterically. And I created you of My sanctity; so impious won't be able to see you."

16. When I looked upon my existence I came to know of my non-existence. When I looked upon my non-existence, God conferred me faculty to contemplate His Being. When bewilderment befell me on this matter, I heard a voice saying: "Affirm My existence" I entreated: "O Lord who can affirm your existence except your ownself as you have said in the holy Qur'an: 'There is no god but God'. And when the Lord cleared this passage, I continued to tread it year by year in the light of it until I crossed the boundary of infidelity and arrived at His absolute Affirmation (*tawhid*). God has now given me such spiritual power that in one step I can reach at such spot where angels have no access."

17. When I got fed up with my selfhood (ego) I made myself fall into water but could not be drowned. Then I made myself fall into the fire, but it could not burn me. Then with the intention to gain total annihilation, I did not eat anything continuously for four months and ten days, but still I could not die and when I adopted lowliness, God conferred expansion on me and elevated me to such lofty ranks which are ineffable. During the journey, I witnessed deeds of the celestial and earthly creations. But their deeds were unimportant in my eyes because I had been informed of their volition completely. At

that time I heard a hidden voice to have said: "O Abul Hasan, as the deeds of entire creations are odious in your eyes, likewise you are too worthless in our eyes."

18. In order to gain chrismatic power one should starve once for three days, then once for 14 days, then once for 40 days and then once for four months, and then once for one year. When you have gained power to endure starvation for one year, you will have such spiritual vigour in your inmost being that a strange thing from the invisible world will appear before you carrying a snake-like thing in the mouth which will be put into your mouth after which it will finish your desire to eat. When after having undergone austerities and asceticism, my intestines went dry, at that time the snake appeared to me. I prayed to God to confer directly on me without the mediation of anyone. Afterwards a sweetness was created in my stomach which was more odorous than *musk* and more sweet than honey. Then I heard another voice which said: We shall create food from your empty stomach and water from your thirsty liver. If it were not the divine injunction, I would have taken food and water from a place, that the creature could not know of it."

19. O the seeker after Truth, never think you have gained illumination until for 70 years successively you experience that whilst standing in prayers in Khurasan you are offering prayer and bowing in Makkah, and all the treasures of the heaven and earth lie bare before your eyes and in spite of all this you remain humble and even in fear lest the Lord should not accept your worship.

20. Many believers circumambulate the Kaaba, yet others go round the heaven, but all praise is due to the hero who circumambulates round the Divine Unity in full consciousness.

21. Fire of His Majesty and Glory is contained in the words (revelations) that pass between the Prophets and the Lord that even if a fraction of the revelations sent to them were disclosed to the world, the whole creation would burn to ashes. But the Prophets can endure them because of their proximity to the Lord at the time of their utterance. If the Lord be not at the time by their side, every limb of theirs (Prophets) would be separated from the other.

22. A Sufi does not need the light of the sun or the moon because divine effulgence (*nur*) is always with him and it is brighter than all other luminous bodies of the heaven.

23. A man must carry on his devotional exercise for full forty years and then he can expect salutary results. Ten years spiritual practice is necessary to correct errors of the tongue, ten years for reducing the fatness of the body, ten years for correcting the vagaries of the heart, and the last ten years for correcting whatever other vagaries are left behind.

24. Had I no fear of the creatures that I have achieved the rank of Bayazid Bistami I would have explained to the people the words Bistami said to the Lord because to the farthest limit where the thought of Bistami reached, my first step took me there and the Lord bestowed on me far more elevated ranks than that of Bistami. This is because Bistami has said: 'I am neither resident nor wandering'; but I say "I abide in His Unicity and wander in His Uniqueness."

25. On the Day of Resurrection, all the Prophets will be sitting on the niche of light, and all the auliya Allah on the chairs of light so that the creatures may have look on them, but Abul Hasan will be sitting on the carpet of His Singularity (فردیت) to have continued sight of His Glorious Being.

26. I walked 40 steps only of which one was from the holy

Throne (*Arsh*) to the beneath of the world (تخت العرش) and cannot expose more about my other steps.

27. The Lord has created such servants whose hearts have been illuminated by the light of Tawhid in such a way that if all the things of the heaven and earth happen to pass through them shall burn to ashes.

28. Seek the company of such saint who is burning in the fire of divine love and drowned in His anguish. Continue recital of litanies (*awrad*) until devotional exercises (*awrad-o-wazaif*) themselves abandon you.

29. The vision of God is such that, after it comes to your lot, you see nothing besides Him all the 24 hours of the day.

30. If even once in your lifetime you have caused annoyance and pain to the Lord, it behoves you to seek His forgiveness throughout your life for although He might forgive you, yet you should always feel pain in your heart that you displeased the Lord and did not follow His precepts.

31. The worldlings get what is recorded in their destiny, but auliya Allah receive that which is not mentioned in the scroll of his destiny. (Destiny is in the hands of auliya Allah)

32. There are such servants of the Lord that when they lie in the bed with quilt covering them, they see the movement of the moon and stars in the heaven and when the angels ascend to heaven carrying good and bad deeds of the servants, they see them too, i.e., the Lord lifts all sorts of veils from their eyes.

33. In the highest state of spiritual elevation, the thirst for God is intensified in the devotee that if the waters of all the rivers of creation are given to him still they fail to slake his thirst, rather it grows more. Such a devotee is alienated from worldly relationship, and is never proud of the miracles that

are wrought unconsciously by him.

34. There are three final states in spirituality. In the first, you consider yourself just as God considers you. In the second state, you become His and He becomes yours. In the third state, you ceased to exist and He alone exists instead. (It is annihilation of annihilation)

35. The Lord has placed such burden on the hearts of His friends that if particle of it is revealed to the creature, they shall be annihilated. But since God looks after them Himself, they are enabled to bear this burden. If God withdraws His vigilance of them, their limbs go asunder, and then they won't be able to bear the load. And when the people of access invoke the Lord, beasts and birds get silent. Sometimes it happens that when the birds engross in *dhikrullah*, the entire universe trembles with fear. Auliya Allah face three occasions wherein angels are terrified. First, the angel of death (is terrified) at the time of seizing their souls; second the Magnanimous Scribes (کرلنا کاتبین) while recording the deeds; third at the time of inquisition of *Munkar* and *Nakir* in the grave.

36. The man of spiritual state is always unaware of his inner condition, for if he comes to know of his any state, that cannot be regarded as enlightened state, rather it can be said as his knowledge.

37. It is wrong notion of ulama that they claim to be the heirs of the Prophets. Auliya Allah are, in true sense heirs of the Prophets because they have the knowledge of invisible and also traits and attributes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ locate in them, for instance *Faqr*, generosity, trustworthiness, honesty etc. Besides this as Rasulullah ﷺ, all the times remained engrossed in adoration of the Lord, auliya Allah too remain busy in *dhikrullah* all the times.

38. God created 99 worlds for the Sufi saints (auliya)- the size of one world comprises regions from east to west and from the Throne to beneath the earth. No one has the courage to explain the dimensions of other 98 worlds. The people of God are like the shining day. The day requires light of Sun to be shining but auliya Allah are more resplendent than sun and moon in themselves. For them distance becomes immaterial.

39. God confers on the hearts of Sufis light of sight which is ever increasing by the time until that sight becomes complete light of His Essence.

40. To acquiesce with divine decrees is far more superior than His granted worship.

41. One cannot become Sufi by eating bread of barley, wearing garments of canvas, because if saintship were based on show off, then all those who wear woolen garments and eat barley bread would have become Sufis. Rather Sufi is that whose heart contains truth and deeds full of sincerity.

42. Ulama think the knowledge; worshippers think divine worship, and the ascetics think asceticism the cause of achieving the gnosis of God. But these things carry no weight in the attainment of nearness to Almighty. He is Sanctified and Independent and likes only sanctity.

43. God confers three stages on His servants. The servant may iterate Allah! Allah! contemplating Him, second, servant may invoke Allah! Allah in his rapturous state and third the servant may adore Allah! Allah by the tongue of the Lord. (Here divinity is fully realized)

44. When people asked Abul Hasan, that Junaid of Baghdad came into the world in sobriety and left in sobriety and Shibli came intoxicated and left the world in intoxication, Abul Hasan said: "They may be asked how they came and how

they left; they both won't be able to tell you anything about it since none of the two knows how he came and how he left. When Abul Hasan uttered these words, divine voice was heard saying: O Abul Hasan you said the right, since the one who is cognizant of the Lord, does not see in world except God. And when the people asked the meaning of this talk, he replied: "To lead the life with the desires unfulfilled is worship in true sense of the term."

45. I lived for 50 years with the Lord alone with no accommodation for the creatures, totally alienated from the people and engrossed in His worship from night prayer to dawn prayer and from the morning till evening prayer. For 40 years I made no arrangement for my food, but kept something for the guests only and by the virtue of whom I would take something with them. For forty years my lower-self desired one draught of cold drink but I kept it deprived of. I spent 70 years with the Lord in such a way that I never obeyed the call of lower-self. For forty years my lower-self desired to eat brinjal, but I didn't. One day on the insistence of my mother, I ate brinjal. Same day someone murdered my son and put his head at the door of my house.

46. Whatever spiritual elevation I gained was the direct result of my reclusive life in utter isolation and complete silence.

47. Since God has annihilated my selfhood (ego) Hell is no fear for me, nor paradise has any attraction for me. The state which God has conferred on me is such that if all the dwellers of Hell and Paradise together enter into it they will be lost.

48. The world flees from him who seeks it. But the Lord is so gracious that whoever seeks Him with faltering steps helps

him tread the Divine Path speedily.

49. Infinite and innumerable are the ways that leads to the Lord and as many as there are creatures in the entire universe. I practically entered every one of these paths, no path was found empty of the people. Then I prayed to God to show me the path which none dares to enter and where Thee and I be alone when I take to it. The Lord pointed out to me the path of affliction and distress. It means whosoever desires to set out on mystical journey should not fear woes, pain and suffering that befall the voyagers.

50. Remember that God is ever with you wherever you are, provided your ego does not intervene. So long as your existence is not converted into non-existence you will not taste His existence.

51. Sometime later in life, Abul Hasan appealed to the Lord to show him his reality. The Shaikh saw himself wrapped in the garment of canvas. When he noticed it carefully, he asked God: "Is it my true shape? God Most High replied: "Yes! This is your staunch reality." Then he inquired: "where do my love, worship, humility and piousness (*Khudu and Khush*) stand?" The divine voice said: "All these virtues were mine not yours. Your reality is the same as has been shown to you."

52. Abul Hasan said to the Lord: "I have been loving and waiting for Thee." Hearing this the Lord said: "But I have been loving you and waiting for your arrival to Me in the pre-eternity of eternities."

53. When the hour of death arrived, Abul Hasan said: "Bury me at a lower level of thirty yards deep so that my tomb must not be higher than that of Bayazid Bistami.

Abul Hasan died in 1034 at the age of eighty. Thus he

was buried according to his last will.

After the death some people saw him in dream and asked how he was treated by the Lord? He replied 'my scroll of deeds was given in my hand whereupon I requested the Lord: "why I am being implicated in scroll of deeds whereas you know me very well what type of actions and deeds had been committed by me. Therefore give my scroll of deeds to Magnanimous Scribes (angels who record deeds) and rid me from this predicament so that I ever remain in communion with Thee."

An orientalist Annemarie Schimmel remarks: "This illiterate peasant mystic of Islam, who could not pronounce Arabic correctly, was a typical *Owaysi*, initiated not by a living master but by the powerful spirit of Bayazid Bistami." Is it not enough to believe in the divinity of Islamic Mysticism and its well-spring being the Court of Rasoolullah ﷺ instead of searching its origin in alien philosophy and doctrine!

Sources

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Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazzali

A person of high-profile, one of the deepest thinkers, theologians, profoundest moralists, an apologist of orthodoxy and a warm advocate of Islamic mysticism, Imam Ghazzali's fame and sublimity has been acknowledged and affirmed by the Muslims and non-Muslims alike since his advent to this day. He has been regarded as the greatest Muslim after the Prophet and is well known by the name of **Hujjat al-Islam** (the proof of Islam). Throughout his life he worked for the glory of Islam and eradication of heresy and irreligiosity. He demonstrated that academic knowledge acquired in the temporal world under the guidance of different scholars and in institutions is insignificant compared to divinely inspired knowledge (*ilm laduni*).

His full name was Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Ghazzali. He was born at Tus (near present-day Meshed) in Khurasan in 1058 A.D. (450 A.H) Tus itself was a town of considerable size, well-built and thickly populated, famous for its waters and trees and the minerals deposits in the neighbouring mountains. This town is still famous as the birthplace of the most outstanding personalities such as Nizam al-Mulk, Firdawsi, author of *Shahnama*, and the celebrated Umar Khayyam who was contemporary of Ghazzali. His place *nisba* is derived from the village of Ghazzala near Tus. He was therefore Persian by birth though most of his works were written in Arabic. Political landscape reveals that some thirty years before Ghazzali's birth, the Seljuq Turks had begun to overrun the North and East of Persia in 429 A.H. Tughril Bey had taken Nishapur in 447 A.H. and established himself in Baghdad. He was ruling as

"King of the East and West" at the time of Ghazzali's birth, and five years later was succeeded by his nephew Alp Arslan.

Ghazzali was not the first scholar of repute in his family, there had been another Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, his uncle, a teacher and also a writer. Ghazzali's father, however like his grandfather was a spinner and wool-seller, a poor man but devout. After finishing his spinning work, it was his daily routine to frequent Khanqahs of *dervishes* and spent time in their company. After listening their sermons, he would pray to Almighty God to grant him a son who should be a preacher and a saint. His prayer was granted. God bestowed him two sons, Abu Hamid Muhammad Ghazzal, the greatest scholar of Islam, and Abu l-Futuh Ahmad surnamed Majduddin (the glory of Religion) who had such power of speech that his congregations were said to tremble with fear at his words. And he like his brother was also mystic. Besides this Imam Ghazzali had several sisters.

Their father died when his sons were still young. He thus entrusted them in the care of his Sufi friend to whom he stated that he had regretted his own lack of education and wished that his sons should have what he lacked. He bequeathed some money to be spent on the education of his children. Ghazzali's education at this stage probably consisted of the study of the holy Qur'an and Traditions, and from his Sufi guardian came stories of the saints and their spiritual states and committal to memory of poems filled with passionate love and lovers.

The Sufi friend undertook the education of the two boys until the small legacy of money was exhausted. Then, as he himself was a poor man, he advised the boys to take admission at some *madressah* (seminary) where as a students they would have rations assigned to them and this they did.

About this period, Ghazzali once said: "we sought education for the sake of something other than God, but He would not allow it to be for anything but Himself." At *madressah*, Ghazzali began to learn jurisprudence in Tus under Shaikh Ahmad Radhkani Tusi, and then travelled to Jurjan to study under Imam Abu Nasr Ismaili of whose lectures he made notes. Returning to Tus Ghazzali met with an adventure when this party was attacked by highway men and carried off all that the travellers had in their possessions. Ghazzali went after them though warned by the chief of the brigands that he was putting his life in danger. Ghazzali persisted and begged only to return his precious note-book which could be of no value for them. "what are your note-books?" asked the robber-chief, and Ghazzali explained that they contained notes of the lectures he had recently heard. The chief laughed and said: "How can you lay claim to this knowledge when we have taken it from you? Being separated from your knowledge, you remain without it." Then he ordered his men to return the note-books to their owner. But Ghazzali felt the words of the robber as Divine guidance to him, and he came back to Tus and started his study again. He committed to memory all the contents of his note-books within the span of three years, so that if it were robbed again, he could not be deprived of his learning.

Most probably during these three years Ghazzali studied Sufism (*Tasawwuf*) under the guidance of Yusuf Nassaj. Ghazzali said later of himself: "At the beginning of my career, I knew nothing of the spiritual 'states and stations' of the gnostics until I associated with my Shaikh Nassaj in Tus, but he did not cease to 'polish' me by means of self-discipline until I was favoured with revelations and I heard the voice of God in a dream saying to me, 'Abu Hamid'. My first thought

was that perhaps Satan might be addressing me, but God said: 'Not so, it is your Lord who is everywhere present with you. O Abu Hamid, abandon your formal rules (academic study) and seek the company of those whom I have appointed to be My friends (*auliya*) in the earth, who have renounced both heaven and earth, for love of Me.' Then I said: 'By Thy Glory hast Thou not made me to think rightly of Thee?' He answered: 'I have done so, and that which separate you from them is your pre-occupation with the love of this world: therefore depart from it of your own choice, before you are cast out of it with ignominy. For I have shed upon you the radiance of My glorious Presence, therefore, stretch forth your hand and obtain.' Then I woke up, happy and rejoicing, and came to my Shaykh Yusuf al-Nassaj and told him of my dream. He smiled, saying: 'O Abu Hamid, these are but the planks we use at the beginning, which now we have kicked away, but if you continue in my company, your inward vision shall be anointed with the antimony of the Divine assistance, until you behold the Throne of God and those who are round about it. When you have reached that stage, you will not be satisfied until you contemplate what the eye cannot see. So will you be purified from the defilement of your human nature and rise above the limitations of your intellect and you will hear the Voice of God Most High, saying unto you, as unto Moses, 'Verily I am God, the Lord of all created things.'"

Afterwards in 470 A.H. (1077-8) Ghazzali left for Nishapur and alongwith other students, joined the classes of Abul al-Maali al-Juwayni known as Imam al-Haramayn under whom he studied theology, philosophy, logic, dialectic and natural science and something more of Sufism. Here he would engage in debates with other students and always remained successful. Imam Haramayn allowed much freedom to his

students which was indeed a stimulus to the genius of his brilliant pupils. Even at this stage of student life, Ghazzali was seen lecturing his class-mates and he also started writing. Describing Ghazzali with two other of his pupils, Imam Haramayn said: "Ghazzali is a sea to drown it, Kiya is a raging lion and Khawafi is a burning fire." Although Imam was proud of being teacher of a distinguished student, it is said that he was really jealous of him, because Ghazzali excelled his master as he had earned reputation as master of every subject through his writings. It is related that when Ghazzali had written his *Kitab al-Mankhul*, he showed to the Imam Haramayn who observed: "You have buried me while I am still alive. Why did you not have patience to wait until I was dead? For your book has thrust my writings out of sight."

It was during this period that Ghazzali became impatient of dogmatic teaching and abandoned the policy of dependence upon authority (*taqlid*). He rose up to free his mind from the rigid adherence to the past heritage and to learn through the aroused attention of the rational soul the goal of happiness and joy. So he set out to secure a knowledge which left no room for doubt and involved no possibility of error or conjecture. He realized that none of the knowledge except that which was based on first-hand experience could satisfy him. From this time onwards he became a seeker after Absolute Truth (God) and was content with no lower standard.

During this period Ghazzali was also studying under the care of a Sufi Ali Farmadhi Tusi. He learnt more of Sufi way (Islamic mysticism). He followed his instructions in regard to observing the daily duties of good works and the work of supererogation which being engaged in frequent devotional exercise. Moreover he took to asceticism and self-mortification, but did not find that these brought him to

his goal. It was probably to this period that he said: "when I desired to set forth upon the Sufi path, and to drink of their wine, I considered my soul and saw that it was enveiled. So I retired into solitude and occupied myself with self-discipline and annihilation for forty days, and I was given knowledge which I lacked before, purer and finer than that I had yet known, but it contained legalistic elements. Then I betook retreat for another forty days and given knowledge still finer and purer than that I possessed at first, and I rejoiced in it. But it had speculative element in it. So I returned to solitude a third time for forty days again and received other knowledge still finer and purer but when I examined it, I found it contained an admixture of knowledge acquired by human means. So I had failed to attained *ilm laduni* (inspired or intuitive knowledge). Ghazzali could have a direct personal experience of God i.e., Tawhid not realized. He was now inclined to royal camp of Alp Arslan who had succeeded Malik Shah Seljuq in 467 A.H. (1072) where his vizier Nizam al Mulk Tusi in 1091 appointed him as professor of Theology at Nizamiyya college Baghdad which he had founded 24 years back. Ghazzali was now at the mature age of thirty-four. He received a warm welcome in Baghdad. He astonished the Baghdadis by the excellence of his lectures, his fluent delivery, the extent of his learning, the subtlety of his allusion, and the lucidity of his explanations. His lectures attracted large classes, which included the chief Ulama of the time. His wealth and position became such that his household and the number of his followers exceeded those of the great nobles, Amirs and even the court of the caliph himself. He became the Imam of Iraq as he had been Imam of Khurasan. In addition to lecturing, Ghazzali was called upon to give legal decisions based on Shariah (canonical law of Islam). He was also

engaged in writing throughout this period to which his earlier works belonged. Simultaneously he busied himself with the study of philosophy. He also received a commission from the Caliph to refute the doctrine of the Ismailians.

But despite his august assignment and acclaim, the fire of his burning intellect was not quenched. He thus applied himself resolutely to search for truth, by an exhaustive study of the writings of the scholastic theologians, the philosophers, and finally the Sufis, believing that the truth must have been attained by one of these groups of thinkers. His investigations led him to reject the first two and concentrated his attention to Sufism. He tells us that he studied philosophy to refute the philosophers.

Meanwhile his classes continued to attract increasing numbers and at this time included 300 of the most distinguished students of the time and one hundred of the sons of the princely families. At the peak of his reputation, with a brilliant future before him, and all that the world could offer at his feet, he suffered a complete physical breakdown incapable of lecturing. When he recovered, he announced that he was going on pilgrimage to Makkah, appointed his brother Ahmad to take his place at the Nizamiyya college, gave away all his wealth, except the small amount of money necessary to maintain his family and in 488 A.H (1096) he left Baghdad with the intention never to return there.

Some inner drive was now controlling Ghazzali. He had discovered through his theoretical study that sufism was the way to spiritual progress. In his spiritual autobiography written after his 'conversion' called *al-munqidh min ad-dalal* (The Deliverance from Error) he discloses his inner transformation in these words: "It was not the result of logical proofs but was effected by means of a light which God threw

into my heart; and that light is the key to most kinds of knowledge." Again: "I turned my attention to the path of Sufis. I knew that it could not be traversed to the end without both doctrine and practice, and that the gist of their doctrine lies in overcoming sensual passion and getting rid of evil dispositions and vile qualities so that the heart may be purified of all but God; and the means of cleansing it is *dhikrullah*. Now the doctrine was easier to me than the practice, so I began to learn their doctrine from the books and sayings of Mashaikh, until I came to know of their path and learned it could be reached by immediate experience, ecstasy and inward transformation. How great is the difference between knowing the definition, causes, and conditions of drunkenness and actually being drunk: The drunken man knows nothing about the definition and theory of drunkenness, but he is drunk; while the sober man, knowing the definition and the principles of drunkenness, is not drunk at all. I became convinced that the Sufis are men of feeling, not men of words, and that I had now acquired all the knowledge of Sufism that could possibly be attained by means of study; for the rest, there was no way of coming to it except by leading the mystical life."

Thus in this state of condition he left Baghdad, went to Syria, and remained there for nearly two years, occupying himself, as he tells us "simply in retreat and solitude, self-discipline, austerities and ascetic practices for cleansing of heart and sublimation of soul." Ghazzali went to Damascus, where he reached in 489 A.H (1096). He entered the city in the garb of a poor man and sat at the threshold of Khanqah Samisatiyya until an unknown *dervish* gave him permission to enter and he then busied himself in sweeping the court of ablutions attached to hospice. One day Ghazzali was sitting in the court of the Umayyads mosque, where a number of muftis

were sitting together. Meanwhile a villager came to them seeking a legal decision (*fatwa*), but they gave him no reply. Ghazzali saw the rustic, called to him and gave reply. The muftis were observing all this. They called the villager and asked what the stranger had said to him. When he explained, they all came to Ghazzali and recognising him, surrounded him, requesting him to establish a discussion circle for them. Ghazzali gave them hope to meet next day, but instead he left the city that night. However in the mosque of Umayyads, he spent most of time in recollection and meditation in the minaret of the mosque which is now called the Minaret of Ghazzali. There he shut himself in, so that he might be free from interruption. This place of retreat is said to have been the cell of Shaikh Nasr al-Maqdisi, and it is related that Ghazzali originally set out to join him. But on the day he reached Damascus the Shaikh had died. When Ghazzali came upon Shaikh Nasr' seat for retreat, a group of students arrived there and entered into conversation with him. Awhile Ghazzali asked them what Shaikh Nasr was doing? They replied: "He has died and we have just returned from his funeral. When he was about to die, we asked him who would be his successor? He replied: "when my funeral is over, return to my cell and you will find someone there, a stranger. You give him my greetings, for he would be my successor."

Ghazzali now lived a life of an ascetic, wearing coarse raiments and practising the greatest abstinence in the matter of food and drink and engaged most of his time in devotional exercise. He found leisure for writing too, and while here he wrote the greatest of all his works the *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (Revival of the Religious Sciences). One day Ghazzali happened to enter a college in Damascus and found a lecturer there who was quoting his teaching, and using the words

"al-Ghazzali said..." Fearing lest he should be recognized, he left Damascus and began to wander about the country. He himself states that he went to Jerusalem where he gave himself up to the contemplative life, spending much of his time in prayer in the great Mosque of Umar. As time went on, he seems to have gathered round him a circle of disciples. This together with his pilgrimage to Makkah and visit to Madinah, the Radiant lasted nearly ten years. Afterwards he went to Egypt and stayed some time in Alexandria. Here he seems to have resumed his scholarly activities and took up teaching again. After this he again adopted wandering life visiting various shrines and sanctuaries (*dargah*) living all the time the life of an ascetic, eating dry bread, wearing rags, carrying a bag for his little provisions and a staff in his hand, until, as his biographer says, he became the "Pivot of Existence" (*qutb al-wujud*). During this period someone followed him, as he was wandering in the open country, wearing a patched garment (گدڑی) and carrying a water-jar and staff. That person had previously seen him in his lecture room, lecturing to an audience of three hundred students and a hundred of the notables of Baghdad and he said to Ghazzali: "O Imam, is not the work of teaching better than this?" Ghazzali looked at him with indifference and replied: "When the full moon of happiness has arisen in the firmament of desire, then the sun of reason approaches the setting-place of attainment." It was probably during this period of wandering that he paid a visit to Hamadan and he had as his companion while wandering Abu Tahir Shabbak. Ghazzali speaks of his inward transformation:

*"Once I had a slave: Lust was my master,
Lust then became my servant, I was free:
Leaving the haunts of men, I sought Thy Presence,
Lonely, I found in Thee my company."*

Ghazzali now returned to his own country and for a time engaged in teaching at Baghdad and lectured on *Ihya* though evidently still living a life of semi-retirement. He established himself also as a preacher and spoke with the tongue of state. He no longer based his teaching on the authority of others. He was now engaged in calling men to repentance, renunciation, urging them to prepare for the journey to the Hereafter, seeking guidance for themselves from those who were endowed with gnosis (*marifat*) and inner illumination.

Once again Ghazzali gave up his work at Baghdad and retired to Tus living in reclusive lifestyle, engrossed in reflection and his spiritual state aiming at guidance and spiritual help for each one who approached him. Then after a time he began to write again and produced a number of books. This state of affairs continued until Fakhr al-Mulk Jamal Shuhada became vizier and established his court and retinue in Khurasan. He visited and listened Ghazzali's teaching, and then besought him not to let his rare qualities and gifts go waste without profit to others giving no light from his radiance. The vizier used every importunity and pressed upon Ghazzali until he agreed to go, and was carried off to Nishapur where he was appointed as professor at the Maymuna Nizamiyya college being unable to escape from government's pressure. This was in 499 A.H. (1106-7). Ghazzali himself considered that this was the will of God who had aroused the desire of Fakhr al-Mulk, in order that Ghazzali should combat the decay of faith among Muslims. He felt also that the desire for peace and protection from worldly persecution were not sufficient motives to justify him in persisting in a life of solitude. He also consulted spiritualists and men of vision and they were unanimous in advising him to quit his life of

seclusion and abandon retreat. Also a number of these pious men had dreams which affirmed their decision, and indicated that God had pre-determined this event for the beginning of the century 500 Hijra. Ghazzali writes: "God has promised a revival of religion at the beginning of every century." So he hoped that this was his God-given task and he went to Nishapur with this purpose in view. "The impulse was not from myself, but He who made me act. I asked God, therefore, first to make me regenerate and then to give regeneration to others through me: to guide me unto the Truth and then to enable me to guide others thereto."

His intention then was to give all the guidance he could to others, by making known the results of his long search and to benefit those who sought him but without any return to what he had already abandoned, or allowing himself to be fettered by the desire for reputation. Now he was often attacked and opposed and suffered calumny, slander and disparagement, but he remained unmoved by it and was not concerned to reply to those who cast slur upon him. He had entirely changed: Nothing of the former conceit, contemptuous attitude towards other men whom he despised in his pride, and arrogance was left in him.

An era of political turmoil, anarchy and terrorism had begun. The main source of danger for the Seljuk empire was the advent of Ismaili movement which had gained strong footing in the various parts of the Middle East. Egypt was still ruled by the Fatimid caliphs. During Ghazzali's lifetime in 1094, the Persian Ismaili leader Hasan bin Sabbah supported Fatimid caliph during the struggle for succession with the result that an Ismaili spiritual estate was built near Kazvin. From there the Ismailis threatened orthodox Muslims in which Nizamulmulk Tusi was murdered by one of Hasan bin Sabbah's disciples

known as the Assassins. Ghazzali wrote several treatises against these *batiniyya*, "the people of esoteric meaning", and in his autobiography tried once more to explain the dangers inherent in the Ismaili system. He had to suffer much opposition and calumny (as stated earlier) and Fakhr al-Mulk who might have protected him against such attack was assassinated in 500 A.H. It was probably at this time Ghazzali thought to seek refuge in the West with Yusuf bin Tashfin, the Sultan of Morocco, but hearing of Yusuf's death which occurred in this year, he abandoned the idea to go there.

Ghazzali was intensely against having his orthodoxy impugned as appears from a striking incident narrated by the Arabic historian named Abul Feda. He tells that Ghazzali's most important work *Ihya* created great sensation when it reached Cordova. Islamic theologians of Spain were rigidly orthodox. They accused the work of being tainted by heresy. They represented to the Caliph Ali bin Yusuf that not only this *Ihya* but all Ghazzali's other works, which have been circulated in Andalusia should be collected and burnt which was accordingly done. Not long after a young Berber from North Africa named Ibn Tumart wandered to Baghdad and attended Ghazzali's lectures. Ghazzali noticing the foreigner, accosted him, and inquired regarding religious affairs in the West, and how his works had been received there. To his horror he learned that they had been condemned as heretical and committed to the flames of fire by the order of the Almoravide Caliph Ali. Upon this Ghazzali, shaken with emotion raised his hands and imprecated in these words: "O God, destroy his kingdom as he has destroyed my books, and take all power from him." Ibn Tumart in sympathy with his teacher said: "O Imam, pray that your wish may be accomplished by my means." And so it happened. Ibn Tumart returned to his North

Africa, proclaimed himself a Mahdi, gained a large following among the Berbers, and overthrew Ali's regime and the dynasty of the Almoravides.

It was probably after 500 A.H. having abandoned the idea to go to Morocco, Ghazzali retired once more to his home at Tus and established a college for the students of theology also close by it a hospice (Khanqah) for Sufis. During this time at Tus, Ghazzali had divided his time to serve the need of those around him. He devoted himself to reading the Qur'an, studying the Ahadith afresh, teaching pupils and to pray so that he should not waste a single moment of his own time or the time of those with content now "to wait with Love for Death's unhasting feet." (*Excerpted and summarised from Al-Ghazzali by Margart Smith*)

Ghazzali gained experience of travelling Sufi Path and thus in his autobiography he writes: He considers the Sufi way of life to be followed only by means of "knowledge and action." He had acquired the theory by his study of the Sufis writings and he knew that he must carry it into practice if he was to attain to their spiritual experience and enlightenment.

Now Divine Path is treaded, he says: "The first step on the way to God is the cleansing of the soul from the qualities which hindered its search for God. The entrance to Divine path requires absolute purification of the heart from all save God, the beginning of which is the complete absorption of the heart in the recollection of God, and the end of it is to pass way altogether into God, the end of the path is but the beginning of the unitive life."

For the purification of the heart, Ghazzali applied himself to the asceticism which would purify his heart from vice, and enable it to acquire virtue as a fixed habit of life. Thus asceticism for Ghazzali began with control of the natural

appetities, for self-indulgence he regarded as one of the gates to Hell while self-condemnation and contrition were a gate into Paradise, the foundation of which was fasting .

To Ghazzali Self-indulgence and the love of this world were the cause of man's destruction in the next and therefore, he set himself against both and cut himself loose from worldly attachments. Four things he considered would guard against "bandits" on the road to God. These four were solitude, silence, fasting and vigils. Fasting made the heart pure and receptive of the Divine revelation. Vigils have the same effect by which means the heart becomes like a bright and shining star, or a polished mirror wherein is manifested the Divine Beauty and so it may contemplate within itself the mysteries of the world to come. Too much sleep is destructive to the heart. The ascetic should indulge only in the strictly limited amount necessary for health. Ghazzali compares wealth with snake, producing both venom and antidote for it, being calamitous in respect of its venom and profitable in regard to the remedy for it.

Asceticism, he felt was of three degrees, the aim of the lowest degree being salvation from the fires of Hell and of the second degree, the desire for the Divine reward and the favour of God and the fulfilment of His promises. But the highest degree is that in which the ascetic desires nothing but God and communion with Him, and his heart is not concerned with escape from the pains of Hell nor with attainment of the bliss of Paradise, but his concern is only with God Most High and this is the asceticism of the lovers of God, the gnostics; for only that one who knows Him really loves Him.

In prayer God is face to face with you and you are in intimate conversation with Him and you must know in whose presence you are standing, for He is the King Supreme.

Prayer with the lips is not the real prayer. He means to say confidential 'communion' with God cannot exist along with any unmindfulness of His Presence. The essence of prayer is humility, intention, presence of the heart and single-minded devotion. He always emphasized the need for the heart to be present.

The soul is itself Divine in its origin; it knows God, because it is godlike. The spirit of man is "of the *amr* of God" and *amr* has a deeper meaning than that of "command", it is rather the Divine Spirit.

The human soul, since it is Divine in its origin, the effect of the inbreathing of the Eternal Spirit, existed before the body to which it is temporarily attached while in this world, but with which it has no real affinity, the body being its vehicle and instrument. The spirit itself is like a radiant sun and its light is dimmed only while it inhabits this temporal body, in which it is a stranger, but that sun will rise again when this body which obscures its light, passes away. He quotes the words of the Prophet "Bodies are the cage of birds or the stable of beast of burden", but the soul when released from that cage, flies upwards to its own abode.

This phenomenal world is like a sleep in relation to the Divine world! as the Prophet said: "Men are asleep and when they die, they awake." Ghazzali believes in the immortality of the soul. He says if the soul is not immortal then all of which we have been told and which we have experienced is vain. *(Excerpted from al-Ghazzali, the Mystic, by Margaret Smith)*

The soul, belonging to the spiritual world, bearing the image of the Divine, a mirror able to reflect Reality, was pure in its origin-"every child is born with an innate sense of religion," but through its association with a material body in this lower world, the soul has fallen from its high estate. The

mirror has become tarnished and the pristine purity of the soul defiled.

In Considering the causes by which the human soul has become alienated from its Divine Source, Ghazzali recurses to the tradition: "God hath Seventy Thousand Veils of Light and Darkness: Were He to withdraw them, then would the glory of His countenance consume every one who looked upon Him." Ghazzali considers that these veils vary according to the different natures of those veiled from the One Reality. The first class of these are veiled by Pure Darkness. They are atheists who believe neither in God nor His Judgment and so on. The second class are those veiled by light mingled with darkness. They are of three types. The first are those veiled by the darkness of the senses. The lowest rank of these being the idolaters and dualists. Other think their god must be something of great beauty: beautiful human being, or tree, or horse-they worship it as their god. Other believe in Fire, Stars, Sun or other luminous bodies. The third class are veiled by pure light. They know that Divine attributes are beyond all human attributes but yet they do not attain to the highest conception of the Divine Unity which is that of the unveiled, who attain to a Being who transcends all that is comprehensible by sight or insight, for they find Him to be indescribable and inconceivable.

The purpose of the mystic, then is to set the soul free from its fetters, to purify the heart, to polish the mirror, and so remove the veils between the soul and God, so that it may be able to return to its true home, to know God as He is and once more be united with its Source. *(Excerpted and summarised from Al-Ghazzali, by Margaret Smith, pp 147-149)*

When the novice (salik) has crossed the stage of the beginner after having attained to outer and inner defilements,

he is now near the gateway of the king's abode i.e. Divine pavilion. Now he has to cross the material, visible world (*alam al-mulk wal-shahada*), manifest to the senses, and the third, the World Invisible (*alam al-malakut*), which is manifest to the spirit. The second world, Ghazzali calls it *jabarut*, it is the mid-way on his journey.

In Ghazzali, the highest contemplating stage is that of Love which includes longing, Fellowship, as he is in intimate communion with God whom he loves, and is Satisfaction. This stage includes the perfection of all the stations and states which the traveller has experienced on the way, but it (love) transcends them all. He who has reached the end of journey, Ghazzali states has attained to sobriety and permanence, and is listening at all times to the Divine Voice. It is all one to him whether he suffers hardship or is at ease, whether he eats or is hungry whether he sleeps or wakes. The desires of the self (ego) have vanished, that which pertains to the spirit remains. His outward self is with the creatures, his inward self is with the Creative Truth. (*Excerpted from Mystics and Saints of Islam by Claud Field, pp 114-118*)

Ghazzali holds that people are like trees and plants, some of which give shade but bear no fruit. Some trees bear fruit but give no shade, and some plants give neither fruit nor shade such as the mimosa (Egyptian thorn) 'which tears the clothes and produces neither food nor drink. Ghazzali was not only a lover of his fellow-men but of the humbler creation. He had great fondness for animals, taking great interest in them and their habits. He commends the fidelity of the watch-dog which is ready to sacrifice itself and its sleep for the sake of its master and is useful for hunting. He was also fond of cats. He was indignant over cruel treatment of animals especially those who do service to men. He was equally interested in birds and

their ways. He may himself have kept pigeons, as it was a common custom of the day to keep doves of many colours about the palaces of the great. He praises cocks for its praiseworthy energy in repeating the Prophet's words: "There are three sounds dear to God: the voice of the cock (when it crows at dawn), and the voice of man who recites the Qur'an, and the voice of those who seek forgiveness of the Lord at the day-break." He had also interest in and affection for plants, flowers and trees.

Ghazzali's activities as an author during his short span of life were gigantic. According to literary historians, he was the author of 99 different works. Some of his mystical convictions and teaching are summed up as follows:-

About Sufi saint he writes, that "he is always mindful of death, because he has been promised union with his Beloved and the lover never forgets such a promise. So he desires the coming of death, in order that he may be delivered from this sinful world and be transported into the Presence of Him Who made the worlds.

The rule of the Sufi is that poverty (*faqr*) should be his adornment and patience his ornament and satisfaction (*rida*) his steed and Trust his dignity.

To be a Sufi means to abide continuously in God and to live at peace with men. The right attitude towards fellow-men is that you should not lay burdens upon them but rather burden yourself according to their desires. Treat other as you would like to be treated, for the faith of God's servant is not made perfect unless he desires for other what he desires for himself.

About the gnostics (Arifeen) Ghazzali says that they differ in the degree of gnosis to which they attain because Gnosis is a "shoreless sea", the depths of which cannot be

fathomed, since none can comprehend the greatness of the Divine Majesty, and those who plunge into this sea do so in accordance with their strength and the precedence which God granted unto them before time. Ghazzali quotes the words of Junaid of Baghdad in regard to the gnostics: "their spirits rejoice in communion with the Unseen, abiding in the presence of the All-Glorious, the Pre-eminent, in the cloud of Glory which envelopes Him, in the shadow of His Holiness. They have attained to a high station and they pass on thence to yet greater perfection, to an absolute glory which is metaphysical, and they walk, clad in the mantle of unification."

God alone should be the object of love and worship for the mystics. For him the essential qualities of a Sufi are: "His heart is free from defilement and from distraction, because of his love for his Lord, and he looks towards Him and his inmost self, committing all things to Him and having fellowship with Him. He does not rely upon anything, nor does he have fellowship with any save Him whom he worships, preferring God to all else. Ghazzali regards God as immanent in his Sufi system in spite of his faith in a Transcendent God.

It cannot be denied that where Beauty is perceived, it is natural to love it and if it is certain that God is Beauty, He must be loved by that one to whom His Beauty and His Majesty are revealed.

Intellectual knowledge relates to rational inquiry about truth. Divine knowledge (gnosis) is personally experienced by the Sufis in their mystical ecstasy. The gnosis goes far beyond the knowledge of the learned, for it enters the hearts of the Prophets and the saints direct from the Creative Truth Himself, nor can it be comprehended except by those who

have experience of it. Gnosis is revealed by God Himself in the heart of the chosen few so that He can unite them with Him. i.e., they are illumined by the radiance of their knowledge of Him.

Gnostic realises whatever occurs to him is done by God alone. He is not conscious of 'otherness' in any form. This takes the seeker, to the mystic stage of the *fana*, i.e., absorption of the soul in God. Perfect absorption means that he is unconscious not only of himself, but of his absorption. He says: when the mystic enters into the pure and absolute unicity of the One and into the Kingdom of the One and Alone, mortals reach the end of their ascent, and there is no ascent beyond it.

I saw that the only condition of success was to sacrifice honors and riches, and sever the ties and attachment of worldly life. I only thought of self-improvement and discipline and of purification of the heart by prayers in going through the forms of devotion, which the Sufis taught me. Sufis are the true pioneers on the path of God.

To believe in the Prophet is to admit that there is above intelligence a sphere in which are revealed to the inner vision truths beyond the grasp of intelligence.

The real light is He in whose hand lies creation and its destinies. Thus the whole world is all filled with the external lights of perception and the internal light of intelligence.

Scientific knowledge is above Faith and Mystic experience is above knowledge.

It is the mark of saintship to show compassion to all God's servants, to be pitiful towards them and to fight for them and with them against the forces of evil.

It is incumbent on a man to dive deep into the sea of love; if the wave of love lands him on the shore of favour, he

had attained to the highest achievement.

It is difficult to save from wickedness unless lustful glance is protected.

It is better to disclose good deeds of others and connive their evil acts.

When you get up in the morning, start your day with the glorification of the Most Glorious.

Aspirant of worldly indulgence is like a person who drinks saltish water of the sea. The more he drinks, more his thirst increases.

Ulama of his era are the savants of the world not of the religion and faith.

To overcome appetitive desire is quality of the angels and to be overpowered by them is the trait of animals.

The best device to get vigilant awareness in prayer is to keep in view the meanings of what you recite.

Heart can never be radiant by Divine light unless ego and carnal desire, by undergoing austerities and mortification, become subservient to Shariah.

Ulama's desire of worldly gains is more disastrous than ruses of Satan.

To revile the calamities and turmoil of the world is equal to assail God with bitter abuse.

Be moderate in our worship of Him. Shun heaviness but be consistent.

Don't develop relationship with the rich and kings who are renegades of deserter and deserted Shariah.

Attain knowledge-that knowledge which creates awareness of your inmost being.

To feed as ascetic is worship and to feed an evil-door is to help sinful.

That feast is worst in which rich people are invited and

the poor ignored.

Never accept invitation of the innovator, oppressor, sinful and conceited.

Tongue engaged in *dhikr*, heart immersed in thankfulness and loyal wife are great boons.

To be patient over misbehavior of woman, to fend her needs and to keep her observant of Shariah are the best of worship.

To earn lawful livelihood for household, is the task of *abdal*. To bring them up teaching good manners and best of conduct is greater holy war.

Little is known about Ghazzali's member of family except his brother Ahmad who was well-known both as preacher and mystic. He was present at his brother's deathbed and was responsible for an abridgment of his *Ihya*. Ghazzali had several sisters and his mother was still alive when both her sons had become famous in Baghdad.

Ghazzali was married before the age of twenty, but none of the biographers gives the name of his wife. He considers that marriage is a great advantage to a man, not only for the sake of having children, but because of the satisfaction and benefit and refreshment to be obtained from the companionship of a wife, which is a consolation to the heart and strengthens it for the service to God. He was well devoted father much concerned with the happiness and betterment of his children. His *Kunya* (nick-name) "Abu Hamid" seems to indicate that he had at least one son, though no sons survived him and perhaps any son or sons died as children. It seems he suffered the loss of children while still young; it must have been a consolation to him to remember the Tradition which he quotes, to the effect that on the Day of Resurrection, when all mankind are taken to account for their deed, those who have

died as infants will gather round the Judgement Seat of God, the Merciful, and He looking upon them will say to His angels, "Take them hence to paradise." Ghazzali was survived by three daughters and, apparently by his wife, since it is mentioned more than once that he died in poverty, having reserved of his former wealth only what was sufficiently to maintain them. It was presumably the urgent requests of his little daughters which induced him to give up a wandering life and to return to his native land. The company of his daughters must have been a great satisfaction to the devoted father like Ghazzali. He quotes with appreciation the story of a little slave-girl who used to take Rasulullah ﷺ by the hand in Madinah and relates that the Prophet did not withdraw his hand from hers, but used to let the child accompany him wherever she wished. (*Ihya*) (*Summarized from al-Ghazzali, the Mystic by Margaret Smith*)

Ghazzali died on Monday the 14th of Jamadiul Sani 505 A.H. (December 18th, 1111CE) at the age of fifty-three. His brother Ahmad relates that at dawn, on the day of passing away, Ghazzali performed ablutions and prayed and then said: "Bring my shroud," and taking it, he kissed it and laid it over his eyes and said: "Most gladly do I enter into the Presence of the Sovereign," and he stretched out his feet and departed to meet Him, and so passed into the Paradise of God, "Worthy of all honours of loftier station than the stars, giving more guidance to men than the full moon when darkness has fallen." He was buried outside Tabaran in a grave near that of the poet Firdawsi.

It is related that just after Ghazzali's death, Abu l-Abbas Ahmad bin Abi l-Khayr Yamani had a vision. He was sitting at the open gates of Heaven and a band of angels were descending to the earth, bearing robes of honour, green in

colour, and with a noble steed. They alighted at the head of a certain tomb and brought forth one from his grave, and having invested him with the robes, set him on that steed, and ascended with him to the heavens, continuing to ascend with him from one heaven to another until he had passed through all the Seven Heavens and ascending beyond them, he traversed the Seventy Veils. "I was filled with wonder at that," said Abu l-Abbas, "and I desired to know who that rider was, and I was told: "It is Ghazzali," and I did not know then, that he had attained to martyrdom". It is said that Ghazzali occupied the position of *qutb* (Pole) the supreme head of Sufi hierarchy for a period of three days.

Sources

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﴿ 14 ﴾

Hazrat Khwaja Fariduddin Attar

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi says that theophany (*nur*) of Mansur Hallaj radiated its brilliance after 150 years of his death on the soul of Fariduddin and caused his advent on earth in the month of Shaban 513 A.H. (1119). He was born in the village of Kerken near Nishapur in Khurasan in the reign of Sultan Sanjar bin Malik Shah Suljoki. Indeed he was the lord of Islamic saints and mystics who acknowledged and affirmed his greatness and his far-reaching impact on Islamic mysticism. His personality and writings reactualized once again traits and characteristics of Hallaj i.e., ardency of divine love, ecstasy and illumination. He asserts again that Sufism is rooted in contemplation and revelation compared to rational speculative and imaginative faculties. That is why Rumi said "Attar is my very soul and Sanaai is my spiritual eye. His works disclose highly elevated rank of his spirituality.

Attar was son of Ibrahim and grandson of Ishaq Attar Nishapuri. Some years after his birth, his father moved to another place named Schadbakh where he ran a druggist's shop. When his father died, Attar himself carried on the business whence he received his surname Attar (druggist)

The cause of his conversion is connected with an event which is narrated as follows: One day while he was sitting in his shop surrounded by a number of his servants busily attending the customers, a wandering *dervish* came and paused at the door. His eyes slowly filled with tears and he begged by saying: **شيئا لله** (Give me something for God's sake). Attar sharply told him to be off from the shop. "That is easily done, I have only a light bundle to carry, nothing in fact but my clothes. But you with your sacks full of medicine; my job will

be easy, but you tell me, when time comes, how will you die?" asked the *dervish*. In response Attar said: "I will die just as you will die." *Dervish* had a wooden *Kashkul* (begging bowl). He lay down on floor, putting *Kashkul* as a pillow under his head and uttered "Allah" and died. Seeing this, Attar's inner world changed. He promptly abandoned his business in order to devote himself to religious life. Bidding a decisive adieu to the world he betook himself to a Sufi hospice (Khanqah) headed by Shaikh Ruknuddin who was Shaikh (spiritual guide) of Kubrawiyya Order. There at the hospice he started rigorous ascetic practices and devotional exercise which are prerequisites to tread initiatic journey for contemplative unitary life. Attar stayed at hospice for sometime and then left for Makkah to perform pilgrimage where he met many renowned Sufi saints.

Little is known about the acquisition of his knowledge in religious sciences. History is silent in respect of his teachers, the seminary he attended and the period he devoted in acquiring formal education. But the contribution he made and the literary heritage he left testify vehemently that Attar was erudite scholar of higher rank not less than any of his contemporary, former or later divines and sages. Rather all the later writers in the domain of Islamic mysticism took benefit of his writings. It is generally commented that he was the first person who concentrated to expose the secrets of mystic path and divinity through the lives of spiritual luminaries. His writings reflect his own mystical state and also the sources he utilized in elucidating intricate domain of Tasawwuf. It is related that he spent seventeen years in the collection of material for compiling *Tadhkaratul-Auliya*. He is reported to have spent 29 years in the city named Shadbagh and 75 years in Nishapur. In every field of Islamic learning he left indelible imprints on the history of Sufism. His writings are considered

scourage for the wayfarers of mystic path.

Attar like other mystic poets was not a professional poet. In his prosaic and poetical works he gave vent to his strong esoteric state. It is written in *Tadhkara Daulat Shahi* that Attar met a great number of consummate mystics of Islam of his time and read four hundred books written by the people of spiritual way of life, that is why his books are full of secrets of divinity. He was not theoretical Sufi but a practising *wali* who spent long spell of his life in isolation and detachment and by the end of his life he had achieved total annihilation. In his childhood he had the privilege of Shaikh Qutbuddin Haider's glance of illumination. The father of Attar too was a disciple of Shaikh Qutbuddin. Attar had composed *Haideri Nama* in his adolescence.

Once Muslihuddin Sadi travelled to Nishapur to seek blessing of Attar. When he arrived at his lodge, he refused to attend Sadi, on the ground that the latter had written eulogy in the praise of king; it was repugnant to the spirit of Sufism. Sadi kept on sitting in front of his house for six months. He expressed his determination not to go back without seeing and earning blessing of Attar. However after six months, Attar came out of his house and allowed Sadi to kiss edge of his garment. After having kissed and repented, he destined back to home.

Attar had adopted retreat and confined himself to his house in the last part of life. Thousands of devotees and aspirants of Truth would come to pay homage at his residence. It is related that Shaikh Majduddin Baghdadi invested him initiatic mantle (خرقه بیعت). In some books it is written that Attar was Awasi. Hazrat Maulana Rum was one of his great votaries. Travelling with his father from Balkh, when Maulana reached Nishapur, Attar gave him a copy of his work *Israr*

namah which he always kept with him.

When Rumi met Attar in childhood he was 6 and the latter 45 years of age. Rumi owed much to Attar and his *Mathnavi* bears witness to his spiritual influence. It is said that it is the *Mantaqut-tayr* (Conference of the Birds) which led him to write *Mathnavi* in the style of parables through which medium great reality can be easily conveyed to the seeker after Truth.

Attar was a copious writer. He wrote over 14 books on Sufism. Most of his books have been lost in the course of the centuries. Today only a few have survived; all are poetry except his *Tadhkaratul-Auliya* i.e., Memoirs of the Saints. Besides *Mathnavi*, Attar has written forty thousand verses of which twelve thousand are quatrains (*Rubaiyyat*). In addition to this forty *Risalahs* are also attributed to him which contain around one hundred thousand verses. The following couplet is also one of the eulogy of Attar:

اے روئے در کشیدہ بازار آمدہ خلقے بایں ظلم گرفتار آمدہ
(O my Beloved you came to market place having veiled your face, still the entire creation fell prey to your spell-bound Being)

It means Oneness concealed in the garb of manyness revealed Himself to the cosmos. This multiplicity rendered the people oblivious of Him. Since the reflection of your Beauty permeates every phenomenal being, some were entrapped in metaphorical love and some in metaphysical love.

Maulana Jami in *Nafhaat* says his poetry comprises over twenty thousand couplets beyond other poetical works. There is another beautiful couplet often quoted in books:

توئی معنی و بیرون تو اسم است توئی گنج و ہمہ عالم ظلم است
(You are Hidden Entity and your Names are your

manifestation. You are treasure and the entire universe is talisman)

سَیْلِ خَلْقِ جَمَلِ عَالَمِ تَا اَبَدِ گَر شَانَسَدَتِ وَاگَرَنَ سَوْنِے تَسْتِ

(You are the only object of love of the entire creation till post-eternity, may they have cognition of You or not. You are the pivotal point of their quest)

The book *Tadhkarat-ul-Auliya* is an important biographical source which provides information about the great mystics of Islam. It depicts their spiritual aspects of lives, inner enlightenment, elevated ranks, and sayings and teachings. In the preface of the book Attar lists a number a reasons that impelled him to compile the work for which he spent 17 years to collect material. His declared motives as summarized and translated by A.J. Arberry, were as follows:

1. He was begged to do so by his religious brethren.
2. He hoped that some of those who read the work would bless the author and thus, possibly, secure his welfare beyond the grave.
3. He believes that the words of the Saints are profitable even to those who cannot put them into practice, inasmuch as they strengthen aspiration and destroy self-conceit.
4. Junaid said, "Their sayings are one of the armies of Almighty God whereby He confirms and reinforces the disciple, if his heart be dejected."
5. According to the Prophet, "Mercy descends at the mention of the pious": peradventure, if one spreads a table on which Mercy falls like rain, he will not be turned away portionless.
6. Attar trusts that the blessed influence of the Saints may be vouchsafed to him and bring him into happiness before he dies.

7. He busied himself with their sayings in the hope that he might make himself to resemble them.

8. The Koran and the Traditions cannot be understood without knowledge of Arabic, wherefore most people are unable to profit by them; and the Sayings of the Saints, which form a commentary on the Koran and the Traditions, were likewise uttered, for the most part, in Arabic. Consequently the author has translated them into Persian, in order that they may become accessible to all.

9. Since an idle word often excites keen resentment, the word of Truth is capable of having a thousandfold effect even though you are unconscious thereof. Similarly, Abd al-Rahman Eskafi said that the reading of the Koran was effectual, although the reader might not understand it, just as a portion of which the ingredients are unknown.

10. Spiritual words alone appeal to the author. Hence he composed this "daily task" for his contemporaries, hoping to find some persons to share the meal which he has provided.

11. The Imam Yusuf Hamadhani advised some people who asked him what they should do when the Saints had passed away from the earth, to read eight pages of their Sayings every day. Attar felt that it was incumbent upon him to supply this desideratum.

12. From his childhood he had a predilection for the Sufis and took delight in their sayings. Now, when such words are spoken only by impostors and when true spiritualists have become as rare as the philosopher's stone, he is resolved to popularize literature of this kind so far as lies in his power.

13. In the present age the best men are bad, and holy men have been forgotten. The *Memorial* is designed to remedy this state of things.

14. The Sayings of the Saints dispose men to renounce the

world, meditate on the future life, love God, and set about preparing for their last journey. "One may say that there does not exist in all creation a better book than this, for their words are a commentary on the Koran and Traditions, which are the best of all words. Any one who reads it properly will perceive what passion must have been in the souls of those men to bring forth such deeds and words as they have done and said."

15. A further motive was the hope of obtaining their intercession hereafter and of being pardoned, like the dog of the Seven Sleepers which, though it be all skin and bone, will nevertheless be admitted to Paradise. (*Muslim Saints and Mystics Tr. by A.J. Arberry, pp. 11-12*)

Another work of Attar's *The Book of God'* is a description of the six faculties of the human being: ego, imagination, intellect, thirst for knowledge, thirst for detachment and thirst for unity. Attar likens the human being with these faculties to a king with six sons. Each son comes to the king requesting something, and the king tries to educate his sons about what it is they desire and what implications the fulfilment of their desires would have. The lesson he teaches them to pursue the Eternal Presence of God as the highest goal.

In his Book of Secrets (اسرار نامہ), Attar adopts another style. It is rather just a collection of small stories presented for the sake of elevating the spiritual or moral state of the reader. Rumi used a similar approach in his *Mathnavi*, but the difference is that he sets the scene to make a point and express his own opinion specifically, whereas Attar simply presents a tale without offering his own opinion, and thus allows the story to speak for itself.

The Book of Affliction (مصیبت نامہ) is based on the story of a traveller who is looking for God. He tries to get

roadmaps from imperfect beings who themselves are lost and are in need of guidance. In this book, Attar's message is that the world without God is a lonely one, full of suffering and that the way of God lies within.

Attar wrote many stories of mystical nature impregnated with lessons for the people of mystical persuasion. These include the story of Shaikh Sanaan, Bahlul renowned ecstatic mystics, the angel Gabriel and the infidel, the Deal criminal, Bayazid Bistami, and *Mantaqut-tayr*. The last one has been translated into English under the title: "*Conference of the Birds*." This Persian poetical work won great acclaim amongst the people of mystical taste on the ground that it depicts different stages of the Sufi's progress towards God. One can say that this work is handbook for the people of initiatic journey (*Suluk*). This is an allegorical poem in which various birds represent travellers of mystic path united themselves under the leadership of hoopoe in order to set out journey to arrive at the court of Simurgh; a mysterious bird whose name signifies "thirty birds", dwells in Mountain Kaf, the mountain which encircles the world. At the beginning of the poem, there is a long discussion and debate between hoopoe and the other birds who, in the first instance look reluctant to undertake the journey. Hoopoe motivates and informs them that it is a difficult and dangerous journey to reach the king. They implore the hoopoe to guide them. He tells them that they need to traverse seven valleys and two deserts; when they have passed the last desert they will enter the palace of the king. Those with weak wills who are afraid of the journey start making excuses. Hoopoe decides that the only way to make the birds understand is to describe to them the seven valleys and deserts of the journey: Thus he explains: the first is the valley of Search; the second is the valley of

Love, which has no limits; the third is the valley of knowledge; the fourth is the valley of Independence; the fifth is the valley of unity, pure and simple; the sixth is the valley of Amazement; last is the valley of Poverty and Annihilation, beyond which there is no advance.

1. When you enter the Valley of Search, at every step you will face new trial, there the parrot of celestial sphere is as mute as a fly. There you must cast away all your possessions and imperil all your riches. Not only your hands must be empty, but your heart must also be detached from all that is earthly. Then the Light of the Divine Essence begins to cast upon some rays.

2. In order to enter the second valley (of love) you must be made all of fire. He who is not composed of fire will find no pleasure in that Valley. He must not think of the future, but be ready to sacrifice a hundred worlds to the flames of that fire if need be. Faith and infidelity, good and evil, religion and irreligion, are all one for him who has arrived at the second stage; for where love reigns, none of them exists any more.

3. In the third valley (of knowledge) the progress of the pilgrims (of the mystic path) is in proportion to their innate power. In the path traversed by Ibrahim (the prophet) the friend of God, can a feeble spider keep pace with an elephant? Let the gnat fly as hard as he may, he will never keep up with the wind. Thus the degree of knowledge attained to by the initiated (disciples) are different; one only reaches the entrance of the temple (Abode of Divine Light) while another finds the Divinity who dwells in it. When the Sun of knowledge darts its rays, each is illuminated in proportion to his capacity and finds in the contemplation of the Truth, the rank which belongs to him. He sees the path lie open before him through the midst of the fire, the furnace of the world becomes for him

a garden of roses. He perceives the almond within the shell that is to say he sees God under the veil of all apparent things. But for one fortunate man who penetrates into these mysteries, how many millions have gone astray? Only the perfect can dive with success into the depths of this ocean.

4. In the fourth valley (of Independence) you have done with everything but God. Out of this disposition of mind, which no longer feels the need of anything, there rises a stormy hurricane, every blast of which annihilates the whole kingdoms. The seven seas are then no more than a pool of water; the seven planets are a spark; the eight paradises are only a single curtain; the seven Hells a mass of ice. In less time than it takes the greedy crow to fill its Crop, out of a hundred caravans of travellers there remains not one alive.

5. The Valley of Unity is in true sense, the valley of privation of all things and reduction to unity, that is to say, the attainment of a degree of spirituality in which the Divine Essence, apart from every attribute, is the object of contemplation.

6. In the sixth valley of Amazement the pilgrim's lot is to suffer and to groan; each breath he draws is like a sword; his days and nights are passed in sighs; from each of his hairs falls drops of blood. When it falls, it traces in the air the letters of the word "Alas!" There the pilgrim remains in a state of unconsciousness and finds his way no more.

7. At last comes the valley of Poverty and Annihilation. "But the words are insufficient to describe it; forgetfulness, deafness, dumbness, fainting-such is the condition of the pilgrim in this valley. One sun causes millions of shadows to vanish. When the ocean is agitated, how can the figures traced on its waters remain? Such figures are this world and the world to come, and he who knows them to be nothing is right.

He who is plunged in this sea, where the heart is astray and lost, has by means of his very annihilation found immutable repose. In this ocean where reigns a constant calm, the heart finds nought but annihilation.

The foregoing terrible description of the seven mysterious valleys was well enough to discourage the birds. Attar tells us that after hearing this account, they stood with heart oppressed and heads bent. He says: 'All understood that it was not for a feeble hand to bend this bow.' They were so much terrified by the discourse of the hoopoe that a great number of birds died on the spot where they had assembled. As to the others, in spite of their dismay; they consented to set out on journey. During long years of flight, they travelled over hills and dales and spent a great part of their lives in journey.

Finally of all those who set out, a very small band arrived at the destination. Some were drowned in the oceans, others were annihilated and disappeared. Others perished on the peaks of high mountains, devoured by thirst and fell prey to all kinds of ills and woes. Others had their plumes burnt and their hearts dried up during flight by the scorching heat of the sun, others fell victim to the wild beasts which haunted the passage, falling panic struck without resistance into their claws; others died of sheer exhaustion in the desert; others fought and killed each other madly for chance grains of corn; others experienced all kinds of pains and fatigues, and ended by stopping short of goal; others engrossed in curiosity and pleasure, perished without thinking of the object for which they had set out.

When they started journey their numbers were countless, but at last only thirty arrived, and these without feathers and wings, exhausted and prostrated, their hearts broken, their souls fainting, their bodies worn out by fatigue

but they arrived at the palace of the Simurgh. A chamberlain of the king, who saw these thirty hapless birds without feathers or wings questioned them whence they came and why? We have come, they answered "that the Simurgh may become our king. The love that we feel for him has unsettled our reason. We have denied ourselves all rest to follow the road that leads to Him. May the king think kindly of the perils we have undergone, and cast upon us at least a glance of compassion. The chamberlain returned a harsh response, and ordered them to go back telling them that king had no need of their homage. This reply at first cause them despair and dismay, but afterwards, imitating the moth which seeks certain death in the flame of the lamp, they persisted in their request to be admitted in the presence of Simurgh. Their efforts brought fruit. The Chamberlain of grace" came out, opened a door and presented them with a document (scroll of deeds) which he ordered them to read. This contained a list of all the sins which the birds had committed against the Simurgh. The perusal of it caused them nothing less than death.

Attar says: "By reason of the shame and confusion which these birds experienced, their body became dust and their souls were annihilated. When they were entirely purified from all sorts of earthly defilements they all received a new life. The sun of proximity burnt them, i.e., their former existence was consumed by the sun of the Divine Essence which they had approached, and a ray of this light produced a life which animated them all. At this moment they beheld themselves reflected in the Simurgh. When they stole a glance at Him, He appeared to be the thirty birds themselves, they seemed to be the Simurgh; and when they looked at both together, only one Simurgh appeared. They were all submerged in an ocean of unconsciousness with all faculties of

thought suspended. Without moving a tongue, they interrogated the Awful Presence for an explanation of the mystery of apparent identity between the Divinity and his worshippers.

Then a voice was heard saying: "The Majesty of the Simurgh is a sun-resembling mirror; whosoever contemplates Him beholds his own reflection, body and soul see in Him body and soul. Although you have passed through many changes, it is yourselves only whom you have seen throughout."

"In all the valleys which you have traversed, in all the acts of kindness which you have done to others; it was by Our impulse alone that you were acting. All this while you have been asleep in the valley of the Essence and the Attributes; you thirty birds have been unconscious hitherto. The name "thirty birds" belongs rather to Us, who are the veritable Simurgh. Find then in Us a glorious self-effacement in order to find yourselves again in Us."

"So they all vanished in Him for ever, as the shadow disappears in the sun. While on journey they conversed; when they had arrived, all conversation ended. There was no longer a guide; there was no longer pilgrims; the road itself had ceased to be." (*Excerpted from the Conference of the Birds, Tr. by C.S. Noth*)

Such is this allegory, or Sufi's "Pilgrim's Progress," which contains nearly five thousand couplets. Thus Attar expounded the mystery of Divine Path (سلوک) in a symbolic allegory for those who understand.

In the last phase of life. Attar went into retreat and practised asceticism to such an extent that he gave up composing poetry altogether. Meanwhile Changiz Khan invaded Nishapur. During combat his son-in-law was killed,

thus he ordered mass assassination indiscriminately. His soldiers started putting the residents of the city mercilessly to sword. The people approached Attar to seek his help. He immediately turned his bowl with the result that Changiz Khan's soldiers turned blind and the massacre stopped. Changiz Khan was irritated too much and again ordered to carry on massacre. It was started next day. The people again approached Attar and he again turned his bowl and the soldiers turned blind and the massacre stopped. Then Changiz Khan himself appeared on the scene on the third day and the massacre started again. Attar was approached again and he as usual was about to turn his bowl when Khidr appeared before him and said: "Refrain from interfering with the divine decree. You will be taken to task for what you have already done, whilst terrible will be the consequences of you if you repeat your miraculous power."

During this pandemonium, Attar fell into the hand of Mongol soldier who took him to market for sale as a slave. Someone came and offered 5000 dirhams for his release. Attar advise the Mongol soldier not to accept the offer as he would get much higher price. Whilst the soldier was waiting for new customer with better offer, a hidden voice told Attar "Your arrogance is remarkable. You consider that you are worth much more than what has already been offered for you." Attar was ashamed. Near evening time an old lady came and offered her bundle of grass in exchange for Attar. Attar at once advised the soldier "Make haste and sell me to the lady, for this is my actual price and that I am worth no more." Hearing this the Mongol soldier enraged and cut off Attar's head with a sword. Thus the great saint was martyred in 627 A.H (1129) at the age of 110. The Lord Most High could not tolerate the insult of His friend by the soldier who was immediately

crushed to death by an adjoining wall falling on his head.

After the assassination of Khwaja Fariduddin Attar, the son of Qazi Yahya bin Saad, a holy man of Nishapur died. The people expediently buried him at the foot of Shaikh Khwaja Fariduddin Attar's grave. Qazi Yahya did not like the site; he buried him again somewhere else. The same night Qazi saw in dream that all the *Abrar, Akhyar, Aqtab* and hidden men were gathered at the shrine of Attar, where divine light (تجلیات) was descending profusely. It looked as if thousands of candles were burning there; and all the notable Auliya Allah were engrossed there in meditation. Upon seeing this Qazi felt ashamed and left the place without attending the assembly of the saints. He also saw his son weeping bitterly who said to his father: "You have divested me from the blessing of the men of God. My paradise lies at the feet of holy men. Be quick, bury me again at the foot of the Shaikh Attar's grave."

Next day Qazi approached kins of Attar in order to seek their permission to bury his son there. After seeking permission, he re-buried his son where he had desired. He repented and joined the circle of Shaikh Attar's devotees. He also built a grand mausoleum over Attar's sepulchre which locates in the locality of Shad Bagh outside the city of Nishapur.

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﴿ 15 ﴾

Hazrat Khwaja Najmuddin Kubra
Badrudin

An epoch-making spiritual stalwart and a wonder spiritualist of Islam, Khwaja Najmuddin is the founder of the famous Kubrawiyya Sufi order of Central Asia and Khurasan. He was frequently designated as *wali-turash* (i.e. the manufacturer of saints). Shaikh Najmuddin Abu l-Jannab Ahmad bin Umar derived his nickname from the Qura'nic expression '*al-tammal al-Kubra* (the greatest affliction) which was shortened to Najmuddin Kubra. This part of name he earned through his pervasive rather formidable talent in polemic religious matters wherein he would always defeat his skillful competitors.

Shaikh Kubra was born in 540 A.H. (1145) at Khiva in Khwarazm (Central Asia). He was called Wali Maker because on whom, in his ecstatic states cast spiritual glance made him enlightened sufi saint. All the Mashaikh of his age affirmed his greatness and paid homage to his spiritual sublimity. He was the leader of the Mashaikh of Firdawsiyya Sufi order of Central Asia which was introduced into India by Shaikh Badruddin Samarqandi. Initially its Shuyukh were based in Dehli but later moved to Bihar. There this order flourished greatly under the guidance of Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri.

Shaikh Kubra was *beginning of his career* embodiment of exoteric and esoteric knowledge. He began his career as a scholar of hadith and religious sciences. He travelled widely throughout the Muslim world for the attainment of education in Hadith. His conversion to Sufism took place in Egypt where he came under the influence of Persian Shaikh Ruzbihan Baqli Misri who was an initiate of the Suhrawardiyya order. After spending a number of years in Egypt, he went to Tabriz in

Persia to pursue his studies in Ahadith. Maulana Jami in *Nafahat al-Uns* writes: One day while he was studying the book *شرح السنه* all of sudden an awful *dervish* entered there. The very moment Shaikh Kubra saw him, his state of condition changed, and could not study further. The Shaikh surprisingly asked who the man was: The people informed the Shaikh that he was Baba Faraj Tabrizi, a well known *Majzooob* (absorptionist). The Shaikh spent entire night in agitation. Next morning when he met his teacher, he asked him 'let us go to visit Baba Faraj. Thus both teacher and the taught left to see Baba Sahib. When they reached the gate of his Khanqah, his attendant informed him about the visitors. He sent message 'if they want to come in my presence as one attends divine sanctuary, they are allowed.' Both accepted the condition. With folded hands on their chests they entered his cell. Awhile after Baba Faraj's own condition changed. He looked too much luminous, face turned shining like the sun and body began to enlarge till his clothes torn away. But after a short while he reverted to his original shape. Baba stood up and wore some of his tattered clothes to Shaikh Kubra and said: 'Now it is not the time for you to remain engaged in academic study. Time has arrived for you to become university for the spiritual education and training of the world.' Shaikh Kubra says 'these words of Baba Faraj changed my destiny and my inmost heart relinquished from non-God. When I left Baba Faraj and came out, my teacher said to me: a small portion of the book *شرح السنه* is left uncovered, you finish it in two or three days and then do whatever you like because the said work is considered the most authentic in the domain of Traditions. (احاديث) The Shaikh says 'when next day I opened the book to study it, I saw Baba Faraj entering my room and saying 'Yestereday you treaded the stations of the knowledge of certitude' (علم اليقين)

and then again you turned towards acquiring knowledge. Hearing this I totally gave up the domain of formal education and engaged in arduous ascetic exercises. Afterwards the descent of *ilm laduni* (a knowledge from Me) and influx of inspiration from the invisible (visitations) began. I thought I would take down these visitations. (نبی واردات) Baba Faraj appeared to me and said: 'Satan is beguiling you, don't write these things.' Thus I dropped my pen for ever and cleansed my heart of all such things abdicating my concern with the external religious sciences.

Shaikh Kubra then adopted the wandering life totalling giving up worldly interest. He came to Hamadan and sought permission of *muhaddithin* in the area of Hadith. Then he set out for Alexandariya to seek permission of the great *muhaddith* of the time. When he was about to come back, he saw the Holy Prophet ﷺ in dream and requested him to bestow patronymic appellation (*Kuniyyat*) on him. The Holy Prophet ﷺ smiled and said 'You are 'Abu l-Jannah.' Thereafter Shaikh Kubra abdicated the world and engaged in *Tafrid* and *Tajrid* (isolation and detachment), and left in quest of spiritual guide. Since he had attained pinnacle in the area of external religious knowledge he seldom bowed before anyone. Thus wandering he reached Khuzestan where he sustained severe pain of Rheumatism. No one in the city was ready to accommodate him. Being helpless, he asked the people 'is there no Muslim in the city who could allow a friendless traveller to stay with him for a few days to rest? A man responded: 'There is a Khanqah in the city and a *sajjada nisheen* named Shaikh Ismael Qasiri, if you go there he might accommodate you and attend your disease.' Shaikh Kubra went there. Shaikh Ismael provided him space on a profico (صف) in front of the veranda of *dervishes*. The Shaikh stayed

there but his disease aggravated. *sama*

The Shaikh Kubra states: "I was deadly against *sama* (audition). Despite my painful disease, I would feel to much torture when Shaikh Ismael held *sama* session. It was intolerable for me anyway. One night *sama* session was going in full swing. Deep ecstatic state overwhelmed Shaikh Ismael. In this state of condition he came to me and asked 'Do you want to stand up?' I replied in affirmative. He got hold my hand and took me in the assembly. After awhile he revolved me in *sama* and made me stand with the support of the wall. I said: "I will fall down. Meanwhile unconsciousness overtook me. When I recovered senses, my disease had disappeared to such an extent that I felt I had never sustained Rheumatism. My faith in the Shaikh increased. Next day I presented myself before Shaikh Ismael and swore allegiance at his hand, and got busy in ecstatic practices and self-mortification. I spent lot of time in his company."

Renewable success

When Shaikh Kubra achieved remarkable success and got cognition of his luminous inner state he thought that he had now gained extensive intuitive knowledge, but his external knowledge exceeded that of his Shaikh's. Next morning Shaikh Ismael called for him and directed him to set out to go in the presence of Shaikh Ammar bin Yasir Bidlisi. He also spent number of years in his company treading mystic path. One day the same kind of involuntary thought (i.e., I have more external knowledge than that of my Shaikh) came into his mind. Next morning Shaikh Ammar bade him to go to Ruzbihan in Egypt so that in one stroke he might dispel this involuntary thought from his mind. Shaikh Kubra reached Khanqah of Shaikh Ruzbihan and found him performing ablution (*wudu*) with small quantity of water. He thought 'what type of Shaikh Ruzbihan is who does not know ablution with

little quantity of water is not justified.' The Shaikh after ablution wiped his hand on his face which rendered him unconscious. Shaikh Ruzbihan returned to Khanqah and got busy in offering voluntry prayer of *Tahiyyaatul wudu*. Shaikh Kubra in state of unconsciousness saw that Day of Resurrection had set in. Hell appeared on the scene and the angels were dragging and throwing the people into it. He saw a holy man sitting in the passage. Whoever asked the angels that he had links with that holy man, they would leave him and throw the others into Hellfire. The angels also seized Shaikh Kubra and dragged him towards Hell. When he reached there he also said 'I hold link with that holy man.' The angels released him. When Shaikh Kubra moved ahead, he saw that the said holy man was not other than Shaikh Ruzbihan. The Shaikh went and placed his head on Ruzbihan's feet. He struck his both hands with full force on his (Kubra) back and made him fell down on the ground and said: 'Now you never deny the sublimity of holy men ever in your life.' When Kubra recovered from unconsciousness, he saw that Shaikh Ruzbihan had just finished prayer of *Tahiyyaatul Wudu* and sent salutations to right and left. Shaikh moved ahead and placed his head on the feet of Ruzbihan who struck his both hands on his back and repeated the same words as mentioned above. Thus his inner ailment wiped out for ever. Afterwards the Shaikh advised Kubra to go back to Shaikh Ammar bin Yasir. At the time of departure, he gave a letter to Shaikh Kubra in order to deliver it to Shaikh Ammar. The letter had the statement: "The people you find like a brass, send all of them to me so that I alchemize them into gold and sent them back to you." Thus Shaikh Najmuddin Kubra left and joined the company of Shaikh Ammar and spent long time under his spiritual training. Before returning to Ruzbihan, Shaikh Kubra

had received Khirqahs from Ammar bin Yasir and Ismael Qasiri. He had also received Khirqah from Shaikh Zia-uddin Suhrawardi and one direct from Ghaus-e-Azam Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani. By then Ruzbihan evidently regarded Kubra as fully mature after having completed his initiatic journey. He thus directed him to go back to Khwarazm in 540 A.H. (1145) with full authority to initiate the people and train them in the mystic path. Shaikh Kubra requested that the people living there are of harsh disposition and deny intuitive power of auliya Allah. But Shaikh Ruzbihan said 'you need not worry nor fear anyone. You go and preach Sufism.' There Kubra swiftly gathered a large following including remarkable number of individuals who attained prominence in their own right as spiritual masters and writers on Sufism. Shaikh Kubra devoted himself fully to the training of his disciples. It looked as if the entire world had been subjugated to his spiritual glance, love and affection. Maulana Jami in *Nafahatal-uns* writes: Shaikh Najmuddin was considered Wali-maker because in his ecstatic state on whom he cast glance, elevated him to the station of *wilayat* (sainthood). He used to ask him where he was from i.e., which country he belonged? Thus he would write *Khilafat-nama* in his favour of that specific country and ask him to go back to his native place and show the people the way to God.

incident of dog's death

One day Shaikh Kubra was sitting with his friend. A falcon was flying in the hot pursuit of a dove. By chance his eye fell on dove who turned and seized the falcon and brought it to the presence of the Shaikh. One day mention was made about the companions of the cave (*ashab-e-Kahf*). Shaikh Sa'aduddin Hammuya, who was one of the perfect disciples of Shaikh Kubra thought 'Is there a spiritualist in Muslim Ummah whose company could benefit a dog spiritually! The

Shaikh through his clairvoyance intuited his thought. He stood up and went towards the gate of his Khanqah and found a dog passing near it. He cast esoteric glance at the dog with the result that bewilderment overpowered him and he left the city and settled in a cemetery. That dog would rub his head on the ground and wherever he moved fifty or sixty dogs thronged around him in a circle spreading their paws before him and stood in respect and lowliness. At last that dog died. The Shaikh directed his followers to bury it making grave somewhere.

switch kubra's disciples

Shaikh Majduddin Baghdadi was one of the foremost accomplished disciples of Shaikh Kubra. He was beloved *mureed* of the Shaikh who had made him his own son, and trained him as top most spiritualist in short time. Thus he would preach and exhort the public in the presence of his Shaikh. One day, while Majduddin was sitting in the company of *dervishes*, rapturous state occupied him. In this condition he said: I was an egg of the duck lying on the bank of a river, and our Shaikh (Kubra) was like a cock who trained us under his wings till I came out of the egg. Since I was a chicken of the duck I went into the river whereas our Shaikh remained on the bank. Shaikh Kubra through his esoteric wisdom (نور فراست) learnt my thought and his tongue uttered 'Die in the river.' After this Shaikh Majduddin recovered his sense and became normal. When he came to know the words of his Shaikh, he feared too much. He met his fellow-initiate (پیر بھائی) named Shaikh Sa'aduddin Hammuya and expressed his humility and contrition. He requested him to inform him when the Shaikh would be in blissful mood so that he could go and seek forgiveness of him. When Sa'aduddin informed him the appropriate time, Majduddin, bare-footed, putting a tray full of fire on the head came and stood folded hands at the place of

footwear. When the Shaikh saw him he said: "Since you have sought pardon according to the rule of mystical discipline, you secured your faith and belief but you will die in the river, I too will be killed, the king of Khwarazm and his nobles will be murdered and his country devastated." Hearing this Majuddin fell on the feet of his Shaikh but after short time the prophecy came true in this way. Shaikh Majduddin was highly handsome man and used to deliver sermon in Khwarazm. The mother of Sultan Muhammad Shah Khwarazm was also beautiful woman and used to attend the sermon of Majduddin. Sometime she would also visit the Shaikh. The opportunist mischievous elements were in search of appropriate time. One day Sultan Muhammad was in an intoxicated state. The people reported to him that his mother had entered wedlock with Shaikh Majduddin according to Fiqh Hanafi. Hearing this the Sultan infuriated and ordered that Shaikh Majduddin be thrown into river Tigris. The royal decree was implemented forthwith. When Shaikh Najmuddin Kubra got this news he was grieved and said: **إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ**, and said the Sultan drowned my son into the river and he died. Thus he prostrated for long while and afterwards said: 'I appealed to God to seize the dominion of the Sultan as ransom to atone for the murder of my son, and He granted my supplication.' When the Sultan came to know of this, he was perturbed much. He appeared before Shaikh Kubra with a tray full of gold and jewels, and sword and shroud. Bare-head and bare-foot he stood at the space of footwear and requested: "If you need ransom the tray is before; but if you desire to punish me for the murder, this sword is ready before you." The Shaikh replied:

" **كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَطُورًا** i.e. it has been decreed in the Preserved Tablet. Ransom of Majduddin will cost your kingdom, your head, and also of large number of people, and

my head also with yours." After short time Changiz Khan started invasions from Turkistan and conquering many countries, he in 615 A.H. with eight lakh Mongol army invaded Khwarazm. It is said that Genghis Khan professed no religion but believed in *Tawhid*. When Bukhara fell to him, one day on the pulpit of Eidgah he came, praised God Almighty and His Unity (*Tawhid*) and said afterwards 'You people have committed grave sins, God made me calamity to take you to task and murder all of you. Then he ordered massacre. In the city of Nishapur seven lakh people were murdered and Shaikh Fariduddin Attar was one of them.

When the ^{fight with Mongol Army} Mongol army reached Khwarazm, Shaikh Kubra assembled his companions who were sixty. Sultan Muhammad Khwarazm had fled and died on the way to some unknown destination. Mongol thought he was in the city and they entered. The Shaikh called for his some disciples such as Sa'aduddin Hammuya, Saifuddin, Najmuddin Razi, Jamaluddin Kesli, Raziuddin Ali Lala, Baba Kamal Jandi, Bahauddin Walad etc. who were sixty in all and directed them to leave his dominion immediately for their own regions as Mongol fire will burn everything. The devotees requested the Shaikh that they had enough riding mounts (horses etc) he too accompany them to go to Khurasan together. But the Shaikh said he was not allowed to leave the city, he would die here. Thus some of his disciples and devotees left for Khurasan. According to the traditional accounts he refused also an invitation by the Mongols to leave the city before they proceeded with their massacre of its inhabitants. When the Mongols entered the city, the Shaikh called for the rest of his disciples and said: قوموا باسم الله نقاتل في سبيل الله
(Get ready to fight in the way of Allah). The Shaikh came to his house, got his Khirqah, tied it around his back and getting

spear in his hand came out to fight. In combat he started throwing stone towards pagan army. Mongol soldiers were shooting arrows towards him. One arrow pierced his chest and he fell down. Thus the Shaikh died at the head of a small group of his followers while engaged in closest battle with the enemy. It is related that at the time of his martyrdom, he seized a flag from the hand of pagan. But Mongols could not get it back even after his death. At last they resorted to cut the flag. Shaikh Kubra martyred in 617 or 618 A.H. (1220-21)

Kubra left behind a number of ^{Number} important ^{but imp} works in Arabic that show his concern with the analysis of visionary experiences. He has discussed among other issues, the significance of various types of dreams and visions, the degrees of luminous epiphany (مکلی) that are manifested to the traveller of mystic path; the different classes of conceptions and images (*Khawatir*) that engage the mystic's attention; and the nature and interrelations of the "Subtle centres" of human body (*lataif*). However among the most important of Kubra's work is the *Fawa'ih al-jamal wa fawatih al-jalal* (The Fragrance of (Divine) Beauty and the unveiling of the (Divine) Majesty. This work contains Kubra's mystical psychology and gives an account of the visions and ecstatic experiences the mystic might attain. There is no doubt that Kubra himself experienced these heavenly journeys and traversed the cosmic ranks in his visions, he agrees with other Sufi theoreticians insofar as he sees man as a microcosmos, containing everything that exists in the macro-cosmos; and that man can be qualified with God's Attributes with the exception of the rank Allah ar-Rehman ar-Rahim. The mystic, who reaches these points during his spiritual ascension, can incorporate these attributes in himself. These acts are regarded by him as perfectly real, for the 'heart' is a fine body that ascends through

the heavens (to the Abode of Light). But such experiences can be realized only after the strictest adherence to the rules of the tenfold path, some conditions of which are to abstain from food as much as possible and to give complete surrender to the Shaikh (Pir) by giving up one's own will completely. In his short treatise Kubra highlights 'The ^{Ten Principles} Ten Principles' which he laid down as code of behaviour to be followed by the novice. Expanding on the eight Sufi principles outlined by Junaid, Kubra recommended that his disciples practise: constant ritual purity, constant fasting, constant silence, constant retreat, constant recollection of God (*dhikrullah*) and constant direction of a Shaikh who explains the meaning of one's dreams and visions. Finally one must give up resistance to God's decree and refrain from prayer for reward in the Hereafter. This is the theoretical foundation of the Kubrawi order. (*Excerpted from the Mystical Dimension of Islam p.255*)

mystical awareness

To Kubra, permanent concentration upon the Divine Names in the retreat leads to mystical awareness. The Shaikh gives an exact description of the revelations of coloured lights that occur to the initiate (*mureed*) during his spiritual training: these are dots and spots and circles: the soul passes through periods of black colour and of black and red spots until the appearance of the green colour indicates that divine grace is near.

Elaborate colour symbols

The Kubrawiyya developed on elaborate colour symbolism. Kubra's disciple Najmuddin Daya speaks of white as connected with Islam, yellow colour with *iman*, (faith) dark blue with *ihsan*, (beneficence) green with *itminan* (tranquillity), light blue with *iqan* (true assurance) red with *irfan* (gnosis), and black with *hayaman* (passionate love and ecstatic bewilderment) Black is the light of His Essence the

"Divine Ipseity as revealing light that cannot be seen but makes see"; it is the colour of *jalal*, the unfathomable divine majesty whereas God's *jamal*, His beauty reveals itself in other colours. However, there are other sequences of colours as well. Kubra admits that the colours and forms seen by the disciples can have different meanings and importance. They may even be of different origins. Therefore, the disciple is always in need of a spiritual guide to instruct him carefully in the deeper meaning of this and that colour, form, or thought. (*Mystical Dimensions of Islam*)

profession of faith

The Kubrawiyya chose as *dhikr* the profession of faith لا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ (There is no deity but Allah) which, when practised under the stern conditions of initiatic retreat (خلوت) should work not only on the breath but even on the blood and permeate the disciple's entire being. Then the adept (*Kamil*) will learn that the Greatest Name of God (اسم اعظم) is Allah, or rather the 'h' at the end of this word.

Foremost Khulafa of

Among the foremost Khulafa of Kubra were Majduddin Baghdadi, Khwaja Fariduddin Attar, Najmuddin Daya Razi, the author of celebrated Sufi compendium *Mirsad al-ibad* (The Path of God's Bondsmen) Sa'aduddin Hammuya, Baba Kamal Jandi, Saifuddin Bakharzi, Iraj Afshar, Raziuddin Ali Lala, and Sultan Walad, father of Rumi.

Rich legacy of mystical literature

Shaikh Kubra left rich legacy of mystical literature. Among the most-important works are "The Fragrance of (Divine) Beauty and the unveiling of the (Divine) Majesty (*Fawa'ih al-Jamal...*) as mentioned before, "The Ten" Principles (*al-usul al-ashara*) and "The Epistle to the Fearful one, Who Seeks to Escape the Reprimand of the Scold" (*Risalat al-Kha'if al-ha'im min lawmat al-la'im*). In addition to these short works dealing with Sufi Path, Kubra undertook to write a monumental Sufi Commentary on the holy Qur'an.

When he died without completing it, the project was carried on first by his *mureed* Najmuddin Razi and then by another Kubrawi Shaikh Ala al-Dawala Simnani. But of all these works Kubra's *Fawa'ih al-Jamal* is by far the most famous. It is described as a spiritual dairy that its author designed as a guide book to help the Sufi wayfarer to tread successfully the mystical path. In this work Kubra provided a detailed account of the psychological phenomena and spiritual states that the seeker experiences on the way to God, with special reference to the ocular and auditory perceptions one encounters during retreat and meditation. (*Islamic Mysticism, by A. Knysh*)

The ^{Teachings of Shaikh} teachings of Shaikh Kubra was perpetuated by his disciples and Khulafa. Saifuddin Bakharzi, a native of Bakharz in present-day Afghanistan, established a well-known Kubrawi Khanqah in Bukhara where he spent his whole life preaching to his numerous followers. He was held in great esteem by the population of Bukhara which referred to him as "The Master of the Universe". It was at Bakharzi's Khanqah that Berke Khan, the fifth ruler of the Golden Horde, proclaimed his allegiance to Islam. Badruddin Samarqandi a disciple of Bakharzi, travelled to India and established there a branch of the Kubrawiyya order that came to be known as the Firdawsiyya. Its most important figure was Shaikh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri. Sa'aduddin Hammuya established a Khanqah at Bahrabad in Khurasan. It was headed by his son Sadruddin Ibrahim who in 694 A.H. (1295) presided over the conversion to Islam of Ghazan Khan, the Ilkhanid ruler of Iran. The Kubrawiyya's involvement in the conversion of the Mongol rulers bears a eloquent testimony to their high prestige and political clout. (*Islamic Mysticism, by Alexander Knysh*)

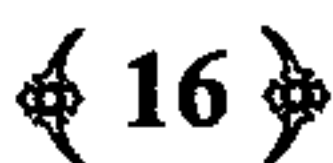
The Kubrawiyya order became the most important in

Kashmir in the later part of the fourteenth century when, according to the legend Sayyid Ameer Ali Hamadhani migrated to that country with seven hundred followers. He reached Kashmir in 1371. His influence did much to shape Muslim mystical thought in the Kashmir Valley which had only recently been Islamized. *principum*

The principal branches of Najmuddin Kubra Sufi order were: Firdawsiyya, Nuriyya, Rukniyya, Hamdaniyya, Istighasiyya (Dhahabiyya), and Nurba-Khshiyya. Of these the most long-lived and prolific initiatic line was probably that descending by way of Raziuddin Ali Lala and two further links of the chain to Ala al-Dawala Simnani. A prolific writer, Simnani further elaborated the analysis of Kubra's subtle spiritual centres (*lata'if*) and also formulated a critique of Ibn Arabi's metaphysical doctrine of *wahdat ul-wujud*. Simnani's two followers named Taqiuddin Akhi and Mahmud Mazdaqani introduced Kubrawi order in Badakhshan (present-day Tajikistan). However this order was universally displaced even in Khwarazm by the Naqshbandiyya from the early ninth (15th) century onwards. The small town of Saktari near Bukhara remained however an active centre of the Kubrawiyya order until at least the early eleventh (17th) century. At some point, the Kubrawiyya seems to have spread eastwards from central Asia into the Muslim regions of China. Finally, there are traces of the Kubrawiyya in Turkey and so on. (*Islamic Mysticism by A. Knysh*)

Sources

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Shaikh Abu al-Hasan Shadhili

The brilliant Maghribi Sufi who was the founder of Shadhiliyya order (*tariqa*) Hazrat Abu al-Hasan Shadhili was born in the northern Morocco, in the Ghumara country between Ceuta and Tangiers around 583 A.H. (1187). His original name was Abdul Jabbar. He was descendant of Hazrat Imam Hasan (R.A) son of Hazrat Ali ibn Abi Talib.

He studied under Shaikh Abu Madyan and travelled through Algeria to Tunisia and later to Egypt where he began to form an independent mystical movement in Islam. Upon completing his studies in religious sciences at Faz, he for some time considered the career of an alchemist, but eventually abandoned this idea in favour of mystical path. He received some instructions from the great Sufi masters of his time. But in view of his anxious desire to meet the spiritual pole (*qutb*) of the era, he set out on a journey to the Muslim East. He came to Iraq in 615 A.H. (1218) where he studied under the guidance of Abu al-Fath al-Wasiti, the principal disciple and Khilafa of the founder of the Rifaiyya Brotherhood of Ahmad al-Rifai. Here someone advised him to return to Maghrib and see the pole there. However in Morocco Shadhili was finally able to recognize the pole in the person of Abdus Salam Mashish, who became his spiritual master (Pir) par excellence. He stayed in his company for several years whereupon he travelled to Tunisia. It seems likely that Shadhili's departure for the East was precipitated by political turmoil which soon afterwards resulted in Abdus Salam Mashish's murder on the order of a local tribal ruler. In Tunisia Shadhili settled in the village of Shadhila, halfway between Tunis and Qayrawan. This village gave him the name under which he became

known among his followers. (*Islamic Mysticism, by Knysht*)

As a Sufi master Shadhili attracted a large number of followers including chief Spanish spiritual successor (Khilafa) named Abu al-Abbas al-Mursi who became the first Shaikh of Shadhiliyya order after the death of Shadhili in 656 A.H. After him Ataullah Iskandari (d.709/1309-1310) a disciple of Mursi became the second Shaikh of this order when his master (Mursi) died in 686 A.H (1287). Ataullah is now regarded as the reputed founder of this order in present day North Africa. Later on the offshoots of the Shadhiliyya order such as Badawiyya and Dasuqiyya continued to expand and flourish after the thirteen century. The Shadhiliyya order, however assumed new organizational structures and won new adepts in both Egypt and North Africa and spread throughout the Islamic world.

Abu al-Hasan Shadhili was Sunni, in theology he was orthodox, an apponent of Mutazilism and he was given to an esoteric interpretation of the holy Qur'an and Islamic beliefs. He is also reputed to have acquired thorough knowledge in all the area of Islamic studies. He was also well-versed in dialecticism. But like other Sufis he always gave precedence to intuitional knowledge over the acquisitive.

Ibn al-Jabbagh relates a story about Shadhili who said "In al-Qayrawan, I was ill, and I saw in dream the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said: Cleanse your raiment of defilement and you will obtain the help of God with every breath (*nafas*)." I asked, "What is my raiment, O the Apostle of God?" He replied: God has clothed you with the vestment (*hulla*) of mystical knowledge, then with the vestment of love, then with the vestment of belief in the divine unity (*tawhid*), then with the vestment of faith (*iman*), and then with the vestment of submission (*islam*). If anyone knows God, everything becomes

of little importance for him; if anyone loves God, everything becomes contemptible for him; if anyone asserts the unity of God, he associates nothing with Him; if anyone has faith in God, he is safe from everything; if anyone is resigned to God, rarely does he disobey Him; if he disobeys Him, he begs of Him to be excused; if he begs of Him to be excused, his excuse is accepted. With these words I understood the meaning of His saying, 'And thy garments keep from stain.'" (74:4) (Excerpted from *Durrat al-Asrar*. p.8)

Ibn al-Sabbagh relates that Shaikh Shadhili embarked on a spiritual journey in search of Sufi Shaikh. He travelled to Baghdad where he was told by an Iraqi Sufi Wasiti (detail follows) to go back to the west of his homeland because the *qutb* of the time was there. Abdal- Salam Ibn Mashish was the *qutb*. The Shaikh got initiation and Khirqah from him. This spiritual kinship goes back to Hazrat Ali (R.A). Shaikh Shadhili describes how he found his Pir:

When I came to Iraq, I met the Shaykh Abu al-Fath al-Wasiti, the like of whom I have not seen in Iraq. My quest was for the *qutb*. One of the saints said to me, "Are you searching for the *qutb* in Iraq while he is in your country? Return to your land and you will find him there.

So, I returned to the Maghrib where I met my teacher, who is my master the shaykh, the saint, the gnostic, the trustworthy, the *qutb* the *ghawth*, Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam ibn Mashish al-Sharif al-Hasani. He related:

When I drew near him, while he was living in Ghumara in a lodge on the top of a mountain, I bathed at a spring by the base of that mountain, forsook all dependence on my own knowledge and works, and went up toward him as one in need. Just then he was coming down toward me, wearing a patched cloak, and on his head a cap of palm leaves.

"Welcome to 'Ali ib 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Jabbar," he said to me, and repeated my lineage down to the Apostle of God. Then he said to me, "O, Ali, you have come up to us destitute of your knowledge and works, so you will receive from us the riches of this world and the next."

He (al-Shadhili) continued,

Awe of him seized me. So I remained with him for some days until God awakened my perception, and I saw that he possessed many supernatural powers (*kharq al 'adat*). For example, one day as I sat before him while a young son of his played with him in his lap, it came into my mind to question him concerning the greatest name of God. The child came to me, threw his arms about my neck, and shook me, saying, "O Abu al-Hasan, you desired to question the master concerning the greatest name of God. It is not a matter of importance that you should ask about the greatest name of God. The important thing is that you should be the greatest name of God, that is to say, that the secret (*sirr*) of God should be lodged in your heart." When he had finished speaking, the shaykh (Ibn Mashish) smiled and said to me, 'Such a one has answered you for me.' He was, then, the Qutb of that time.

Then he said to me, "O 'Ali, depart to the Province of Ifriqiya and dwell there in a place called Shadhila, for God will name you al-Shadhili. After that you will move to the city of Tunis where charges will be brought against you before the authorities. Then you will move to the East where you will inherit the rank of Qutb."

I said to him, "O my master, give me your spiritual bequest." So he replied, "O 'Ali, God is God and men are men. Keep you tongue from the mention of them, and your heart from inclining before them, and be careful to guard the members (*jawarih*) and to fulfill the divine ordinances; thus

the friendship (*wilaya*) of God is perfected in you. Have no remembrance of them except under obligation that duty to God imposes on you; thus your scrupulousness is perfected. Then say: O God, relieve me from remembrance of them and spare me disturbances from them. Save me from their evils, enable me to dispense with their good through Thy good, and as a special favour assume Thou care of me among them. Verily, Thou art mighty over all things."

(Excerpted from Durrat al-Asrar)

The meeting with Ibn Mashish played a pivotal role in Shadhili's intellectual and spiritual formation. Feeling comfortable with his spiritual achievements after this encounter, Shadhili moved to the city of Tunisia as his spiritual guide had directed. Here he settled for several years before his permanent departure to Egypt. During his stay in Tunis, he attracted many followers, who perceived in him great human and spiritual qualities, and who considered him to be on the side of the poor and downtrodden in society. This popularity, however, won him the envy and the hatred of Ibn al-Bara' the chief *qadi* of Tunis who, according to Mackeen, charged al-Shadhili "with Fatimid learnings."

When Shaikh Shadhili first time arrived at Tunis, he experienced an interesting incident. He relates: When I entered the city of Tunis as a young man, I found there a great famine, and I came upon men dying in the market places. I said to myself, "Had I wherewith to buy bread for these hungry people, I would surely do it." Then I was instructed inwardly: "Take what is in your pocket." So I shook my pocket and, lo, there was silver money in it. So I went to a baker at Bab al-Manara and said to him, "Count up your loaves of bread." He counted them for me. Then I offered them to the people who took them greedily. I drew out the pieces of money and

handed them to the baker.

Consequently, I remained for some days inwardly perplexed until, on Friday, I went into the Zaytuna mosque, near the reserves section on the east side of the mosque, and performed two cycles of the greeting of the mosque and pronounced the salutation. Suddenly, I saw a man on my right. I greeted him and he smiled at me, saying. "O 'Ali, you say, 'Had I wherewith to feed these hungry people, I should surely do it.' You would presume to be more generous than God toward His creatures. Had He willed it, He would surely have fed them, for He is more cognizant of their welfare than you."

Then I said to him, "O my master, by God, who are you?" He replied, "I am Ahmad al-Khidr. I was in China and I was told, 'Go and look for my saint 'Ali in Tunis' . So I came hurriedly to you." When I had performed the Friday worship, I looked about for him, but did not find him. (*Durrat al-Asrar*)

In view of hostile political situation, Shaikh Shadhili decided to say good bye to Tunis. When the Sultan came to know the reality of affairs that the Shaikh had no concern with Fatimid regime and the allegation against him was baseless, he supported him. But the Shaikh had planned to move to Egypt where his tariqa flourished and expanded. When he left Tunis, the Sultan heard of it and immediately sent someone to get him back. But the Shaikh answered: "I left the country with the sole intention to perform pilgrimage. If and when God wills me to go back, I shall return to Tunis."

Shaikh Shadhili said: "I saw the Holy Prophet ﷺ in a dream and he said to me: "O Ali, migrate to Egypt and there raise and instruct forty disciples." It was the summer season and intensely hot. So I said: O my master, O Apostle of God, the heat of summer is intense." He replied: "clouds will overshadow you there." Then I added: I fear thirst. He said:

"The sky will rain for you every day before you." So he promised me seventy miraculous gifts on my journey. Thus the Shaikh alongwith his companions journeyed toward Egypt.

Shadhiliyya order was formed against the background of "an Urban surrounding as an outcome of the existing patterns of politic-religious and economic life. It is maintained that this order (*tariqa*) has been characterized, since its inception, by both intellectualism and social action. Abd al-Halim Mahmud claims that Shaikh Shadhili started learning the religious sciences while still young and earned himself the best exoteric education. He memorized the Qur'an by heart and studied the Sunnah. He insisted on the importance and genuineness of mysticism as an Islamic science and saw no contradiction between Shariah and *haqiqa* nor between the exoteric and esoteric in Islam. (Ibn al-Sabbagh) The emphasis he laid upon learning thus became part of the rules of Shadhiliyya order. Disciples were accepted only after they were versed in the sciences of Shariah and *fiqh* (Islamic law and jurisprudence). There is no doubt that Shadhili mystical aspiration was shaped by his understanding of the Qur'an and his deep awaranness of the Divine presence in the universe. The vision of the divine being stirred him to the depth of his soul, and implanted in him deeply and permanently love of God and gnosis (*marifat*). Although he was intellectually oriented, he associated *mahaba* (love) with *marifat* (gnosis) and took the heart to be the locus of this association. Shadhili pondered over all the encompassing nature of Sufi knowledge in the following manner:

Mystical knowledge (*ma'rifa*) is a disclosure of the sciences along with the veil. When the veil is removed, we call it certainty (*yaqin*). He who has access to the divine realities is drawn away in rapture. He who has mystical knowledge is

carried away (*maslub*) from himself. The mystical sciences are garnered treasure, and the illuminations (*anwar*) are spiritual insights (*basa'ir*). Mystical knowledge is divine amplitude (*si'a*); unity (*tawhid*) is sincerity (*sidq*); wisdom is instruction; light is clarification (*bayan*). The object of knowledge is of two kinds: one derived from divine bestowals (*mawahib*) and one from acquisitions (*makasib*). Acquisitions are of two kinds: one coming by way of instruction and the other by speculation.

Therefore, in order to know God intimately, a true Sufi must lose himself in God and attempt to annihilate any distance or chasm that may separate him from God's treasures of mercy. This is not to say that, Man is God and God is Man. Man is conscious of his imperfection and often attempts to reach perfection by manifesting the divine presence in his life. To al-Shadhili, true servanthship (*ubudiya*) is strengthened by persisting in neediness, impotence, weakness, and lowliness before God. He said, "The opposites of these are the attributes of Lordship, and what have you to do with them? So hold fast to your attributes while depending on the attributes of God. Then say as an expression of genuine neediness: 'O Sufficient One, whom has the needy but Thee?' As an expression of weakness, say: 'O Powerful One, whom has the weak but Thee?'" (*Durrat al-Asrar*)

Shadhili's concept of tawhid is based on experience of witnessing or contemplating Allah of the soul's uniting in rapture with Allah... The real unitarian is he who allows Allah to have complete sway over his life. For Shadhili, Sufism is training the self in servanthship and restoring it to the rules of lordship. To him the true Sufi is one who does not turn his attention to mankind but relies on nothing except the promises of God Most High.

According to Martin Lings, there is strong connection

"between mercy and comprehension" in the Qur'an. In Qur'anic language, mercy can be synonymous with rain, comprehension, and revelation. In view of Ibn al-Sabbagh, Shaikh Shadhili pondered the intricate connection between his external practice and the inner meanings of mercy and comprehension as portrayed by the holy Qur'an. Thus, he achieved the status of Qutb only after he embodied all these transcendent qualities in his personal life and behaviour.

In addition to its intellectualism, Shadhili's Sufism was socially oriented. It propagated the values of family life, competitiveness in the economic sphere, and hard work. He never emphasized the necessity of monastic or solitary life, nor did he encourage specific forms of vocal *dhikr*. Shadhili was continuously searching within himself for the supreme qualities (attributes) that God implanted in man. Likewise every member of his order was supposed to realize the spirit of the order in his own life and his own environment in the midst of his duties.

Shaikh Shadhili comments on the ideal Sufi by saying that he must have four essential qualities: Being characterized by the characteristics of God, abiding closely to the commands of God, relinquishing the defense of one's self out of shame before God, and holding to the practice of spiritual converse by truly abiding with God.

In Shadhili view Tasawwuf, (Sufism) as a science, could lead to an exemplary ethical and social behaviour: The starting point of Tasawwuf is *ilm*, or religious science. Its middle point is action and its end is divine gift.

Little is known about the early life of Shaikh Shadhili while he was in North Africa. Nor Shaikh left my legacy of mystical literature except his teachings, discourses and some amazing spiritual events that have come down to us through

his disciples, friends and associates which Ibn al-Sabbagh collected in his book *Durrat al-Asrar wa Tuhfat at-Abrar* and translated by Elmer H. Douglas. A few events which reflect luminous inner state, spiritual excellence and lofty rank of Shaikh Shadhili, are reproduced from *Durrat* as follows:

In his early life Shaikh Shadhili desired to learn the art of alchemy, but was forbidden by the Lord Most High. Shaikh Abu Faris abd al-Baji says that Shaikh Shadhili has related him the event as follows:

In the beginning of my career I was wont to pursue the science of alchemy and would make petition to God regarding it. I was told, "Alchemy is in your urine. Put into it whatever you will and it will become what you desire." So I heated a pickax, quenched it therewith, and it turned into gold. Then my presence of mind returned to me and I exclaimed, "O my Lord, I petitioned Thee for a certain thing, but I obtained it only by the use of unclean devices, and the use of unclean devices is unlawful." Then I was told, "O 'Ali, the world is filth, and, if you desire it, you will not obtain it except by filth." I replied, "O my Lord, deliver me from it." I was then told, "Heat the pickax and it will return to iron." I heated it and it became iron.

He related,

One night in the beginning of my period of wandering, I lodged in a place where there were many wild beasts. The beasts began to growl at me. So I sat down on a high hill and said, "By God, I will invoke blessings of on the Apostle of God, Surely he said, 'If anyone blesses me once, by that act the blessing of God will be upon him tenfold'. and , if the blessing of God be upon me, I shall pass the night under His protection." So I did this and feared nothing. At dawn I went to a pool of water to perform ablutions for the morning prayer.

Before it was a mass of reeds from which partridges emerged with a great flutter of wings. Fear overcame me and I drew back. Then I was summoned within me with the words, "O 'Ali, when you passed last night under the care of God, the growling of the wild beasts at you did not frighten you, but when you arose today under your own care, the flutter of partridge feathers caused you to be afraid." (*Durrat-al-Asrar*)

He related,

One night in my period of wandering, I came to a cave to pass the night there. Within I heard the voice of a man praising God. I said, "By God, I will not trouble him this night." So I passed the night at the mouth of the cave. About dawn I heard him say, "O God, verily some people have besought Thee that men should be brought in their presence and be subject to them. O God, I pray Thee for their removal from me and for their shunning of me that I may have no refuge except in Thee."

When it became light, he came out, and, lo, he was my teacher. Thereupon I said to him, "O my master, last night I heard you say so and so." He replied, "O 'Ali, which is better for you, that you should say, 'Be Thou for me, or 'Cause the hearts of Thy creatures to be submissive to me'? For whenever He is for you, you have all things." (*Durrat al-Asrar*)

Abdullah ibn Salama al-Habibi was the first to become disciple of Abu al-Hasan Shadhili in Shadhila. One day his disciples asked him to tell something about his own master Shaikh Shadhili. He replied"

"I have seen many things regarding him, some of which I shall relate to you. I remained with him on Mount Zaghawan for forty days, feeding on herbs of the fields and laurel leaves until the inside of my cheeks became sore. Then he said to me, "O 'Abd Allah, it seems that you desire food." I

replied, "O my master, my looking at you enables me to do without it." So he said to me, "Tomorrow, if God wills, we shall go down to Shadhila and some divine gift will come to us on the way."

He continued,

So the next morning we descended and, while walking through a valley, he said to me. "O 'Abd Allah, if I should leave the road, do not follow me."

He went on to say,

An intense mystical state fell upon him, and he departed from the way until he was at some distance from me. Then I saw four birds about the size of a stork come down from the sky and spread their wings over his head. Each one of them came and conversed with him, and then flew away. Among them were birds about the size of swallows which flew around him between the earth and the horizon, hovering in circle about him. When they had disappeared from sight, he returned to me, saying, "O 'Abd Allah, did you see anything?" I told him what I had seen and he explained to me. "The four birds are some of the angels of the fourth heaven which came to question me concerning knowledge (*'ilm*), and I answered them thereon. The birds which had the form of swallows are the spirits of saints which came to receive a blessing from our arrival."

He remained on Mount Zaghawan a long time and God caused to flow for him a spring of fresh, running water. There he had a cave in which to dwell. At present, the call to prayer is heard from the base of the mountain at the hour of worship, and people go up to the cave but find no one, and no one inhabits it except the believing *jinn* who were his companions.

He said,

I was told, "O 'Ali, go down to the people in order that they may receive some good from you," I replied, "O my Lord, deliver me from other men. I have no capacity to mingle with them." Then I was told, "Descend, for We have caused security to accompany you and We have withdrawn blame from you." I said, "O Lord, if Thou commit me to men, I must eat by their pittances." Then I was told, "Spend, O 'Ali, for I am the Provider, if you wish from your pocket (*jayb*) or if you wish, from the unseen (*ghayb*)."

So he entered the city of Tunis and resided in a house by the Balat Mosque. There, he had as companions a group of noble men. Among them were the Shaykh Abu al-Hasan 'Ali ibn Makhluf al-Siqilli, Abu 'Abd Allah al-Sabun the Shaykh Abu Muhammad 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Zaytuni, his servant Abu al-Aza'im Madi, Abu 'Abd Allah al-Bijai' al-Khayyat, and Abu 'Abd Allah al-Jarihi. They were all endowed with miraculous powers (*karamat*) and blessing (*barakat*).

Shaikh Abu al-Azaim Madi relates that Shaikh Shadhili one day discoursed on the significance of a Sufi master in his dealings with the disciples. He said that his hand would be upon them to preserve them wherever they might be. I made objection to that in my mind and I said "That cannot be except with God." When morning came, I was depressed and I went out of Alexandria and sat on the seashore the entire day. After performing afternoon prayer, I leaned my hand upon my knees. Suddenly, something shook me. I raised my head and saw a beautiful woman garbed in lovely clothes and ornaments inviting me to satisfy her. I sought refuge with God. But she said: By God I will not leave you. Then I pushed her away from me. She grasped me to her bosom and played with me as a child plays with a sparrow and I lost control over myself. She forced me to herself and my lower-self desired her. Suddenly a

hand got hold of me by the collar, and I heard the Shaikh Shadhili saying to me: O Madi what is this into which you are falling?" Then he cast me away from her. I felt that the Shaikh (his spiritual master) had passed by that place. But on raising my head, I found neither the Shaikh nor the woman.

Madi relates another event: I went on pilgrimage with my Shaikh Shadhili. On our arrival in the holy city of Madinah, the Shaikh stood before the door of the Mosque of the Prophet seeking permission to enter. "This is a place", he said, "regarding which God has spoken: 'O ye who believe, enter not the Prophet's houses until permission is accorded to you.'" Thus Shaikh stood there until permission to enter was granted to him. He entered and stood before the face of the Apostle of God. Uncovering his head, he uttered: "The blessings of Allah, His angels, His Messengers, His Prophets, and of all His creatures from the inhabitants of His Heavens and His earth be upon thee, O our master, O Apostle of God, and upon all thy companions." He went on repeating that over and over, as he was in a state of ecstasy, until the ecstasy subsided. Sitting on one side of the sanctuary, he said: "When I was in the act of greeting him with peace, I had a revelation of him wherein I was greeting him, and he was returning to me the greeting with his forefinger."

Madi relates: "The Shaikh Shadhili had son named Ali. I met him in Alexandria drunk with wine. So I brought him to his home and beat him so severely that he grabbed onto his mother. I dragged him away with such force that he pulled out with his hands the cords of her hair. She cried aloud and wept. When the Shaikh came to her and asked why she was weeping, she told him the story but did not inform him of the son's drunkenness. The Shaikh became troubled. He came to Zawiya and asked Madi why did he do such and such? He

replied: Because I found him drunk with wine. By God, even if he had clung to you, I would have flogged him according to the legal stipulation." Then he went on a retreat for an hour and called for me. When I went to him, I found him glad and rejoicing and he said to me: "O Madi, I wanted to imprecate for my son, but I was told, O Hasan what is this between you and my saint? Let him be until which I have decreed for him shall be accomplished." A short time later he went out as wandering ascetic, appeared in the land of Maghrib (North Africa), and thus his sainthood became apparent.

Shaikh Shadhili states: when "I entered the land of Egypt and established my dwelling there, I prayed to Almighty God: O my Lord, Thou hast caused me to dwell in the land of the Copts to be buried among them so that my flesh becomes mingled with their flesh and my bones with their bones." A hidden voice came to me: "Nay, O Ali, (The Shaikh Shadhili) but you will be buried in a land that God has never compressed at all."

When the Shaikh set out on the journey in which he passed away, he asked Abbas al-Mursi to carry a pickax, and shovel in case one of us should die and burial became necessary. It was an intimation of his death. On entering the desert, the Shaikh and a youth who accompanied him fell ill. The youth died one day's journey reaching Humaythira. But the Shaikh said to carry the youth to Humaythira where he was washed and buried.

That evening the Shaikh assembled his companions and gave them various final admonition. He also enjoined upon them the **Litany of the Sea** (*Hizb al-Bahr*) adding "Teach it to your children for in it is the Greatest Name of God." He talked in private with Abu al-Abbas Mursi and gave him instructions and made him to be the especially favoured

possessor of divine blessings. He said to his companions: "When I am dead, look to Mursi for he is my successor. He will have an exalted station among you. He is one of the doors of God, praise be to Him."

Between sunset and dusk, he said to Mursi: O Muhammad, fill for me a receptacle with water from this well." He replied: Its water is salty and bitter, but the water that we have with us is fresh."

The Shaikh said: Give me some of it (water from the well) for what I have in mind you know not." So the salty water was brought to him. He drank of it, rinsed his mouth and spat it into the receptacle. Then he said to Mursi: "Pour it back into the well." When Mursi poured it back, the water of the well turned sweet and fresh and became abundant.

The Shaikh passed that night in devotion to God and recitation of *dhikr*. "He was heard saying: My God, My God." When the day broke, he became still. The companion thought he was asleep, they shook him and found him dead. Al Mursi gave burial wash to the Shaikh. The companions said funeral prayer and buried him in Humaythira. This place is in the desert of Aidhab in a valley on the Sa'id road. Al-Mursi relates: The Shaikh ordered me to perform the pilgrimage and promised me divine gifts.

Shaikh Shadhili said: "When I fell ill, I prayed to God, when will the encountering take place?" The voice said: "When you reach Humaythire then will the encounter be."

He died in 656 A.H. (1258) in Egypt at the age of 72.

Some of the teachings, injunctions, and doctrine on Sufism of Shaikh Abu al-Hasan Shadhili are recorded here in nutshell:

1. The Sufi way is the holding of one's course towards God by four things: The first of these four is remembrance

(*dhikr*) the basis of which is righteous works, and the fruit of which is illumination. The second is meditation (*tafakkur*), the basis of which is perseverance, and the fruit of which is knowledge. The third is poverty (*faqr*) the basis of which is thankfulness, and the fruit of which is an increase of it. The fourth is love, the basis of which is dislike of the world and its people and the fruit of which is union with the beloved.

2. Whatever involuntary thoughts (*khatarat*) come over to you to hinder you from the object of your desire, be cognizant of your Lord's nearness to you. Knowing this, your heart rejoices when you constantly consider how He has procured for you the things that are beneficial to you and averted the things that cause you harm.

3. If you desire to have some share in what the saints (*auliya Allah*) possess, adopt two good habits of mind: 'Shun the world and renounce the company of human being' then practice devotion to God with watchfulness and continue in repentance with spiritual mindfulness in seeking pardon with contrition and in submitting to the Shariah with rectitude.

4. The saint is kept secure from involuntary thoughts and evil whispering, (*wasawis*) in four situations. These are: during the worship, during supplication and seeking refuge with God, when difficulties befall and when they are removed. In these situations nothing occurs or clings to their hearts save God.

5. Sincerity is a light from the light of God that He has deposited in the heart of His believing servant and by which He cuts him off from all others. That is sincerity which no angel looks upon to record it, no Satan to corrupt it, and no evil inclination to cause it to deviate. On the other hand, hypocrisy is turning the heart in a religious act to other than God in a way that God has not permitted.

6. Tasawwuf, as a science, could lead to an exemplary ethical and social behaviour. The starting point of *tasawwuf* is 'ilm or religious science. Its middle point is action, and its end is divine gift. The mystic path (*tariqa*) is neither one of monasticism (*rahbaniya*) nor of eating barley and bran, nor one of the other skills. It is only a matter of patient endurance and firm belief under divine guidance.

7. Patience endurance is applied whenever one suffers injury. Holy fear implies that one causes no harm to others. Scrupulousness has to do with what goes out and enters here.

8. Mystical knowledge is of the Truth, which no one who possesses it, is belittled by divulging it to any creature.

9. Remembrance (*dhikr*) of Him is the light of the heart, and His presence is the key to the invisible.

10. Quoting from his teacher, he said: The most excellent of religious works are four plus four: They are love toward God, acquiescence in God's decree, asceticism in life, reliance upon God, performance of God's ordinance, avoidance of what God had forbidden, enduring what has no significance, and caution with regard to everything that distracts.

11. Whenever the lower self (*nafs*) is dominant and the spirit (*ruh*) subordinate, then occur drought and sterility, the whole order is overturned and every evil befalls. So heed the guiding words of God and the healing discourse of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

12. The exalted man is he who is rooted in the science of reverence (*adab*) who conducts himself according to divine will, and not by passion, appetitive desire, or natural disposition. The real asceticism is emptying the heart of whatever is other than God. The real knowledge of what is good implies dwelling in it, and real knowledge of evil implies departure from it.

13. The real prostration is the yielding of the heart to the ordinance of the Lord. The real vanishing of passion (*hawa*) from the heart implies fondness for meeting with God in every breath without man's choosing a certain situation in which to be.

14. The real love is beholding the beloved face to face, and its consummation is your destitution in everytime and season.

15. The real spiritual aspiration (*himma*) is the attachment of the heart to the things to which one aspires, and its perfection is the union of the heart with God while separating itself from all except Him.

16. The real nearness to God means unawareness through nearness, of the nearness by reason of the great nearness.

17. The Sufi Shaikh is one who directs you to your ease, not one who directs you to your toil.

18. Sufism is training the self in servanthship and restoring it to the rules of lordship. The Sufi, in respect of mankind, within his innermost soul is like scattered dust particles in the atmosphere, neither existent beings nor nonexistent beings, just as they are known by God.

19. The vilest of men in rank is one who is niggardly of worldly possessions towards one deserving them.

20. Anyone whose divine illumination takes precedence over his reason is blessed indeed, but anyone whose reason takes precedence over his illumination is impoverished.

21. Divine Unity (*tawhid*) is a light which makes you nonexistent to others and makes others nonexistent to you.

22. The ranks of the saints are four in number: rank in respect of nearness to God, rank in the dominion, rank in respect of the fulfilment of divine obligations, and rank in respect of election.

23. Cast yourself before the door of divine satisfaction and be detached from your resolves and your will, even from repentance, because of His relenting. God has said: Then He relented towards them that they might repent, for God is the Relenting, the Compassionate.

24. Any affliction for which a hope for reward is entertained and a punishment is feared is not an affliction. An affliction for which neither a reward is hoped nor a punishment is feared is affliction in true sense.

25. Your tracing of the origin of the secret of His close proximity to you is like its extension to the farthest limit of His remoteness from you. These two-proximity and remoteness-are only two aspects of the same soul, corresponding to the aspects of passing away (*fana*) and of continuance (*baqa*). If you are in the state of passing away, there is neither proximity nor remoteness, as there is neither union nor separation. If you are in a state of continuance, you have learned what the tradition says: "By Me he hears, and by Me he sees," and so forth.

26. Mystical knowledge is that which has severed you from everything except God and brought you back to Him.

27. Whenever He hinders you from attaining what you desire and makes you resort to what He desires, it is a sign of His love for you.

28. My teacher admonished me saying: Flee from the good of humans more often than you flee from their evil, for their evil afflicts your body while their good afflicts your heart, and that you should be afflicted in your body is better than that you should be afflicted in your heart.

29. Someone wanted the Shaikh to explain what is the drink of love, the cup of love, and the cupbearer? He replied: The drink is the light radiating from the beauty of the Beloved.

The cup is the kindness that brings that light into contact with the mouth of the hearts. The cupbearer is He who befriends the greatest of the elect and His righteous servants.

30. Knock on the door of the *dhikrullah* seeking shelter with God and avowing your need of Him, with continual silence towards your fellows and the shepherding of your innermost being to guard it from converse with the lower-self with every breath, if you desire to have spiritual sufficiency.

31. Sustenance is divinely apportioned. It is not the piety of a pious men that increases it nor is it the impiety of an impious man that diminishes it. (*Excerpted and summarized from Durrat al-Asrar*)

Once when Shaikh Shadhili was travelling to Makkah to perform pilgrimage and the ship was about to sail, there was no favourable wind to proceed on. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ in a vision taught *Hizbu l-Bahr* (Litany of the Sea) to the Shaikh and directed him to recite alongwith other passengers on the board. This resolved the sailing problem and the ship left. When dying in the desert, Shaikh Shadhili is reported to have gathered his disciples around him and gave as a legacy of *Hizbu l-Bahr* with the advice to make their children commit it to memory for it contains the Greatest Name of Allah. This litany has become a regular devotional exercise for the saints and mystics of different Sufi Brotherhood since then. But it must not be recited without the permission of the Shaikh or directed from the invisible.

Sources

1. Ibn al-Sabbagh, *Durrat al-Asrar wa Tuhfat al-Abrar*. Translated by Elmer H. Douglas 1993.
2. Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism*.

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi

The greatest Persian mystic and poet Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi was born at Balkh in Persia (Central Asia) on September 30, 1207 A.D. (604 AH). Since Rumi lived most part of his life in Konya, a city in present-day Turkey, the Turks claim him as being Turkish. The Afghans raise another claim arguing that since this great saint was born in Balkh, a city now located in Afghanistan he must be considered of Afghani origin. However most scholar agree that Rumi is Persian on the ground that Balkh city in which Rumi was born, was Persian city at the time of his birth, and also all the Rumi's books were written in the Persian language. However Rumi chose Konya as his place of residence and remained there until his death.

Rumi's family had settled in Balkh in the northern Persian province of Khurasan for several generations which had produced a notable number of jurists, saints and sages. Most of the family's history traces its descent from Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (R.A), the first Righteous Caliph of Islam.

Husain ibn Ahmad Khatibi, the grandfather of Rumi was a great scholar of the time. According to Aflaki, Rumi's grandmother was the daughter of Alauddin Muhammad, son of Khwarazmshah. Some consider Alauddin Muhammad, the uncle of Sultan Muhammad Khwarazmshah. Bahauddin Walad, the father of Rumi was also a great scholar and bore the title of king of scholars. He inherited wealth of exoteric knowledge and spiritual excellence from his father. He was conversant in all the Islamic sciences and was an acknowledged and venerated preacher, instructor, jurist, and sufi of eminence. He displayed a fanatical allegiance to Imam

Ghazzali who in his own day had inflicted a crushing defeat on philosophy. Thus Bahauddin Walad was an authority in both exoteric and esoteric sciences of Islam. As an instructor, he taught Islamic law and jurisprudence in mosques and other public places; and as an esoteric divine, he would meet in private environment with those who were in quest of Ultimate Truth. He was disciple and one of Khulafa of Khwaja Najmuddin Kubra.

Bahauddin Walad grew up in the atmosphere of hostility to philosophy. He was son of a great Sufi and Sufis never in the history acknowledged Greek, or any other alien philosophy or doctrines. This creed of his attracted him to Ghazzali. By 1208 when Rumi was a child of one year, his father publicly condemned philosophers and rationalists and advocated to study inner dimension of Islam. He even did not spare the courtiers who maligned king with him. The king Muhammad, the great Shah of Khwarazm attended most of his lectures, but eventually grew jealous of his popularity and suspicious of his teachings. The philosopher Fakhruddin Razi, who was both the courtier and the teacher of the king too helped malign the atmosphere against Bahauddin. The table was turned against him to the extent that the king sent him the keys of his treasury and made him an offer to become king. Bahauddin answered that he had no concern with earthly greatness and glory and that he would willingly leave the country so as to remove from the kings's mind all misgiving on this score. Needless to repeat that this political pollution and misgivings were the result of conflict between the philosophers and the Sufis at the court of Khwarazm king. The conflict between Bahauddin and Fakhruddin Razi had become so acute and acrimonious that it has often been said that it resulted or caused Bahauddin exile from Balkh. But there is no

authentic account of Baha's enmity with Razi. Sultan Walad, his grandson does not mention the name of Razi when he talks of Baha's migration in his Mathnavi. On the other hand he attributed it to the bad attitude of the people of Balkh.

No historian of Rumi had been able to fix the date with confidence of his father's migration from Balkh. Most probably he left Balkh in 1219-1220 when Rumi was twelve or thirteen years old. It is also said that Baha left Balkh, first time in 1212, and later returned to his native town which he finally abandoned a year before Mongol invasion of Balkh in 1220. It is likely Bahauddin alongwith his entire family left in 1219 to perform pilgrimage at Makkah. They stopped at Nishapur, the hometown of Khwaja Fariduddin Attar, the great Persian mystic and poet who received the guests warmly. His spiritual eye visualized great promise in Rumi and presented to the young boy his work *Asrar-nama* (Book of Secrets). Rumi, as history recorded, proved himself worthy of this tribute. Ira Friedlander romantically describes this meeting in these words: Bahauddin and Attar sat together, drank the customary tea and spoke of passage in the Qur'an. Several hours later, the travellers were preparing to depart. As young Rumi walked closely behind his father, Attar turned to one of his *dervishes* and remarked: "Look at this peculiar situation; **there goes a sea followed by an ocean.**" Attar said to Bahauddin "Your son will soon be kindling fire in all the world's lovers of God."

From Nishapur, Bahauddin went to Baghdad. In every town which they visited, the chief men came to see Bahauddin and listened to his teachings. According to Jami, in Baghdad, he was received by Shaikh Shahabuddin Suharwardy, and stayed for a couple of days in Madrasa Mustansari and then left for Makkah on the third day. In Baghdad the Caliph sent him a present of 3000 Sequins, but he declined the gift as

being money unlawfully acquired. He also refused to visit the Caliph, but on his request consented to preach in the great mosque after the noon prayer on the following Friday, the Caliph being present. In his speech he reproached the Caliph face to face for his evil course of life and warned him of his approaching slaughter by the Mongols. The Caliph again sent him rich presents in money, horses and other valuables but he refused to accept them. Before Bahauddin left Baghdad, intelligence was received regarding siege of Balkh and its devastation and destruction by the Mongol army.

From Baghdad Rumi went to Syria with his father and after performing Hajj in Makkah, they all left for Zinjan; and from here to Larinda. Here Rumi had attained age of 18, and was married to a young lady named Gohar Khatun, daughter of Khwaja Lalai Samarqandi. The next year (1226) a son was born to Rumi and named Sultan Walad. Here after constant travelling for a period of five years and marriage of Rumi, he settled down to a life of comparative peace in Larinda.

Larinda was not far from Konya. From Larinda, on the invitation of the Seljuk King Alauddin Kaiqubad or rather of his wazir Parwana Muinuddin, Bahauddin moved with his family and settled permanently in the capital city of Seljuk Empire Konya (Rum) around 1229 A.D. (Rum was then called as Asiatic Turkey). He preached there for two years till his death in 1231. Rumi was 24 years of age at this time. He succeeded his father according to the will of Bahauddin. On his shoulders fell the mantle of the King of Scholars, a great opportunity and a great challenge before him to meet.

Rumi had exceptional intelligence and great brilliant promise. His systematic education started at home at the knee of his father since childhood. He had, by this time mastered Arabi and Persian grammar, prosody, the Qur'an, Hadith,

Qur'anic commentary, Shariah, history theology, logic, philosophy, mathematic and astronomy. Rumi is assumed to have become familiar with the principles of Sufism under his father's guidance, although his formal spiritual training started in around 1232 when a brilliant student of his father named Burhanuddin Tirmzi came to Konya in the hope of visiting his master.

Tirmzi was a devoted disciple of Rumi's father in Balkh. It is related that at the time of Rumi's succession to his father, Tirmzi was not present in Konya. He arrived there a year after the death of Rumi's father completely unaware of the fact that the Master (Bahauddin) had passed away a year before his arrival in Konya. It is also related that Bahauddin after one year of his death directed in dream to Tirmzi to go to Konya and teach his son.

Rumi learnt a lot at the feet of Tirmzi in respect of Islamic mysticism, the Sufi path, and the intricacy of Sufism. Once both travelled to Aleppo and Damascus and met the most influential Sufi master of all times, Ibn Arabi. Tirmzi continued to impart instructions and transmit spiritual treasure which he had inherited from Rumi's father. Rumi too surrendered himself completely to his tutor who took nine years to complete his teachings to him until his death in 1240. It was a process of complete surrender and unqualified devotion. Rumi openly acknowledged his debt to him. He symbolised his gratitude by placing his own son Sultan Walad under the care of Burhanuddin.

During this training period Burhanuddin directed Rumi to undertake a course of mortification (*fana*) and ascetic practices for 120 days. The course was successful as Rumi attained to inner illumination. Burhanuddin offered his gratitude to God, embraced Rumi in delight, and kissed on his

face. Addressing him he said: "You were unparalleled in the world in rational, traditional, spiritual and acquisitive knowledge, and now at this moment you are unsurpassed in the knowledge of Divine secrets." He then directed Rumi to start his mission of assisting and leading those who had gone astray. Thus Rumi became a full-fledged successor of his father.

At the age of 34 Rumi had become an acknowledged leader of men. He gained widespread respect and fame as a learned professor addressing vast audience on religion, philosophy, Jurisprudence, mystical science and morals. People from all parts of the East would come to seek his advice. He lived simply, studied deeply and lectured eloquently. His circle of disciples and devotees was extensive. His son Sultan Walad remarks: "The number of his disciples grew to more than ten thousand, although in the first instance they were far from sincere. He addressed them from the pulpit selflessly with feeling and eloquence and his sermon was like the sermon of the Prophet himself."

For four years Rumi continued to impart education and the light as he had attained himself. At the age of 37, he looked satisfied with the success he was achieving as a teacher of Islam and was proud of his popularity. One day, while Rumi was fully occupied with his work of sermonizing the people, there appeared suddenly on the scene "a weird figure wrapped in coarse black blanket." He was said to be an exceedingly aggressive and domineering in his manner." Because of his flighty wanderings, he was nicknamed Paranda (The flier). So sudden and pervasive was his influence that the cool minded self-possessed professor of theology i.e. Rumi left his lectures only to become an humble disciple of that dignified sage. This was Shams-i-Tabriz a disciple of

celebrated Shaikh Ruknuddin.

Shams-i-Tabriz belonged to the assassin tribe of Hasan-bin-Sabah. His father Nuruddin Muhammad, a lieutenant of Hasan-bin-Sabab succeeded his chief in 1166 A.D. He died in 1210 and was succeeded by his son Jalaluddin who declared himself an orthodox Muslim. Shams is said to be his son, although some historians differ at this statement of Daulat Shah.

It is related that Muhammad Malikdad, later given the title Shamsuddin Tabrizi (or Shams-i-Tabriz) was born in the city of Tabriz in Persia in the year 1185. In his childhood he showed exceptional traits. Instead of playing, he would attend religious lectures and study Sufi masters of the past. He always looked sad and depressed. When his was asked the reason for the depression, he answered: "I wish someone would take away that I am already wearing. Thus upon his master's suggestion, Shams started to search a disciple of his own who would come up to his expectation. This search lasted most of his life. From city to city and country to country Shams travelled. He took any job from school teaching to unskilled labour and never accepted any pay for his services nor had any more money than was necessary. He gave the appearance of a beggar in his coarse patched black cloak. Or sometimes looked as merchant holding bunch of keys in his hand to conceal his identity.

Shams continued travelling from place to place in search of an ideal disciple during which he interviewed many Mashaikh of lofty ranks. It is related that one day Ruknudddin, (his Pir) when talking to Shams said: In the land of Rum (Konya) is a Sufi who glows with divine love; you must go there and fan this glow to a clear flame." Shams thus at the age of sixty reached Konya on the morning of 26th Jamadiul-Sani

in 642 A.H (1245). There are four different versions of his meeting with Rumi. Only too most acceptable and authentic versions of his arrival and meeting are described here.

A holy man, a basket-maker by trade, travelled various lands in search of a worthy disciple who could get and sustain divine knowledge he had attained. He also prayed to God to help locate such person, the most one of His favourites in order that he might go to him and fire divine love in him. In Konya he hired a lodging at an inn and pretended to be a great merchant. In his room, there was nothing but a broken water pot, an old mat, and a bolster (pillow) of unbaked clay He used to break fast once in every ten or twelve days with a bread soaked in the soup of sheep's trotters. One day as he was seated at the gate of the inn, Rumi passed by, mounting on a mule, in the midst of a crowd of disciples and students following him on foot. Shams arose, advanced and took hold of the mule's bridle addressing Rumi in these words: Exchanger of the current coins of' recondite significations, who knowest the names of Lord! Tell me, was Muhammad the greater servant of God or Bayazid Bistami? Rumi shuddered and answered: Muhammad ﷺ was incomparably the greater-the greatest of all Prophets, Messengers, and the saints. Then Shams again inquired "how is it that Muhammad ﷺ said: We have not known Thee, O God, as Thou rightly shouldst be known, whereas Bayazid said: Glory to me! how great is my majesty." On hearing this question, Rumi became silent, and could not answer. Shams seeing that Rumi was unable to answer this question, said: "Bayazid's thirst was quenched after drinking a mouthful, whereas the Prophet's thirst was never quenched, for he was always thirsty for more and more of divine knowledge."

Finding himself weakened by Shams's powerful

words, Rumi fell at Sham's feet and lost consciousness. When Rumi recovered, his head was in the lap of Shams. Shortly afterwards, the two spiritual stalwarts went into seclusion together for three months or more.

There is another version which was also related by my Shaikh whose spiritual eye could see events far beyond in the past. According to him Rumi was addressing his students as usual in his house near a water pond. His books were also lying there for anyone to see and consult. Meanwhile a stranger appeared on the scene and pointing his finger towards books asked Rumi: 'What is this?' Rumi said: "It is knowledge which you don't know." Shams threw some books into the water pond around which the students were sitting and disappeared himself. Rumi was perturbed too much and looked around to find the *dervish*. Now there started a 'hide and seek' type of game which continued for long while. In the end Shams came at the pond and took out books which were said to be totally unsoaked, and even some dust came out of them. Rumi asked: 'what is this?' Shams replied: 'This is an action which you don't know.' Afterwards Shams left Rumi fully disturbed to search him for longtime.

Whatever be the event of encounter, it was sudden and unexpected which changed the course of Rumi's life. He was on high spiritual pedestal, restless and in quest of worthy spiritual master and so was Shams. When they met, they naturally discovered each other on account of their highly developed sense of intuition and inner enlightenment. The meeting brought about a unique peace and restlessness. For Rumi it brought dawn of new spiritual world, new horizon, new spaceless plain to travel. It is related that Rumi left teaching assignment and searched Shams for eight or ten years, roaming and wandering in the different regions of the

world. At last when they met, both spent three or four months in seclusion. No one was allowed to enter in their retreat cell. No one knew what Shams taught Rumi in that period. What the contemporary observers saw was that Rumi emerged from the retreat at the age of 38 a changed man. Instead of giving religious lecture, sermons or teaching his students or engaging in congregational prayers, he would lead Sufi *sama* (music) and dance in ecstasy which is called whirling dance. He would now listen to the music of reed pipe or play the *rabab*, a string instrument. He who had no background in poetry, began to compose glorious verses expressing his Love of God. The fire ignited by Shams had transformed Rumi entirely. The person who had ruled out music as an undesirable had now become so enamoured of it that he threw all 'decorum' to the winds, listened to music with rapt attention even at odd hours of the day and danced in ecstasy. His son Sultan Walad describes his condition in these words: (Translation of his verses)

Day and night he danced in ecstasy

On the earth he revolved like the heavens.

His (ecstatic) cries reached the zenith of the skies

And were heard by all and sundry

He showered gold and silver on the musicians

He gave away whatever he had

Never for a moment was he without music and ecstasy

Never for a moment was he at rest.

There was an uproar in the city

Nay, the whole world resounded with that uproar.

This encounter with Shams wrought a miraculous change in Rumi's life. He was so struck by the light of Shams (spiritual sun) that he became utterly heedless of whatever he had learnt and practised. His traditional knowledge in Islamic sciences, gnosis, theosophical doctrines and teachings all went

neglected. Nothing existed for him but Shams with whom he would remain closeted in spiritual communion completely dead to outside world, alienated from his disciples, students and friends.

According to Chittick: "one could say that without Shams, there would have been no Rumi. Nevertheless, one must not over-estimate the role Shams played, since Rumi was already an accomplished adept when Shams arrived on the scene." Shams himself confessed: "If I worked hard for one hundred years, I would not be able to acquire one-tenth of the knowledge Rumi had. But out of his extreme humility, Rumi considers his knowledge as nonexistent. Like a two-year-old child who listens to his father with love, and like a new Muslim who knows nothing of the faith, this man (Rumi) listens to me. I am embarrassed by this."

Shams had found divine in the face of Rumi. His search had come to an end when he met this exceptional lover of God. He said: I wanted someone after my own heart, someone to turn to for I had become tired of myself. Now I have found the one who would understand what I say." Rumi praises Shams in these words:

پیر من و مرید من درد من و دوائے من
فاش بگفتم این سخن شمس من و خدائے من

Since Rumi was spending much of his time with Shams, which excited jealousy in his students and admirers who were deprived of his company and learning. They were also shocked to see Rumi flout religious conventions which he had hitherto fervently preached. This departure was an unusual and unpleasant for Rumi's followers. They ascribed this new undesirable situation to the evil influence of new arrival (Shams) whom they considered a nuisance and a meddlesome

freak. A voice of protest was being heard continually. Rumi had become aware of the consequences which this jealousy had engendered. He was already appealing Shams to ignore the protests directed against him. He would say to Shams: You are the light of my house, don't go away to leave me alone. Being dejected of the situation prevailing there, the followers of Rumi conspired against Shams. Thus after a sixteen months stay in Konya Shams left for Damascus on Shawal 21, 643 A.H. (1246). Rumi, who could not endure the separation from Shams, sent his son Sultan Walad after him. Shams agreed to come back to Konya. However not long after his return, in 1248 he disappeared again mysteriously and no further information had ever been found about him, even to this day. Rumi himself twice visited Damascus to search Shams but failed in his purpose. Some researchers report that Shams's manners outraged many of the townpeople of Konya. Matter came to a head in 645/1247 when he was murdered under the cover of night by Rumi's disciples at the instigation of Sultan Walad's brother Alauddin. Shams's corpse was then thrown into a well, where it was discovered by Sultan Walad, who buried it at a secret location. He also kept secret this event from his father and from Konya town folk out of concern for the family honour. But this is quite certain that those who participated in murder met tragic fate one after the other in short time.

After the separation of Shams, Rumi remained in terribly perturbed state of mind for some time. Only in music his madness found soothing effect. It was in these days that Rumi was seen dancing in the street of Konya listening to a musical sound coming from the rhythmic beat of a goldsmith's hammer. The goldsmith, in deference to Rumi's state of ecstasy continued beating the silver leaves. He wasted a good

deal of silver but gained more than this weight in gold lasting friendship of Rumi. It was Salauddin Zarkob. Although an illiterate goldsmith, he exercised influence on great Sufi and retained his confidence for nine years. Rumi feared that the jealousy of his followers might not deprive him once again of a new friend, and in his anxiety to retain him, he married his son Sultan Walad with Fatima, the daughter of Zarkob. He also taught her 'to read Qur'an and other books. Rumi and Zarkob had been Burhan's fellow-pupils and Rumi knew that Zarkob was held in great esteem by Burhan. Zarkob acted as friend and instructor for nine years, and died around 1261. There are at least 71 ghazals in which Rumi records the name of Zarkob. Rumi not only gave him his confidence but loved him to the extent of adoration. This period between 1245 and 1261 is appropriately called the period of lyrical activity as most of Rumi's time during these fifteen years was devoted to music, dancing and writing ghazals. *Diwan-i-Shams-i-Tabriz* relates to this period.

Besides some 2500 odes, Rumi composed a large number of Rubais probably as many as 1600; and ended up with the six books which make up the Mathnavi-the Qur'an in the Persian language.

After the death of Zarkob in 1261, Husamuddin Chalapi came into limelight who retained confidence of Rumi till Maulana died in 1273. In this final period of Rumi's life, Chalapi was the recipient of his love and confidence. Rumi was so kind to him that he would send everything he received to Chalapi. Once Ameer Tajuddin Motabar sent a present of 70 thousand Dirhams to Rumi; he at once sent the whole amount to Chalapi. Sultan Walad drew his father's attention to the utter lack of provisions in the house and complained about his complete disregard of domestic needs. Rumi retorted: If a

million saints were to starve within my sight and if I had a loaf of bread, by God I shall send that loaf to Chalapi.

The fourth, fifth and sixth volumes of Mathnavi start with a mention of Chalapi, and it is said that Mathnavi was written at the insistence of Husamuddin. Rumi and Chalapi spent hours together; often they would work for the whole night on the Mathnavi-Rumi dictating in rapturous state and Chalapi taking down the verses and chanting them aloud in his beautiful voice. As Husamuddin was the inspirer of the Mathnavi, Rumi describes him as the 'key of the treasuries of the Throne (*Arash*), the trustee of the treasures on earth', Bayazid Bistami and Junaid' of the age. He also called in volume vi, the Mathnavi, the *Husami Nama*. The work began sometime in 1260 and continued with intermittent delays until the death of Rumi in 1273.

During the last days of his life Rumi appointed Husamuddin Chalapi as his spiritual successor (*Khalifa*) becoming the Chief of the Mevlevi Order of *Dervishes* founded by him (Rumi). He carried on in this position for ten years till his death in 1284 A.D. after which Sultan Walad took over as the Chief of the Mevlevi order. He died in 1312 A.D.

Of the two major poetical works of Rumi, one is Diwan which contains 3000 mystical odes, followed by some 2000 quatrains-altogether 35000 verses or more. It is named after Shams and is dedicated to his memory. Mathnavi is in six volumes and contains 25632 verses. Of his three prose works the *Fihi ma fihi* is more important. It contains discourses addressed to his disciples.

Speaking of the Mathnavi in the Preface to the first volume, Rumi says: it is the Greatest science of God, the clearest way of God, and the most manifest Proof of God. The

like of its Light is 'as a niche wherein is a candle' shining with an effulgence (*nur*) brighter than the dawn. It is Heart's Paradise with fountains and foliage...

Shamsuddin Aflaki who was disciple of the grandson of Maulana Rum compiled a book in Persian language under the title: *Manaqibul Arifeen*. It was published in Iran in 1342 A.H. This book is replete with spiritual anecdotes revealing mysterious inner life of Maulana which his immediate followers used to note and record on paper daily. One can rename this book as 'Karamat-i-Maulana Rum.' The compiler of the present work (M. Riaz Qadri) translated it into Urdu and arranged to publish it in 1997 from Lahore (Pakistan) under the title: *Manqib-e-Rumi*.

Rumi died in 1273 at the age of 67 (or on Saturday 5th Jamdius Sani 672 A.H.). It is related that Maulana Sadruddin Konveee came forward to lead funeral prayer, but shrieked and fell unconscious. After a while he recovered and led the prayer. Later some adept asked why he fell swooned? He said: when I moved forward to lead prayer, I saw large crowd of angels wearing black robes engaged in prayer. Uncontrolable mob, including Muslims, non-Muslims participated in funeral ceremonies. Everyone was mourning and lamenting in the procession. Jews, Christian, Zoroastrian and many other communities had participated. They were holding and reading their respective religious books such as taurat, Injil (The Old and New Testaments) and mourning equally. The Muslim mourners holding sticks and swords in their hands were politely driving them away from the scene. Clash between different communities looked imminent. The matter was reported to the Sultan, and the minister Moinuddin Perwana rushed to the spot to control challenging situation. They asked the priests and religious leaders of other communities that the

event did not relate to their religions and they should go. They replied: "If Maulana Rumi was Muhammad of his time, he was equally Musa and Isa for our communities. As you people are his lovers, we too are manifold more lovers than you." Thus all the communities were allowed to join funeral rites. The Muslim Qaris were reciting the holy Qur'an. Some were busy in *dhikrullah*. Ten pairs of singers were singing dirge. The sound of drums and some other musical instruments had created tumultuous scene like that which would be seen on the Day of Resurrection. From the Madressah to the tomb, on account of uncontrollable mob six biers were broken and replaced by new one after the other. Hence Maulana was laid to rest at night. He was buried in Konya (Istanbul, Turkey) and his tomb, like those of Muslim saints and mystics is a centre of spiritual significance.

Some of Rumi's teachings and doctrines (selective) of highly mystical nature are recorded here as follows:

1. Rumi divides Reality into two realms: the Realm of Spirit and the realm of Nature, but soul is the realm of spirit. Soul is one and undifferentiated.
2. Soul is substance and its nature is super-sensual and super-rational. The belief that the soul was created by God is totally false; soul is itself the ultimate reality, it is not perishable.
3. Man's love of God is God's love of man, and in loving God, man realises his own personality.
4. Man does not attain to union by contemplation, but by consistent effort at creating in himself all the attributes of God.
5. Love is the motive force of the universe; it is because of love that everything travels towards its origin. Love alone takes us to the Reality for which ceaseless effort is necessary.
6. Love of God is the only means of Sufi's return to his

eternal destination of *al-Haqq*. Love discloses the secrets of Reality and it is through love that the mystic's soul seeks perfect identity with God.

7. Rumi compares the soul to a moaning dove that has lost his mate to reed torn from its bed and made into a flute whose painful music fills the eye with tears. In other words soul is celestial and is in exile from light in this world. It longs for Life and the Living One, remembering its origin in the Infinite Soul which is a mode of the Absolute Being. It desires for ascent and exaltation to its original Home.

8. Tawhid is to burn oneself before the Beloved (God), to melt away one's existence in that Existent who nourishes and sustains existence, as copper melts away in the elixirs.

9. God's Essence is the Self whereby He exists. It is manifested through His Names and attributes which inhere in it. It is the source of life on all levels of being.

10. God is transcendent as well as immanent and yet is beyond description. The world is an objectification of His countless attributes and is permeated by His Essence.

11. With Rumi God is far more immanent (as all Sufis hold) than transcendent. As he says "He who beholdeth God is godlike", and in another place "our attributes are copies of His attributes."

12. God is the Sun and reason is His shadow. When the saint becomes intoxicated by the wine of Divine Love, his reason becomes distraught. Ecstasy sweeps away his personal consciousness, and he is not aware of what he is saying or doing. This was the case with Bayazid and Hallaj.

13. Ecstasy is a state in which Sufi passes away from himself. His apprehensions are blunted. Not a vein of his is sensible. He is like a star on which the sun shone and he has vanished in it. His senses and reason are effaced in the

knowledge and wisdom of God.

14. Life is a journeying back to God; it proceeds according to process of evolution. The minerals develop into plants, and plants into animals, animals into man, and man into super human beings ultimately to reach back the starting point.

15. Every moment we are dying and returning to Him. Every moment, the world is renewed, but because of fast renewal it appears continuous. If we are not aware of the constant renewal of the world, it is because the renewal is of like by like (*tajaddud-i-mithal*), and the change is too rapid for our perception.

16. Like every other act, our remembrance of God does not result from our initiative. As God says: *"It is We who have sent down the Remembrance and We watch over it"*. (15:9) It can also mean: "We have placed in you a substance, a seeking, a yearning," so that this remembrance is from God to man. It belongs to all stages of the mystic Path.

17. The process of evolution does not end with man. He can rise to angelhood, and to countless still loftier stations and become perfect. The Perfect man (Apostle) alone reflects all the divine attributes.

18. Predestination (Destiny) is a fact, as all action is willed and decreed by God. Free-will is also fact as man reflects the attributes of God and one of them is free will.

19. Evil is relative. It exists because good exists. Heedlessness of God is evil, but is necessary to keep this world going. Lust is evil, but is necessary for procreation.

20. Sufi Path may be divided as a three-stage journey. The first stage is the purification of heart and sanctification of soul. The second stage is ecstasy and illumination, contemplation of God and His attributes. The third stage is intense

contemplation which is the unitive stage. This involves union with the divine attributes and in its zenith reaches with divine Essence.

21. The saints generally remain hidden; they have no visible marks by which they can be recognized, except that the mystic knows them when he sees them. The animal soul cannot see them. 'Below' and 'above', 'before' and 'after' are attributes of the body, but the radiant spirit of the saints is above all spatial relations and is hidden from the eye of 'flesh'. In order to see the saints, one has to open his inward eye with the Light of God. Spirit life can be seen only by the eye of spirit. The ordinary eye is only blinded by that Pure Light.
22. God has friends who move about wholly hidden and are unknown on earth; even the *abdal* do not hear their names. They possess spiritual dominion and are celebrated in heaven, they and their miracles are in the sanctuary of God. *Qutb* is the axis on which the entire existence, including the celestial spheres revolves. His soul is the mirror of the Divine Essence.
23. Saintship is not acquired by self-discipline; it is determined essentially by preelection. God elects in eternity those who will inherit the scripture, read it and establish worship. No class of the people of God is more sublime and illuminated than this class, for they are acquainted with the mystery of Determination (*sirru l-qadar*).
24. Except for the apostolic mission of the prophet, there is hardly any difference between the prophet and the saint. Saintship is the inward aspect of prophecy, so that every prophet is a saint, but saint is not a prophet.
25. According to Rumi, the *Pir* (spiritual Guide) need not be present in person or even be living to guide disciples. He may be remote in space and time. His light and spirituality can guide love aspirants without any formal initiation.

26. But a living *Pir* is not easy to find. Rumi says as many Adam-faced devils exist, we must not give the hand of discipleship to every hand. The genuine *Pir* is not mere beard and patched frock, not one who uses golden words stolen from a genuine *dervish*, or indulges in miracles that are plain magical feats. All his performance is calculated to entrap and deceive simple people for his own selfish end. He is a hypocrite by any standard and we must not fall into his trap.

27. A Sufi is like a book not composed of ink and letters, but a snow-white heart whence shoot forth rays of Divine Light revealing the Reality.

28. The Qur'an possesses two aspects, the exoteric and the esoteric. It is double-sided brocade. The inner side is not a single layer. Rumi cites the Tradition of the Prophet that the words of the Qur'an, have an exterior meaning, and under it interior meaning, and under that interior meaning another interior meaning and so on to seven interior meanings. Even the first interior meaning is exceedingly overwhelming, and in the third meaning all intellects get lost. These seven meanings are related to seven ascending spiritual states and are beyond the reach of speech.

29. The Divine knowledge cannot be directly communicated by any external teacher. No outward ear can hear it, no tongue can convey it. It descends into the heart as inspiration from God; it is gained by direct perception. The Divine knowledge is synthetic. It is a world of Divine Unity. It is knowledge of the whole arising out of spiritual experience or mystical illumination.

30. The externals of asceticism like nightly orisons, vigils, retreats, abstinence, and fasting devoid of inner meaning are of little avail on the Path. Inward methods involve the killing of all ignoble attributes.

31. The spirit is also everlasting like the soul and is like the resplendent Sun which is free from direction. As no bodily limb can function without the presence of the spirit, the spirit may be deemed to be present in every part of the body and therefore, to possess its shape and form. It is from the world of the souls and intelligence and has deserted its origins, is constantly receiving admonition from the pure, celestial souls and intelligences that it has forgotten its old heavenly companions and attached itself to new friends on earth.

32. The Prophets and auliya Allah are taught the essence of the Qur'an in pre-existence, and they can recognise its signs in their hearts or some Sufis learn its meaning directly from God; it descends into his heart. Whoever feeds on the Light of God becomes the Qur'an. One can also learn the inner meaning from a man of God. Rumi says, seek the meaning from God Himslef, or from the Qur'an or from one who has sacrificed himself to the Qur'an, so that the Qur'an has become the essence of his spirit.

33. Sense-perception cannot go beyond the world of the senses, the world of form and colour. It has no knowledge of the world of Unity (*Tawhid*), no knowledge of God (*marifat*) which is without form and colour. Thus intellect is unable to lead us to the knowledge of the essence of things.

34. The five spiritual senses which are derived from the Universal Spirit manifest the Divine attributes and are not separate but involved in one another. When one has been delivered from the body, the ear is an eye to behold and the eye an ear to hear. All the senses unite in one sense.

35. *Sama* (audition) is to hear the sound of bala (yes) affirming the Lordship of the Lord on the Day of Primordial Covenant (روز است); it is to separate oneself from oneself and obtain union with Him. It is to be unconcious of individual

existence and savours eternal life in absolute self-extinction.

36. The sound of the rebeck (رباب) to Rumi is an echo of the Voice of God and he desired to recall His Voice, proclaiming His Lordship on the Day of Alast. That Voice is heard in the heart of the Sufi as trumpeting the spiritual resurrection, and it is like the sound of *qarna* (horn) that will be blown on the Day of Resurrection. Rumi also retorted that his rebeck-playing was a call to prayer and that while the ritual prayer only called the external self to serve God, his music called the inner self to love and knowledge of God.

37. The mystic's life is one of constant death and resurrection. He is ever dying to things of the flesh and ever rising to things of the spirit. His total resurrection is total separation from his individual self and everlasting union with the Universal Self.

38. Mystical instruction cannot be communicated by tongue, but silently from the gnostic's soul to the soul of the novice.

39. In the highest unitive state, the Sufi is veiled neither by the outward world from its inward reality, nor by its reality from its outward form, as in the spiritual intoxication. In this final state, the state of *baqa*, his self knows itself as the Divine Essence manifesting itself to itself and it also sees the Divine Essence in its outwardness. Essence and attributes are combined in him. He is never severed from the Divine Essence.

40. To die to self and to attain to the unitive life is to go back to one's original state of non-existence when one was a thought an idea in God's mind. It is to realise the Unity of God and His actions.

41. The gnostic's prayer and petition to God is like God's own petition to Himself, for he has said: I am to him an ear

and an eye and a tongue and a hand, so that 'By Me he hears and by Me he sees.' This means that God has so overpowered his being that his faculties have ceased to function, and when he does seem to will and act, it is not he but God who acts through him.

42. Those in communion with God must veil their secrets in reserve and silence, lest their divulgence should destroy the life and livelihood of men by making them heedful of God and heedless of the affairs of the world.

43. With Rumi, death was no occasion for sorrow, but an occasion for rejoicing for it meant the Homeward flight of human spirit, freed from the trammels of matter. Hence, they viewed the death of their friends with delight, and carried their coffins for burial to the accompaniment of joyous singing and dancing.

44. The dead till the Resurrection remains in the tomb some enjoying 'a sweet repose and drunken sleep', and some suffering pain and agony. Heaven and Hell are spiritual states and Hell is purifying, and that eventually, The Mercy of the Most Merciful will save us all.

45. While the evil-doers will be left burning in the flames of their lust, the righteous will have no awareness of the existence of Hell or of its smoke and fire. Because in their earthly life, they conquered their appetitive soul, quenched the flaming fire of lust and transformed it into the garden of piety; they killed all envy and turned their anger to forbearance, ignorance to knowledge, greed to selflessness.

46. Rumi describes Hell as the mosque for the infidel, where the resurrected counterpart of his earthly body will be consumed in the flames of Hell and in his suffering, he will become aware of God and as a result of his remembrance of Him, his soul will emerge purified. Ultimately when we reach

Him (God) alone, all souls will be concerned with Him alone duly purged of all taint of sin and 'otherness'.

47. According to Rumi, Paradise, like sun and rain is for all-not only for the righteous, but also for the sinners. The Lord's wrath which is His justice, is born of His eternally precedent Mercy and sinks back into it. Then why to dread death? Holy men welcome it. Death is not the end; it is life's culmination; it is the entrance to a new life; a life, mystic, wonderful, leading us through countless realms into the Presence of the Judge of judges, the King of kings (Absolute Sovereign) enabling us to say at the last: Lo unto Him, we have returned! (*Excerpted and summarised from The Sufism of Rumi by K. Khosla*)

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Shaikh Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri

High profile consummate, celebrated, and unrivalled Sufi saint of Bihar whose unique and unsurpassed 'the *Hundred Letters*' are considered rich legacy and invaluable contribution to mystical literature, Hazrat Shaikh Sharafuddin Ahmad was born in Maner, a town about 20 miles west of Patna (Bihar) , a state adjacent to Bengal in northern India, on 26 Shahban 661 A.H (1263). His father a famous Sufi in his time was named Yahya. Hence the full name of the great sufi saint is Sharafuddin Ahmad ibn Yahya Maneri. At present the people in Bihar refer to him as Makhdoom Sahib. Family lineage of Yahya Maneri is traced back to Abdul Mutlib bin Hashim bin Abd Manaf. The mother of Shaikh Sharafuddin was descendant of Hazrat Imam Jafar Sadiq (R.A) in 14th generation. The family of Shaikh Sharafuddin migrated from Bait-ul-muqadda, came to India and settled in Maner in the district of Patna. The family was well-renowned for its renunciation and abstinence (زهد و تقویٰ) and the people of Maner and its surrounding areas entered the fold of Islam impressed by the sublimity and piousness of them. The father of Sharafuddin was also a great spiritualist, endowed with exoteric and esoteric knowledge (ظاہری و باطنی علوم) and intuitive power; his tomb also locates in Maner. The mother of Sharafuddin never suckled him without ablution.

Basic education of Shaikh Sharafuddin started at home. He too attended a local mosque school (Madressah) for his early education. In those days *Masadir*, and *Miftah ul-lughaat* and some other books formed syllabus. Maneri had committed *Miftah ul-lughaat* to his memery in those days. He then accompanied a notable traditionist of Delhi Abu

Tawwama al-Hanbali to Sonargaon near modern-day Dacca in Bangladesh. He received thorough education in all the branches of Islamic sciences current at the time under his care. He also learnt logic, philosophy and Arithmetic in the same school. According to the writer of '*Manaqib ul-Asfiya*', he too studied Tasawwuf (Islamic mysticism) extensively for years on end during the same period and also undertook austerities and ascetic practices alongwith academic education. After the completion of education he returned to Maner, but during his stay at Sonargaon, he sustained a serious disease which was considered incurable by the physicians of the time and marriage was proposed the only solution to the problem. Thus he married the daughter of his mentor Abu Tawwama in Sonargaon, and a son named Hazrat Shah Zakiuddin was born to him and his generation continued through him.

Shaikh Sharafuddin would never open letters received from his home in Maner during his stay and education at Sonargaon. But one day by chance he opened a letter which conveyed the news of death of his father. He got disturbed to learn the news and immediately set out to his native town. There he stayed for some days. Fire of Divine love had lit in his inmost being. He left his new born son with his mother and himself left in quest of spiritual guide. His elder brother Shaikh Jaliluddin, in love with his younger brother Sharafuddin too accompanied him. In those days Delhi and its surrounding areas were the centres of the great Sufi saints of Islam. Shaikh Sharafuddin met many ascetics, sages and savants, recluse, and *sajjada nishin* of many Khanqahs and finally reached the renowned exemplar of his age Shaikh Nimazuddin Auliya. Shaikh Sharafuddin requested Nizamuddin for initiation (*Bait*) but before taking any action, he sought help from the invisible world. Immersed in

contemplation he bowed his head. When he raised his head he said: 'Dear Sharafuddin, your spiritual kinship is directed towards my brother Najeebuddin. You go to him, he is waiting for you.'

There is another more authentic version in respect of his initiation. When the Shaikh flew in quest of a spiritual guide, many great Mashaikh of the time had spread their nets to ensnare this falcon. When he approached Khanqah of Nizamuddin, he too visualized everything and said:

مُرغيت نصيب دام ما نيت

(This falcon will not be entrapped in our net)

Khwaja Nizamuddin did not take oath of allegiance, rather by giving him betel-leaf saw him off in veneration. Shaikh Sharafuddin went to Panipat and met Shaikh Sharafuddin Buali Qalandar. He spent sometime in his company but left him with these remarks: 'He is overpowered in mystical state (مغلوب الحال); how can he train others. I am myself a Shaikh.' It is related that at the time of departure Buali Qalandar said to him: 'Door of Divine light was opened to Rasulullah ﷺ on the mount of Hira, you will be enlightened on mount Rajgarh. Afterwards his elder brother persuaded him to go to see Khwaja Najeebuddin Firdawsi. In the company of his brother, who insisted him, he travelled to see Khwaja Najeebuddin. But the dignity and awfulness of Khwaja overpowered his heart the moment he arrived there and he perspired at the sight. A betel-leaf was still in his mouth. When Khwaja Sahib saw him he said: 'You have one betel-leaf in your mouth and the second you are hiding in your turban and still you claim to be a Shaikh (great spiritualist). Hearing these words, Sharafuddin threw off betel-leaf from the mouth and sat on the haunches with throbbing heart before

Khwaja Najeebuddin. Awhile after, he requested Khwaja Sahib to initiate (*Bait*) him in his order which was accepted. Khwaja Najeebuddin took his oath of allegiance in his own Firdawsiyya order (*tariqa*). This order is a branch of the Kubrawiyya *tariqa* of Hazrat Khwaja Najmuddin Kubra. The principal branches of Kubrawiyya *tariqa* were: Firdawsiyya, Nuriyya, Rukniyya Hamadaniyya, and Istighasiyya. Badruddin Samarqandi, a murid of Bakharzi was the first who travelled to India and established there a branch of the Kubrawiyya that came to be known as the Firdawsiyya, and most important figure being our Shaikh Sharafudddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri. Thus Kubrawiyya *tariqa* gave birth to the Hamadaniyy sub-order in Kashmir and the Firdawsiyya in Delhi and Bihar. Kubra (Najmuddin) is frequently designated as wali-turash, "the manufacturer of saints". The initiatory chain (شجره طریقت) of Shaikh Sharafuddin therefore goes back to Khwaja Junaid Baghdadi through Khwaja Najmuddin Kubra-Sharafuddin being the 8th after Junaid.

After taking oath, Khwaja Najeebuddin awarded to Sharafuddin all the litanies and formulae (*awrad-o-wazif*) of Firdawsiyya *tariqa*. Simultaneously he conferred Khilafat and gave letter of investiture of successorship (*khilafatnama*) to Sharafuddin. He also gave all the sacred relics of Firdawsiyya *tairqa* to him. At the same time, he introduced the doctrine of *wahdat ul-wujud* to him. But Shaikh Sharafuddin hesitated and said: "Sir, I am not worthy of all these conferments. I won't be able to fulfil the responsibility of your successorship." In response Khwaja Najeebuddin said: "I have not written letter of investiture (*Khilafatnama*) at my own accord; I wrote it on the command of Rasulullah ﷺ. Blessings of his Prophet-hood would train you. Also sainthood (*wilayat*) of my own Mashaikh is transmitting

spiritual influence to your illumination. Thus you need not worry at all." Shaikh Sharafuddin sought permission of his Shaikh (Pir) to stay in his company for some days but it was not granted. Shaikh Njeebuddin gave him list of essential instructions to be carefully implemented in his mystic life which are summarised as follows: O Dear! this thing is made clear after spending good deal of time in reflection and meditation that it is great mistake to indulge in anything in the world except in the abandonment of self-hood (خودی). All human talks, actions, and movements are born of self-hood. Eating, talking, sleeping, intercourse with the people, hearing and seeing are the demands of human instinct, but these things must be done within limit; if done beyond intense need, create alienation from God. Therefore one must be thoughtful day and night to address them in order to get rid of them by the grace of God. If an iota of this (self-hood) is left behind, it will keep you enveiled. As long as one is not liberated from the fetter of selfhood, he must not get busy in any other work. If engaged in some other work, it would be satanic. Austerties and ascetic practices must be carried out in such a way that they eliminate self-hood completely and excellent type of piousness is attained and corporeality (بشریت) is cleansed. Never be without ablution may there be cold weather, midnight and water intensely cool. Never skip offering two cycles of *Tahiyat-ul-Wudhu* (or greeting of ablution prayer).

Eating and drinking perpetuates life, intellect and strenght. One should give up eating as long as one's life and intellect appear in danger. In such condition one may take dry bread, dry rice or dry Khichri (a dish made of split pulse and rice boiled together) whatever is available. But must not think about meat or curry. Likewise taking water should also be abandoned as long as life or intellect is not disturbed. In such

condition one may take little water just to soak his throat and slake thirst, but not fearing reduction in physical strength. By practical experience one will come to know how many days he can pass without taking food, without putting life and intellect in danger. After sustaining experience he is allowed to adjust his living accordingly.

One must not sleep anytime in 24 hours, rather dispel sleep by keeping himself engaged in prayer, reciting the holy Qur'an and reading books on Tasawwuf. But all this depends that one should not even recline anytime day and night; rather spend 24 hours in sitting or standing posture. Must not engage in talking with anyone except to answer question of the inquirer. But if the inquirer is a scholar, he should not be responded. Never be engage in academic like debate as it entails lot of woe and afflictions. However if the answer is not of academic nature, one may reply in brief, and talk only when it is indispensable. But it is better not to initiate discourse himself anyway.

The novice should not have association or friendly relation with anyone. Keep himself remote and concentrate on to his own work, nor allow anyone get near him. Always keep eyes down cast and don't see left and right unnecessarily. Never try to listen talks of others, nor take interest in anything. Only in the wake of intense need take dry bread and little water. Don't eat anything on the ground that it was already present before him as it encourages self-hood. Go to wash room at noon daily, but it is preferable not to go provided little food is taken. Must be in ablution all the time. Never wear anything except one blanket, but in winter wear ordinary garment over the Sufi-cloak (خرقة), and add to it nothing else. Never express displeasure at any cost on coming, going, talking and working of anyone nor let anyone come to know

his inner state, to such an extent that state of *wahdat*(Oneness) and spiritual influence are realized.

Eyes must not be tearful at the time of *sama* (audition/mystical musing) nor body be shaken (i.e, to be controlled as much as possible.) One must not be overpowered by passions to get witnessed during *sama*, it creates many tribulations. Thus concealment of state is indispensably necessary. No one should come to know how much flash of divine light is being influxed in his inmost being. This is such a sublime elevated station which is attained after having undergone utmost hardships and severest type of austerties expanded over year on end. If anyone fails to get this Divine Providence (عنایت الہی), still God requites him in some other ways."

After giving these instructions in writing to Sharafuddin, his Shaikh Najeebuddin sent him off with these words: 'If you happen to receive any news about me *en route*, you need not come back.' Shaikh Sharafuddin had hardly travelled for two days when he received news of death of his Shaikh Najeebuddin. He immediately recalled the admonition of his Shaikh and continued his journey. Two days after crossing Banaras, he gave the letter of investiture (*Khilafatnama*) and all the sacred relics to his brother, who accompanied him and himself disappeared in the jungle. There is another version, that while passing through jungle of Bhayya (in the district Arah) he listened scream of peacock and lost self-control and fell unconscious. In intense anxiety he disappeared in the jungle. Despite consistent search no one could trace him anywhere. His brother, afterwards handed all the sacred relics to the mother who worried much about her son, and indulged in weeping and groaning. After a few days heavy rain started. She again started weeping profusely in

remembrance of her son. The same day and at the same moment, Sharafuddin came to see his mother and stood in the courtyard of the house. The mother directed him to enter inside. But he said to his mother to come out of the room and see his condition. When she came out she saw it was raining heavily but the spot where he was standing had no drop of rain and his clothes were totally dry. Then he said to his mother: 'The Lord Most High protects us like this, why you are worried about me. You consign me to God and be pleased with me.' The mother had no alternative but to be pleased with son. She then said good bye to him.

The writer of *Manaqib ul-Asfiya* says Shaikh Sharafuddin spent twelve years in the jungle of Bhayya. Afterwards he spent many years in the jungles of Rujgeer (Patna). It is generally held that he spent thirty years in jungles engaged in devotional exercises and divine adoration. Once he was seen holding branch of a tree in hand immersed in bewilderment (حیرت) in such a state of ecstasy that ants would come and go in throat but he did not know of it at all. During the era of austerities (مجاہدات) he would not eat anything. However sometimes in the intense hunger he would take leaves of the trees. Once in early morning he felt need to take bath. It was winter and the water very cold. He thought to offer prayer by dry-ablution (تمیم), but the second thought did not allow him to find relaxation given in Shariah. Thus he entered the cold water and became unconscious, Heat of the sun in the morning restored him to consciousness but the time of dawn prayer had passed. He felt distress and said: The austerities which I have undertaken, if mountain faced, it would have turned into water, but Sharafuddin remained unaffected.' Due to intensity of austerties and hardship blood had dried in the body. Once barber's razor injured his head, but

water erupted out of it instead of blood. (*Manaqib ul-Asfiya*)

When Shaikh Sharafuddin was illuminated fully by divine light, some people of mystical persuasion would go to jungle to see him. Maulana Nizamuddin Maula who was devotee of Khwaja Nizamuddin went to Bihar. He, alongwith his some companions used to go to jungle to visit the Shaikh. There they used to hold confidential meetings of spiritual nature. By the by more and more people started visiting him frequently. When the Shaikh realized that the people were coming to visit him in the jungle full of danger, he one day asked them 'You need not come here to visit me, I shall present myself in the main congregational mosque (Jamia mosque) of the city on every Friday. There I shall meet all of you.' Hearing this Maulana Nizamuddin Maula built a simple lodge near the mosque for the Shaikh. Thus on every Friday the Shaikh, after offering prayer would come to that lodge and hold spiritual gathering to benefit the elect and the common folk alike. Sometimes he would stay there for a day or two. Afterwards Maulana Nizamuddin asked Majdul Mulk, the governor of Bihar that 'we have enough financial sources with us, you arrange to build a grand house for our brother Shaikh Sharafuddin.' Majdul Mulk took notice immediately. He demolished the old house and erected a grand building at the same spot. The Shaikh then made the new house his permanent residence where the people thronged him to seek spiritual gain. Here in the city the Shaikh spent sixty years making his house a fountainhead to satiate spiritual thirst of the elect and the common man.

When Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq came to know sublime *dervishhood* of Shaikh Sharafuddin, he issued royal order in the name of Majdul Mulk the governor of Bihar to build a grand Khanqah (hospice) for Makhdoom ul Mulk

Shaikh Sharafuddin and allot the estate (جاگیر) of Rajgreer to meet its expenditure. If he refused to accept, it be given to him forcibly. Majdul Mulk carried out the royal order immediately and handed over the said estate to the Shaikh which he accepted reluctantly. When the construction of Khanqah was completed, the Sultan sent Balghari mat to spread there, and the Shaiikh graced the occasion by sitting on it. When he sat there, he said: 'I am not fit to become even Muslim not to speak of honouring me by spreading royal mat.' A *dervish* sitting in the gathering at that time said: "O Makhdoom! who recognizes you not on account of Khanqah and prayer-mat; we come here attracted by your strong esoteric state. Here Islam will flourish by your grace and get strength." Thus it happened likewise and the light of Islam spread in all the directions without resistance from any quarter. But the Shaikh always considered the estate a burden on him. When Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq died and Ferozeshah Tughlaq took over as Sultan, the Shaikh immediately travelled to Delhi in person. The courtiers thought that the Shaikh might have come to seek increase in the estate. When Ferozeshah came to know the arrival of the Shaikh, he said 'I am ready to confer the entire region of Bihar on the Shaikh if he desired.' But when he appeared in the court of Ferozeshah, addressing him, he said: "I have come to make a request to you. If you promise to fulfil then I will disclose it to you." The Sultan readily accepted his request. The Shaikh instantly took out all the royal documents from his cloak in respect of the estate that he had brought with him and placed them before the Sultan and said: For God's sake take them back; these are not of any use for me." The Sultan and all his nobles were wonderstruck to see the behaviour of the Shaikh. The Sultan still made an attempt and offered substantial amount of money to meet the expenditure

of Khanqah. The Shaikh accepted the amount of money, but the moment he came out of royal court, distributed it among the poor and destitutes. Thus with empty-hand and *dervish*-like grandeur he resumed return journey to Bihar. (مونس القلوب بحواله سيرة الشرف)

Sitting in the corner of Khanqah, Shaikh Sharafuddin continued his service as a spiritual guide by his discourses and writing letters. The travellers of divine path used to assemble regularly in Khanqah to seek guidance from the Shaikh. Sometimes, Ulama, jurists, traditonists (*muhaddithin*), and scholastic theologians would also get together there to discuss and debate different religious matters. Sometimes affirmation and negation in the matter would result. It was the practice with the Shaikh to explain and elucidate the issue to the entire satisfaction of the audience. The Preface to the work '*Madin al-Maani*' indicates: Every gathering of the Shaikh Sharafuddin comprised disciples, noble men and aspirants of Truth. Everyone had the right to put question relating to *Tariqat* (mystic path) *Sharaih* (sacred law of Islam) *Haqiat* (Ultimate Truth) and *Marifat* (gnosis or divine knowledge) The Shaikh would answer every question satisfactorily. Explanations, elaboration, and symbolic allusions (اشارات) were unique and attractive. His explanations were replete with thousands meanings, allusions full of flawless spiritual perceptions, every hint entailed endless meanings, every subtle word countless referénces, state of art, and ineffable spiritual taste. His eloquent discourses were full of information in respect of Islamic mysticism covering all aspects.

The author of *Manaqil ul-Asfiya* relates that once all the Shuyukh (elder saints) of the time got together at one place. Every participating Shaikh expressed his own desire in the assembly. When Shaikh Sharafuddin was asked to speak,

he said: 'I desire that my name should not exist in this world nor in the Hereafter.' These words vehemently refer a tradition which is read:

إِذَا آتَمَ الْفَقْرَ فَهُوَ اللَّهُ

(When *faqr* i.e. mystic path is complete, there is left nothing except Allah).

Shaikh Sharafuddin was unique in his style and at home in explaining transcendental verities and subtleties (عرفاني حقائق و دقائق). In the domain of *Tasawwuf* the Shaikh followed the faith and practice of Qazi Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani. He has mentioned his name many a time in his works. At one place he pays tribute to him in these words:

آن عاشق فانی عین القصات ہمدانی (That annihilated lover of God Ayn al-Qudat Hamadani), at second place he writes:

'مست الست یزدانی قاضی عین القصات ہمدانی در معدن معانی' (That God intoxicated Qazi Ayn al-Qudat a pearl from the mine of spirituality)

Despite having close relation with the Sultan, kings and governments high officials and those authorised to loose and bind (ارباب حل و عقد) Shaikh Sharafuddin spent secluded life. He used to eat dry bread, dry rice or dry *Khichri*. The house never cooked anything in day-time. The Shaikh used to give to his mother household expenditure on daily basis but on this condition that smoke should not come out in daytime. One day a guest came to his house. The mother started cooking chicken and bread. When the Shaikh saw smoke in the air, he called for the attendant and inquired into the matter. When he came to know that his mother was cooking for the guest, he came to her and said: 'You could not fulfil the condition I had laid down.' The mother gave all the things i.e. chicken etc. to the guest and asked him to arrange cooking somewhere else

outside. (مونس القلوب). Once a man presented a bowl of *flaudah* (a kind of flummery pressed through a sieve and mixed with sugar and milk). The Shaikh just smelled it and left; and said: I was saved. Had I taken, it would have made end of me.' (*Manaqib ul- Asfiya*). The Shaikh believed that food should be taken as if one takes medicine.

The Shaikh used to wear simple raiments. He would use *tah band* (a cloth worn round the waist), mirzi (jacket with long loose sleeve), shirt and a sheet and a turban. The colour of his clothes was mostly like of sandal wood. Some of the sacred relics of his clothes are still preserved in the Khanqah.

Reverential fear of Almighty God would often cause him to weep profusely which further intensified his love for the Lord. Once his disciple Maulana Nizamuddin during sermon read the following two Persian verses:

اے قوم بہ حج رفتہ کجائید کجائید معشوق ہمیں جا است بیائید بیائید
آنانکہ طلب گار خدائید خدائید حاجت بطلب نیست شمائید شمائید

(O the Muslim Nation gone to perform Hajj! where are you roaming about. Come back, the real object is very much here. Those who are the seekers of God, are themselves the locus of Divine manifestation. They don't stand in need to seek God.)

Hazrat Shaikh Sharafuddin too was present in the assembly of sermon. Hearing this verse, state of ecstasy overpowered him in which he struck his head with a pillar and injured bitterly. Despite immersed in Divine Essence, he would always adhere to *sunna* and used to say:

با خدا دیوانہ باش و با شریعت ہوشیار

(Be ecstatic with God, but sober in the observance of canonical law of Islam, i.e., Shariah)

The Shaikh took full care to fulfil obligation towards humanity. He would consider public service a great boon. He said: To serve Muslim brethren and stick to work for their weal and betterment is an invaluable blessing. This is the job the Prophets of God used to do. They would serve Muslim Ummah and faced their hardships and woes themselves.' Once he wrote to Malik Khidr: 'In this dark world, console the needy and destitute with your pen, tongue, wealth and office as much as is possible for you. Rituals such as prayers and fasts are quite good but these are not so much beneficial as is sending peace and comfort to the humanity.' The Shaikh himself acted upon this principle throughout his lifetime. His basic purpose to reside in Bihar was to improve and polish outer and inner conduct and traits of the elect and common man.

The Shaikh always concentrated to soothing afflicted hearts and concealing misdeeds of the public. If he were keeping voluntary fast, and someone invited him to meal, he would immediately accept the offer and break the fast and say: voluntary fast can be omitted but there is no remedy to heal the broken-heart. One day a drinker moved ahead to act as Imam to lead the prayer. The people informed the Shaikh that the person was a toper. He said: 'He might not be drinking all the time.' The people said: 'He drinks all the time.' The Shaikh said: He might not be drinking in the month of Ramadan, and thus said prayer in his precentorship (امامت).

Humility and self-abasement (عجز وانكساری) of the Shaikh was exemplary. He would consider himself a scabby dog in the galaxy of Ulama, and like to live contumely. Once he sent a shoe to Hazrat Makhdoom Jahaniyan Syed Jalaluddin Bukhari which meant 'I am your shoe bearer.' In response Jalaluddin sent his own turban to him which meant 'you are

crown of my head.' In the book *Manaqib ul-Asfiya* it is written: Hazrat Syed Jalaluddin facing Delhi and rubbing his chest would say: 'Smell of divine love reaches me from Bihar.' The Shaikh would always venerate Auliya Allah too much. Once in his assembly someone mentioned the name of Mansur Hallaj. The Shaikh said there were many elect mystics in his time holding the same faith and creed (مشرَب) as that of Hallaj. But no one could come out to save him from execution. If I were in his time I would have shifted him from singularity (فردیت) to duality (i.e., from unity to plurality or from divinity to humanity). Once Qazi Zahid in the assembly asked him: 'The traits and characteristics of the men of God as you explain, we don't find any spiritualist of the like in the entire Hindustan.' The Shaikh said: That violent lover of God lives in Panipat (i.e. Sharafuddin Buali Qalandar). Qazi again said: There are so many holy men in Hindustan, then why do you prefer Buali Qalandar?' The Shaikh said: 'You asked about the men of God not about the holy men.'

Shaikh Muzaffar Balkhi (as stated before) was very close and beloved devotee of the Shaikh. He was son of Syed Shamsuddin Balkhi who belonged to royal family. In the reign of Tughlaq Sultanate he came to Hindustan and settled in Bihar and entered in the discipleship of Shaikh Ahmad Chermpoosh. His son Muzaffar took oath of allegiance at the hand of Shaikh Sharafuddin. Before allegiance (*Bait*) he used to argue and debate with the Shaikh on different religious issues, but after initiation surrendered totally before him. The Shaikh then started his education and training afresh and said: "whatever you have learnt hitherto was for sake of worldly gains which won't help in divine path. Now when you have entered *Tariqa*, attain knowledge afresh. Exert in quest of Truth till you become infinite spiritual elite." Under the care of

Shaikh he acquired exoteric and esoteric knowledge many years. But the Shaikh was still not satisfied and smelt some vanity in him. He then directed Muzaffar to serve *dervishes* in the Khanqah. He would serve and obey what the *dervishes* asked him without being conscious of his own honour and dishonour. When his clothes were torn, he would patch them. His outlook was reflecting his abasement. When the Shaikh noticed his condition, he asked the attendants to provide him precious fine clothes, nice lodge and best food. But all these amenities had lost value for him by then. Secret of *dervish-hood* had been open to him. One day he was standing putting hand on threshold. The Shaikh saw that his body had lost flesh; the skin stuck into the body. Seeing this condition, the Shaikh said to his disciple Qazi Zahid: 'Now he is on the straight path.' When Shaikh Muzaffar completed his initiatory journey (*suluk*), his Pir (Sharafuddin) used to address him in these words: *تن شرف الدين اور جان شرف الدين* (Body of Sharafuddin and soul of Sharafuddin). Afterwards whenever Muzaffar used to come to visit his Pir, the Shaikh would go upto the gate of Khanqah to welcome him.

Shaikh Najeebuddin, the spiritual guide of Shaikh Sharafuddin had advised him that at the time of *sama* gathering (audition) his outer and inner states must not be manifest. That is why during *sama* when ecstatic state overpowered him, he would go to seclusion and close the door. No one was allowed to enter there in that condition. Three conditions were laid down for holding *sama*: Place, participants, and time. The place specific to Mashaikh. The participants should only be *dervishes* or the friends of *dervishes*, disciplined and trained ascetics. And finally at the time of *sama* the heart should be void of all sorts of interest.

Hazrat Shaikh Sharafuddin left rich and unique literary

heritage. The family members of the Shaikh claim that he has contributed 1700 works (big and small) in the area of Islamic mysticism. However, the following works are well-known in the literary world:

(الف) مکتوبات (۱) مکتوبات صدی (۲) مکتوبات دو صدی (۳) مکتوبات بست و ہشت (۴) فوائد رکنی۔

(ب) ملفوظات (۱) معدن المعانی (۲) خوان پر نعمت (۳) مع المعانی (۴) فوائد غیبی

(۵) گنج لایقنی (۶) مونس المریدین (۷) راحت القلوب (۸)

ملفوظ الصفر (۹) بحر المعانی (کنز المعانی؟) (۱۰) مغز المعانی

(ج) تصانیف (۱) ارشاد الطالبین (۲) ارشاد السالکین (۳) رسالہ مکہ و ذکر فردوسیہ

(۴) شرح آداب المریدین (۵) فوائد المریدین (۶) اجوبہ (۷)

لطائف المعانی (۸) عقائد شرفی (۹) اوراد و کلاں (۱۰) اوراد اوسط (۱۱)

اوراد خورد (۱۲) اشارات (۱۳) رسالہ در بدلیت حال (۱۴) مرآة

المحققین (۱۵) رسالہ وصول اللہ۔

On the morning of Thursday 6th of Shawal, the Shaikh started his preparation to say good bye to the corporeal world. On that day he called his disciples one by one near him. Embraced some, shook hand with other, kissed beard of someones, took some in his lap and prayed for others. He also gave last advice to some elect, and recited the following verse of the holy Qur'an-repeatedly:

لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا (39:53)

(Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: Verily Allah forgives all sins.) He performed fresh ablution and offered Magrib (evening) prayer and then engaged in reciting *Kalimat-ut-Tayib*, and afterwards engaged in supplicatory prayer. And reciting لا اله الا الله (There is no Deity but Allah)

his radiant soul flew to celestial abode.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

He died on the thursday, 6th Shawal 782 A.H. (1381) at the age of 119. Before death, he was asked who would act as Imam to lead your funeral prayer? The Shaikh said: 'A true Saiyyed, ascetic, Hafiz would come at the spot to lead the prayer.' After giving burial bath and shrouding, the mob was waiting impatiently the Imam to come. All of sudden, they saw Hazrat Ashraf Jahangir Simnani coming from one direction. He was the only person who fulfilled all the conditions laid down by the Shaikh. Thus Hazrat Simnani led the funeral prayer of the Shaikh and he was laid to rest. When he was placed in the lateral niche (*lahd*), his hand came out of grave. People were surprised and asked Hazrat Simnani the state of condition. He immediately attended spiritually to the soul of the Shaikh to inquire into the reason of that unusual show. He was told that the Shaikh had got a cap from the hidden men on the mount Rajgarh during span of his wandering life in jungle. He had advised his followers to bury that cap with him in the grave, but they had forgot at the time of burial. The cap was therefore searched instantly and given in the hand of the Shaikh, and then he withdrew his hand inside.

Shaikh Muzaffar Balki and Hussain bin Muizz Balkhi were immediate spiritual successors of Shaikh Sharafuddin in the Firdawsi order. Both were not only spiritual guides of high level but also skilled literary craftsmen; they produced collections of letters that complimented and extended the many insights set forth in the correspondence of their illustrious Shaikh.

It is related that Shaikh Sharafuddin had one lakh disciples spread all over Hindustan. Those who were living far

of regions could not attend his *majalis* regularly. The Shaikh would teach and guide them through letters. Number of times he sent guidance to Sultan Ferozeshah Tughlaq. He also taught code of practical life to Dawud Malik who was son-in-law of the Sultan. In the world of Islamic mysticism, it is admitted that Makhdoom al-Mulk left rich legacy of mystical literature, but by no means one can assure that his literary output has been preserved in its entirety. However his: مکتوباتِ صدی (The Hundred letters) prevail upon his other works which indeed have immortalized his name and fame. It is pointed out that this Bihari saint wrote a series of two hundred letters with topics similar to those covered in the first volume 'The Hundred Letters.' The second volume (in Urdu) was entitled as: 'مکتوباتِ دو صدی' which contains about 208 letters. The third volume i.e. مکتوباتِ سہ صدی comprises 125 letters. The Shaikh also wrote a twenty-eight letters to his principal disciple and eventual successor named Muzaffar Balkhi. In addition to these, 28 letters written to Muzaffar were regarded as top confidential. The Shaikh had written him more than two hundred letters over 25 years period. Muzaffar however directed that they must be buried with him and only one small bundle was 'kept apart in a bag that now comprises 'The Twenty-eight Letters.'

Bruce B. Lawrence comments that no doubt *Kash al-Mahjub* of Shaikh Ali Hujwiri is like an encyclopaedia of mystical Muslim practitioners, their thought and terminology, and *Maktubat-i-Imam Rabbani*, an enormous corpus of 524 letters from the pen of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi which are of personal nature and speak of his own spiritual preeminence or explain how he attained it, *The Hundred Letters* of Sharafuddin are by no mean personal as they do not give insight into his own spiritual formation or private states. What

distinguishes 'The *Hundred Letters*' from *Kash al-Mahjub* is its artful balance-between reflection and conduct, between explanation and advocacy, between attachment to the Law (Shariah) and pursuit of the way (*suluk*), between sobriety (سحر) and ecstasy (سكر) bondage and freedom, death and life. Again he says 'The *Hundred Letters*' of Sharafuddin may be less personal than the *Maktubat of Imam Rabbani*, less comprehensive than the *Kash al-Mahjub* of Ali Hujwiri, less revealing than the saint's own twenty eight letters to Muzaffar Bulkhi, but they are unrivalled-and cannot be surpassed-as an invitation to experience the Sufi way as a Sufi master experienced and described it, to join him in the endless struggle. (Foreword by Bruce B. Lawrence)

Paul Jackson has translated first authology of 'The Hundred Letters' into English, published from London by SPCK in 1980. Just to have glimpse of the depth of intuitive knowledge the Shaikh three letters no.13 in respect of *Kashf* (state of unveildness) and summary of letter number 61-62 in respect of *Tajrid* and *Tafrid* (separation and detachment) addressed to Shamsuddin are translated here in sum.

You should know that unveiling (*Kashf*) means lifting of the veil. The person who is endowed with the faculty of *Kashf* becomes capable to perceive things that were previously hidden behind a curtain. The veil refers to those impediments that conceal the sight of God from his servant and makes it inaccessible to him. There are many worlds in veil (hidden-worlds); they might be eighteen thousand or according to other Tradition eighty thousand. All of them are present in man's constitution. With reference to each world, man has been given special vision that will enable him to observe that world and the revelation occuring in it. All eighty thousand worlds can be summed up in two worlds. They

comprise darkness and light, earth and heaven, the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual, this world and the next. When a sincere traveller of mystic path, impelled by his aspirations, turns his face from his lower-self and fixes his gaze on the heights of Shariah and sincerely steps into the path of *Tariqah* (mystic way) under the care of his spiritual guide, then from behind each veil that is lifted—all eighty thousand of them—there is granted him a special eye (vision) that is suitable for him to observe that particular stage or station (the world). Then step by step and eventually each stage comes into his focus. In this sense the very first vision (eye) unveiled to him is that of intellect (عقل). To the extent that veil is lifted, the traveller (*salik*) is enabled to understand anything intelligible (معقولات) that has been revealed to him and he becomes familiar with the secrets of that particular revealed world. This is called the 'unveiling of the intelligible world' (کشف معقولات یا کشف نظری). He should not place too much confidence in this new knowledge, because not everything that swims into sight can be attained by him. Philosophers are stuck up at this stage and cannot go beyond.

When the sincere aspirant passes beyond the revelation of intelligible stage, then the realm of heart is revealed to him. It is called the 'revelation of perception.' (مکاشفات دلی یا کشف شهودی). At this stage varied kinds of lights shine forth. After this the 'revelation of secrets' (مکاشفات سری) is introduced to him. This is also called 'Inspired Kashf'. (کشف الہامی) In it secrets of creation and the wisdom contained in the existence of everything become evident. A mystic poet said in this regard:

اے کردہ غمت غارت ہوشِ دل ما درد تو شدہ خانہ بدوشِ دل ما
 سرے کہ مقدسان ازان بے خبر اند عشق تو فرو گفتم بگوشِ دل ما

1. Intensity of your love plundered my heart; agonizing

concern of you made my heart temple of you (i.e., you annexed my heart)

2. Your love whispered into my ear the secret which was unknown to the angels.

After this 'soul revelation' (مکاشفاتِ روحی) are made manifest. These are also called spiritual revelations (کشفِ روحانی). At this stage heaven and hell, and angels appear, and opportunity to converse with them and also to listen their talks is made openly available. And when the soul is completely defecated of all sorts of defilements, and bodily filths cleansed, Infinite sphere (عالم نامتناهی) is disclosed to the traveller. He sees the entire circle (of creation) that had come into being from pre-eternity to post-eternity (ازل سے ابد تک). At this state cosmic revelation (Kashf Kawni) takes place, i.e., the veil of time and space is rent asunder so much so what occurred in past is known in the present. Rather some holy men see the beginning of existence and its 'Five Divine Presences' (مراہب ستہ). Similarly he sees what will take place in future. As Harisa said: 'when I look towards the blessed, I see them advancing, but when I look towards the damned, I see them creaming in Hell. When the veil of the categories of space and time is split asunder, then time and space of the Hereafter (celestial world) are revealed. The traveller then can see from behind and in front alike. As the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Just as I can see from in front, so too can I see from behind." At this elevated state, one can read the thoughts of others, becomes aware of things don at a distance, can walk on water, fly in the air and do other likewise miraculous things. But such things should not be given much importance for they are found among both believers and non-believers. Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ asked Ibn Saiyed: what do you see? He replied: 'I see the divine throne on water.' The Prophet said:

No! that is the throne of Satan. Beware! Similar things will also accompany anti-Christ Dajjal. There is a Tradition that says: Dajjal will have the power to kill a man and resuscitate him. But the real genuine miracle (*Karamat*) is not vouchsafed but to the Muslim believers.

But remember 'soul revelation' (کشفِ روحی) creates hidden mystical revelation (مکاشفاتِ خفی) which is not vouchsafed except to the elect (خاصانِ حق) because 'hidden soul (خفی روح) has the privilege of 'Divine Presence'. (حضرتی) The holy men say this soul is nexus between the two worlds (i.e. corporeal and the celestial), and the Dominion of the Lord (عالمِ خداوندی) and the kingdom of spirituality so that heart becomes worthy to sustain divine revelations, and the reflection of this attainment (conduct) is cast on one's illuminate state. At this time he will be endowed with *تُخَلِّقُوا بِأَخْلَاقِ اللَّهِ* (assimilate the attributes of Allah). This stage is also called 'revelation of cleanliness,' and one more world of knowledge is open to the aspirant which is called 'knowledge from Me (علمِ لدنی) or inspired knowledge. An infused knowledge appears in him. If in it the quality of hearing is revealed, he will hear the divine word and address; if the quality of seeing is given, then the vision and divine contemplation (مشاهده حق) become manifest; if the quality of divine beauty (جمال حق) is unveiled, then he gains relish in the spectacle of divine beauty (مشاهده جمال الہی). If the quality of His Severity or Majesty (جلال الہی) is made manifest, annihilation (*Fana*) in true sense will appear. If the quality of His Eternity (قیومیت) or Sub-subsisting (وجوبیت) is made open *Wahdat* will appear. One may recount other qualities (Divine attributes) in the same manner. (*Maktub no. 13 Tr. by. Paul Jackson*)

Dear Shamsuddin, you must know that for a disciple, separaton and detachment (تجرید و تفرید) are the conditions of the

Mystic Path for the voyager to fulfil. To relinquish from the creatures and worldly relation is *Tajrid* (Separation) and to alienate from your ownself in *Tafrid* (detachment): no "other than God" in the heart, no burden on the back, no association with anyone, no getting busy in the bazar or in work with any creature. A disciple's aspirations soar above the pinnacle of the divine throne. He shuns the universe, and finds rest in the Object of his desire. In spite of having both the worlds, he would not be happy without his Friend. And if he did not have anything in the universe, but had his Friend, he won't experience unhappiness at all. One beloved of God has said: "If you are with God, there is no anxiety or difficulty, but with anything other than God, there is no peace and comfort." Similarly, it is said: whoever is veiled from God would experience by that very fact, calamity, and grief even though he had in his hands the key to the treasures of the two worlds. A mystic poet has said:

ہر کرایک خرقہ و نانے بود در دو کونش ملک سلطانے بود

(A *dervish* who is content in his patched garment and a piece of bread, he is the king of both the worlds)

Hazrat Khwaja Sari Saqati has said: "O Allah if you want to punish me, do as you like, but do not punish me by hiding Yourself from me." (*Letters 61-62. Tr. by Paul Jackson*)

Now some extracts from his work '*The Hundred Letters*' closely related to mystical path and the experience he gained are recorded here. Basic translation is by Paul Jackson, but it is modified, corrected, and summarised where found necessary.

Belief in Divine Unity (*tawhid*) can be divided into four stages. The first is: "There is no god but God!" Here the

heart is devoid of faith. This belief is hypocrisy and proves profitless in the next life. The second type is: "There is no god but God!" It enters the heart that this is so. Such belief is either conventional or is supported by rational proofs as is the case of the learned. The third type or stage is that when a person's soul is illuminated in such a way that he is able to perceive every action flowing from a single source and deriving from a single agent. This elevates the heart. It is the contemplation of Divine light that effaces creatures. He is Sufi who in this stage sees creatures and experiences the Creator in the sense that he perceives that they all come from Him. The fourth stage arrives when the traveller, after austerities, self-mortification, and His adoration advances to such an extent that he sees nothing except God in the entire universe. In His light every particle becomes concealed within his vision just as particles in the air are lost to sight on account of the brightness of the light emanating from the sun. This occurs not because the particles have ceased to exist but rather because the intensity of sunlight makes it impossible that anything other than this concealment should result. Some people are admitted into the royal Presence for an hour a week; other for an hour or two a day; while yet others are absorbed in divine contemplation (مشاهده ذات) for the greater part of their time. Beyond these four stages is one known as "losing consciousness of being lost in divine contemplation."

تو در و گم شو کہ توحید این - بود گم شدن گم کن کہ تفرید این بود

(You lose your identity in God, for this is Divine Unity. And lose the sense of "being lost"-that is complete detachment (تفرید)). On account of this forgetfulness, all awareness of self is lost. By arriving at this stage of detachment the reality of *Wahdat ul-Wujud* is revealed to the

seeker. The existence of lover in the pavilion of the Beloved is a sin beyond comparison to any other.

Sin for the servant is great calamity. May God protect us from such things! Sin in the beginning hardens the heart, which ultimately leads to unbelief and wretchedness. Don't forget the wiles of Satan and the fate of Balaam Baour.

Know that sincere repentance is like a beautiful carpet on which you perform your devotions. The actual meaning of repentance is "turning back." The elect turn away from their evil deeds because they have become cognizant of their obligation to revere their Master. Thus the elect of the elect perceiving their nothingness in the light of the glory of the Lord, are able to turn away from all that is not God.

Discipleship (ارادت) is the name of heart's inclination for the acquisition something specific which produces determination to seek the things itself. The desire of God (His quest) is wholly pure, stripped of anything base, untainted by selfishness, and free from inconstancy. It is enriched by God Himself who removes any obstacle that might obstructs its attachment.

Mystic way is infested with one's ego, devils, men and jinn, thus making it impossible to travel along it without an experienced holy man as one's escort. Also there are many slippery places where it is easy to fall. And one can be plagued with misfortune and dangers from behind.

A saint (*wali*) is a person who continuously enjoys the divine favour in all his activities and becomes one of those protected by God. Among them are four thousand "concealed" ones who do not recognize one another and who do not know the beauty of their own lofty state. They remain hidden from both themselves and the people. Then there are three hundred saints who are authorized to loose and to bind. They are called

Akhyar. And there are forty *Abdal*, four *Awtad* and three *Nuqba* and two *Najeeb* and one *Ghaus*. All these holy men know each other and run administration of the world in consultation with each others. Saint does not rest content with what is miraculous, nor does he pride himself with being a miracle worker. The two attitudes are contradictory.

Saintliness (*wilayat*) is one of the divine secret. It is not born from self-discipline, and austerities. Only saint can recognize another saint. If this mystery (*nur-e-wilayat*) could be made plain (open) to all reasonable men, it would then be possible to distinguish the friend from foe or the spiritual adept (*wali*) from the careless worldling. God willed things in such a way that the pearl of friendship (*wilayat*) was placed inside a shell of popular contempt and cast into the sea of affliction, so that the seeker of this pearl dive into the bottom of this ocean of death where he will either win his desire or make an end of his life.

The one who is radiant Sufi saint never looks his miraculous power, nor he thinks himself worthy of it. To be a radiant mystic and to concentrate on one's intuitive power are the too attitudes which are contradictory. That is why the venerable Sufi saints look miracles (*Karamat*) as one of them said: "There are many idols in the world, one of which is miraculous concurrences."

It is said that a disciple should be like the earth so that his Guide may be like the sky. Sometimes he might shower rain over it and another throw warmth of the sun on it. Sometime, like cloud keep him under his shadow. Sometime fragrant breeze of his compassion and bounty refreshed him making his soil fertile and wealthy. The purpose of all this is to bring the disciple to perfection. He who is blessed, all sorts of arrangements i.e., divine favour and grace descends on him.

But he who is wretched in destiny, no soul in the world can take him to the elevated rank.

There are thousands upon thousands who have been martyred and slain in the Divine way. Many other thousands are wounded and thrown prostrate. Those well known for their intellect have been perplexed in their search for Him and those famous for their religious knowledge are searching Him at the outskirts of His Glory and Tremendousness. Those, whose eyes are radiant and heart clairvoyant, are submerged in one drop of His ocean of His Majesty or singed like sparks from the fire of His Glory.

The kings of this world, when they want to honour their servants confer a turban and a robe of honour upon them as well as estate. When God honours anyone, He begins by removing his turban and robe of honour. Then He makes him hungry and strips him naked. And this is tradition of this path: "There is no return for anyone who has turned towards Him till he is slain."

May you have long life and victory over your lower soul! The seeker of God has no station to stop nor does he rest anywhere along the mystic path. He is forbidden to rest contentedly anywhere in either of the two worlds - as it has been said: "Rest is forbidden for the hearts of God's friends!" it is not possible to find the Desired One in this world or the next in such a way that the heart is freed from the pain of seeking Him.

The sign of sincere disciple would be that he chooses what is not easy, what is little known, the life of solitude, the occupation of a *dervish*, and takes pride in these things! The lord of Universe ^ﷻ despite having attained to highest exalted rank and degree, besought the Lord of Glory saying: "O God, grant us poverty in both life and death, and on the Day of

Resurrection, raise us up in the condition of the poor."

The wayfarer of the spiritual path has to face fear and hope many thousands times, and thousands of descents and ascents, torments and griefs and many other such like things to undergo. If a spiritual master comes upon the scene, he will have a particular remedy at hand for all the various causes of trouble; he will know the serum for every sickness. His arrival makes the way easy.

The first step from the disciple is to observe the sacred law (Shariah). Then the mystic way (*tariqa*) will show its face to him. This is the way to the heart. When he has observed all the demands of this way, then he can again be confident that the veil covering his heart will be removed and the meaning of Truth, which is the way to life, will be shown to him. The Mashaikh have enumerated four stages on the way to God for the travellers. The first stage is the temporal world, second the angelic world, third is the world of power (*jabrut*), and fourth is the world of divinity (*lahut*).

We are confronted with such a *Jabbar* and *Qahar* (The compeller and the Dominant) that even the eight heavens can be changed into a hell and hell can become a paradise. A church can be changed into Kaaba, and Kaaba made of an idol-temple. To His power, both are equal. Be fearful and trembling all the times. Be afraid lest a hand of rejection might emerge from hidden without reason. His wrath and grace need no reason. His grace seeks someone polluted in sins in order to wash him with the water of forgiveness and thus his heart attains purity. On the other hand, His wrath seeks someone pure, in order to blacken his face with the smoke of separations, so that the purity of the king of wrath might be made manifest apart from causes. On one occasion, He brings forth a prophet from beneath the skirt of a wicked man. On

another occasion He draws forth a wicked man from beneath the skirt of a prophet.

I asked: "What is my sin?" He said: "Your being in front of My Being is the greatest sin." O Brother you should repent for your sins. The gnostics say one must repent for his devotion like the sinner over his sins.

Bliss and misery are two treasures of the Lord. The key to the former is submission, while the key to the latter is sin. The one who is fortunate has been blessed from his mother's womb. Such a person is given the key to bliss. The one who is unfortunate has been born accursed. Sin is the key to misery.

All the honour, dignity, and wealth of a servant lies in his devotion to the Almighty while all baseness, torment and losses are derived from sin. All nearness to His Presence depends on submission, all punishment on sin. All those who are thrown down are thrown off the path of sin; while all those who are raised aloft are raised up from the path of submission. One who for seven hundred thousand years was devoted to worship in a holy place (celestial world), his rosary constantly in his hand, for ever purifying himself, was thrown down simply because he refused to prostrate, with the result that he was never able to rise up again. But the dog of the companions of the cave, simply by association, was so lifted up as to be incapable of falling. *"This is the decree of the great, wise God (41:12).*

We have become fuel of the hell, joining the company of Nimrod and Pharaoh. We have fallen asleep dreaming foolishly about ourselves. The effect of heedlessness on the hearts of man is greater than that of hell on the unbeliever.

The world is not resting place. An idol (human) made of water and clay has been destined to be thrown into the

valley of calamity. If he eats to his fill, he grows drowsy. If he is hungry, he grows mad. If he is asleep, he is like a dead man. If he is awake, he is perplexed. Indigence and helplessness are his inevitable qualities. If he seeks mystical knowledge of God (*marifat*), the reply comes: "*They do not honour God with the honour due to Him.*" (6:92) If he is engrossed in His worship, it is said: "*They have been given no other command then to serve God with great sincerity!*" (98:5) If a man ceases to pursue either gnosis or service, it is said: "I did not make jinn and men except to worship Me!" (51:36) If he becomes heedless, he is frightened with, "*Know that the grip of your Lord is very tight!*" If anyone seeks intercessor, the order comes: "*No one can speak except he whom the Merciful permits to speak and He will declare what is right* (78:18) *If you desire any rank in your heart, it is said: He knows the hidden secrets of the heart!*" If someone flees and goes into hiding, it is said: "*There is no place to which he can escape!*" If he continues to flee, calamity befalls him: "All have to return in His direction!" If any one despairs, it is said: "*Do not despair of God's mercy!*" (39:53). The gnostics have said: "We entered this world in a condition of anxiety, passed our days in astonishment and, with a cry we left."

O Dear! Live in this world brokenhearted and miserable. When Moses asked God: "O Lord where should I search You?" The answer came: "In the heart which is broken by the hand of destiny."

The foundation of Sufism is quite ancient having been practised by the prophets and the righteous. Those associated with this Tradition are divided into three groups. The Sufis, the seekers, and the dissemblers. A Sufi is a person who is completely lost to himself, exists only in God, is freed from the hold of his lower self and is conjoined to the Truth. The

seeker is one who engages in the struggle with self, undergoes austerities, and disciplines himself by means of various practices. The dissembler is one who pretends to be one of the above, but is devoid of any of their qualities. The first Sufi in the world was Adam. He made a fortyday retreat between Makkah and Taif. The Holy Prophet ﷺ set aside a special corner in his own mosque and from his Companions, he selected a group of about seventy people who were wayfarers on the mystic Path. They used to converse there together, while the Arab Chiefs and other Companions did not know their secret talks. When the Apostle bestowed great honour and dignity upon any of the companions, he would give him his own cloak or shirt. That person would then become a Sufi. Thus the beginning of mystic way started from Adam and its completion was found in Muhammad, the Apostle of God. (PBUH). (The Hundred Letters tr. by Paul Jackson)

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﴿ 19 ﴾

Hazrat Shah Nimatullah Wali

Shah Nuruddin Nimatullah Wali is a high-ranking illustrious Sufi saint of Islam whose name and fame is heard from the tongue of every Muslim and non-Muslim of the world. The main cause of his being renowned was that he had kept open the mine of his spiritual wealth to all even for those who were disappointed and rejected from other thresholds of Sufis' hospices (Khanqahs). Above all he is considered the reviver of Sufism in the Muslim world, especially Iran and Indo-Pak subcontinent. He was born on the 14th of Rabi al-Awal 731 A.H. (1330) in Aleppo in present day Syria. His learned revered father Mir Abdullah was one of the erudite scholars and well-known sufi saint of his time. His mother was of the royal lineage of Fars, in southern Iran. Shah Nimatullah was descendant of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in 19th generation through Hazrat Imam Baqir (the 5th Imam of Ahl al-Bait). He has stated this in one of his poems as follows:

My 19th ancestor was the Messenger of God himself, a revealed fact, not hidden.

Nasrollah relates that when he was of five year, his father took him to a Sufis gathering. Mir Abdullah spoke about the battle of Uhud in which during fight the Prophet lost five teeth and Hazrat Uways Qarani, who was miles away in his retreat in Yemen-at once broke all his teeth. The child Shah Nimatullah wondered why Uways did so. The same night he saw Uways Qarani in dream who told him: "In love of your ancestor (Rasulullah ﷺ) I broke the thirty teeth of avarice for this world and the next." Hazrat Uways is regarded as the prototype of the *dervishes*. But most significantly he is the founder of a Sufi order which flourished in India and is still

flourishing in Iran.

The spiritual vision at the age of five is considered significant in determining spiritual career of Shah Nimatullah. Once he revealed mysterious life of his childhood in these words: What the Shaikh after forty days of solitude at the age of thirty never realized, was revealed to me at the age of three.

Shah Nimatullah showed promise of brilliance in his early life. Not only had he a precocious understanding of religious matters, but his memory was developed to such an extent that he had memorized the whole of Qur'an as a young child. Before entering the spiritual path, in the course of his formal education in Aleppo, he had studied all the traditional sciences. Dr Javad Nurbakhsh states he received his elementary education from Shaikh Rukhuddin Shirazi and afterwards studied rhetoric under Shaikh Shamusuddin Makki, scholastic theosophy (*hikmat-i Illahi*) under Syed Jalaluddin Kharami, and scholastic theology (*Ilum al Kalam*) under Qazi Idhdhauddin. Besides this he studied principles of *fiqh* and a number of other books on Sufism such as *Mirsad al-ibad* of Najmuddin Razi, *al-Isharat wa'l tanbihat* (The Book of Directives and Remarks) of Avicenna, and most important of all *Fusus al-Hikam* (Bezels of wisdom) of Shaikh Akbar Muhyiuddin Ibn Arabi. Shah Nimatullah held Ibn Arabi in great esteem, as a top ranking mystic of Islam.

Thus as a young man Shah Nimatullah mastered all the traditional and rational sciences including studies in *Sufism*. But he realized that just bookish knowledge of Islamic mysticism (*Tasawwuf*) won't lead him to achieve goal. It could not slake his fiery thirst for Absolute Reality nor relieve his pain, as he said:

*I perceive all the professors of exoteric knowledge
to be full of learning with no application
Day and night wasting their lives, pursuing
discussion, chatter, and empty disputation.*

Thus in the end Shah Nimatullah closed the chapter of institutional knowledge and pursued the acquisition of intuitional knowledge. Now began the search for spiritual guide (*Pir*) which comprised his wandering from place to place, city after city. This is considered the most challenging and pains-taking formative phase of life of the traveller of mystic path. Concerning this, Abdur Razzaq Kirmani has quoted Shah Sahib's words:

"Any place where it appeared there was a *dervish*, I hurried in complete sincerity and seriousness to be in his company, remaining vigilant and watchful under his training and guidance so that the true reality (*ha-qiqat*) of his state would appear to me. When, however, I perceived by the grace of God, my own intoxication to be greater than his, he would also see this and would stop trying to exercise his spiritual domination over me."

During this period, Shah Nimatullah remained in the company of many spiritualists for years together, but none of them had the capacity to spiritually dominate him. No one could illumine his inmost being. Thus after serving many Mashaikh, Shah set out to Makkah to perform pilgrimage where he met the Shaikh of Makkah Hazrat Abdullah Yafii. Shah Nimatullah recounts his first meeting with the Shaikh Abdullah Yafii in these words:

"When I entered the mosque, I saw a man engaged in teaching Traditions (*Ahadith*) of the Prophet, and at once perceived myself as a drop and this man as the ocean. I waited

until he had finished his lecture. Suddenly he glanced at me, and handed me a manuscript which he was holding. "O Syed, he said, "all the *Ahadith* of the Prophet which are judged spurious are in this book, and anyone who wishes to determine their degree of authenticity must make use of it." At that I proffered the hand of servitude (*iradat*) to him and grasped the skirt of his robe in submission." Thus Shah Nimatullah was initiated (*Bait*) systematically by Abdullah Yafii in his Sufi order.

Hazrat Abdullah Yafii was born in Yemen around 698/1298, and died in Makkah in 768/1366. He spent his early life in Aden and was taught by Shaikh Abu al-Hasan Nuruddin Ali Tawashi. There he was invested with not one, but two *Khirqahs*, one from Shaikh Salih Barbari, although he is said to have received his mastership from six Shaikhs altogether. Abdullah Yafii was Shaikh of the Shadhili Order, and the founder of the Yafiiyyah branch of Qadiriyya Sufi order. Shaikh Yafii was endowed not only with esoteric perfection, but with so great mastery of exoteric knowledge that he was considered to be one of the greatest jurists and historians of his time.

Shah Nimatullah spent seven years in the service of Abdullah Yafii during which he earned his subsistence by working as a shepherd for the Shaikh's flocks. But by the grace of Shaikh's company, he had become a preceptor after having been a student and a spiritual guide after having been a disciple.

After the lapse of this period expanded over seven year, Shah Sahib set out on long journey through different countries. This time he was not a seeker but an accomplished mystic of his age slaking the spiritually thirsty by the grace of

his breath, providing necessary instructions and guidance to the aspirants of Truth. About his inner state, he speaks:

*I was an intellectual, but by the love of the Beloved
I went crazy.*

*And having made His acquaintance,
I became foreign to myself.*

*In the fire of His love, the candlelike taper
of my being was burnt,*

*And like the mystic, I became aware
of the rapture of the moth.*

The first place he visited was Egypt. One day he was sitting in a house on the bank of the river Nile overlooking the river with a disciple of one of his early Shaikhs named Syed Husain Ikhlati. In the course of conversation, Ikhlati expressed his desire to benefit from Nimatullah's achievement. Shah Sahib politely said that he too wished the same from Ikhlati. So Ikhlati got up and opened a window, and to Shah it seemed as if the Nile was full of blood. Ikhlati closed the window, and on opening it again Shah Sahib saw the tides flowing with dismembered hands and feet. Yet a third time Ikhlati closed and re-opened the window, and this time, the river was filled with milk. Finally the fourth time, the Nile appeared once again plain water. The show being completed Shah Nimatullah remarked: "We have no state like this. Our only claim is the alchemy of *Faqr* (spiritual poverty). Thus, saying this, he got up and left.

After going ahead some distance, Shah Nimatullah called a *dervish* to him and handed him a closed box, telling him to deliver it to Ikhlati. On opening the box, Ikhlati saw inside it a piece of cotton sitting unsinged in the middle of a field of burning coals. Astonished, he regretted his own

display of trickery show and his failure to benefit from Shah Nimatullah's acquaintance. The *dervish* who had delivered the miraculous box was so greatly impressed and when he returned Shah saw in his mind the unexpressed desire to learn more. Picking up a stone from the ground, he handed it to the *dervish* who saw that it had become a jewel. "Take this to the bazar and have it priced", he said. In the market, a jeweller told the *dervish* that he had never seen a jewel like it, and at once offered him a thousand dirhams for it. The *dervish* returned to Shah Nimatullah who ordered him to crush the jewel and mix it into a drink which all the disciples shared. It was then, according to the legend that Shah Nimatullah spontaneously composed and sang the *ghazal* beginning:

*We alchemize the dust of the way with a single glance;
with the corner of our eye we remedy a hundred pains.*

In Egypt Shah Nimatullah met a man who made a 40-day retreat (*Chilla*) eating only a single almond a day. "Is this, he asked his *dervishes*, a manly or womanly retreat?" Please, tell us. Shah said:

A womanly retreat is to eat as little as possible. A manly retreat is to fast every day, to break fast each evening with a ship-load of food, and not to break ablution for the entire 40 days. The disciples were incredulous, so Shah Nimatullah immediately undertook and successfully completed such a retreat. From Egypt Shah Nimatullah travelled to Persia where in Tabriz he met another Sufi poet named Muinuddin Ali called Qasim Anwar. From Azerbyjan he went on to Transoxania where he settled in Sharisabz near Samarkand. It was in this journey that an encounter took place between Shah and Tamerlane. But Timur's relations with Shah remained

estranged. Timur himself had the only virtue that he would respect the holy men (*Auliya Allah*). It is unlikely that Shah Nimatullah was, in any way politically engaged against the Mongols, but he wanted only to exert a spiritual and civilizing influence on them. Since Shah Nimatullah was not in good books of Timur, he decided to banish Shah; but his respect for Sufi saints prevented him from acting in his brutal manner. He sent a message to Shah asking 'shall you come to see us, or shall we come to see you?' Shah responded by saying "we should behave according to the tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ", implying that Timur should come to him. Timur did come, and brought food with him; while they ate, he asked Shah, 'why does a holy man scrupulous man like you eat food which does not belong to you, and is therefore *haram* (forbidden)?" "Since my sustenance is from the *halal* (permitted), it was put into your mind to visit the *dervishes*, Shah replied.

On hearing this the Mongol (Timur) determined to put the saint (Shah) to test. He ordered his cook to go and steal a lamb somewhere, and cook it. The cook met an old woman with a lamb and seized it from her forcibly. He hurried back, prepared the meat, and carried it to the two men. As soon as Shah Nimatullah tasted it, Timur exclaimed "You claim not to eat what is *haram*, but this lamb was taken by force from an old woman! What do you say about that?" We must look into the matter, he replied. "Send for the lady." When the woman arrived, they inquired of her; she said "I inherited some sheep from my husband. Recently my son took some of them to the market in Sarakhs, but I heard some bad news about him, and was afraid that he might not return. I made a vow that if he came back safely I would give a lamb to Shah Nimatullah.

After a few days he returned safe, but as I was on my way to Shah Nimatullah with the lamb, this cook attacked me and stole it from me. Timur apologized, but banished Shah anyway. Shah then commented:

*Of the kings of this world I have seen many, but was there ever a Sultan as crippled as Timur the lame?
No!*

Shah Nimatullah's relations with Timur's son, Shah Rukh were much better. Shah Rukh was crowned in 807 A.H. (1404) and presented a complete contrast to his father in every way. Shah Rukh took Kirman in 819 A.H (1416). His relations with Shah were good. By this time Shah Nimatullah was already globally famous, and had begun to write. Gifts and visitors came to him from as far away as India. He had literally hundreds of thousands disciples and there is no doubt that Shah Rukh was among the devotees of Shah Nimatullah though not actually initiated at his hand. Shah Rukh and his sons and courtiers and administrators did their best in upholding the Shariah and spreading *Tariqat* in the world.

When Timur himself banished Shah Nimatullah from Transoxania, he travelled first to Mashhad where he undertook 40-days retreat, and then left for Harat where he married the daughter of Amir Husain Harawi-the man who asked the questions which prompted Mahmud Shabistari to compose his *Gulshan-i Raz*.

Despite large amount of wealth in the form of gifts and donations coming to him, Shah Nimatullah always worked for a living and spent most of his time in Harat farming which he liked most. When Shah was living in the Kirman region, a *dervish* would visit him frequently. One day Shah asked him: "what is it you want?" I understand you know alchemy, the

dervish replied. "Yes we know it", Shah said. Later in the early spring when the time came to plant melons, Shah Nimatullah gave some seeds to the *dervish* and one of his own servants and told them to plant them and tend the crop. By the grace of Shah's attention an enormous harvest of huge melons was sent to market. Shah gave most of the money to the *dervish* and told him "if you want alchemy take up farming".

Shah always encouraged his disciples to earn their livelihood if they could, and he said "God has created man for worship and gnosis (*marifat*), and put him in need of three things: eating, since the life of the body depends on it; clothing for covering the body; shelter for rest and comfort. One cannot obtain these things except by earning a living, begging or stealing. The last two are rejected by God, so only working is accepted." Shah wanted the *dervishes* to be "men whom neither commerce nor trafficking diverts from the remembrance of God. (24:37)

After Harat, Shah Nimatullah moved on to Kubanan (near Kirman) where he stayed for seven years and where his son Shah Khalilullah, who later succeeded him as 'spiritual heir', was born in 775 A.H (1373). Shah Nimatullah was then 45 years old. Shah made a number of side-trips during this period, to Yazd, Taft and other neighbouring towns and villages. While engaged in building a Khanqah in Taft, he travelled to Abarqu where he constructed a garden with a pavilion. On the way from there to Bafq he stayed overnight in a Caravanserai which was attacked by a band of robbers. They tied up all the merchants and seized their mercandise, but when they came near to Shah Nimatullah, he pierced them with an angry look and literally paralysed them. After untying the merchants, Shah lectured the highwaymen and then let

them go.

The large and important city of Kirman (formerly big center of the Zoroastrians i.e. fire-worshippers) came to attract Shah Nimatullah by its beauty, its clear brilliant sky and the hospitality of its people who had traditionally been amenable to esotericists (mystic men). He called his family from Kubanan and they settled in Kirman. Once during excursion out of the city, Shah found the village of Mahan, about 40 kilometres to the south which was then a place for summer retreat for some wealthier families. Its climate was perfect and water unlike Kirman's very good. The native people were eager to receive and accommodate Shah Nimatullah there. So he moved to Mahan and spent the last 25 years of his life between Mahan and Kirman. It was in Mahan that Shah began to compose his poetry and essays. For the rest of his life, it was the growing Order centre of Shah's spiritual influence.

One night as Shah sat with his disciples in Mahan, he said "A *dervish* in Shiraz is singing one of my *ghazals* (odes)!" Sometime later, a sufi from Shiraz arrived in Mahan and told how he had dreamt one night, after singing a poem of Nimatullah that Shah himself had appeared, clapped him on the back and congratulated him. He left for Mahan the next morning. It suggests that Shah was gaining a number of devotees in Fars. It may have been in response to their request that Shah considered making his last major journey. The city of Shiraz had recently (1409) come under the rule of a grandson of Timur, Iskandar bin Umar Shaikh, who later built a Khanqah for Shah Niamtullah in that city, and it was his invitation which persuaded Shah to come.

As Shah Nimatullah's entourage approached the city,

many people came out to greet him, and met him by Sa'di's tomb. Amongst them was also famous philosopher and gnostic Syed Sharif Jurjani. As Shah Nimatullah and Jurjani embraced, it began to rain and the latter exclaimed: "witness God's generosity: His Bounty (Nimat) in my arms and His Mercy falling on us!"

During his stay in Shiraz, news spread that Shah Nimatullah, Iskandar and Jurjani would appear together at the Atiq Mosque for the Friday congregational prayer. A huge crowd gathered there. One of Jurjani's student brought the prayer carpets for the three men ahead of them to the mosque and laid them out with the king's in the middle, Jurjani's on the right and Shah's on the left. The crowd was waiting for Shah to appear. When he entered, they went wild trying to touch him and kiss his hands. In the crowd Jurjani was nearly crushed but Shah took hold of his hand and steered him through the mob. When they came to the prayer mats, Jurjani picked up his and Shah's mats and reversed them putting his own to the left and Shah's to the right side of the kings's. Later when Jurjani's students raised question why he made change, he answered "you are not aware of the stations of the saints."

Shah Nimatullah had apparently not misjudged his time, for during his stay in Shiraz it is said that 30,000 people took oath of allegiance at his hand. (*Excerpted from Kings of Love, by Nasrollah Pourjavady and Peter Lamborn Wilson*)

Besides the great number of devotees in Persia, Shah Nimatullah's Order was also gaining influence in India, where Shah Ahmad Bahmani, the king of Deccan called himself 'the meanest of Shah Nimatullah's disciples. Ahmad himself is perhaps the only India's ruler ever to be have been called saint (wali). He began to send letters to Shah Nimatullah, requesting

him to visit India. Shah did not want to go, but he sent one of his disciples Mulla Qutbuddin to India with Ahmad's messenger. Ahmad wrote again to Shah Nimatullah begging to send a son; but since he had only one, he decided instead to send his grandson, Mir Nurullah. Ahmad himself came out to greet him and at the place of their meeting he caused to be built a town which he called Nimatabad. Nurullah received the title Malik al-Mashaikh 'king of the Shaikhs', and was given a place in the court above all others. Finally, he married the king's daughter. After Shah Nimatullah's death in 834 A.H. (1431) Khalilullah and most of the rest of the family left Persia and migrated to India, where the city of Bidar became the seat of the Order for more than three centuries.

According to a tradition "The ways towards God are as numerous as the creatures themselves," in one of his prose work, Shah Nimatullah explains that each soul, according to its aptitudes, belief and capacity, had a way towards God; but the shortest and most luminous is the straight path of the eager ones, the Sufis. In general, all the paths can be classified under three headings. The first is that of 'the People of Transactions' (*mu'amalat*). Islamic Law is usually divided into worship (*ibadat*) and transactions, the former concerns with prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and the like; the latter dealing with contracts, inheritane, marriage and so on. Those who engage in an excess of prayer and fasting from a purely exoteric point of view, are however really trying to bargain or 'do business' with God. Thus Nimatullah calls them not the people of worship but the people of transactions. Although prayer and fasting form part of all the paths, still there is difference in approach by different people. There is the prayer of ordinary people, prayer of the Elect, and prayer of the Elect of the Elect.

The first group of transactions works on their outer selves (*zahir*), the second group works on self-denial, mortification and purification of soul and character and works on their inner selves (*batin*) More of these will reach the goal than the first group but they still cannot reach the Reality of the Sufis. The stage of Hallaj is in fact the third and highest path, the way of those who fly towards the Absolute. These are the people of Love, and the Sufis consider that their journey is made through divine attraction-that is that God draws them to Himself.

The central term in Shah's description of Sufism is the use of *qutb*. Shah says that there are two kinds of *qutbs*: those who came before Rasulullah ﷺ and those who came after him. The first were the Messengers of whom there were 330; and the latter number only twelve upto the Day of Resurrection. The last figures in each of these categories really occupy unique positions: they are Jesus and the Mahdi. Nasrullah Pourjavady in his work '*Kings of Love.*' records final lines of Shah's *ghazals* which reveal his spiritual excellence in his own words: These are reproduced as follows:

There is no more drunken reveller than Ni'matullah

And if you say there is, come and show him to me! (Diwan, p.34)

I am the Guarded Tablet, the treasure of the Treasury of the Throne;

The heart of my Lord (Muhammad) is the storehouse of my secrets. (p. 138)

*We are intoxicated, the rival of God's Bounty (Ni'mat Allah),
Cup in hand, listening to the music of the reed. (p. 706)*

Is there anything which does not contain God's Bounty?

No. Then see Ni'matullah in every thing. (p.395)

Do you want to reach Ni'matullah?

Then leave both annihilation and permanence behind! (p. 619)

Others have seen God through His Bounty,

But we see Ni'matullah through Him. (p. 21)

Ni'matullah appeared, like light.

Take a look-behold: it is Love. (p.108)

Do you know who Ni'matullah really is?

He is the memorial of the Prophets and saints. (p. 8)

I am the Bounty of God wherever I go

I am with God, I am with God, I am with God! (p. 8)

Shah Nimatullah did not feel the necessity of declaring himself categorically either *Shiah* or *Sunni* although in one of his ghazals he says!

O you who are the lover of 'Ali's family,

you are a perfect believer-there is none like you.

Choose the Sunni way, which is our path,

lest you be lost and destroyed.

Whoever loves the Four

is a pure follower of the only real school, and a saint.

I am the friend of the Companions-all of them-

the friend of the Sunnis and the enemy of the

Mu'tazilites.

(Diwan, pp. 684-5)

They ask me what school, what rite I follow-

O you unaware ones! what school could I have?

Shafi and Abu Hanafi have placed mirrors before me-

each in his own way is apt-but mine is the Way of my

ancestor (Muhammad).

My knowledge of the science of prophets and saints

is more perfect than that of any school.

(Diwan, pp, 734-5)

The above quotations amply demonstrate impact of

Ibn Arabi's sufism on Shah Nimatullah. His poetry is soaked in the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (Oneness of Being). Shah also rendered some portion of the *Fusus al-hikam* (of Ibn-Arabi) into Persian verse and commented on it. In a *Risala* commenting on the *Fusus* he wrote:

*The words of the Fusus became placed in our heart
like a stone in the setting of a ring.*

They were revealed to him (Ibn' Arabi)

by the Messenger of God,

and again, by his Spirit, to us.

Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh underlines some of the major contributions Shah Nimatullah made in the realm of Sufism. His awe-inspiring personality enraptured everyone who approached him and that no one dared speak in his presence. His speech was profound and eloquent. As has been written:

When Shah Nimatullah began to speak

Even the angels descended to listen.

His endeavour bestowed fresh radiance upon the reputation of the Sufis of Iran and of the entire world of Islam. Shah spent his free time in farming making it his occupation a model for his disciples to emulate. He believed that the best form of austerity, and the excellent way of purifying inmost is by service to society and kindness to other human beings. This practice amongst Shah's disciples caused the state of expansion to prevail upon that of contraction. Shah Nimatullah demonstrated that retirement from the world and laziness resulted solely in apathy, lethargy and depression. Thus Nimatullah's Sufis abandoned seclusion and retreat. He urged that travellers of mystic path should have an occupation. He was against wearing of any particular costume (*Khirqah etc*) as Sufi dress. It was his opinion that inner and spiritual affairs

had to be free from any show off and pretense, colourless being far closer to God than black or white raiments. The nobility of man consists in assimilating divine attributes, not in attachment to a particular dress. Shah purged Sufism from of the non-Islamic elements which had crept into it. He made efforts to purge Sufism of Hindu Schools of philosophy insisting on strict observance of *sunna* and Shariah. He strongly affirmed that *tariqat* and Shariah are one and not different entities, and Reality can be attained by the integration of both. He has written:

*The Shariat is knowledge of the theory of religion
the tariqat its application.
And if you combine Theory and practice sincerely,
Solely for the sake of God,
That's the haqiqat.*

One of the most important steps taken by Shah Nimatullah, was that he did not considered Sufism limited to a certain group of people in contrast to other sufi Mashaikh of his time who would accept only some seekers of God and reject others as unworthy. Shah kept his door open to all aspirants in whom he perceived a longing for Union. He said: "All those whom the saints have rejected, I will accept, and according to their capacity, I will perfect them."

It was in this way Shah revived true spirit of mystic path of Ali in Iran. His efforts prevented his disciples to adopt lustful worldly life. He encouraged the seekers to concentrate on the purification of the heart and illumination of the soul.

Shah Nimatullah, after the age of sixty began to compose poetry, but in reality he was not a poet; rather he was a gnostic (*arif*) and mystic of high rank who clothed Reality in the garb of verse. The main form he adopted was the lyric

(*ghazal*). Those poems which he wrote in other metrical styles such as *qasidah*, *mathnawi* and *rubai* are insignificant compared to his lyricism.

In most of his poems, Shah speaks in some manner of the Unity or identity of the "seer" with the "seen" or the witnesser (*shahid*) with the "witnessed" "*mashud*" or the "seeker" (*talib*) with the "sought" (*matlub*). More often he dwells on the Lover, the Beloved, and Love. The meaning of these metaphors, however revolves around one single idea: the **Unity of Being** (*wahdat al-wujud*). Shah alludes to this point in some of his poems, for instance:

According to our faith, lover and Beloved are one.

To us, what is desire?

The desirer and the Desired are one.

They tell me: seek Him in His Essence.

But how should I seek?

Seeker and sought are one.

These ideas on the *wahdat al-wujud* which Shah set to meter in his *Diwan* of poetry (some quotations given before) were also expressed by him in his prose writings. (*Summarized from 'Masters of the Path, by Dr. Javad Nurbakhsh*).

It is not feasible to recount total literary contributions of Shah Nimatullah in this small essay. Some lines from his *Diwan* have been quoted to explain Shah's faith and conviction in Sufism. His *Diwan* is an enormous work of some 14000 lines containing lyrical, dialectic and philosophic verse of sublime quality. Of his prose works 120 are known to have survived, although some chroniclers claim he wrote more than 700 in all. All of his works are in Persian, except for three in Arabic, two of which have been translated into Persian by

Javad Nurbakhsh. However, Qur'an and Ahadith were the strongest influence on the development of his Sufi thought and practices followed by the saying and writings of the great Sufi Mashaikh particularly *Fusus al-Hikam* of Ibn Arabi.

Shah Nimatullah lived nearly one hundred years. In 834 A.H (1430) during his visit to Kirman, he 'emptied his *Khirqah*', i.e. he died. Before his death he assembled his disciples and introduced his son Khalilullah as spiritual successor (*sajjada-nishin*). Two days later a *dervish* named Nizamuddin Kiji, who was known to be living in Abarqu, suddenly appeared and washed the body for burial. They took the coffin to the congregational mosque in Kirman and waited to see who would lead the funeral prayer. Amir Shamusuddin Muhammad Ibrahim appeared in some mysterious manner from the city of Bam and without uttering a word, stood in front of the congregation and acted as *Imam*. The *dervishes* carried the bier on their shoulders all the way to Mahan and buried it there in the centre of the town. As soon as Ahmad Shah Bahmani heard of his Shaikh's death, he sent a donation to Persia for the construction of a mausoleum. This chamber, now the central domed burial vault of the Mahan complex, was eventually completed by Alauddin Bahmani in 840 A.H. (1436); the exquisite carved sandal wood doors, were donated by Ahmad Shah. In 999 A.H. (1590), the Safavid emperor Shah Abbas constructed the western gallery etc. Finally in Qajar times, the large oblong court with its minarets was erected by Muhammad Shah, another royal *dervish*.

Shah discoursed: The ruined tavern where I am seated is a house of peace and security. It is occupied by the chief of the (*rind*) i.e. profligate of God. In the tavern, the drunkards

delight in tranquillity.

His perfect morality inclined him to regard all human beings as worthy of being treated with goodwill. In this respect he says: in all my life I never offended a single ant. As long as I have been, I have been so, and as long as I will be, I will be so.

He regarded all people as being equally deserving road to Sufism. Thus he vehemently said: "All those whom the other Mashaikh have rejected, I will accept, and according to their capacity, I will perfect them."

Shah Nimatullah not only opened the door of his tavern to all the seekers, aspirants and his followers, but also paid respect to all nations, people and other Sufi orders of his time. He said: "We are like the sea, people our waves; necessarily we are associated with everyone."

Sources

1. Narullah Pourjavady & Peter Lamborn Wilson, *Kings of Love. Tehran 1978.*
2. Dr. Javed Nurhakhsh, *Masters of the Path, 1980.*

*Islamic Sufism: An account of the mysterious lives
of the great saints and mystics of Islam*

Former Auliya Allah

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