CHAPTER V
ETHICS OF ETIQUETTE: MAINTAINING
AD’AB IN SUFI RITUALS
Once in an assembly of *sama* the famous and undisputed master of the Sufis of Baghdad, Abul Qasim al-Junayd engaged himself in the audition of the Divine. In the heights of the assembly, his expression of sobriety amazed his more ecstatic contemporary Abul Husayn al-Nuri. When the latter enquired as to why he was depriving himself of the ecstatic feelings of the assembly while other mystics whirled away in *raqs*, the master from Baghdad replied, 'You see the mountains — you think they are firm, yet they move like clouds.'

This statement of al-Junayd has been immortalised in the annals of mystical sayings, not because it was a derivation from the Holy Quran, more so because it contained one of the greatest Truths of *tasawwuf*. For mystics of that age, in the early tenth century, the proximity to God signified the ultimate achievement of their spiritual toils, without scant regards to the methodology of such a spiritual gain. So that in an assembly of *sama* mystics did not think twice before committing themselves to the ecstatic effects of music, and as a result losing control over their limb movements.

Mystics like al-Junayd realised the dangers inherent in such expressions of unbridled exuberance. Audition led to such transformations in the state of the mystic that they became oblivious to the feelings of pain and pleasure. While getting enraptured by sounds of the verses or music, he might start whirling, or in extreme conditions of self effacement rend his clothes. While some seem to have died in the exercise, others are known to have lost their self control, at times disappearing into thin air. A Negro turning white under the effect of such ecstatic states, are for ages the stuff of legends.

In the light of such dangerous and seemingly unreal behaviour, arising from an experience of the Real, mystics like al-Junayd foresaw the necessity of regulations that would imply a degree of strict self control by the mystics.

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1 KM, p. 415; Al Quran 27:90
in an assembly of audition, or any exercise with a possible ecstatic outcome. The question that was posed however was that whether the listener in a state of experiencing the Divine and wholly occupied in the thought of the Lord, should allow himself to be swept away by the imposing effect of music, or should hold on to a more sober state. The answer lay to a certain extent in the words and actions of contemporary mystical masters, like al-Junayd, who would vehemently argue for a state of sobriety (sahw) for the Sufi rather than an intoxicated self.

The reason behind this advocacy of sobriety had multiple layers of interpretations. At the more superficial level Junayd harped on the essence of perfection of the spiritual state, where every thought, every love, every inclination every fear and every hope on God would occur under a state of perfect realisation by the mystic, and not under a state of spirited intoxication. For Junayd it was this state of 'perfect concentration' that ensured success for the mystic in his spiritual practices, where the mystic is in a condition of becoming more and more aware of his existence in God, where all his attributes become fused with those of the Almighty – the station of baqa being reached. But if we look away from such intricate spiritual theorisations, we would realise that Junayd had a far deeper understanding of the problem than it apparently presents itself to be. He was completely aware of the fact that at a time when he was talking of such ideas of intense spirituality, there remained little possibility of the concept of mystical experience itself getting moulded into a theorised thought process. This lack of ability in rationalising the mystical experience made it a dangerous subject for discussion in the public arena. With the activities of Sufis being viewed with a growing degree of cynicism by the theologians, it

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3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 182.
would be suicidal if such intensely convoluted ideas of mystical experience and Divine union be discussed in public.  

Keeping this in mind it became imperative for leading mystics like Junayd to promulgate some kind of a regulation on mystical actions and expressions. So that even though he was supportive of the exercise of sama in his early days of mystical initiation, Junayd became more and more skeptic of such a ritual as he progressed in the spiritual path, and gained on the knowledge of realising the realities of the age. Thus over the centuries both mystics and mystical theorists have worked dexterously to impose multiple layers of regulation on spiritual exercises with the express intention of limiting its dangers, both for the initiated and more so for the uninitiated.

**Etiquette (adʿab) as Spiritual Aid**

A close reading, or maybe a cursory sift, through Shaykh Shihabuddin’s much revered Sufi manual *Awarif ul Maarif* is enough to give the reader an idea of the Suhrawardi shaykhs’ idealism. It goes without saying that such an ideological disposition wholly concerns the pursuit of *tasawwuf*. Through the organisation of an intensely structured Sufi order, the Suhrawardi masters were attempting at constructing an ideal Sufi world in an attempt to unite with the Divine. How then, should such an objective be achieved? What should be the precise spiritual basis on which this aim be situated?

In the words of Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, the Sufis of this order were attempting a larger goal than merely limiting themselves to the tenets of doctrinal religion – in a sense they were, as said above, contemplating and moving towards the larger aim of uniting with the Almighty. An exercise of such spiritual magnitude essentially requires an individual to have complete control over his thoughts and actions at every

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5 Ibid., pp. 181-82.
6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
moment and at all places. And in order to achieve such a degree of spiritual control it is absolutely incumbent for the individual to adhere to the proper norms of etiquette (adab) of spiritual knowledge. This ideal is central to the Suhrawardi obsession with norms of proper adab, worship rituals and dhikr sessions. It is only through a detailed understanding of these concepts of Suhrawardi spirituality that one can completely appreciate the theoretical framing and practical application of Suhrawardi spirituality.

Suhrawardi emphasis on proper adab was essentially meant to be the basic, but yet the most essential, norm the shaykhs of this order should adhere to if they are to benefit from the path of spirituality. Since the Suhrawardi spiritual ideology did not visualise a divorce of the spiritual and the material world, rather considering it to be intertwined, it was important for the Suhrawardi shaykhs to perfect their spiritual outlook together with their physical customs. So that at the ultimate stage the entire principle of adab did not necessarily rest on uplifting their spiritual outlook, but rather a sincere attempt at developing a strict internal and external discipline.

Adab was a crucial element in maintaining internal and external discipline, since one witnesses a convergence of these concepts of discipline in the supreme mystical aim of union with the Divine, and for the realisation of this objective it is necessary that one's thoughts and beliefs be in total control of oneself - at every time and in every moment. Suhrawardi mystics harped on the centrality of adab primarily as a means to ensure that the flow of spiritual knowledge from the master to the disciple did not get disturbed or threatened. It is the importance of this mystical knowledge that enabled the Sufi disciples to strike a balance in their inner and outer realms of existence, the flow of which if disturbed through impure

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.

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influences or improper conduct could deprive the mystic of his goal of reuniting with the Almighty.\textsuperscript{11}

The masters of the Suhrawardi order were also equally respectful towards the hallowed Prophetic tradition, where Shaykh Suhrawardi cites a saying of the Prophet which states that God taught the Prophet good etiquette (\textit{adab}) so that he could be closer to His knowledge. For the Prophet repeatedly emphasised that acquiring proper \textit{adab} is essential for traveling on the path that leads a mystic closer to his Lord.\textsuperscript{12} It must also be kept in mind that Prophet Muhammad in every aspect of life represented the 'perfect being' (\textit{insaan i- kamil}), who brought God's final book of guidance to humanity, for their proper understanding of the multiple dimensions of life. As a servant of God, the \textit{adab} of the Prophet was a direct beneficence from the Almighty, which the Suhrawardi mystics connected to their spiritual order for a successful culmination of their spiritual quest.

The Suhrawardi adherence to \textit{adab} as an essence of spirituality reflected two important dimensions of their ideology. Firstly, it upheld the \textit{sunna} of the Prophet as the progenitor of the concept of \textit{adab}, essential for both the material and spiritual pursuits of an individual. This over course of time came to signify a genealogical mode of knowledge transmission, whereby the Suhrawardi shaykhs came to be viewed as the source of this knowledge of \textit{adab}, from whom the successive generations of spiritual disciples laid claim to their own share of \textit{adab}. Since such virtues were handed down only through a form of personal training, from the master himself, it in a way also upheld the importance of the master-disciple relationship and its centrality in the realm of spiritual knowledge and \textit{tawawuf} training. Thus in the Suhrawardi order the principle of \textit{adab} came to signify the essence of values and strength of character one must cultivate in order to find himself closer to his Beloved.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 63.
Secondly it is towards this end of achieving proximity to one's Lord that it is important to practice adab. Since, through the spirit of the Prophet of Islam, the quality of adab is a gift of God, for His creations, so that they may find the correct path in living a God life, and for the mystical it is mandatory since manifests Himself to the Sufi through adab. Like all creations the source of adab is also from the Almighty, and hence all mystics should respect and cultivate the quality of adab as an expression of their love for their Beloved, and at the same time as a means to witnessing (shahada) His manifestation (mushahada).

It is a well known truth in mystical doctrines that God created humans as pure beings with the ability to be virtuous. In the opinion of the mystics it should be the aim of humans to return to that original state of purity, through right actions and a strong morality. Thus towards such an end the practice of proper adab creates the ground for correct behaviour of an individual thereby guiding him towards right actions. Therefore in the quality of adab lies hidden God's own will of purging human beings of all immoral affairs and lead him towards the path of the Divine and virtuous.

Suhrwardi treatises while discussing the worth of adab as a trait of perfection in an individual emphasises on the intellectual aspects of its understanding, connected with Sufi ethics and practices. For the Suhrwardi Sufis adab remains an essential tool for understanding the inner and outer attributes of mystical ethics and rituals, so that they may understand and in turn appreciate the interconnectedness of such practices with the more cardinal features of Suhrwardi tasawwuf, which included the use of reason, intellectual enquiry and a proper exchange of ideas among else.

The essential aim of Suhrwardi mystics was to prove that adab was not an incidental aspect of Suhrwardi tasawwuf, rather its presence in the

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13 AM, p. 250.
14 Ibid.
15 Huda, Spiritual Exercises, p. 63.
Suhrawardi liturgy was to uphold the point that mystics of this order have drawn the basic and most important tenets of knowledge of the Unseen from this attribute and have thus been able to transfer them to their disciples.16 Thus it becomes quite evident that adab is no longer ‘another tool’, but rather the most important instructional tool for securing the master-disciple relationship within a Sufi order, and in the way ease the flow of the knowledge of spirituality from masters to disciples. It is the good fortune of the mystics to be endowed with this quality from their Lord, and thus it becomes their utmost duty to transfer the essential knowledge of this quality to their disciples in the process of training them in the tenets of the tariqa.17

It is that knowledge which is supposed to strengthen the foundations of the tariqa and at the same time equip the disciples of that order to protect the sanctity of their knowledge in the pursuit of the Divine.18 Therefore adab becomes an essential means for gaining the knowledge of tasawwuf. The wisdom of tasawwuf is unveiled to the believer in the mystical path through a proper adherence to the theology of Divine. And it is the dynamics of adab that helps in combining inner knowledge of the mystic with the outer actions that he follows towards his search for the Divine.19

The importance of adab to the Suhrawardi mystics therefore lies in it being an indispensable part of the mystical pursuit of Truth. It is the characteristic of adab that successfully combines the multiple layers of knowledge, the sunnah of the Prophet and the Quranic knowledge towards a successful practice of tasawwuf.20 Mystics and disciples who are oblivious to the centrality of this tenet in the realm of tasawwuf are deprived of following the sunnah of the Prophet and as a result are punished by being bereft from

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16 Ibid., p. 64.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., p. 65.
the knowledge of the Divine. Thus the entire chain of knowledge transmission is broken right from the blessings of God to the master-disciple relationship. On the other hand a complete and thorough understanding of the principle of *adab* is in recognition of the Prophets *sunnah* and hence upholds the sanctity of the Quran, and the faith thereby leading the mystic in the path towards the beneficence of the Lord.

For Suhrawardi shaykhs *adab* represented an intrinsic process of spiritual education for the disciples, which draws its inspiration from the relation of the Prophet with his companions. It is believed that *tasawwuf* without the notion of *adab* loses its basic worth, as for every stage of *tasawwuf* there remains a proper form of *adab*. Individuals who remain steadfast on the path of spirituality must do so by a strict following of the tenets of *adab*, while those who pay little or no heed to the quality of *adab* are deprived from achieving an advanced state in the realm of *tasawwuf*.

Since when mystic masters impart the knowledge of *tasawwuf* to their disciples it is essentially based on the principle of proper *adab*, not only towards the shaykh but also towards the entire process of knowledge transmission. And this process of learning *irfan* from the Sufi masters is almost the same way as the companions of the Prophet learnt the essentialities of faith and practice from the messenger of God.

According to the great Suhrawardi master Shyakh Shihabuddin, the concept of *adab* encompassed both the words and the actions of the mystic. Words essentially signified the knowledge the mystics gained from their masters and in the same way actions signified the rituals they adhered to in their quest for the spiritual Truth an ultimate union with the Almighty. In such an occasion any individual who incorporates *adab* in his liturgy of

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., p. 66.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., p. 71.
spiritual practices becomes 'closer to God, by being a part of the love in His heart.' For Suhrawardi saints it was more important for mystics and disciples alike to cultivate more the characteristic of adab than they did of knowledge, since all knowledge is laid waste of Divine blessing if it is devoid of the characteristic of adab. Thus knowledge of tasawwuf, as mentioned earlier is incomplete without a complete adherence to adab theology, so that the pursuit of adab needed to be with full understanding, concentration and sincerity towards its related components. So that at the end, to a mystic, knowing adab becomes synonymous to knowing oneself. The light of knowledge (nur-i-irfan) never descends in an ignorant heart, a heart that is deprived of the emotions of spirituality, and most importantly the realisation of adab.

**Adab in the Kashf ul-Mahjub**

Usman al-Hujwiri one of the earliest Sufi theorists of Al-Hind in his magnum opus - Kashf ul-Mahjub succinctly enumerates the regulations that should control an assembly of audition (sama) intended towards a more rewarding spiritual experience. He is of the opinion that participants should not engage in the assembly if the urge to participate does not come from within. The yearning for the Divine is not something that can be induced; rather it should be an original feeling in the heart of the mystic. Only if a mystic feels the urge to participate in an assembly of sama, that he should participate in the exercise. However being a theorist al-Hujwiri is of the opinion that although sama is an important means of achieving spiritual ecstasy, one should be careful not to indulge in it beyond certain limits. If the mystic tends to overindulge in the exercise not only will he grow used to

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26 Ibid., p. 72.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 KM, p. 418.
the spiritual worth of the exercise but at the same time may cease to hold it in reverence.\footnote{Ibid., p. 419.}

It is also important to preserve the proper sense of discipline in the assembly. In this regard al- Hujwiri is of the opinion that such an assembly of high spiritual worth should never be organised in the absence of a spiritual master.\footnote{Ibid.} Likewise sama being an exercise intended especially for the adept in the path of mysticism, it is strictly recommended that the place where the assembly is meant to be held should be completely free of the presence of common people.\footnote{Ibid.} The dangers that the commoners might place themselves into while attending an assembly regarding which they are little knowledgeable, was duly emphasised upon by al- Hujwiri.\footnote{Ibid.} In this sense the only outsider in the assembly seems to be the qawwal. However Hujwiri is mindful of this aspect of the assembly and suggests that the qawwal should always be a learned person, aware of the spiritual manifestations of the assembly of sama. If not, then he would also treat the assembly as any other audition session, with scant regard towards its mystical essence.\footnote{Ibid.}

However it must be kept in mind that in an assembly of audition, neither the commoners nor the qawwal hold to the spirit of the gathering. Rather it is the mystic who remains the central figure in the exercise of sama, for it is he who derives the greatest benefits from such an exercise of audition and the ritual is meant to facilitate his journey towards the path of mystical union.\footnote{Ibid.} Thus is of little surprise that the main corpus of regulations will be formulated keeping in mind the mystical participant in the ritual of sama.

Hujwiri is of the opinion that the primary condition for the mystic who intends to participate in the assembly of sama is to nurture a purified

\begin{footnotes}
\item[Ibid., p. 419.]
\item[Ibid.]
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Since the heart of the Sufi is the ultimate place for experiencing the blessings of the Divine, it is mandatory that it be purged of all worldly desires and material thoughts.\textsuperscript{37} It is only then that the heart if spacious enough to accommodate the benefaction of the Lord. Since, it is an eternal truth that worldliness and Divine love cannot coexist in one place, the heart of the mystic being the occasion here. While the Sufi cleanses his heart of all dirt and grime, he should also eliminate all thoughts of amusement and should never consider the ritual of \textit{sama} as a pastime. If it is considered so then the heart of the mystic will be forced to act in the manner it should when present in delight and diversion.\textsuperscript{38} At that moment if the mystic feels that he should act the way other fellow mystics are in the assembly of \textit{sama} then he is left with little option but take recourse to forced behavior (\textit{takalluf}).\textsuperscript{39} Such artificial efforts at gaining conformity with those mystics who are in an original state of ecstasy and mystical witnessing, only leads the non believer further away from the beneficence of the Lord, so that he is left high and dry in the assembly, while at the same time committing the sin of heresy.\textsuperscript{40}

At the same time al- Hujwiri also warns the Sufi who participates in the assembly with a true heart that he should refrain from taking recourse to false emotions.\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Sama} is a benefaction of the Divine, and it is incorrect on the part of the participant to anticipate its effects on any individual including himself. Hujwiri states that the participant in the assembly should act in the flow of the gathering – that is, if the effect of the assembly is such that it agitates the mystic, then he should make no attempts at restraining that effect, for it is in a sense the benefaction from the Unseen.\textsuperscript{42} In the same

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\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
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way if the audition calms the mystic in the assembly then he should remain
calm rather than force himself into false agitation. Thus it is imperative that
the Sufi should be capable enough to differentiate between a strong natural
impulse from the ardour of ecstasy (wajd). Unfortunately if the mystic is
incapable of differentiating between the two states of revelation, then it is
possible that he choose to repel the manifestation of the Divine when it
overpowers his heart and at the same commit himself to a forceful ecstasy
when his heart has long lost the link of Divine revelation and attraction.

Similarly when he is in a state of intense emotional upsurge, he
should realise that his fellow mystics too are affected by his state. Therefore
he should never expect any help from them, nor should he offer any
voluntary help to others in the assembly. But if he is provided support by
any of his fellow Sufis then he should not refuse it either. His thought
process should be exclusively fixed on the contemplation of the Divine, and
must not get distracted by his fellow participants. In a sense he must steer
himself clear from thinking about his fellow participants and their opinions
on the verse that is being read out in the assembly. Since through such
actions he only pulls back the natural flow of the assembly distressing those
who are in deep contemplation of the Divine, through the audition of the
mystical verses.

While the mystics are rightly considered the focus of the assembly of
sama then it remains undeniable that the success of the assembly lies to a
great extent of the shoulders of the qawwal, who is the repository of the
verses that are being read out, intended to induce a mystical ambience. Thus
the mystic should refrain from commenting on the performance of the
recitor, lest his positive or negative comments break the serenity and calm of

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43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.

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the assembly.47 Rather the mystic should be completely oblivious of the presence of the qawwāl in the assembly, considering that the verses that enter his ears are directly from the Lord Himself, and hence should concentrate only on His attributes.48 If under certain conditions the mystic is left unaffected by the proceedings of the assembly then it is unethical for him to look towards those mystics experiencing the ecstasy of the Divine, for support. He should keep away from the intoxication of the affected ones and should withdraw himself to a safe corner where he should continue his contemplation of the Divine, so that the blessings of the Unseen may benefit his spiritual state.49

Thus it is in the light of the strictness of the above regulations that al-Hujwiri is of the opinion that young novices should be kept away from such assemblies of high spiritual content, where there are all chances that his spirits be depraved oblivious of the true mystical understanding the verses read out in the assembly.50 However this issue been discussed in much detail in the preceding chapters it is necessary that we move ahead and enter the realm of the south Asian masters who too laid down similar advices in their treatises.

Ad'ab i-Sama of the Chishtis of North India

The Chishtia masters together with bringing a new element of faith in the socio-cultural environment of the subcontinent also institutionalised certain spiritual exercises within the folds of their own silsila that many a times irked their co-religionists rather than the Hindus. One of the burning topics of controversy that the Chishtia mystics of the day faced was with regard to the spiritual practice of sama. A detailed discussion with regards to its antecedent and religious tradition being elaborated in a previous chapter we need not

47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., p. 420.
repeat the same. Rather it is important to delve into the parameters the shaykhs of the Chishtia order set forth in their observance of the ritual of *sama*.

One of the leading Chishtia mystics of the day who was instrumental in institutionalising the ritual of *sama* in the annals of Chishtia mysticism was none other than Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya. The spiritual empire founded by him in the thirteenth and fourteenth century had the controversy of *sama* at the centre of its affairs. Time and again the *ulama* would rake up the issue in the pretext of denigrating the shaykh on the ground that his lack of reverence for the *shariah* led him to practice such rituals which had no justification in the Islamic tenets. Shaykh Nizamuddin was patient enough to face all the royal diatribes with an enormous degree of spiritual sagacity, quite rare among his belligerent opponents. Once he remarked in reply to an agitation, in some unrepeatable language, in support of prohibition of *sama* that ‘God Almighty has declared His enmity to “he who is extremely violent in quarelling”, since the one who is extremely violent in quarrelling referred to the one who takes recourse to abusive language in the line of disputation.’\(^5\) And each time he would strongly emphasise, as recorded in his discourses in *Fawaid ul Fuad*, that *sama* was nothing but a stable touchstone of piety and assemblies of *sama* if conducted with proper *adab* were blessed with Divine mercy.\(^6\)

So, what does Shaykh Nizamuddiin imply when he emphasises on the context of proper *adab*? What is the pattern of this *adab* in an assembly of audition, and how it can be fulfilled? The answer, much to our relief, lies in the pages of his extensive discourse on mysticism, *Fawaid ul Fuad*. Here the shaykh, one of the pioneers of the ritual of *sama* among the subcontinental Chishtia *silsila*, sets forth a number of conditions and regulations that should be adhered to with precision if the assembly of *sama* is to hold on to its

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\(^5\) *FF*, p. 190.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 138.
Divine sanctity and hence be considered a place for the bestowal of beneficence from the Lord.

He pointed out that an assembly of sama rests on four pillars: the qawwal, the content of the assembly (masmu), the listener (mustami) and the instruments of music (lahwi sama). While elaborating on each of these four aspects Shaykh Nizamuddin stated that the person who should be the qawwal in the assembly must be a matured individual, and not a boy of young age. Neither should a woman be made a qawwal. The reason for the first regulation could be that the shaykh was apprehensive of the spiritual maturity of a young boy in managing the affairs of a mystical gathering like the sama. Also due to the fact that the hearts of young boys are yet to be hardened to the lustful desires of the material world, so that if he conducts an assembly where the verses read out are largely indicative of love and frivolity, it is probable that he may misinterpret those verses in tune with his worldly dispositions, and hence commit himself to serious heresy. Regarding the prohibition on women it could well be that the presence of women can largely act as distractions rather than spiritual catalysts. It is such that the verses being itself pregnant with ideas and imageries that convey love, desire, separation and a host of physical attributes. The presence of a woman as a qawwal in such occasions might completely betray the aims and intentions of the assembly leading it towards a self satisfying and licentious exercise.

As to the second regulation it is said that the content of the assembly of sama should not involve anything lewd and obscene. It is usually recognised that the verses read out in a gathering of sama constitutes love poetry, but one needs to be careful so that it does not cross the limits of decency. The verses read out in the assembly must not convey ideas of

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53 Ibid., p. 201.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
debauchery, frivolity, distrust, perversion and lustful desires among else. Although essentially constituting love poetry with interjections of separation, it should conform to the true mystical spirit of the assembly.\textsuperscript{56}

In the third condition, the listener should participate in \textit{sama} with a pure heart drained of all material desires, and replete with remembrance of the Lord.\textsuperscript{57} Since the basic definition of \textit{sama} implies to it being an exercise in listening to chanted verses with an attempt to participate in a dynamic dialogue between the human lover and the Divine Beloved; it is mandatory that the participant behaves in accordance to the spirit of the assembly. \textit{Sama} being essentially a ‘movement of the heart’ it is natural that the participant in the gathering must have a pure heart so that it is receptive to the Divine benefices that descend upon such an assembly.

As for the last condition of musical instruments it is said that stringed instruments like the \textit{chang, rabab, flute} and similar instruments must not be used in \textit{sama}, so that it ruins the spiritual ambience of the assembly. Rather it is permitted that the \textit{tambourine} and the \textit{dholak} can be used as accompaniments of the verses read out in the gathering.\textsuperscript{58} As discussed in an earlier chapter, the Chishtia Sufis usually discouraged the use of musical instruments in the assembly of \textit{sama}. But on certain special occasions if the use of musical instruments were permitted it was limited to non-string instruments, more precisely the \textit{duff} and the \textit{tambourine}.

In the \textit{Siyar ul- Awliya} – one of the primary Chishtia hagiographical accounts of the medieval period, Mir Khurd dedicates an entire chapter to the various aspects of \textit{sama}.\textsuperscript{59} Here he also has a section on the proper etiquette (\textit{adab}) one needs to follow in the assembly of \textit{sama}. He mostly cites Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya as his primary source, where the shaykh states that \textit{sama} should be held in such an hour when the heart is completely

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{S.A}, Chapter 9.
immersed in the thought of the Divine and no distractions or worldly affairs moves it away from the thought of the Divine. Next, the place for the assembly should also be pleasing so that on seeing the same the heart is filled with a sense of pleasure and satisfaction. The participants should also be of the same spiritual state, that is to say that all the members in the assembly of audition must be attuned to the exercise of sama.

It is important to note that along with stressing on the necessity of spiritual purity in an assembly of sama, Shyakh Nizamuddin Awliya also gives equal importance to the aspect of physical purity. So that he is of the opinion that while participating in the assembly of sama one should apply fragrances and must be completely clean and bathed.

Fakhruddin Zarradi in his famous treatise on the practice of sama, titled Risala i- Usul as- Sama, states that one of the most important preconditions for participating in an gathering of sama is that the individual must be in complete control of his senses while listening to the verses read out in the assembly. At the same time it should seem that he is completely absorbed in his own thoughts, contemplating about the Almighty, without any heed to what his fellow mystics are doing. If it is so that the mystic rather than taking care of his own spiritual state is more interested in the affairs of his fellow participants then he is sure to lose out on the benefits of the assembly. It is strictly instructed that no mystic should interfere or show interest in the spiritual matters of his fellow professionals. This way he not only harms his own self, but at the same time distracts the entire proceedings of the assembly thereby losing out on the beneficence from the Unseen.

60 SA, p. 513.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
Zarradi further states that as far as possible the mystic should try not to rise from his place, rather he should remain seated to his original place.\textsuperscript{66} If it be so that the emotions of the heart are too heavy for the mystic to sustain, then it may be that he may break into tears. Even during such a state of ecstasy it is advisable that the Sufi does not raise his voice over that of the assembly. It is important for the mystic to remain seated in his place since that is where the benefaction from the Divine would descend on him, through the emotions of ecstasy rising in his heart.\textsuperscript{67} In the assembly of sama it may so happen that another mystic might experience a sense of agitation in his heart and as a result rise to the movement of his limbs. Also it may be such that the mystic only rises up to express his state of ecstasy (\textit{hilal-i-wajd}), without any action of the limbs. In both the occasions it is advised that mystics yet to experience such a state should stand up in conformity of the particular spiritual state present in another mystic.\textsuperscript{68}

Our raconteur narrates an incident which upholds the veracity of the above regulation. Few days after the demise of Shyakh Badruddin Samarqandi\textsuperscript{69}, an assembly of sama was organised at his place where along with others Shaykh Nizamuddin was also present. Since the shaykh arrived late, he took his place in the second row of the majlis. In the course of sama when the earlier participants rose up in an expression of their ecstatic states, Shaykh Nizamuddin also followed suit. Many in the assembly were surprised and asked him to return to his place since he joined late and was yet to reach

\textsuperscript{66} Fakhruddin Zarradi, \textit{Risalah i-Ustul al-Sama}, in \textit{SA}, p. 513.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{69} Shaykh Badruddin Samarqandi was a great mystic of his age, and was the deputy (\textit{khalif}) of Shaykh Saifuddin Bakharzi, another great Sufi of the age. He was well acquainted with Shaykh Najmuddin Kubrawi. Shaykh Samarqandi was not only well versed in the Holy Quran (\textit{hafiz-i-Quran}) but at the same time was a master of \textit{tasawwuf}. He was a great lover of sama and never participated in the same without the companionship of Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya. It is hence quite evident why the shaykh himself took the onus of being present at the sama assembly held in the memory of Shaykh Samarqandi. The latter was a man of emotions and at the slightest spur of emotions would engage in doing \textit{raqs}, seeing which all those present in the assembly would derive much pleasure and satisfaction in their hearts.
the state of ecstasy. To this Shaykh Nizamuddin replied that they are right, but it is mandatory on the part of the participants of the assembly of sama to conform and hence stand up in support of those who were already in possession of their ecstatic states and had risen up (muwafeqat). Thus through such a regulation the Chishtia saints were in a sense approving the practice of tawajud or empathetic ecstasy, as discussed in detail in the earlier chapter.

Ad'ab i-Sama among the Deccani Chishtis

The adab of sama and the necessary regulations that accompanied the assembly were carried forward and over to the Deccan by the Sufis of the Chishtia order, more particularly Shaykh Burhanuddin Gharib, whose mystical genius was instrumental in single handedly establishing the order in the teeth of a hostile political and social environment. Here we stay away from such avid political discussions and rather return to our area of focus – the Chishtia lessons of etiquette (adab) guiding the ritual of sama. Theorists would argue that such norms of adab were imposed with the express intention of attracting Divine beneficence on the assembly of mystics, while at the same time shutting off any possibilities of the human ego overpowering the mystical self of the Sufi.

All said and done, the greatest dynamicty that these instructions reflected was that they were never restricted only to the dry pages of the instructional manuals, rather they formed a intrinsic part of the daily exercises of the Chishtia mystics who often demonstrated the essence of these regulations through their actions and deeds – the one of Shyakh Nizamuddin Awliya mentioned above is a brilliant example in this regard of how a leading Chishtia master not only harped on the necessity of adab in an assembly of sama, but at the same time lead by an example for his disciples.

70 SA, p. 513.
71 EG, p. 153.
In the text of *Ahsan ul-Aqwal*, Hammad uddin Kashani, a disciple of Shaykh Burhanuddin Gharib, gives a vivid picture of the ritual of sama as it was performed in the *jamaat khanab* of the Chishtia shaykh. He states that each assembly of sama in the circle of Shaykh Burhanuddin Gharib began and ended with the recitation of the Holy Quran.\(^\text{72}\) That the Chishtia Sufis considered sama as much a sacred and pious exercise as the daily salaat, is made amply evident from the fact that Shaykh Gharib made it incumbent on every mystical participant in the gathering to perform ablutions (*wudu*) before he can be allowed to enter the assembly.\(^\text{73}\) At the same time the listener demonstrating his reverence for the ritual should abstain from chewing betel leaf.

It was also recommended that sama must not be degenerated into a regular exercise, attaching to it a mechanical character.\(^\text{74}\) Rather it should be held as when the necessity arises, and the heart desires for such an exercise. Hence it is not proper to regularise the occasion of sama as a weekly or bi-weekly ritual.\(^\text{75}\) The basic truth behind the success of this ritual lies in the fact that it completely depends on the spiritual state of the mystic, and by making it a habit or stressing unduly on its performance; the mystic only loses out on the Divine benefaction that descends only as a voluntary action, irrespective of any scheduled time or place.\(^\text{76}\) Thus it is in a way recommended that the mystic should concentrate more on interpreting the verses of the *qawwal* than measure the spiritual adeptness of his fellow mystics.\(^\text{77}\) If it so happens that a particular verse arouses a sense of agitation in the mystic, it is not barred that the mystic request the *qawwal* for a repetition of the verse. Interestingly it also states that ‘if in spite of his desire’ the mystic submits to his spiritual self and retracts from requesting a


\(^{73}\) Ibid.

\(^{74}\) Ibid.

\(^{75}\) Ibid.


\(^{77}\) Ibid.
repetition of the verse then ‘God inspires the reciter’ to repeat the same so that the mystical realisation of the Sufi be heightened in his search for union with his Beloved.\(^{78}\)

In the above regulations we witness, even if it may be unintentional, an influence of the regulations set forward by Usman al-Hujwiri in his treatise *Kashf al-Mahjub*. However a more detailed analysis of Shyakh Burhanuddin’s instructions would help us get a better understanding of the influence, if it existed at all. It was forbidden in an assembly of *sama* to question others extent of feelings in the folds of Divine beneficence. Strict instructions were delivered with regard to the fact that each mystic should stay away from the affairs, spiritual to say the least, that concern his fellows in the assembly of *sama*.\(^{79}\) Putting forward inquisitive queries is in a sense reflective of the enquirer’s demonstrative ego, which tries to show off his superior knowledge in spiritual affairs. Such actions completely destroy the spiritual ambience of the gathering and thus distract other Sufis from their real aim of audition – concentrating on the thought of the Divine.\(^{80}\)

Since the *qawwal* forms the focus of the assembly of *sama*, it is intended that under no circumstances should the actions and words of the *qawwal* be questioned.\(^{81}\) This succeeds the precondition where, as elaborated above, it is mentioned that the *qawwal* must be a knowledgable person adept in the emotions of mysticism. If this clause if fulfilled then it is improper on the part of the mystical participants to question the recitation style of the *qawwal*. One should not pass remarks as ‘Sing loudly’, or ‘Wish your voice was more sweet’ – as this reduces the sanctity of the assembly to a more mundane occasion.\(^{82}\) In assemblies of *sama*, as the Chishtia masters emphasise, importance must be given not to the quality of the voice but to

\(^{79}\) Ibid.
\(^{80}\) Ibid.
\(^{82}\) Ibid.
the ability of the qawwal to inspire the assembly through his artistic skills, thereby easing the Path towards the experience of ecstasy.\textsuperscript{83}

Control of the material ego being already stated as an important necessity for the participant in sama, Shyakh Burahuddin Gharib goes further to elaborate on this aspect by stating that the physical behavior of the participants should be regulated as a precondition to controlling the human ego.\textsuperscript{84} Towards this end the dervish should practice physical restrain, and should be sober in his actions. If he accidentally raises his hand in the assembly then the same is no longer allowable for him. The mystic participant should be extremely careful never to allow his hands of feet touch another shaykh in the assembly.\textsuperscript{85} Zaynuddin Shirazi while emphasising on this aspect of proper physical adab in the assembly of sama remarked that 'If a hundred Sufis are in sama, one walks so that one’s skirt does not touch the skirt of another.'\textsuperscript{86} But at the same time it is quite probable on part of humans to commit mistakes and slips do occur, most of the time unintentionally. On such occasions if someone behaves in a state of intoxication, unmindful of the adab of the assembly of sama, then it is advised that fellow Sufis should help the person gain his sober state, without ever handling him roughly or publicly rebuking his coarse actions.\textsuperscript{87}

Crawling on the ground under the impulse of spiritual ecstasy is considered one of the expressions depicting lack of physical sobriety. Shyakh Buhanuddin Gharib himself was imposed with a fine when he lost control over his sober self while attending an assembly of sama.\textsuperscript{88} It is instructed in the adab manuals that no participant in the assembly of sama should drink or eat anything during the proceedings or should look for

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.,
physical comfort, precisely fan oneself.\(^{89}\) Considering the hostile climate of both north India and the Deccan, it is significant that such a regulation was imposed keeping in mind the subcontinental environment the Chishtia flourished in. \textit{Sama} was always considered to be the supreme demonstration of the lovers suffering for the Beloved, through all the pains of material and spiritual world. Thus it is highly ironic that in such an assembly the Sufi should search for physical comfort while striving towards union with his Beloved. Once when a disciple committed this offence he was rebuked by the great Chishtia master Shaykh Nizamuddin Awliya in the words ‘Dervishes consume their blood, what I have to do with sherbet?’\(^{90}\)

Thus both in north India and the Deccan the Chishtia masters were a stickler for regulations in the assembly of \textit{sama}. An analysis of the above regulations shows that the basic tenet was premised on maintaining intense concentration on the thought of the Beloved. These aspects of the ritual uphold the genius of the Chishtia order in their attempts at establishing the ethics of the practice both through the external and internal consonance of spiritual norms. We now turn towards the words and advices of the last of the greatest Chishtia masters in the Deccan — Shyakh Bandanawaz Gesudaraz, who was instrumental in upholding the sanctity of the ritual of \textit{sama} in the farthest corners of the subcontinent.

One of the vehement proponents of the ritual of \textit{sama} Khwaja Bandanawaz Gesudaraz set forth an elaborate set of rules, which, in his opinion should operate in any assembly of \textit{sama}. Gesudaraz was at the helm of Chishtia affairs in the Deccan when the \textit{silsila} was facing a severe crisis in leadership. The legacy of the north Indian masters needed to be upheld with much vigor if the \textit{silsila} was to continue in its tradition of spiritual quest. At this crucial juncture the responsibility rested on the shoulders of Khwaja Gesudaraz to set forth the ideals of the \textit{silsila}, in the little known political

\(^{89}\) Ibid.,
\(^{90}\) Ibid.,
and social climate of the Deccan. Well versed in the traditions of the *sharia* and that of the Prophet of Islam Gesudaraz, was the last of the great mystical theorists of the Chishtia *silisa*. Thus it is of little surprise that his regulations on the ritual of *sama* be considered decisive in the annals of the Chishtia *silisa*.

Khwaja Gesudaraz being respectful of the classical tenets of Sufism draws his regulations from the recommendations of one of the greatest mystics of Baghdad, al-Junayd. It was the latter's insistence on the three essentialities of time (*zaman*), place (*ma'alan*) and brethren (*ikhwani*) that inspired Gesudaraz to formulate his instructions on such a platform.91 With regard to time Gesudaraz insists that *sama* be performed at night, that too in a well illuminated place. Since during the time of night it was easier for oneself to hide his actuality of states (*bat*). However Gesudaraz insists that if a Sufi expects visitors in his *khangab* then it is advised that he organises the assembly during daytime for the convenience of his visitors.92 It goes without saying that in the midst of such spiritually stimulating exercises the presence of guests is a major distraction for spiritual contemplation. Even in the midst of such chaos and din if the mystic succeeds in focusing his attention on the affairs of the assembly then there remains nothing better than that.93 Focusing ones attention completely in the assembly of *sama* is essential for the procurement of the desired spiritual benefits. Keeping this in mind it has been prescribed that *sama* should be performed only after the completion of all religious and social duties, so that there remains nothing to distract the mystic in the assembly of *sama*. In the light of the above prerogative it remains understandable that *sama* is prescribed at night, after the days religious and social duties have been dispensed off with.94

91 *AA*, p. 99.
92 *Khatimah*, p. 34.
93 Ibid.
94 *SM*, p. 155.
Khwaja Gesudaraz states that the choice of place for the performance of sama must be very carefully chosen. It should be an enclosed (mahjuf) area with walls on all sides and a roof. Open space must be avoided since the presence of strong winds causes the voice of the qawwal to echo. This might result in the voice getting carried away by the wind rather than reaching the desired destination (mahalt) which is the heart of the mystic. It can also be deduced that Gesudaraz was wary of commoners getting attracted to the assembly of sama through the audition of a high pitched voice, carried ahead by strong winds. Together with being well lit, the place should be well perfumed (murawkat) and free (khalt) from all disturbances. Places where Gesudaraz attended sama were well lit and filled with invigorating fragrance of aloes wood and ambergris, together with flowers of various kinds, incense and sandalwood, on whose fragrance the spirit (rub) fed itself. Thus the spirit when it receives nourishment from various sources increases in strength and becomes powerful which in turn increases the taste (qawq) of sama. Gesudaraz was careful not to compromise on the sanctity of the ritual so that he forbid holding sama at general public spaces, including wedding ceremonies and mosques. At the time of attending the assembly the members should take great care to ensure that they do not face the Mecca (qabah) nor should their backs be towards it.

Khwaja Gesudaraz was also explicit with regards to the participants in the assembly of sama. He suggested that the members in the assembly be of the same spiritual preceptor and belong to the same faith (yak khanawadah). Regulations were also imposed as to who should be left out from the assembly of sama. They included the condemner (munkir),

95 Ibid.  
96 Khatimah, p. 46.  
97 A A n QQ.  
98 Ibid.  
99 Khatimah, p. 34.  
100 Ibid., p. 46.  
101 Ibid., p. 21.
unaffected disciple (*muta'allimi bi suṣ*), prosaic jurist (*matafaqqihi bi saṣ*), merciless master (*ustadi bi dard*), impure scholar (*danishmandi bi safā*), vagabond (*gumrah*), royalty (*abna i-mulk*), worldly (*arbab i-dunya*). Apart from these women (*awrat*) must not be allowed to even peep from doors and windows. The above regulations thus include a wide cross section of the population who were not allowed to participate in the assembly of *sama*. This was done with the primary intention of ensuring that the Divine benefits gained from an intense spiritual assembly must not get ruined to the profanity of some of its unworthy participants.

The instructions set forth by Gesudaraz in a way are reflective of the concept of union (*jam*) that the shaykh was attempting to uphold through the ritual of *sama*, both in its external and internal aspects. Participants in the assembly of *sama* should be careful of performing proper ablutions (*wudu*) and wear white clothes before they begin the proceedings. Since the ritual of *sama* essentially necessitates the purity of the heart it is in a way symbolic that the participant wear white clothes, which in the mystical parlance is symbolic of the element of purity (*safā*).

Khwaja Gesudaraz taking a cue from his Suhrawardi counterpart and professional senior, Shaykh Abu Najib al- Suhrawardi, opined that any assembly of *sama* should begin and end with a recitation of the Holy Quran. This should be a mandatory clause to the extent that it has been suggested that if a recitor is unavailable one must at least try and read the opening verse or *fatiha* from the Book. The theoretical explanation forwarded in support for such an action is such that the first part of what is being recited in between the Quranic recitations (*tilawat*) connects to the starting point of *sama*. Similarly the second half of what is being recited in

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102 Ibid.
103 Ibid., p. 139.
104 Ibid., p. 21.
105 Hussaini, *Sayyid Muhammad al-Huseyni i-Gisudaraż*, p. 132.
106 Ibid.
the assembly of sama connects to the ending point of the session. Now in the mystical argument if the session begins and ends with the recitation of the Quran then the portion that was being read in between becomes connected to the Quranic recitations, making the entire exercise an audition of the Quran (sama-i-Quran).\textsuperscript{107} Khwaja Gesudaraz argues that this is primary the reason why the Prophet of Islam instructed his companion Mimshad al-Dinawari to recite the Quran at the beginning and end of sama.\textsuperscript{108}

The concentration of the listener in an assembly of sama must be fixed on the qawwal.\textsuperscript{109} If this is not the case then the listener should fix his vision in the front and restrain from looking around him towards other mystics or wayward individuals.\textsuperscript{110}

The central function of the ritual of sama remains the act of meditation (murqabah).\textsuperscript{111} In this the mystic should set his goal before him, and concentrate completely on achieving that goal (maqsud). Since meditation is the primary and most important means of elevating the spirit and moving towards ones spiritual goal of Divine witnessing (shabadah).\textsuperscript{112} It is recommended that the mystic should practice silent remembrance (zikr-i-khafi) of the Divine and should contemplate Him in his heart, so that the manifestation of the Divine has its desired effects.\textsuperscript{113} Though it is recommended that in the assembly of sama the mystic should practice silent remembrance of the Divine in the form of zikr-i-khafi; but it is also warned that the listener must never practice loud remembrance or zikr-i-jali in an assembly of sama, through the invocation of illa Allah, as this would be against the spirit of the assembly of sama, transforming its character into a

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Khatimah, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p. 24.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
ritual of *zikr*. Thus a sense of mystical individuality can be discerned through the fact that although strict remembrance of the Divine is prescribed as an essential norm for the mystic, care must be taken that the ritual does not divert into an occasion of *zikr*.

Any sort of movement is discouraged in an assembly of *sama*. Even if it arises from any sort of physical discomfort the listener is not permitted to complain or divert his attention from the proceedings of the assembly. On occasions when the listener is bowed by exhaustion and laxity he should not drink water or search for refreshments. At the same time if a sense of intense spiritual energy agitates the mystic in the course of the proceedings of the assembly, still he should refrain from making erratic movements (*jumbišti*) and should rather concentrate on his mentor (*pir*) and try and relate the verses recited in the assembly to the qualities of his *pir*. Since it is he who is in charge of the assembly and it is through him that the beneficence of the Divine descends.

Khwaja Gesudaraz also recognises the centrality of the *qawwāl* in the proceedings of the assembly of *sama*. So that he vociferously prohibited against any sort of disrespect towards the *qawwāl* in the course of the assembly. On a finer note he stated that the singer should never be questioned with regard to the quality of the verses. The suitability and nonsuitability of the verses read out in the assembly of *sama* should be decided only by the *qawwāl*. The participants of the assembly will have no voice in it. At the same time a participant should never request the *qawwāl* to recite a particular verse in accordance with his choice and mystical state.

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114 Ibid., p. 41.
115 Ibid., p. 42.
116 Ibid., p. 21.
117 Ibid.
118 Ibid.
120 Ibid.
121 Khaitmah, p. 20.
122 Ibid., p. 43.
Gesudaraz states that the choice of the verses is made from the Unseen, and whatever the qaawal recites in an assembly of sama comes from the Divine. Thus the content of the assembly is beyond any shades of doubt, and since it emanates from the Unseen (ghayb) it is completely faultless.

It is advised that, if possible, the qaawal be chosen from among the community (qawmt) of mystics, so that he is in tune with the ideology and sanctity of the assembly of sama. If the qaawal is not from among the mystics then at least he should be a person of knowledge (ilm) and dignity so that he can command respect from the participants of the assembly. Mystic or commoner the qaawal should be absolutely clean (ba taharat) at the time of conducting the affairs of the assembly. Else he should be barred from participating in the exercise. The qaawal is also prohibited from actively participating in the affairs of the assembly; precisely he should not rise up in dance (raqs) in the course of the sama. During the proceedings of the assembly if any participant gets agitated by the feelings of ecstasy and in turn tears his clothes, then the torn portions should be given only to the qaawal and none else.

Sama affects different individuals on a varied plane of realisation. It may so happen that one participant may be induced by a sense of ecstasy sooner than his companions. In such occasions it is incumbent on the part of the fellow mystics to conform (muwafaqat) to that feeling of ecstasy and thus stand up in support of the agitated Sufi, so that he is not left high and dry in his state of self ecstasy. But at the same time it is also warned that if a mystic finds himself regularly in the folds of Divine manifestation through the agitation of his limbs it is unwise for him to indulge in sama on a regular

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123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid., p. 34.
126 Ibid., p. 47.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid., p. 43.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid., p. 42.
basis. Under such circumstances it may so happen that the sanctity of the ritual is compromised and sama degenerates into a professional pastime. Such an eventuality would lead to the creation of hypocrisy (nifaq) in the mystic rather than aid his spiritual elevation.

These strict guidelines as enumerated above help to uphold the sanctity of the ritual of sama, thereby regulating its performance and preventing its degeneration into a musical festival of a more secular type. Such degeneration is in a way an insult to the spirit of the great mystics who fought for the sanctity of this ritual, at times when the entire state apparatus, from time to time, seemed to oppose it blindfolded. At the shrines where the exalted tradition of these mystics is preserved sama is organised through the recitation of the Holy Quran and devotional prayers throughout the night. Music is strictly forbidden on such occasions and it is known as Shar i- Urs, meaning the celebration of urs where music is not allowed. Such is the mode of sama at the shrine of Usman al- Hujwiri where music is not allowed and the participants spend the night engaging themselves in prayers and recitation of the Quran.

Thus what emerges from the discussion above is the fact that for the mystic to gain for the success of sama it is necessary that heart of the participant be free from worldly diversions and remain oriented strictly towards the Almighty, wherein lies the ultimate goal (maqṣūd i- tamam) of spiritual union of the mystic. It is only through a proper perusal of this path of spiritual salvation that the Sufi can hope to achieve the end of mystical triumph (fatah) which causes him to rest in the glory of the Divine.

131 Ibid., p. 41.
132 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
Essence of Purity (safa) in the Assembly (majlis) of the Shaykh

While the above discussion ably reflects upon the notion of purity of the heart in the assembly of the Sufi shaykh, it is thus mandatory to elaborate on the concept of purity as it is understood in the mystical realm. The notion of purity constituted one of the fundamental principles guiding the mystical ideology, where the etymological root of the word 'Sufi' has been traditionally traced to the root term of safā, implying purity. Thus it is of little surprise that Sufis considered the attribute of purity as crucial in their attempt at a steady advancement in the Path of inner enlightenment. Purity in the Sufi parlance constitutes one of the chief elements of inner (batīn) knowledge which guides a mystic in various steps and stages towards a beneficial change in his heart and behaviour. This is symbolic of changes within the personality of the mystic, both in material and spiritual terms, preparing the mystic towards new and unknown challenges in the Path of tasawwuf.

Purity remains one of the important yardsticks of measurement in the mystic's spiritual journey towards God. With the concept of purity is attached the idea of knowledge, which the Sufi gains through a pure heart. But before the mystic can actually acquire that knowledge it is important for him to ascertain its worth in the spiritual journey of the mystic. Knowledge only descends in a pure heart, just as water descends in a stream. In a way that the water increases the volume of the stream; the descent of knowledge in the same way sets the notion of understanding in the heart of the mystic. It is only when the purity of the heart is furnished by the presence of spiritual knowledge that the purity of the mystic's soul is ascertained and it shines forth like a shining light. Sufis irrespective of orders and affiliations believe in the fact that the Path of tasawwuf has its beginning in the heart of

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136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 AM, p. 267.
the mystic, and the heart will realise the presence of Divine knowledge within it only when it is cleansed of all its impurities.\footnote{Huda, \textit{Spiritual Exercises}, p. 149.}

In the words of God, the Holy Quran has ample proof of the fact that God gave believers a heart for knowing God, and nothing knows God better than a pure and cleansed heart.\footnote{Ibid.} But the uniqueness of the heart lies in the fact that it remains incapable of accommodating both purity and impurity. Humans have the free will of filling up their hearts either with the pureness of the Divine, or with the lustful desires of the material world. Sufis have taken great pains to make people realise that the path of \textit{tasawwuf} is a long and arduous journey that requires constant struggle with purifying the inner self so that the mystic may encounter God. This element of purity can be achieved through continued spiritual exercises and a strict adherence to asceticism.\footnote{Ibid.}

Individuals who are cynical of the Sufi path to success should realise that the mystics are truly concerned with leading a life of eternal Truth, where it is absolutely essential to follow the tenets of purity. For the true believers in spirituality their hearts are strengthened only through the pursuit of purity and spiritual rigor.\footnote{Ibid., p. 150.} Only when the heart is in prayer and remembrance of Allah is it capable of cleansing away the impurities and worldly concerns that hold it away from purity, and subsequently it opens itself up to Divine presence (\textit{hazrat i- haqq}).\footnote{Ibid. p. 150.} It is then that the moment of spiritual Truth arrives and the heart is awakened by the touch of Divine illumination.\footnote{Ibid.} Such is then the moment of realisation and witnessing of the spiritual seeker who is then blessed by the illumination of the Divine.

The teachings of the Sufi masters are instructive to their disciples of certain religious truths that can be realised only through the path of
spirituality. In order to realise crucial issues of mystical content concerning both the outer and inner essences of the mystic, it is necessary for the Sufi to have a sense of God's knowledge in each and every aspect of one's being. And the knowledge of God can percolate the heart of the mystic only when he has fully prepared himself for the glorious moment of disclosing his heart to his Beloved, through specific cleansing exercises or *tahara.* It is precisely through such spiritual exercises that the heart can be purified and prepared for the moment of Divine encounter. This is an ample indication that piety is something that needs to be practiced daily if the hearts of the Sufis are to purify themselves and develop the inner piety of love, connected to the heart, and outer pietistic expressions.

A proper control over ones carnal self (*nafs*) can be achieved only through the purification of their inner essence. Thus in a sense purification holds multifaceted benefits for the mystic. When an individual chooses to indulge in evil and harmful actions then it automatically affects the purity of the heart, thereby limiting future blessings and benefices from God. Moreover to harbor dishonest intentions and thereby move away from the folds of purity is essentially the individual's choice, and his conscious action, which in turn is in constant violation of the Divine tenets.

The Quranic verses alone do not lead an individual in the Path towards God. Rather it is the fruit of ones individual striving that leads to the development of heart in the presence of the Divine, through the primary virtues of purity and chastity. A mystic can never hope to realise the true essence of *tasawwuf* and spiritual progress if he is not aware of the factors that contribute towards such an understanding. In this regard one of the primary factors that aids the Sufi towards Divine union is the purity of the

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145 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid., p. 151.
149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
inner self (batin) which is made receptive to the inner instructional messages that emanate from the Divine.\textsuperscript{151} These messages are not isolated revelations to the Sufi but are rather a direct offshoot of the Sufi tasawwuf practice and spiritual enlightenment.\textsuperscript{152}

It is interesting to note that there remains a number of ways and stages that can be followed to cleanse one's inner self and hence benefit from the blessings of God. Firstly, one needs to begin with sincere repentance (tawbah) for all the misdeeds that conditioned his heart and soul. Secondly, one needs to completely work towards the Path of inner cleansing (mutmaina) of the self from the harmful influences of the material world.\textsuperscript{153} A combination of such practices gradually helps the mystic in purifying his heart, which then is readied for nurturing compassion for the Divine, thereby preparing a place for the blessings of Allah. Since mystics are unanimous on the account that pious hearts are granted forgiveness for their repentance and are lead towards the presence of Allah.\textsuperscript{154}

Keeping in mind the above discussion concerning the purity of heart in the pursuit of the Divine, one can argue that Sufi rituals, intended to facilitate the mystic's journey towards the Beloved, were expressions of the spiritual self, based exclusively in the purity of the heart and beneficial intentions.\textsuperscript{155} Purity as an essential attribute of the spiritual Path was instrumental in guiding the mystic towards union with God, while at the same time guarding him of the danger of falling into the traps of untrue knowledge, which in itself is capable of misleading the believer.\textsuperscript{156} Thus a pious follower in the search of Divine union needs to be aware of the purity of his self, which in return instills a deeper understanding of the attributes of the Divine. With this we move towards a closer analysis of the effects of the

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., p. 152.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., p. 153.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid.
Sufi ritual of *sama* on the spiritual state of the mystic, which can be achieved only through devotion by a pure heart.