Chapter-1

Introduction
Sufism is generally considered as the inner or mystical dimension of Islam. But, the spiritual aspect of Sufism is as ancient as the rise of human consciousness. It is believed that Sufism began as religious teachers in the Middle East came to learn the Truth of Islam directly from Prophet Mohammad PBUH. (Masters who were upon him). Islam is an external structure in which the individual exists while the internal quest for enlightenment belongs to a realm of Sufi knowledge. This quest of knowledge integrates Islam and ancient doctrine that resembles elements of Greek Philosophy, Zoroastrianism and Hinduism that are part of the Sufi path to God-realization.

The most sacred knowledge attained by the Sufi masters was not written but passed to each generation orally, which makes it somewhat difficult historically to trace the evolution of Sufi doctrine. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable that the Sufi doctrine which differs the most from the basics of Islam had its beginnings much earlier for many years these extra qualities created a great deal of friction between mainstream Islam and the Muslim mystics. After centuries of falling in and out of favor, Sufis became integrated and an important part of Islamic culture and society. Some times it appears became that the difference between Sufi's way and Islam is as extreme as the difference between Mormons and Catholics, which also differs order wise. Yet, Sufism is integrated in Islam. The mystical aspects of Sufism may have ancient influences, but these traditions depends upon what goes on within an individual. Islam stresses service, virtue, honesty and charity, the

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1. Ziauddin Barani, Tarikh-i-Firuzshahi, --364
essence of Sufism and a foundation that is necessary for the inner spirituality of Sufism.

Islam recognizes all Prophets sent by the God before the Prophet Mohammad in including Abraham, Moses and Jesus, but they credit Mohammad PBUH for reintroducing the true religion of the god almighty without contamination. Sufis extend this liberal belief, that all prophets and saints of all religions are inspired by the same source and the rejection of any one is a rejection of the essential Truth behind them all - the one God. That one God is absolute, extending beyond time or space, and all that is within the universe is of God, including good and evil.

Sufism encompasses a wide range of beliefs that centers on the quest for personal enlightenment in the union with God. It is a mystic tradition that consists of a varied range of ideas and practices that emphasize on the attainment of divine love and compassion of the heart. One of the few concepts that Sufis seem to agree on is that all religions offer a path to salvation or enlightenment and that true God realization, no matter how it is achieved, transcends the limitations and classification of any religion. Basically, a saint in any religion is equal to a saint in any other religion because they are inspired by the same Divine source. In the 14th century, a Sufi saint wrote a book known as the Principles of Sufism that defines the essence of Sufism as "a science whose objective is the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God".
Historical background of Sufism

The word "Sufi" is derived from the Arabic word 'suj', meaning "wool," Garments woven from wool were generally worn by early mystics, who came to be known as "Sufis." There are other explanations and meanings of the word 'Sufi' but the one I have just given is generally accepted by most Sufis and Sufi scholars. Sufism is known in Arabic as 'Tassawuf' or Islamic Mysticism. A Sufi is a mystic, if by "mystic" we mean a person who strives towards intimate knowledge or communion with God; through contemplation, meditation and or "inner-vision."

The origin of Sufism goes back to the Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, who received the Divine Revelation known as the 'Qur'an,' over a period of 23 years. As all Muslims know; the Holy Qur'an is a "multi-layered revelation," whose verses can be interpreted literally, metaphorically, philosophically, and mystically.

The Prophet used to explain and clarify the meaning of each chapter and verse of the Qur'an to his immediate friends and companions. To a select few of his Companions he explained the mystical interpretation of the verses; thus starting a "chain of transmission" of the esoteric meaning of the Qur'an. This was conveyed first by "word of mouth" from master to pupil or disciple. This oral tradition has continued from generation to generation to the present day. It is interesting to note that the "Sufi pledge" between a Sufi-master and his disciple is still an oral one. It
was much later that Sufi teachings and practices were formally laid down in writing for future generations.

**What is Sufism**

The word Sufi comes from the Arabic word ‘Safa’, which means pure, clean, complete. It implies having gone through the required personal disciplines of self-purification to attain to our original state. These disciplines are referred to in Arabic as Tasawwuf and that is the origin of the word Sufism. ‘Sufi’ implies being self-realized and confirmed - innocent, pure and forgiven in the eyes of God. It implies, complete realization, a full understanding and agreement and ability to teach, the origin, purpose, goals and central teachings of all religions, to know and to pay to love to the Lord with all devotion of mind, heart, soul and spirit. That's what Sufism.

Sufism is to purify our outward manifest behavior to match our inward spiritual reality - is available in every beating heart, and completely independent of language or religion. This is why Sufis are not interested in conversions. Though religion may be a suitable vehicle for self-purification, self-realization is not dependent upon it, but upon understanding and personal effort. True religion is revealed to assist and guide humanity in our work to reaching the fulfillment of our Divine potential, but that work is dependent upon the quality of the teachers. If the fruit is not sweet, the quality of the water becomes questionable. So religion is dependent upon the self-realized teachers, but self-realization is not dependent upon
religion. One who is truly self-realized, however, will understand the origins, purpose and meaning of all religions, coming to their aid with no aversion to any of them on this ground.

Most religions are simply the deliverance of a message from God; allowing and insisting that each individual finds his own way to the point and goal of that message. In that respect, each religion has its own general parameters for self-purification, and some are stronger in that regard than others. So the degree of personal guidance available in all religions depends upon the level of realization of those who teach them.

The point and means of self-purification is very strong in the religion of Islam. A vast but silent majority in the world of Islam believes clearly that without guidance, there is no benefit from religion. It is for that reason that the practices of spiritual purification and reverence for spiritual masters as guides are so evident and have flourished there so well. This is not to say that the goals of self-realization and aid to humanity are not recognized in and by all religions and spiritual practices. But the very nature of the Islamic revelation is such a manifestation of Divine Mercy and Guidance as to make the practices of self-purification and personal usefulness easily accessible to all. Indeed, salvation of the soul and humanity is its very purpose.
True self-realization is the first fruit and beginning of the spiritual work, and it is a sufficient reward for the effort. Self-realization implies the ability to receive proper guidance from within, to make constructive and rightly guided choices on the pathway through life to success. By making your peace with God you become free of the hindering effects of your inner contradictions and fears, and the totality of your spirit is free to be focused on the matters at hand. Self-realization is the key to true success. All scriptures and spiritual teachings teach this, all religions point to it, and all paths and disciplines have it as the goal.

Self-realization is dependent upon Surrender, the Surrender to Truth and the relinquishing of the false and self-created reactionary self that we have used so effectively to get our way in life. It is often feared that the renunciation of our false self is the renunciation of life itself. But the reality is quite the opposite. In the relinquishing of our false selves, with all of their illusory and made-up rules as to how the world is, we re-inherit our true self and begin to live our lives fully in the Divine reality. And in the knowledge of the Divine, everything is real, however temporary it may be, and a reflection of that which is indeed eternal.

So the deeds we create in this life will be with us and enhanced, in the next. And this is the living in a life that is independent of, yet supportive of, the life and death of our bodies. This eternality, in the midst of which we may choose to continue to play our personal games, is dependent upon the Will of God alone, and there is nothing we or anyone else can do to change that. This is the message of

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2. Siyar-ul-Auliya, pp.278-82
religions and the understanding to which we wish to surrender. Then our true self will manifest in all its glory and splendor. Then we will understand that God did indeed create us in His own image.

But just as God has created us in His own image, we too have done the same thing by creating ourselves, our pseudo-selves, our replacement selves, in reaction to and as a means of coping with the other self-created images and ideologies with which we are met upon entrance into this material plane. Slowly but surely, as we became more and more conscious to the world in which we were born, we made conscious decisions to surrender to coercion and conform to whatever it was that circumstances dictated convenient and practical in what was being taught to us to be the ‘real’ world. We soon came to believe that we are what we have created of ourselves out of our desire to conform and get along. So we quite naturally feel constantly disconnected from our original reality, and thrust into the commonly accepted but very paradigmatic (as in artificially created) world of norms that we refer to as our ‘culture’ or ‘society’.

But like all cultures that are based upon commonly accepted ‘material’ values, the illusion in which we find ourselves begins to fade. Simply because it is based upon mutually accepted illusions, it slowly becomes apparent to many individuals involved that it really doesn’t work, and that its superficial goals will bring no lasting satisfaction. This breeds the overwhelming sense of disillusionment, dissatisfaction, emptiness and depression that is now prevalent everywhere.
So please recognize the significance and understand the importance of religion in general, the Islamic revelation specifically and Surrender to Allah!, the One. As we become older in anticipation of our departure from this planet, it becomes increasingly important to not be worried about ourselves, as this concern should have been resolved first, but to be able to leave behind a legacy of right guidance for others. Surrender to oneness without the guidance of faith is stagnation, just as belief in religion without self-realization, which is the reality and result of true Surrender, is simply division.

**The Sufi Message**

Man’s greatest need is the exploration of the human personality, in order to find there the latent inspiration and power upon which to build the whole structure of his life. For life means not only to live, but to enable oneself and reach that perfection which is the innate yearning of the soul. The solution to the problem is the awakening of the consciousness of humanity to the divinity of man. The undertone of all religions is the realization of the one life which culminates in the thought of unity.

The work of the Sufi message is to spread the unity of religion. It is not a mission to promote a particular creed or any Church or religion; it is a work to unite the followers of different religions and faiths in wisdom, so that without having to give up their own religion they may strengthen their own faith and focus the true
light upon it. In this way a greater trust, a greater confidence will be established in mankind.

When the message of God has been given to the world, there was a certain peculiarity in the way it was presented to the world because every messenger was made fit for his own time, and his message suited to that particular time. But behind it all there is one Truth, and one Divine Wisdom in all religions.

They are the more entitled to it. Verily, blessing is for every soul; for every soul, whatever soul, whatever be his faith or belief, belongs to God. What is the message of Sufism? Sufism is the message of digging out that water like life which has been buried by the impressions of this material life. There is an English phrase, "a lost soul". The soul is not lost; the soul is buried; when it is dug out then the divine life springs out like a spring of water.

The message is not for one nation, race, or community; it is for the whole of humanity. Its one and only object is to bring about a better understanding between the divided sections of humanity by awakening their consciousness to the fact that humanity is one family.

What is religion? Religion is a lesson which teaches the manner of living right and reaching the object for which we are born. This religion has come time after time to the world, through those who have brought the message of God. Those
who came with this message of religion have given it in diverse forms, in accordance with the evolution of the people at that particular time, but the religion was one and the same. There never has been any other religion than one, for God is one, truth is one, and so religion is one. If there is any difference, it is a difference of form, not of the soul. It is the same water, pure water, perhaps filled in several pitchers. One pitcher is made in India, the other in China, the other in Arabia, perhaps the other in the western world. It is like a stream which comes through the fountain and falls in various streams, but it is one and the same stream.