Sufism signifies Islamic mysticism. It is an Islamic way of reaching God, which involves rigorous meditation and prayer, emphasis on inner self rather than external rituals, continuous service towards humanity and renunciation of the worldly pleasures. In Islamic world, it is popularly known as 'Tasawwuf', while Western writers have termed it as 'Islamic mysticism'.

The genesis of Sufism lies in the Quran itself which reveals, “God is the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward.”\footnote{1} It also reveals, “Wherever you turn, there is the Face of Allah.”\footnote{2} (This is not to be confused with shape or figure). Here the emphasis is God alone and everything else is perishable and of no worth. Therefore, Shibli states that Sufis are those who do not see anything other than Allah in both the worlds.\footnote{3}

The Sufis imitate and derive inspiration from Prophet Mohammad in terms of morality, piety and religiosity. The Sufis, because of their mystical knowledge and experience, could understand the sayings of the Prophet correctly. Therefore, Sarraj writes that ‘God reveals the truth behind the language of Quran to those whom He loves and who are true Sufis’.\footnote{4}

There exist conflicting theories regarding the origin of the term ‘Sufi’ and that of Sufism as a socio-religious and philosophical movement. Al-Hujwiri while dealing with its origin states:\footnote{5}
While one group contends that it emerged from the word ‘suf’ which means woolen cloth and logically who wear the same are called Sufis; another group contends that it is related to ‘saffa’ and those who were in first rank i.e. ‘saffa-i awwal’ in following the Prophet and led ascetic life were Sufis. There is a third group who relate this to a mountain called ‘Safa’ in Mecca. Al-Beruni contends that the word ‘Sufi’ is derived from the Greek word sophia meaning wisdom or policy.

The author of Ghiyyathul-Lughat says that suffa was the name of a tribe of Arabs, who at the time of ignorance i.e. prior to the birth of Islam, separated themselves from their people and engaged in the service of the Meccan temple. However, the majority of the scholars including Thomas Arnold, Alfred Guillaume, R.N. Nicholson, A.J. Arberry believe that the word Sufi is derived from suf meaning wool, because the Sufis used to wear garments made of coarse wool. In fact, a great number of Sufis themselves confessed that the name of their class had a very prosaic and humble origin; a Sufi was a man who wore clothes of suf or wool. Incidentally, woolen cloth in those days was worn by the poor people of Iraq. Al-Hujwri, after analyzing various theories of the origin of the term, finally states that ‘suff’ indicates ‘wearing of woolen clothes’ and ‘hiding’.

From the early Arabic and Persian sources, it is apparent that Sufism is a distinctive way of life, which did not come into being immediately after
Prophet Muhammad, though its genesis lies in the Quran; rather, it emerged slowly as a means for seeking salvation through intensive devotion to the commands of God and absorption in the words of God revealed in Quran with superlative degree of purity. Early Sufi authorities acknowledge that the term ‘Sufi’ was not in general use before the time of Abu Hashim al-Sufi, though some assert that the term was known to early Muslim religious figures such as Hasan al-Basri (d. 728 A.D.) and Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 778 A.D.).

One group of scholars attributes it to the influence exercised on Islam by other faiths, while others emphasize the essentially Islamic origin of Sufism. There are several theories suggesting that Sufism was derived from Neoplatonic, Christian, Buddhist or Hindu sources. Islam prohibited its adherents from practicing the mortifying austerity and asceticism, which were followed by Jewish and Christian monks and Hindu Yogis. However, though external influences on Sufism cannot be denied, the speculative and the mystical qualities of Sufism originated within Islam and developed within its own frame of reference. The influence of other faiths on Sufism was not mechanical, but a sophisticated appropriation of metaphysical concepts to mystical experience. Such for instance is incorporation of celibacy by certain Sufis. Sufism, it may be stressed, therefore is neither a separate religion nor a sect; it is a particular and distinctive Muslim way of life born of the human heart against the cold formalism and hair-splitting ideology of the
institutionalised Islamic orthodoxy. Therefore, it is most important to study Sufism in its practical aspect in which sense it was an organized activity based on certain attitudes, feelings and practices employed by the Sufis.

Prophet Mohammad is considered the last Prophet in Islam. Before him number of Prophets were born including Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus etc. After the death of the last Prophet holy people with prophetic qualities needed to be addressed with some nomenclature apart from prophet’ or ‘man’. They were not ordinary human beings. Thus the concept of ‘walayah’ came into being.

*Walayah* is saintship attributed to the Sufi saints. Shaikh Nizam al-Din had discussed the concept of saintship in a general way. Shaikh Nasir al-Din Chiragh also discussed about saintship but not in detail. Gisu-Daraz, who is considered the successor of Shaikh Nasir al-Din, discussed the problem elaborately. He seems influenced by the thoughts of Ibn al-Arabi and holds saintship superior to prophethood at some instances. However, this ‘mis-adventurous’ thought of his has been rejected and rebuffed by many. He expressed his thought through a letter to an eminent Chisthi saint of the age, Shaikh Mas'ud Bak (d.1397-98 A.D.). Mas'ud Bak in his reply said that holding a saint higher than a Prophet, merely on supposition that a saint is closer to God than a Prophet due to his indulgence with the creation or *khalq*, is *kufr* (blasphemy) as per unanimous agreement between the saints and
Gisudaraz himself paradoxically considers his thought as *wahm* i.e. fantasy and different from *asliyat* (reality). Earlier Al-Hakim al-Tirmididh (d. 3rd century A.H/9th Century A.D.) and Muhyi al-Din Ibn Arabi (638 A.H./1240 A.D.) had also dealt with the aspect of *Wallayah* vrs. *Nabuwwah*, whereby they implied superiority of saintship over Prophethood on some aspects.

For this act of his, Tirmidhi was exiled from his native town, Tirmidh. Then, he backtracked and in his autobiography *Buduvw Shah* stated that he was accused of all that had never occurred to his mind. He further wrote that 'a Prophet first realizes saintship and then is bestowed with prophet hood. Therefore all Prophets are necessarily saints. This proposition got general acceptability with Sufis.

Ibn al-Arabi divided Prophethood as general and special. He says, special Prophet ceased to exist after the death of Muhammad but general Prophethood has not been closed. He attempts to equate general Prophethood with saints. He considered that a saint who had esoteric knowledge *‘ilm al-batin*) is conscious of that knowledge, but, the Prophet is not aware of that knowledge which he also possesses. By this, he indirectly implied superiority of saint ship. ‘Ala al-Dawlah al-Simnani (d. 717/ 1336), who is considered a balanced analytic by many, considered that a Sufi achieves ‘the pearl of the
crown of the need’, becomes a trustee, rightful successor of the Prophet of Islam and is capable of being called a preceptor (Shaykh), pole of guidance (Qutub al-Irshad) or saint (Wali). However, he holds that ‘the end of the saint is the beginning of the Prophet.’

While Ibn al-Arabi compared saintship to gold and Prophethood to silver, Simnani made a cryptic note, 16 “For the Sufis (ahl-i ma’ni) silver is purer and stronger than gold; it is only for the externalists (ahl-i zahir) that gold is superior.”

However, superiority of Prophet can be inferred from the fact that Prophethood belonged to the days of ignorance. As a dim light in darkness has greater value, Prophethood is superior, as it was deemed to remove the darkness or ignorance. Further it is generally agreed that sainthood is the beginning and only on its realization prophethood was bestowed. Thus, Nabuwat is on higher pedestal compared to Walayah.

The Sufis were to imbibe in themselves the prophetic qualities. Al-Hujwiri has quoted Shaikh Junaid Bughdadi having said that there are eight qualities attributed to eight different Prophets, which a Sufi should strive to have. Those are - generosity of Abraham, bliss of Ishaq, patience of Ayub, right direction of Zakaria, austerity of Yahya, woollen out-fits of Musa, the wandering of Jesus, and faqr of Mohammad, the last Prophet.

Religious practices adopted by Sufis can be broadly divided into
practices as prescribed in the Shari'at and practices not included in the Shari'at. To Islamic practice, the Sufi approach is that of interiorization, beginning with the broad path of the religious law (Shari'at), and proceeding via the path (tariqa) of the Sufis, to the divine reality (haqqa). To put it in other words, everything has an external (zahir) and corresponding internal (batin) aspect. If the religious law and practices of Islam are taken as the external form, then Sufism is its inner meaning. The inner and outer are inseparable; one cannot approach the divine, internal reality except through the external religious structure. It follows therefore that Sufism is unthinkable without the basic Islamic religious practices such as salat, safa, faqr, renunciation and striving to attain higher states of spirituality.

In his account of ritual prayer (salat), Sarraj insists that from the beginning a Sufi must know all aspects of prayer as discussed by the religious scholars. This learning is necessary because of the paramount place of ritual prayer in Islam, and particularly because it is the locus in which the whole range of internal spiritual experience becomes available. In the performance of all Islamic religious practices, not only do the Sufis perform the literal requirements of the law, but they also fulfil it more perfectly than others. “Their custom is to hold firmly to the most comprehensive (interpretation) of religious duties, and to retain the most perfect part of the science of religious law; dependence on being excused is the way of the masses and accepting
comfort and rationalization is the condition of the weak.”

Based on ‘Islamic practices and prescriptions’ by the Prophet, Al-Hujwiri has laid down certain preliminary conditions of prayer which include purification outwardly from filth and inwardly from lust, wearing clean clothes, purity of place of worship, turning towards Qibla (Ka’ba) with divine contemplation, standing outwardly in the state of qudrat (power) and inwardly ‘qurbat’ (proximity to God), sincere intention, saying ‘Allahu akbar’ in awe, reciting verse of Quran and bowing the head with humility.17

Al-Hujwiri emphasizes the importance of safā (purity) in the derivation of the word Sufi; safā is universally praised and its opposite is kadar of which the Sufis have purged themselves and on that account they are called Sufis. Prophet Muhammad is supposed to have said: “The safw (pure part, i.e., the best part) of this world is gone and only its kadar (impurity) remains.” In this context, the Sufis perform an impossible task by being able to retain their safā (purity); and the nomenclature Sufi is a proper (az asami-yi-alam), in as much as the dignity of the Sufis is too great for their transactions (muamalat) to be hidden, so that their name should need a derivation.

Purification involves outward purification as well as inward purification. The Sufis were constantly engaged in purification in both, as ‘God loves these who often repent and those who purity themselves.18

According to Al-Hujwiri the name has no derivations answering to
etymological requirements, because Sufism is too exalted to have any genus from which it might be derived; for the derivation of one thing from another demands homogeneity (miyanasat). All that exists is the opposite of purity and things are not derived from their opposites. To Sufis, the meaning of Sufism is clearer than the Sun and does not need any explanation or indication. ‘safa’ or purity is essential for Sufis which they persistently strive for.

For a perfect Sufi, in order to be able to conquer his own self, purity is very essential. “Verily purity is the characteristic of the veracious, if thou desirest a true Sufis, because purity (safa) has a root and a branch, its roots being severance of the heart from ‘others’ (aqhyar), and its branch that the heart should be empty of this deceitful world”. A Sufi Shaikh has said:

“Purity is not one of the qualities of Man, for Man is clay, and clay involves impurity, and Man cannot escape from impurity”.

Therefore purity bears no likeness to any acts (af’al), nor can the human nature be destroyed by means of effort. The quality of purity is unrelated to acts and states, and its name is unconnected with names and nicknames - purity is characteristic of the lovers (of God), who are Suns without clouds - because purity is the attribute of those who love and the lover is he that is dead (fani) in his own attributes and living (baqi) in the attributes of his Beloved.

Thus, the element of purity lends a supranormal or suprahuman
characteristic to a Sufi, which an eminent Sufi describes thus:

"The combination of the light of the Sun and Moon, when they are in conjunction, is like the purity of love and unification, when these are mingled together."

A Sufi’s mode of resignation from material temptations brings him to the mystical stages of purity (safa), as followed by early mystics. Purification of soul is essence of mysticism. Shaikh Junaid thus said:\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{Tasawwuf} is to be chosen for purity. Whoever is thus chosen (and made pure) from all except God is a Sufi."

Bishr al - Hafi of early nineth century is the first Sufi who recognized the quality of purity as a condition to reach the goal of a Sufi and thus, articulated:\textsuperscript{20}

"He is a Sufi who keeps a pure heart towards God."

The Sufis followed general Muslim mystical attitude, besides pursuing moral and spiritual path recommended by Prophet Mohammad. They practiced spiritual exercises, renounced every thing which is not Divine and purify their soul to reach to the goal. The mystical systems of Sufis dealt with relation between soul and God, various degrees of spiritual perfection
on the Divine path, the or esoteric knowledge, the soul’s effacement (fana) and permanency (baqa), the Truth (al-Haqq) and the perfect Man (Insan ‘ul kamil) which they experienced in their mystical states.

The Sufis were fully convinced that God loves those who abandon every thing for the sake of their Beloved (God). Abu’d Hasan al Nuri thus says: 21

"Tasawwwf is hatred towards world and love for God."

Maru’f al-Karkhi said: 22

"Tasawwuf is to possess realities and leave that is in the hands of man."

A Sufi’s life was distinctive life, which had to be with ‘faqr’, (poverty) and other Prophetic qualities. Sufi enjoys the spiritual state of perfect renunciation, when he enters the stage of poverty (faqr). Shaikh Summun al-Muhibb says, "It is to not to possess any thing and nothing should possess you." 23 Such a spirit of detachment from the world takes a Sufi to a stage of freedom. Abul Hassan al-Nuri further says: 24

"Sufism is liberty, so that a man is freed from the bonds of desire, and generosity, and abandonment of useless trouble and munificence."

Shaikh Sahl b. Abdullah al-Tustari observes: 25
“Tasawwuf is to eat little and to take rest with God and to be away from people.”

This complete separation from worldly things leads to the realization of spiritual state of contentment (rida) on his way to God.

The internal urges of a Sufi can be articulated in two ways through different “states” (hal, pl.ahwal) and “stations” maqam, pl.maqamat). The states are typically described as temporary conditions of the soul, caused by God’s spontaneous manifestations in one’s consciousness. While the states cannot be induced by human effort, the stations in contrast are described as the results of the soul striving to attain the qualities of God. In the opinion of a mystic, the state of a perfect Sufi is like the clear Sun (arbab-i-hal). Repentance (tawba), asceticism (zuhd), poverty (faqr), patience (sabr), trust in God (tawakkul) and satisfaction (rida) are some of the principle stations. When a person has escaped from the captivity of “stations” (maqamat) and gets rid of the impurity of “states” (ahwal) and is liberated form the abode of change and decay and becomes endowed with all praiseworthy qualities, he is disassociated from all qualities. It implies that he is not held in bondage by any praiseworthy quality of his own, nor does he regard it, nor is he made selfconceited thereby. “His state is hidden from the perception of intelligences and his time is exempt from the influx of thoughts. His presence (huzur)
with God has no end and his existence has no cause.” And when he arrives at this degree, he becomes annihilated (fani) in this world and the next, and is made divine (rabbani) as his humanity disappears; and gold and earth are the same to his eyes, and the ordinances which others find hard to keep, become easy for him.

In order to arrive at this degree, a Sufi performs many religious exercises and meditations - simple free prayer (dua), long and eloquent invocations (daawat) and beautiful, intimate conversations (muajat) and repetition of names of God (zikr). In addition purity (safa), Divine knowledge (marifa), revelation (kashf) and love of God (ishq) are essential characteristics, which help a Sufi to attain perfection. In fact the term Sufi itself describes a saint, who is perfect. A Sufi Shaikh has said:

“He that is purified by love is pure, and he that is absorbed in the Beloved and has abandoned all else, is a Sufi.”

The inferior aspirants (taliban) are called ‘Mutasawwif’, for tasawwuf belongs to the form tafa ‘ul, which implies ‘taking trouble’ (takalluf) and is a branch of the original root. The Mutasawwif seeks to reach the rank of Sufis by means of self mortification (miyahadata) and in his search rectifies his conduct in accordance with that of the Sufis who are dead (fani) to self and living (baqi) by the Truth, escaped from the grip of human faculties and have really attained (to God). In contrast to these two, there exists a third kind of

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person the ‘Mutaswif’ who makes himself like the Sufis, for the sake of wealth, power and the worldly advantages.

Apart from the above practices of Sufis which source from the Shari'at, certain specific practices like the Pir-murid relationship, sama, ziyarat, zikr, concept of ‘wilayat’ etc. are popular among the Sufis. These practices do no derive their source from the Shari'at.

A Sufi in order to attain his goal, has to follow the instructions of his ‘leader’ who is his ‘Pir’. Thus, Baba Farid’s Pir was Shaikh Qutub al-Din whose Pir was Shaikh Muin al-Din and so on. The first and foremost requirement of following a path of a Sufi is to place oneself under the guide of a ‘Sufi’ or ‘Shaikh’ or a ‘Pir’. Here he has to take a vow of complete ‘obedience’. The ‘Pir’ transmits spiritual power to his murid by the exercise of ‘tawajjuh’ (concentration).

The initiated disciple ‘murid’ proceeds along the various stages (maqamat) of the path under the mystic guidance, develops his spiritual knowledge and experiences the Truth (al-Haqq). The entire process of training and teaching is personal which is undisclosed. The aspirant advances on the path of pure love, experiences that God is truth and that existence completely lies in the hands of the God. He desires nothing for himself and bears no ill feeling for others. In such a stage, Rabi’a, a woman saint of second half of eighth Century said in his prayer:

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“Whatever share of this world Thou does bestow on me, bestow it on thy enemies; Whatever share of the next world Thou does give me, give it to thy friends. Thou art enough for me”.

The sama was another popular practice of the Sufis. Sama, literally means ‘hearing’ or ‘music’. Sufis organized the sama with a view to inducing a state of ecstasy. In India it took the form of ‘qawwali’ and the singers were called ‘qawwals’. The early mystics of Islam used to listen to formal recitation of the Quran which used to move their hearts and arouse their emotions. At a later stage recitations of poetry and rendering of musical compositions were also permitted on the basis of some traditions attributed to Prophet Muhammad and his companions. Shibli observed:

“Sama outwardly is a fitna (sedation), but internally it is a lesson.”

Since lawfulness of music has been the subject of long controversy, mystics’ participation in the ‘sama’ also became a matter a diverse opinion. The Ulama objected to the Sufis’ participation in the ‘sama’. However, for the Sufis it was not practiced for recreation but for facilitating their spiritual enrichment. The object of the sama was to attain ecstasy (wajd). Thus, Gazali says:

“For him, whose heart is overpowered with the love of God, the sama is momentous (muhimm), because the fire (of Love) is increased by it.”
Shaikh Zunun Misri has said:  

"Sama is a gift of God. Man’s heart activates on hearing this. One who listens correctly, gets the ways to God and one who hears it for ‘nafs’, takes the way of non-belivers".

However, different saints practiced same in different ways. Some allowed musical instruments to be played, while others did not. Shaikh Nizam al-Din, for instance did not allow the use of musical instruments in the sama. Some allowed raqs (dancing). The Sufis of Mawlawiya silsillah which is named after Jalal al- Din al-Rumi (d.672 A.H./1273 A.D.) were popularly known as ‘whirling derveshes’ because of the pattern of their dances. Al-Hujwiri did not approve of raqs and so also Ibn Arabi. However Shaikh Junaid, al-Shibli, Mansur al-Hallaj etc. participated in ‘raqs’ in sama.

Gisu Daraz divides sama into four types from the legal point of view. Halal (Permitted) ones were those, whereby the thoughts of the listeners are related exclusively to Reality and Truth. When thoughts tend towards the worldly affairs, that ‘sama’ would be haram (forbidden). If those are midway between Reality and worldliness it is makruh (undesirable) and if those are inclined more towards Reality, then sama is mubah (allowable). Sama had also been identically divided by Shaikh Nizam al- Din Auliya.

Zikr is an important practice of Sufis. Zikr, ‘remembering’ is a special act of devotion whereby God’s name is recited again and again. It is done
while controlling the respiration. They recite words as follows:\(^{33}\)

“Allah or ‘La-ilaha - illa’llah’ (there is no god but God) or Allahu hadiri-
Allahu Naziri - Allahu Shahidi (God is present with, sees and witnesses-
me), etc.”

Along with recital of ‘zikr’, he may recite some verses of Quran.

Ziyarat or visit of Shrines of Sufi saints is a common practice. The saints often visited the shrines of their Pir. Also, large number of visitors come for prayer and blessings. On the day of ‘wisal’ i.e. the day of death of a Pir ‘urs’ is celebrated. Death is considered an auspicious day when the Shaikh became one with God. Urs Mubarak of Muin al - Din Chishti is a very popular event when thousands of devotees throng Ajmer Sharif, where the saint’s shrine exists. Ziyarat is the visitation to a shrine and the shrine itself is called mazar. Some times the latter is called ‘dargah’. Other wise also everyday people from all faiths visit the dargahs. Qawwali is organized near the dargah. The Muslim visitors recite ‘fateha’ (see Plate - IX ) when they visit the shrine. Flowers are offered and ‘agarbattis’ are lit.

Each shrine has definite etiquettes. In the shrine of Muin al-Din Chishti, no one is allowed to sit near the mazar; people pray while standing nearby. In the shrine of Shaikh Qutub al-Din (see Plate - VI ) it is obligatory to wear cap before going to the sanctum sanctorum. Similarly it is a popular practice to visit the mazar of Amir Khushrau (See Plate - XIII ) before visiting
the mazar of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya, as the former was considered very dear to the Shaikh.

Many visitors carry sweets to the mazar and place it on the shrine and bring it back to distribute as ‘tabarruk’. There are offerings of ‘chadars’ i.e. sheet of clothes. On Thursday evening special prayers are organized, lamps are lit and placed on tombs and gawwali are organized. Some tie threads (dhaga) on the window screen of the mazar (see Plate - XI ) with some wishes (mannat).

In Sufi practices a hierarchy of saints was established. The head of silsila appointed Khalifahs to various parts or willayats and they in turn appointed subordinate Khalifahs for qasbas and cities. In north India, during the period of Sultanate, a hierarchy of saints came to be established.

The medieval mystics assigned importance to their personal articles and handed over to those selected to become their spiritual successor. Those include patched frock (khirkah), prayer carpet (janamaz), rosary (tasbih), rod (asa) etc. Whoever received these succeeded the ‘wilayat’ as well and theoretically had the control of the territory.

Khirka was of four types. Khirka-i idarat indicates giving the khirka to particular disiples personally. Kirka-i wilayat-khilafat was one in which a Shaikh finds in a murid the quality and karamat of a Wali and makes him his successor and sends the murid to a place to look after matters (mystical)
there as his deputy. *Kirka-i tabarraka* indicates the Shaikh’s entitling a disciple through some *tabarrukat* to abide by the *Shari‘at* and maintain comradeship with the other Sufis. *Khirka-i salahiat* is another type of *khirka*, which is of lesser importance.

The Sufi practices were aimed partly at realization of *Haqiqa* and partly to maintain their distinct identity as per their *silsilhas* or sub-sections of the *silsilhas*. The practices that were as per the *Shari‘at* could not be challenged by the *Ulama* or the Sultanate, but as far as the practices, which did not originate from the *Shari‘at* were subject to occasional bone of contention between the *Ulama* and the Sufis. Sometimes, the *Ulama* took help of the Sultanate in opposing such practices of the Sufis. Though the *Ulama*’s objection was based on their jealous attempt of preservance of Islamic orthodoxy, they were also protective of their position, which was undermined by the popularity and the general acceptability of the Sufis.
NOTES


15. Ibid, p.255.


22. Ibid, p.441.


26. Ibid, pp. 73.


