CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION TO SUFISM AND SUFISTIC LITERATURE
Similarly Suharwardi tries to establish an intimate relationship between Sufism and knowledge. According to him, knowledge that is followed by moral behaviour is the main characteristic of Sufi line. Such knowledge is called by him as Fiqh which is not used in usual legal sense but for spiritual status of man is solely based on knowledge. He refers to several Quranic verses to prove this point. First he quotes the verse; “He (God) taught man what he did not know,” and concludes that the spiritual insight into religion is solely based on knowledge. Secondly, he holds that Sufis are the people who acquire spiritual insight into religion and this helps them lead people to the right path. This spiritual perception, according to him, pertains to the sphere of the heart and not to the sphere of the head. He argues that according to Quran, knowledge and moral uprightness are the characteristics of the truly learned people. He holds that knowledge is the consequence of Taqwa,”those of his servants only who are possessed of knowledge have Taqwa.” This verse is very significant in establishing the relationship between knowledge and moral behaviour, for as Suharwardi puts it, it excludes knowledge from those who are not characterized by moral integrity. (Taqwa)

Sufism for Suharwardi is characterized by two things. It consists in following the practices of holy prophet (Sunnah) and in inculcating purity of motives and attaining the highest integrity of character. There are two different categories of Sufis. The first includes those persons in whom mystic illumination (Kashf) is followed by exercise of personal effort (Ijtihad). He quotes the example of Pharaohs magicians. When they realized the spiritual illumination as a result of which they decided there and then break with the Pharaoh in favour of Moses. This decision of theirs for which they willingly bore all terrible consequences with which the Pharaoh threatened them came to them with an ease that follows spiritual illumination. To the second category belong those people who lead a hard ascetic life spending, their days in prayers and nights in meditation. It is only after a long struggle spread over days, months and years that they receive divine illumination. Here illumination is the fruit and crown of personal efforts and hard ascetic life. He quotes a saying of Junaid “We did not gain access to the domain of Sufism through discursive reasoning or intellectual

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8 Suhrawardi, S.D., Awarif al-Madraif, Urdu Translation, Naval Kishore Press, Lucknow, Chp 1, P.17.
9 Quran, XXX5, 28 Quoted in Sharif (ed) A History of Muslim Philosophy, Low Price Publications, New Delhi, Pg.355.
discussion but through hunger, abdication of worldly lust and prestige and discarding of even unlawful things.”

The Sufi has to undergo a long course of austere and exacting disciplines prescribed by a spiritual preceptor, called Shaikh, Pir or Murshid to whom he must surrender himself completely. The rules and the methods of devotion inculcated by the Shaikh and followed by the disciples called 'Murid' constitute the ‘Way’ or Tariqah of the Sufi. He has to fight against the temptations of the flesh and carnal desires (Nafs) and practice puritanical abstinence from worldly pleasures and enjoyments. Repentance and conversion (Tauba), renunciation (Zuhd), poverty (Faqr) patience and resignation (Sabr-o-riza), trust in God (Tawakkul) contentment (Qanaat). Humility (Inkisar) charity and contentment (Jud-o Sakha), good disposition (Khulq) etc., are the virtues he has to cultivate. By self-restraint and living a life of isolation and withdrawal from the world (Khalwat wa uzla) he keeps his heart pure and rids himself of evil habits. Meditation and concentration on God (Muraqaba), self examination (Muhasaba), self mortification (Riyzat) and above all remembrance of the names and attributes of God’s name and attributes of God (Dhikr) which means repeated recital of God’s name in rapid cadence with physical movements and restraints of breaths are some of the distinctive forms of Sufi’s devotions. The devotional exercises were very often and specially among the ‘Chistis’ and the ‘Suhrawardis’, accompanied by religious songs and ecstatic movements of the body called dances.

The Sufi represents himself as entirely devoted to the search for truth and thinks that there may be partial truth in all the different religions of the world. He holds that the foundation of all the religious beliefs must be essentially true. The different forms of worship result from a variety of names and attributes by which God reveals himself in the creation. In the words of the celebrated 13th century Chisti saint of Delhi, Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia, once observed “Every nation has its own way, its own faith, its own place turned to when at prayer” (“Har quam rast rahe dine wa qiblagaha”). The 14th century Sufi saints of Amber (Bihar) of the Suhrwardi order, H.Amber Chirmposh, (d.775) composed many verses which emphasized the essential oneness of all schools of thoughts – all creeds and the importance of love for the mystics. In one of his mystic ghazals he wrote “Ishq ra rahnuma, yake didam”; ke munazah ze

Kufr-o-din didam (I saw love as one and the true guide. I found it free from faith and infidelity.)

The Sufi, with his fervent love of and devotion to the one eternal reality, imminent in all things and known through divine illumination and grace, with his belief in the moral exaltation of life in pursuit of duty, with his idea of ascetism, seclusion, control and regulation of breath, repetition of divine names, and with his frenzied devotion through singing, dancing and music, found a fruitful soul to thrive in India, the land of the Vedanta, yoga and Bhakti, more than elsewhere.

Certain points of resemblances between Indian systems and Islamic mysticism have led astray some people who are inclined to father the one on the other. Some have gone so far as to think that Sufism owes its origin mainly to the schools of Indian philosophy. Parallel philosophical conceptions are pointed out and striking points of contrast between vedantism and Sufism are emphasized upon by those who take such ecstatic utterance of Husain Mansoor Halaj and Bayazid Bostami as “Anal Haque” (I am the truth) “I went from God to God, until he cried, from me to me o thou I”. Glory to me! How great is my majesty” to be the echoes of the vedantic and upanishadic ideas and expressions like “Tat twam asi (thou art), Ekam Advaitam’ (one without the second), ‘Aham Brahma Asmi’ (I am the supreme spirit). The author of the dabistan is quoted to say that the Sufi holds that God alone exists and besides him there is no reality. As in the Indian thought there is said to be in Sufism the same emanation of all things from one supreme and the same final absorption of all things into the divine essence.

The Buddhist nirvana is said to be practically the same as the Sufistic doctrine of fana or self effacement whose first exponent was the saint, Bayazid Bustami, a grandson of a Persian magi, and a pupil of Abu Ali Sindhi. The Sufi concept of the world of phenomena and of senses as mere mirage or mirror or reflection is said to be something like Maya. Some even mark a tendency to the belief in metempsychosis in the Sufi doctrine of ‘Successive existences’ and a line from Mathnavi of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, “Haft sad haftad qalib dida am hamchu

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sabza bar-ha royeeda am” (I have witnessed seven hundred and seventy forms- I have grown so many times as the vegetable plants) is quoted in this connection. Legendary tales of prince beggar, Ibrahim Bin Adham (the ancestor of the Balkhi saints of Bihar) and of the begging bowl reminds such people of the Gautama theory and Buddhistic influences are traced in the rise of monastic establishments of Khanqah, in the institution of religious orders, the system of Maqamat or stations on the road of beatitude and the use of rosary with 90 beads. Parallel ascetic discipline, and corresponding methods of spiritual culture are found in ‘Dhikr’ or ‘Jap’ ‘Pas-i-Anfas’ or Pranayama, Muraqaba or Samadhi, ‘Jalsa’ or Asan. The idea of Awalim-i-sab or the seven worlds of the Sufi is considered as analogous to sapta loka and resemblance is found between ‘Wali’ or ‘Arhat’, ‘Insan-i-Kamil’ or ‘Tatha gata’. The veneration of spiritual teachers, Saints, Pirs and Murshids as a sure and certain mediatory agency is taken to be comparable to the blind obedience to and veneration of the Hindu guru. Procession and pilgrimages to tombs are said to hold much more important place in the estimation of the Indian Muslims than elsewhere.

The main Sufi orders of India are, established by distinguished Sufi Saints like the Qadriya from Abdul Qadri Jilani, Naqshbandi from Khwaja Bahauddil Naqshband, Chisti from Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Suharwardi from Khwaja Shahabuddin Shirarwardi. Several other orders were later founded. The main orders named here dominated the Islamic World for many centuries. Each order contributed immensely in the spread and development of Islam. The earliest Sufis of Bihar consisted of the Chisti order, some of the earliest being Shah Mahmud Bihari and Saiyid Taju’d Din of Danapur, the disciples of Qutbu’d Din Bakhtiyar Kaki (d 633-1235), Maulana Ali Bihari, a disciple of Baba Farid Ganj-i-Shakar(d.644-1246), Makhdum Adam Sufi (d 686-1287), son of Saiyid Ibrahim Chisti, of which later became Hajipur (d.657-1258) and his son, Makhdum Hamidu’d Din(d.771-1369) and the latter’s son, Taimullah Sufaid Baz (D.790-1388) the spiritual guide of Shaikh Faidullah of Kurji near Patna (d.831-1427); Shamsu’d Din of Chandhan’s (Biharsharif) (d.820-1418).

Some of the prominent Sufis of Suharwadi order were Shaikh Jalal Tabrizi, one of the chief disciples of the celebrated author of ‘Awarifu’l-Ma’arif, Shihabu’d Din Suhrawadi, came to Bihar via Delhi and Badaun, and from there he went to Bengal and Sylhet where his Chilla

13 Askari, S.H, Op Cit, Pg.9.
Khana is still found and who is also known as Sharfuddin Maneri. Maulana Taqiu’d Din Suhravadi of Mahsun (Dinajpur, Bengal), the author of Multaqit which is an abridged version of Ghazzali’s Ihyau’l ‘Ulam, Taqlu’d Din was the inspirer of many Suhravadi saints of Bihar, including Makhdum Yahya Maneri, the father of the celebrated Firdausi saint, Makhdum Sharfu’d-Din Maneri.

I would like to now focus on the various debates regarding the diverse opinions on the origin of Sufism. The following section will discuss this feature.

**Origin of Sufism**

There are innumerable theories regarding the origin of Sufism and scholars differ in assessing the extent of the various extra non-Islamic elements in its making. Some of them, as has been pointed out by scholars like Dr. Arberry are mutually contradictory. Points of contact between Christianity and Sufism have been detected. It has been suggested that the earlier Arabian type of Sufism was quietism and ascetism which was influenced by Christian monasticism. The earliest Sufi is said to be like Hindu ascetics and hermits. But it is also said that the Muslim conception of Allah with his majesty, awe and vengeance over-shadow the attributes of mercy and love. In the Islamic idea of God and Satan, the Zarathushtra conception of dualism and belief in the perpetual conflict between good and evil, light and darkness has been discovered. But in Islam good and evil are two separate things and not two phases of Godhead.¹⁴

Some have described Sufism as an Iranian reaction to the Arabian faith. E.H. Palmer has tried to show that Sufism is really the development of the primeval religions of the Aryan races. Those who believed in the Aryan reaction theory say that anti-Semitic reaction two forms, Persian and Indian. Browne says that there is no historical proof that India had any direct influence on early Sufism. But the Persian theory which refers to the introduction of pantheistic element in Islam also cannot explain the whole situation. Some of the early Sufis were not of Persian nationality and some of the pioneers of Islamic mysticism were Arabs and natives of

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¹⁴ Askari, S.H. Islam and Muslims in Medieval Bihar, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna. Pg.11.
Syria, Egypt and Spain. Then there are the advocates of the Neo-Platonistic theory which is said to explain the origin of Sufism more adequately than other theories. Plotinus, the Egyptian (203-207 A.D.) who reinterpreted the philosophy of Plato and Dionysius, the Syrian monk who developed a mystical theosophy based on Hellenic sources are said to have been the inspirers of the philosophy of Sufis. But some scholars have raised the question as to what elements of their philosophy did the Neo-Platonists originally borrow from the east, Persia and India? Does not their philosophy of ultimate reality and the restless soul aspiring to gain its basic unity with the supreme one suggest the influence of oriental cults.

There is definite and adequate historical evidence is lacking to prove that Islamic Mysticism was a product of foreign culture, Greek or Neo-Platonic ideas, Christian asceticism and monasticism, Persian and Zoroastrian beliefs, and Indian or Buddhistic and Hindu principles, practices and influences. Some like Massignon, Clarke, etc hold that Sufism must be sought in the Quranic words which lend themselves to mystical and spiritual interpretations. The tendency to mystical life which is not confined to this or that people was not lacking in Arabian Islam of the first two centuries. Considering the universality of human mind which is essentially one despite the barriers of distance, time and tradition, there is nothing surprising if common notions are found to run parallel in the minds of the different peoples. Similarity and unconscious coincidences need not necessarily be taken to connote borrowing or indebtedness. A like cause may give rise to a like result. Political strife's, social turmoil, and worldly outlook began in Islam soon after the death of second Caliph and became aggravated under the rule of the materialistic Ummayyads of Damascus. The disgust felt at the existing state of things soon assumed a sort of spiritual revolt of which one phase was a revolt against the cold formalism. Ritualism and traditionalism of rigid orthodoxy. Even European scholars admit that the seeds of Sufism are to be found in the powerful and widely spread tendencies which arose within Islam during the first century and it was not till the third century of the Hijra that the non-Islamic influences began to affect the character of Sufism.

The advocates of the Esoteric Islam theory or the theory of the independent origin or spontaneous growth trace the origin of Sufism from the life time of the Prophet and see its natural development within the framework of Islam, it being only the esoteric aspects (with

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15 Askari., Op.Cit, Pg.11.
emphasis on hidden or 'Batin' rather than apparent or 'Zahir' or literal meanings of the Quran) of that great religion. They bring out the examples of such companions of the Prophet as Uthman Bin Maazun, Abu Dhar Ghifari, Tamim-ad-dari, Abu-darda and a host of others who gave the first impulse to Islamic mysticism because they not only denounced but also renounced worldly wealth and carnal desires, lived solely for God and raised their voices against what they considered to be the growth of the grossly materialistic and disgustingly impious and irrereligious outlook of the people. These (men of God) have been variously called as Hab-i-safa (Purity) Saff (bench) Suffa (Row) and Soof (Wool) and came to be styled, in course of time as Sufis. The derivation of the word from the Greek ‘Sophist’ is repudiated and the expression ‘Labesa-as-suf’ (clad in wool) is considered preferable. The word Sufi in its theosophical connotation first appears in the middle of the eighth century when it was definitely applied to a certain class of ascetics and quietists who were clad in wool and practiced austerities. According to Jami, Abu Hashim Kufi was the first to get the name ‘Sufi’ in 150=766. Even a little earlier than him flourished the famous Sufi, Hsan-al-Basri (D, 110=728) and it is from him through Ali, he Prophet’s son-in-law, that almost all important Sufi orders trace their origin.

The early Sufis believed that once he had set the pattern of his life in the mould of the attitudes and relations, he was ready to make a start in realizing his ultimate ambition namely the ambition of experiencing God in such a way that he might be able to say like every Sufi:” What for others is just a matter of conjecture and vague hypothesis is for him there like the most certain entity, and what for others is a matter of conceptual understanding of God is for him something to be experienced as an existent about the reality of which there can be no possible doubt, so that he can sing with the poet:

“My night is aglow with the beauteous grandeur of the face,
While the darkness of night envelops everyone else,
While others are enshrouded in the pitch darkness of night,
I am experiencing the brilliant light of the day”. 16

Some famous orders of Sufism

There are more than 200 orders known orders, some being local and others as universal. Some are rural and others are urban in locale. Some of the main Sufi orders are:

The Quadariya: Also called “Ummul Salasal” (Mother of Silsilas), it is the oldest and most widespread order. It has branches all over the world loosely tied to its centre at Baghdad. It was founded in Baghdad by ‘Abdal-Qadir Jilani (d.1166), who is considered to be the greatest saint in Islam. It later established itself in Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, The Maghreb, Central Asia and India. The Qadriya stresses piety, humility, moderation and philanthropy and appeals to all classes of society being strictly orthodox. It is governed by a descendant of Al-Jilani who is also the keeper of his tomb in Baghdad which is a pilgrimage centre for its followers from all over the world. Hazrat Abdul Wahab (RA), Hazrat Abdul Razzaq (RA), Hazrat Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Qadir Jilani (RA), Hazrat Abdul Qadir Najibuddin Suharwardi (RA), Hazrat Sheikhul Shuyukh (RA), Hazrat Ibrahimul Muqaddasi (RA) were the main contributors to the growth, development and propagation of this silsila. It is said that one of the sons of Hazrat Abdul-Qadir Jilani (RA) also came to Sindh and his tomb is also located in Sindh. Hazrat Syed Ahmad Amjhari (RA), Hazrat Qamis Qadiri (RA), Hazrat Pir Mujibullah (RA) etc. were among the most prominent Sufis who propagated the philosophy and concepts of Qadriya Silsila in Bihar. In Mughal period, Hazrat Sheikh Muhadith Dehlavi (RA) gave immense rise to this Silsilas.

The Jilaliya: It is a Qadiri branch in the Maghreb worship. Al-jilani who worships Al-Jilani as a supernatural being, combining Sufism with pre-Islamic ideas and practices.

The Naqshbandiya: It was founded in Central Asia in the thirteenth century in an attempt to defend Islam against the ravages of the Mongol invasions and spread to the Indian subcontinent. The Naqshbandis tried to control the political rulers so as to ensure that they implemented God’s will. They were politically and culturally active; the great poet Mirdad (d 1785) belonged to this order. They were also connected to the trade and crafts guild and held political power in fifteenth century Central Asia and in Moghul India. A Naqshbandi branch Khalwawiyah, had an important part in efforts to modernize the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
The Naqshbandi developed mainly as an urban order with close links to the orthodox hierarchy. They recite the Dhikr silently, ban music, dance and prefer contemplation to customs. The middle way between extreme asceticism and extreme antinomianism seemed acceptable to the orthodox hierarchy. They have been involved in underground movements against Soviet rule in Central Asia and supported the Afghan Mujahideen against the Russians.

The main propagator of this silsilas in India was Hazrat Khwaja Baqi Billah, who contributed a lot to the growth and development of this Silsila. The second prominent name related to this Silsila in India is of Hazrat Imam Rabbani Mujaddid Alf e Thani Hazrat Shaikh Ahmad Farooqi Hindi (RA) who also made huge contribution to the promotion of this Silsila. His contributions could be assessed with the fact that this Silsila also got famous by the name of Silsil-e- Mujadadiya Naqshbandiya.

**The Mawlawiyah:** This order was founded by Jalal-din-rumi (d.1273) who is called as the greatest Sufi poet who wrote in Persian. Their rituals are aestically sophisticated and their saran is famous for exquisite combination of music, poetry and whirling dance. In the west they are called as 'Whirling Dervishes' which transports them into a trance like state. The Mawlawiyah were especially attractive to the educated elite of the Turkish Ottoman empire and were wide spread in Anatolia where they had close links with the authorities.

**The Bektashiya:** It is a syncretic order whose ritual and beliefs are a mixture of Shiism, Orthodox Christianity and Gnostic cults. By the 16th century Bektashis were the order of the famous janissary corps, the elite military unit of the Ottoman Empire. Their magic like rituals appealed to the illiterate masses of Anatolia. Their clergy were celibate, they practiced ritual confession and communion and had a Trinitarian concept of God similar to that of the Alawis.

**The Tijaniya:** it was founded by Al-Tijani in 1781 in Fez, Morocco. It extended the borders of Islam towards Senegal, Nigeria and founded great kingdom in West Africa. They taught submission to the established Government and their influence is still an important factor in the countries where it is associated with conservative businessmen.

**The Daraquiya:** was founded in the early 19th century by Arabi Darqawi (d.1823) in Morocco. It was the driving force behind the Jehadi movement which achieved mass conversions to Islam.
in the mixed Berber-Arab-Negro lands of the Sahel. It is influential today in Mali, Niger, and Chad and still influential in Morocco.

**The Khalwatiya:** was founded in North West Persia in the 13th century and spread to the Caucasus and to Turkey. It was closely associated with the Ottoman sultans and had its headquarters in Istanbul. It has also spread to Egypt and Indonesia. The origin of this Silsila is associated with Hazrat Sheikh Mohammad Khilawati (RA). The main propagator of this Silsila was Hazrat Sheikh Muzaffar Katkani Nishapuri (RA), however, the Silsila remained confined to a very limited area.

**The Suharwardiya:** the founder of this order is Shihab-Al-Din Suhrwadi. His wisdom of Ishraqi has played such a great role in the intellectual and spiritual life of Islam and especially of Shi’ism. He was born in Suhrwadi, a village near the present city of Zinjan in Northern Persia, in 1153 A.D. 17 Having finished his formal studies, he began to travel through Persia, meeting various Sufi masters and benefiting from their presence and teachings. During this period, he spent much time in meditation and invocation in spiritual retreats. He also journey during the same period through the regions of Anatolia and Syria and acquired great love for the cities of these countries. On one of his journeys, he went from Damascus to Aleppo and met Malik Zahir, the son of Salah-al-Din Ayyubi, the celebrated Muslim ruler. Malik Zahir became more devoted to Shihab al Din and asked him to stay at his court. It was here that the master of Ishraq fell into disgrace with the religious authorities in the city who considered some of his statements dangerous to Islam. They asked for his death and when Malik Zahir refused, they petitioned Salah al-Din himself who threatened his son to abdication unless he followed the ruling of the religious leaders. Shihab al-Din was thereby imprisoned and in the year 1191 A.D. at the age of 38, he was either suffocated to death or died of starvation18. There are nearly fifty titles of Suhrawardi’s writings which have come down to us in the various histories and biographies. They may be divided into five categories as follows19:

1. The four large doctrinal treatises, the first three dealing with Aristotelian (Masha‘i) philosophy with certain modifications and the last with Ishraqi wisdom proper. These

18 Corbin,1952. Suhrawardi d’Alep Fondateur De La Doctrine Illuminative (Ishraqi), Maisonneeuve, Paris, Pg.373.
19 Corbin,1945 Maarif Mathaasi, Bibliotheca Islamica, Istanbul, Pg.xvi.
works, all in Arabic, include the Talwihat, Muqawwamat, Mutarahat, and the Hikmat al-Ishraq.

2. Shorter doctrines treatises like Hayakil-al-Nur, Al-Alwah al-Imadiyyah, Partau-Nameh, I’tiqad al-Hukama, al-Lamahat, Yazadan Shinakht and Bustan al-Qulub all of which explain further the subject matter of the larger treatises. These works are partly in Arabic and partly in Persian.

3. Initiatory narratives written in symbolic language to depict the journey of the initiate towards Gnosis (Marifah) and Illumination (Ishraq). These short treatises, all written in Persian, include ‘Aql-i-Surkh, Awaz-i-par-i-Jibrail, al-Ghurbat al Gharbiyyah (also in Arabic), Lughat-i-Muran, Risalah Fi Halat al- Tufuliyyah, Ruzi ba Jamaat-I Sufiyan, Risalah fi al Mi-raj and Safir-i-Simurgh

4. commentaries and transcriptions of earlier philosophic and initiatic texts and sacred scriptures like the translation into Persian of the Risalat-al-Ta’ir of Ibn Sina, the commentary upon the verses of the Quran and on Hadith

5. Prayers, litanies, invocations and what may be called books of the hour, all of which Shahrazuri calls al-Waridat w-al-Taqdisat.

These works and the large number of commentaries written upon them during the last seven centuries form the main corpus of the tradition of Ishraq and are a treasure of traditional doctrines and symbols combining in them the wisdom of Sufism with Hermeticism and Pythagorean, Platonic, Aristotelian and Zoroastrian philosophies together with some diverse elements.

The famous Suhrawardi saint, Shaikh Jalal Tabrizi, one of the chief disciples of Shihabuddin Suhrawardi came to Bihar via Delhi and Badaun and from here he went to Bengal where his ‘Chillakhanas’ are still found. Bihar also felt the influence of the Suhrawardi order through the activities of the followers of Syed Jalal Bukhari Makhdoom Jahanian (1383 A.D) and of still earlier, the celebrated Bahauddin Zakaria Multani. Makhdoom Syed Hasan, a contemporary of Humayun and Shershah, after whom Hasanpura in Saran district is named, and his sons and grandsons, Syed Ahmad of Hajipur, Syed Muhammad of Mansurgabj, Patna and Syed Husain of Bhagalpur all called ‘Pir Damaria’ were Suharwardia saints and were linked in the chain of spiritual discipleship to Makhdoom Jahanian. Maulana Ahmad
Damishqi, one of the ‘Khalifas’ of Bahauddin Zakaria Multani was the spiritual guide of Maulana Taquddin Suhrawardi of Mahsum in Bengal, who was the author of an abridged version of ‘Ihya-ul-ulum’ of the celebrated Imam Ghazzali and he was the inspirer of many Suhrawardi saints of Bihar including Makhdum Yahya Maneri, the father of the renowned Makhdoom Sharfuddin the greatest muslim saint that Bihar has produced.

The Rifatiya: was founded in the marshlands of South Iraq by Al-Rifai (d.1187). They stressed poverty, abstinence and mortification of the flesh and are also known as the ‘Howling Dervishes’ because of their land recitation of the Dhikr. They focus on dramatic rituals and bizarre feats such as fire eating and piercing themselves by sharp objects.

The Shadiliya: It was started by Al-Shadilild (d.1258) in Tunis. It flourished specially in Egypt under other names. The Shadiliya stress the intellectual basis of Sufism and allow their members to remain involved in the secular world. They are not allowed to beg are always neatly dressed. They appealed mainly to the middle class in Egypt and are still active there. It is said that Shadiliya were the first to discover the value of Coffee as a means of staying awake during nights of prayer.

The Chishtiya: Hazrat Abu Is’haq Chishti (RA) is understood to have been the founder of this order; however, Prince Dara Shikoh in his book Safinat-ul-Auliya names Hazrat Khwaja Ahmad Abu Ahmad Chishti (RA), one of the disciples and successor of Hazrat Abu Is’haq, as the “Sardar” of this order. This order originated in Chisht (currently in Afghanistan), and reached India after passing through Sanjan, Damascus, Sajistan, Khorasan, and Nishapur. In India it was founded by Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer, India. His teaching was simple and the order is known for its fervour and hospitality. This order helped in the Islamization of the Indian subcontinent. Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Bakhtiyar Kaki, Fariduddin Ganjshakar and Amir Khusrau are some famous Sufi Saints of Chishtiya order.

Hazrat Mu’inuddin Chishti was born in 536 A.H./1141 CE, in Sistan in Persian Khurasan, modern Iran. He is a descendant of Muhammad through Ja’far as Sadique. He grew up in a Persian family. His parents died when he was only fifteen years old. He inherited a windmill and an orchard from his father. During his childhood, the young Mu’inuddin was different from
others and kept himself busy in prayers and meditation. Legend has it that once when he was watering his plants, a revered Sufi; Shaikh Ibrahim Qunduzi came to his orchard. Young Mu‘inuddin approached him and offered him some fruits. In return, Sheikh Ibrahim Qunduzi gave him a piece of bread and asked him to eat it. The Khwaja got enlightened and found himself in a strange world after eating the bread. After this he disposed of his property and other belongings and distributed the money to the poor. He renounced the world and left for Bukhara in search of knowledge and higher education. Mu‘inuddin Chishti visited the seminaries of Samarkand and Bukhara, and acquired religious learning at the feet of eminent scholars of his age. He visited nearly all the great centers of Muslim culture, and acquainted himself with almost every important trend in Muslim religious life in the Middle Ages. He became a disciple of the Chishti saint ‘Uthmān Ḥārūnī. They traveled the Middle East extensively together, including visits to Makkah and Medina.

**Mu‘inuddin’s Journey to India**

Mu‘inuddin Chishti turned towards India, reputedly after a dream in which Prophet Muhammad blessed him to do so. After a brief stay at Lahore, he reached Ajmer along with Mohammad of Ghori, and settled down there. In Ajmer, he attracted a substantial following, acquiring a great deal of respect amongst the residents of the city. Mu‘inuddin Chishti practiced the Sufi Sulh-e-Kul *peace to all* concept to promote understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.

**Founding of the Chishti Order in India**

He apparently never wrote down his teachings in the form of a book, nor did his immediate disciples, but he laid the foundations of the Chishti order in the city of Ajmer in North India. His firm faith in Wahdat al-Wujūd (Unity of Being) provided the necessary ideological support to his holy mission to bring about emotional integration of the people amongst whom he lived.

The central principles that became characteristics of the Chishti order in India are based on his teachings and practices. They lay stress on renunciation of material goods; strict regime of self-discipline and personal prayer; participation in Samā' as a legitimate means to spiritual
transformation; reliance on either cultivation or unsolicited offerings as means of basic subsistence; independence from rulers and the state, including rejection of monetary and land grants; generosity to others, particularly, through sharing of food and wealth, and tolerance and respect for religious differences.

He, in other words, interpreted religion in terms of human service and exhorted his disciples “to develop river-like generosity, sun-like affection and earth-like hospitality.” The highest form of devotion, according to him, was “to redress the misery of those in distress – to fulfill the needs of the helpless and to feed the hungry.”

It was during the reign of Emperor Akbar (1556–1605) that Ajmer emerged as one of the most important centers of pilgrimage in India. The Mughal Emperor undertook an unceremonial journey on foot to accomplish his wish to reach Ajmer. The Akbarnāmah records that the Emperor’s interest first sparked when he heard some minstrels singing songs about the virtues of the Walī (Friend of God) who lay asleep in Ajmer.

Mu‘īnuddīn Chishti authored several books including Anīs al-Arwah and Dalīl al-‘Arifīn, both of which deal with the Islamic code of living.

Quṭbuddīn Baktiyār Kākī (d. 1235) and Hamīduddīn Nagorī (d. 1276) were Mu‘īnuddīn Chishti’s celebrated Khalīfas or successors who continued to transmit the teachings of their master through their disciples, leading to the widespread proliferation of the Chishti Order in India.

Among Quṭbuddīn Baktiyār’s prominent disciples was Farīduddīn Ganj-i-Shakar (d. 1265), whose dargāh is at Pakpattan, (Pakistan). Farīduddīn’s most famous disciple was Nizamuddīn Auliya’ (d. 1325) popularly referred to as Mahbūb-e-Ilāhī (God’s beloved), whose dargāh is located in South Delhi.

From Delhi, disciples branched out to establish dargāhs in several regions of South Asia, from Sindh in the west to Bengal in the east, and the Deccan in the south. But from all the network of Chishti dargāhs the Ajmer dargāh took on the special distinction of being the ‘mother’ dargah of them all.
Sufis of the Chishti Order

He had more than one thousand khalifas and hundreds of thousands of disciples. Sufis of different orders became his disciples and took ijazah from him. Among the famous Sufis who trace their lineage to him are: Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, Fariduddin Mas'ud, Nizamuddin Auliya', Amir Khusrau, Muhammad Hussain-i Gisudaraz Bandanawaz, Ashraf Jahangir Simnanî, Aṭā' Hussain Fâni and Shâh Jamâl Bâbâ Bahaya Aurangâbadî.

Today, hundreds of thousands of people – Muslims, Hindus, Christians and others, from the Indian sub-continent, and from other parts of the world – assemble at his tomb on the occasion of his 'urs (death anniversary).

The Sanusiya: is a military brotherhood started by Al-Sanusi (d.1837) in Libya with political and military as well as religious aims. They fought against the colonizing Italians and the former king of Libya was head of the order.

The Nimatulahiya: it was developed first in Persia and then to India as a specifically oriented Sufi order.

The Ahmadiya: is the leading order in Egypt with its centre at Tanta. It was founded by Ahmad-al-badawi (d.1726).

All the above discussed orders helped in spreading of Islam and their Sufi concepts in frontier lands such as India, Central and South-East Asia, Sudan, Morocco and Sub-Saharan Africa.
Prominent Sufi exponents:

This section will discuss the role of two prominent Sufi exponents who contributed immensely in the development of Sufistic thought

1. Imam Ghazili

2. Maulana Rumi

Imam Ghazili may be regarded as the chief exponent of Sufistic thought. He occupies a position unique in the history of Muslim religious and political thought by whatever standard we may judge him: breadth of learning, originality or influence. He has been acclaimed as the proof of Islam (hujjat al-Islam), the ornament of faith (zainal-din) and the renewer of religion (mujahhid). 20

He was a canon-lawyer, a Scholastic, a philosopher and a skeptic, a mystic, theologian, a traditionalist and moralist. His position as a theologian of Islam is undoubtedly most eminent. His outlook on philosophy is characterized by a remarkable originality which however, is more critical than constructive. He was the first who formulated the notions of this thought. His exposition of this system in a few words is as follows: like the school of commandment the school of Tasawwuf consists of two parts- Knowledge and conduct. The difference between the two is that, in the first knowledge precedes conduct whereas in the latter Knowledge is the outcome of the conduct.

The most important thing about Al-Ghazali's system of thought is its method which may be described as that of the courage to know and the courage to doubt. The best expression of it is given in his famous autobiographical work, al-Munqidh_min al-Dalal_ (The deliverer from error) which he wrote some five years before his death. In this work he made a critical examination of the various schools of thought current in his time in a manner closely similar to that of Descartes (d.1060|1650) in his discourse de la method (1047|1637).

For Ghazali all kinds of knowledge should be investigated and nothing should be considered dangerous or hostile. He views "I poked into every dark recess and made an assault on every problem, I plunged into every abyss. I scrutinized the creed of every sect and I

fathomed the mysteries of each doctrine. All this I did that I might distinguish between the truth and the false. There was not a philosopher whose system I did not acquaint myself with, or a theologian whose doctrines I did not examine. If ever I met a Sufi, I coveted to probe into his secrets; if an ascetic, I investigated into the basis of his austerities; if one of the atheistic zindiqs, I groped into the causes of his bold atheism." 21 Such was the courage of al-Ghazali to know. He was free from the parochialism of the dogmatic theologians of his day who would rather consign the books of the atheists and philosophers to flames and then read them. But prepared though he was to listen to every creed and doctrine, he would accept none and doubt all. For one thing, he came to the conclusion that the greatest hindrance in the search for truth was the acceptance of beliefs on the authority of others and blind adherence to the heritage of the past. He remembered the traditional saying of the prophet: "Every child is born with a sound disposition (fitrah) it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian" 22 and he was anxious to know what that sound disposition was before it suffered the impress of the unreasoned convictions imposed by others. Indeed, he wanted to reconstruct all his knowledge from its very foundation. Voluminous works of Imam Ghazili are considered to be the standard works on Islamic mysticism. The give a wonderful minute dissection of the human mind, its shades and colours, passions, emotions and volitions and contain a remedy for every conceivable moral or spiritual ailment.

Another great figure of the same school Maulana Rumi quotes the same illustration and says that the heart of man, when thus purified becomes the tabernacle of the divine. His famous book known as Masnavi known by the name of the "Quran in Persian language".

The pages of Islamic history are bright with the names of these spiritual luminaries, all down the ages. The names of Attar, Hafiz, Sadi among the Persians, are too well to be given an introduction.

Every Muslim land is rich in these beacon lights. Muin-ud-din, Nizam-ud-din, Ganj Baksh, Baha-ud-din and many others shone on the spiritual horizon of India and their graves to this day adorn that ancient home of sages and seers attracting crowds of pilgrims, both Hindus and Muslims. There are various spiritual pleasures of their ecstatic moments likened to wine or the gentle breeze and quite a vocabulary of terminology has been developed to express the

21 Al-Munqidh, Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden, Pg20, 21.
22 Quran, xxx,30, Quoted in Sharif, Op.Cit, Pg453.
hundred and one phases in relation to the universal mind. Here is a specimen of their enchanting notes:

“A philosopher you have become, but you know not,
From where you are, where you are and what you are.
Throw your hundreds of books and leaves in the fire;
Turn your heart and soul towards the beloved,
In your heart you will see knowledge of prophets;
Without the aid of book,
Or tutor or teacher”

Maulana Rumi

“How long will you waste your time in Greek philosophy?
Come and learn the philosophy of believers too
A lifetime had been wasted in discourses of grammar,
Come and read a word of love as well
There is no knowledge but the knowledge of love”

Maulana Rumi

Jalaluddin Rumi is considered to be the greatest mystical poet of Islam. He was born in 604\1207 during the reign of Muhammad Khwarizm Shah whose empire extended from the Ural Mountains to the Persian Gulf and from the Euphrates to the Indus. Rumi’s father entrusted the education of his promising son to this teacher who inculcated in his pupil the habit of independent teaching. Rumi’s education covered the whole curriculum: the Quranic commentary, Hadith, jurisprudence, Arabic language and literature. His Mathnawi bears ample evidence of this vast learning. It is on account of this intellectual and academic training that his mysticism is not merely emotional. At every step we find him intellectualizing his supranational spiritual experiences. He spent seven years in the colleges of Damascus and we find him still engaged in academic pursuits even at the age of forty.

It was the influence of Shams of Tabriz which changed Rumi to a great mystical poet with spiritual experiences. Also Rumi who avoided music until now changed himself into an ecstatic dancer accompanied by spontaneously gushing forth lyrics as an involuntary expression of deeply stirred soul. However Rumi had no intention of either founding a new sect or initializing a new movement; his devotees and disciples however did form a distinctive group after his death, but they developed only some external observances and rituals and degenerated into a community of whirling dervishes.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam have inculcated a belief in creation ex nihility by a voluntary act of the creator at a particular moment of time. In Rumi’s views there is no creation in time because time itself is created and is a category of phenomenal consciousness which views events in serial time and mystic consciousness diving into the spiritual ground of being apprehends reality as non-spatial and non-temporal. For Rumi as for Al-Ghazali time and space are categories of phenomenal consciousness only. He says about serial time, “You think in terms of the past and the future; when you get rid of this mode of consciousness, the problem will be solved.”

The universe, according to Rumi, is a realm of love. In comparison with love, law and reason are secondary phenomenon. It is love that creates to fulfill itself and reason steps in later to look at it retrospectively, discovering laws and informalities to seek the threads of unity in the diversities of manifested life. Language was not created by any preconceived grammar, nor do the flowers blossom by any conscious planning or according to the laws of botany or aesthetics. Rational thinking follows creation but does not precede it. Rationalization, being a secondary phenomenon, is not by itself a creative force. As Hegel, has said philosophy always comes too late only to contemplate retrospectively what the dynamism of history has already created and completed. Cosmic love transcends all creeds and all philosophies and so the religion of love could never be completely identified with any orthodoxy, dogmatism or love and universal reason, but when the human intellect narrows itself, it begins to take part for a whole making the mistake of identifying a fragmentary phenomenon with the whole of reality. Human intellect, divorced from universal reason, remains at the biological and utilitarian level and language which is the outward garb of the intellect possesses no vocabulary for the

description of the intuition of cosmic love. Human consciousness remains generally at the biological level and its perceptions, affections and conations are governed directly or indirectly by biological needs. This biological instrument Rumi calls Khirad or particular reason ('Aql-i-juzwi) to distinguish it from universal reason, which is an ally of the intuition of life. The particular reason which exultingly calls itself scientific reason, capable of explaining all reality and solving the riddle of the universe, proves to be utterly useless when faced with the intuition of life and love and instead of gracefully accepting its inadequacy begins foolishly to deny the reality that it cannot comprehend.

The religion of a mystic philosopher like Rumi is a universal religion which could not be enclosed within any orthodox or dogmatic boundaries. His religion is not the creed of any particular religious community but being the religion of the universe is a universal religion. It is the religion of glowing stars, of flowing streams and of growing trees. Whose belief, intuition and practice accord with this outlook, he has attained the truth. Religion if it is genuine is not a blind faith about the understandable unknown; it is an ever-present reality perceived and lived.

Rabi'ah-al Adawiyyah of Basra (95 or 99|713 or 717-185|801)²⁵

Rabi'ah-al Adawiyyah was a famous woman mystic, well known for her advocacy of disinterested love for God. She was born into a poor home, stolen as a child and sold into slavery. But her devotion to life of piety and prayer enabled her to win her freedom. She decided to adopt a life of celibacy in spite of many offers of marriage by removed mystics of her time. Once her companion suggested to her in the spring season to come out of the house to behold the works and beauties of God. She replied: come you inside that you may behold their maker. Contemplation of the maker has turned me away from the contemplation of what he has made.²⁶

Her contribution to mysticism was her doctrine of disinterested love of God which served both as a motive and a goal for her. With most of her contemporary mystics the guiding motive for asceticism and otherworldliness was the fear of hell or the reward of paradise. Rabi'ah, on the other hand tried to emphasize that a man who claims to attain union

²⁵ Ibid. Pg.832.
with God should be oblivious of both. Attar relates that once some mystics came to her. She asked: Why do you worship God? One said: There are seven stages in hell and everybody has to pass through them: therefore, in fear and dread of them I worship. Another replied: the eight stages of paradise are places of great delight and a worshipper is promised complete rest there. Rabi‘ah replied: he is a bad servant who worships God for fear of punishment or desire of reward. They asked her: Why do you worship if you have no desire for paradise? She replied: I prefer the neighbor to the neighbor’s house (i.e. paradise). She added that God is worship even if there is no motive in one hand and water in the other. People asked her the meaning of her action. She replied: I am going to light fire in paradise and to pour water on hell so that both veils may completely disappear from the pilgrims and their purpose may be sure, and the servants of God may see him without any object of hope or motive of fear in the following verses, she distinguishes the two kinds of love, selfish and disinterested:

In two ways have I loved thee: selfishly,
And with a love that worthy is of Thee.
In selfish love my joy in Thee I find,
While to all else, and others, I am blind.
But in that love which seeks Thee worthily,
The veil is raised that I may look of Thee.
Yet is the praise in that or this not mine,
In this and that the praise is wholly thine.

The object of this disinterested love, according to Rabi‘ah, was union with God. She says: My hope is for union with Thee, for that is the goal of my desire.

Rabi‘ah held that the true love, whose consciousness is unwaveringly centered on the beloved, is unattached to conditions such as pleasure or pain, not from sensory dullness but from ceaseless rapture in divine love.

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27 Aflaki, Manaqib al-Arifin, as quoted in Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, P.463a.
28 M. Smith, Rabiah, the Mystic, P.102-04.
Sufis relationship with God

Having felt convinced that Sufism is the best of all paths; the Sufi has to take a few decisions regarding his relation to God, man and the world. For it is in light of these relations that he can be distinguished from others. In a way these relations constitute the criteria on the basis of which a genuine Sufi could be distinguished from those who just pretended to be so.

Out of these three types of relations the Sufi’s relation to God is the most important, because the other two, strictly speaking are derived from and based on it. Qushairi makes the following significant statements in connection with the Sufi’s relation to God.

1. The first and foremost thing is that one’s belief in God should contain no element of Doubt. It should not be contaminated with new fangled notions and misguiding concepts, and should be firmly rooted in self-evident facts.29

Doubt in this context means vagueness about the attributes of God and skepticism is possible only if he relies on whatever has come down to him warning against “new-fangled” notions and “misguiding concepts”. What these notions and concepts were, one can easily find out from what both Qushairi and Hujwiri bring under the heading of Malahidah and Qaramitah, etc. but what is most remarkable in this connection is the emphasis the Sufi lays on factual evidence, for he believes that the purely conceptual is not the only relation man can have with God; this relation can be experiential to,

2. A person’s relation to God should be so thorough, comprehensive and intimate that it would lead him to feel as if he lives and does everything not because he is doing it all, but because he is doing it all, but because God is doing it all. In identifying himself with God he would go through the double process of losing his moral self in him and experiencing him in every act of his own self. As a consequence of this the Sufi, from the very beginning, endeavors to have a life about which it may be truly said it is a life with and in him.30

30 Ibid., P.126
3. Another way of putting the point stressed above is that the Sufi not only stops referring all
his acts to his mortal self, but he builds up the positive attitude that it is the divine will
which must be accepted by the Sufi as the supreme. Not on this or that occasion, nor in such
and such particular situation but always and in every situation of which his life is
composed.31
4. The Sufi’s relation to God is a pure relation in the sense that it is a relation just between
him and his God without any material link.32
5. This relation rids man of all occupation with worldly affairs and mundane.33
6. The Sufi must regard himself as having been created for nobody and nothing except God.34

Regarding their relations to their fellow-beings and the world at large, the early Sufi’s
were quite explicit in emphasizing that the Shariah is the framework within which these
relations have to be built and maintained. With this in view they enjoined every Sufi to
pursue all the sciences on which the Shariah is based; it was enjoined especially that he
should seek enlightenment about the way the Holy Prophet lived his life so that the Sunnah
might become the guiding light for him in everything he does and every relationship he builds.
While the different schools of Sufis had each its own unique pattern of Sufi techniques, they
were all agreed on one common framework of ultimate reference, and that was the framework of
the Shariah.36

The distinction between the Sufi’s position and that of the orthodox theologian lies in
the fact that the theologian regards the law (Shariah) and reality (Haqiqah) as one and the same,
while the Sufi maintains that the two are so different from each other that unless one explicitly
recognizes the difference, one is apt to commit a fundamental error.37 Reality from this point of
view is a special aspect of God, such that man can and must aspire to understand and act upon
as completely as possible.

31 Ibid., P.127.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
37 Ibid., P.446-47.
The identity of reality and Shariah which the Sufis attributes to the theologian does not appear to be easy to understand. Going by what one finds in the writings of the leaders of the four schools of Fiqh, one would say that the theologian is very logical and cautious in his views regarding the attributes of God. He would be the last person to identify the Shariah and the Haqiqah, for whereas the understanding of Shariah requires for solving the problems of his daily life, the understanding of Haqiqah requires a special capacity with the Prophets alone are endowed.

Regarding the distinction between the Sufi's and the innovators and sophists, it is pointed out that while the Sufi's hold that the Shariah and Haqiqah, inspite of their theoretical distinction, always operate in intimate relation, the innovators maintain that the Shariah is operative only so long as a man has not established contact with reality; for whenever he does establish this contact, the Shariah stops being operative and becomes altogether useless and futile.38

The broad significance of this distinction is that the early Sufi never regarded himself as some of Carmathians and others did, as law unto himself or as a lawgiver to others.

Apart from these distinctions between the position taken up by the Sufis on the one hand and theologians, carmathians, etc., on the other the early Sufi felt the need of another distinction and that was the distinction between his attitude towards the Shariah and that of the average Muslim. He held that while for the average man of religion a large number of conveniences and concessions are permissible within the framework of the Shariah, there are no such concessions and conveniences for the Sufi. The latter does not believe in an extremely high level of conformity with the law. As there is no transgression for the Sufi, there is no relaxation for him. Even the relaxation permissible to others is a threat to him39

This unsparing attitude of the Sufi is not the result of his belief in asceticism per se. it is rather the logical result of his basic attitude towards God which is his starting point, and by virtue of which alone he is justified in calling himself a Sufi. The concessions given by the Shariah to an average Muslim are determined by his station in life in so far as he accepts the

38 Ibid. P.446.
39 Al-Qushairi, Op Cit, Pg.182, 186.
rights and obligations for the fulfillment of which concessions and conveniences within the
Shariah may be necessary. This point becomes clear when one compares the attitude of the Sufi
with that of the ascetic. Whereas the ascetic believes in the strategy of now sacrificing this asset
or resource now that in his search for goodness, the Sufi believes in an all-out bid to reach God.
There is nothing too precious, too dear, or too delicate to be spent and expended in the Sufi’s
endeavour at reaching the fountain which alone can quench his thirst.⁴⁰

It is the Sufi’s acceptance of Tauhid as basic and fundamental that helps him build the
right type of relation with God without which there is nothing in his life because of which he
may be called a Sufi. It would be necessary, therefore, to state clearly what Tauhid meant to the
early Sufi’s.

A Sufi like Junaid of Baghdad believed that Tauhid means that a man has the
knowledge as sure as any scientific knowledge today would be, that God is unique in his
timelessness, and that there is none like him and further that nothing and nobody can carry out
the actions which he, and he alone, is capable of carrying out. On another occasion Junaid puts
his ideas about Tauhid thus: It is the maximum of certainty with which you believe that all
motion as well as lack of motion of things created is the act of God.⁴¹ Jafar Sadiq explained
Tauhid by saying: He who thinks that Allah is in something, or o something, commits the sin of
making things other than God. His equals, because if God be in something it means that he is in
time and space.⁴² Abu ‘Ali Rudhbari expressed what Tauhid meant to him by saying: God is
other than that which man’s thinking and imagining makes him out to be, because he himself
says in Quran, “There is nothing like him and he hears all and sees all”⁴³

The early Sufi believed that once he had set the pattern of his life in the mould of the
attitudes and relations, described somewhat in detail above, he was ready to make a start in
realizing his ultimate ambition namely, the ambition of experiencing God in such a way that he
might be able to say, like every Sufi: “What for others is just a matter of conjecture and vague
hypothesis is for him there like the most certain entity, and what for others is a matter of

⁴⁰ Ibid. P.182, 186.
⁴¹ Ibid., P.5
⁴³ Ibid, P.5.
conceptual understanding of God is for him something to be experienced as existent about the reality of which there can be no possible doubt, so that he can sing with the poet:

“My night is aglow with the beauteous grandeur of the face,
While the darkness of night envelopes everyone else,
While others are enshrouded in the pitch darkness of night,
I am experiencing the brilliant light of the day”

But how he should make a start, and what exactly he should do after having made a start are matters of controversy among Sufi’s. Those controversies are more keen and intense among the latter Sufi’s than among the early ones. The intensity of these controversies among the later Sufi’s can be judged from the simple fact that, as we come out of the period of early Sufism and get into the later period we find no Sufi who is not anxious to link himself to one of the orders like Qadriyyah, Chistiyyah, Naqshbandiyyah, Shattariyyah, Uwaissiyyah, Suhrawardiyyah, Malamtiyyah, etc. Among the early Sufis on the other hand we find practically no trace of such anxiety. For example, one finds little mention of such orders in Qushairi, though Hujwiri, who came after Qushairi, shows a good deal of order consciousness. This order-consciousness of Hujwiri, which probably reflects the order-consciousness of his contemporary Sufi’s, finds expression in a discussion of such orders as: al-Muhasibiyyah, al-Taifuriyyah, al-Qassariyyah, al-Saiyariyyah, al-Suhaliyyah, al-Kharraziyyah, al-Nuriyyah, etc.

The early Sufis regarded reliance on just one’s own initiative as misleading perhaps because they considered the experiences of a beginner to be mostly theoretical for when he thinks he is in contact with reality, he may actually be just imagining things; or he may be a victim of illusions and hallucinations. If it is just the disciple’s own insight, limited as it is in the beginning and nothing else, on which he has to depend, he will find it almost impossible to distinguish between the genuine Sufi experiences and what he is at the time experiencing. If, on the one hand, he is under the guidance of an established master and preceptor and observes the disciples, he is in no danger of falling a victim to illusions and hallucinations and in case he does fall victim to such confusions, he has, in his preceptor, one can bring him back to the right path. The preceptor can do it because he is in actual living contact with reality and his first-

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44 Ibid. P.334.
hand experience of reality can help the disciple verify his own experiences are genuine or otherwise.

**The Sufi-Preceptor relation**

The Sufi disciple-preceptor relation would be unislamic if it could be demonstrated that the features which distinguish it from its Jewish and Christian models are not derived from Islam but are, rather derived from sources other than Islamic. However, these extra-Christian and extra-Jewish elements in the systems of the early Sufis were not derived from sources other than the Quran and the Sunnah. And one could cite in support, cases like that of Shibli, the preceptor and Husri, the disciple. Shibli told Husri in the very beginning of their relationship that if between one Friday and the next, when he had come to Shibli, i.e. for one his mind, his coming to Shibli was altogether forbidden.\(^{45}\) The case of Shibli and Husri is instructive from another point too. It illustrates in a simple and concrete form what exactly the Sufi preceptor does for his disciple.

To think of nothing and to live a life involved in nothing but God, not only for one whole week, but week after week, is the least that is expected of a beginner. Such a way of life is easier described than actually lived. Life as average mortal lives presents no parallel to this kind of involvement. For the Sufi, especially the beginner, in spite of his having selected the path of Sufism, is still the member of a living society which does not stop making demands on him; and he needs attending to so many other things just to survive and remain strong enough to carry out the task that the Shariah prescribes for him even strong enough to carry out the task that the Shariah prescribes for him even in the context in which he has to put himself. To carry out adequately all this and yet let no thought other than that of God enter his mind even for the fraction of a moment seems, at the face of it, quite an impossibility. The only parallel one finds in ordinary life is that of a lover. The lover is seldom forgetful of his love in spite of all activities of daily life; rather he does everything for the sake of his beloved. Even so the Sufi does everything for the sake of his beloved, God. Once this becomes possible, acts not only like

\(^{45}\) Ibid. P.182.

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those of the prescribed five prayers a day, but even those remotely connected with praying, becomes acts carried out by him with God constituting the constant frame of reference.46

The case of an ordinary lover is easier to understand for the simple reason that, as we know, there is a lot within us which can never find expression or satisfaction without one’s being in love. The person with whom one is in love offers a living answer to so many of the problems of a lover’s personality that, without being in love with just such and such person, the lover might have remained incomplete himself. In so far as there is this personal, specific and concrete element in every lover-beloved relation, it falls below the Sufi-God relation. But in so far as every genuine lover-beloved relation means the living by the lover a life which even when it does not appear to be lived for the sake of the beloved, is actually colored by the tender thoughts of the beloved deep in the heart of the lover, the lover-beloved elation offers the only parallel in ordinary like for the Sufi-god relation of the type Shilbi demanded of Husri.

How the Sufi comes to fall in love with God, the unseen is one of the greatest mysteries of Sufism. One may however, safely infer that unless there is a preceptor this would be impossible for a beginner. The conceptual unseen somehow must be made experiential, for otherwise the Sufi can never have a more personalized and intimate understanding of him than just an intellectual grasp of that which his logically defined nature can provide. One may say that the preceptor helps his disciple fall in love with God first by turning intellectual acceptance of God by him into an emotional acceptance. Once the disciple has worked through this stage, and succeeded in converting his own intellectual acceptance of his creator into an emotional acceptance, he is ready for the next stage, the stage of finding this emotional acceptance of the creator so overwhelming that every other reality, social, biological, etc., is completely subordinated to it. And if one were to go into it one may find that these are just the first stages in the Sufi’s long, life-long, career in God. Unfortunately, there is very little in the literature concerning the early Sufis which could throw light on the actual experiencing of the disciple in his progress and development.

Once the disciple has put himself completely in the hands of his preceptor, the chances are that he will soon start having experiences of reality which till then were altogether unknown

to him. This first contact with reality might not always be conducive to happy results. Sometimes the novitiate feels the urge of communicating these novel and marvelous experiences of his to anybody and everybody just to test whether he still is in possession of his senses; and sometimes he communicates with others because of some other experiences and sometimes he communicates with others because of some other emotional urges. All this is forbidden. He should keep his experiences of reality as his most precious personal secrets to himself and divulge them to nobody except his preceptor. 47

Even the most intimate emotional involvement of the Sufi with the creator does not result in his losing the perspective of his material surroundings. Account after account of a genuine Sufi’s life will convince even the most skeptical that, if at all the over-all perspective of a Sufi is more realistic than the perspective of even the most realistic of the ordinary mortals among whom he has to live. Keeping this mind it would not be difficult for any student of Sufism to reject the charge usually leveled against the Sufis that they were mostly unrealistic persons wrapped up most of the time in the pseudo-universe of which God, a distorted father image is the centre. For the early Sufi, who was lucky to have met many of those who had the privilege of seeing the Holy Prophet and learning the Islamic way of life through their personal contact with him, God was the being not of mere conceptual nature, but rather a being who was responsible for the heavenly journey of the Prophet; the being to whom in their hour of distress they could turn and call aloud: “when is Allah going to help us!” and being from whom they expected to get the response in concrete terms which their anguished hearts desired. For such early Sufi’s God was not a pseudo-father image; he was rather the most real and living being, and the ultimate refuge of those lost in delusions and hallucinations.

One of the first things which the disciple learns to do in order to establish his relation on a firm and operative footing is to put himself completely into the preceptor’s hands. This attitude of complete faith in and reliance on the preceptor may lead the disciple sometimes into actions which to all intents and purposes go against the most explicit injunctions of the Shariah. But the disciple, in spite of his awareness of what the Shariah demands of him, must obey the preceptor. This aspect of the preceptor-disciple relations has been emphasized by the early Sufis as much as by the later ones. And it came in for very strong criticism from the orthodox

47 Ibid.
theologians. But, in spite of the emphasis the early Sufis laid on the role of the Shariah in their lives, they justified this attitude, of blind obedience of the preceptor, on the ground that justified this attitude, of blind obedience of the preceptor, on the ground that it was just a passing phase in the development of the beginner, and a necessary phase, because without it was impossible for the beginner to get out of the personal and self-centered frame of reference which throughout his life up to the point he took a preceptor had been his only operative frame of reference. The way Qushairi puts the whole idea as: When the disciple has rid himself completely of the influence of his worldly position, status and wealth, it becomes incumbent on him to set right his relation with God by deciding never to say no to his Shaikh.\(^{48}\)

Having worked with the disciple through these early experiences, the Shaikh finds out the strength as well as the weaknesses of the disciple. In the light of this understanding the preceptor then selects one of the various names of the Almighty and takes him through an involvement with it in such a way that, by the time he finishes this period of training, he is completely influenced by it in everything he does. There are several stages in this which the disciple must pass through under the watchful supervision of the Shaikh. He first repeats this name of the Almighty, but even his heart and soul utter nothing but this name. Then the disciple is told to keep engaged in the uttering of the name all the time and continue thus till he feels actually as if he is with his heart and soul occupied with and engaged in nothing but his creator. It is at this last stage that the disciple achieves for the first time that involvement with the Almighty which alone makes it possible for him to go in his Endeavour to achieve an infinitely progressive type of involvement with him.

The beginner's ability to achieve a view of the universe around him as nothing but that aspect of being which is signified by the particular name of the Almighty, on which the master trained him, depends a great deal on the influence exerted on him by the master's personality. But apart from this there is a considerable amount of hard work which has to be done by the beginner himself by way of long prayers, series of night-long vigils, self-denial in food, sleep, rest etc. this hard work which is planned and prescribed by the master has to be carried out by the disciple, however arduous and inconvenient it may be. To this hard work the early Sufi's

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the name of Mujah̄adah (i.e. the first seeing of the Almighty with the mind's eye) can never occur without Mujah̄adah.

One explanation of the significance of the beginner's hard work (Mujah̄adah), in so far as it is necessary condition for his first contact with reality, is that it is a process of disciplined prayers and ascetic practices which ultimately results in such a refinement of the Sufi's personality as to rid it of all that is base and low in it. This disciplined and refined personality is more ready to receive the first version of reality than the original personality of the beginner which basically is self-centered and crude.

But even the most stringent discipline of this type ((Mujah̄adah) is not considered by the early Sufi's to be the sole and necessary means for the first contact with reality (Mushahadah). As Hujwiri puts it, all such discipline is the Sufi's own work, but this work brings the proper reward in its wake only when the creator wills it.49 Why the early Sufi's, in spite of rating the Sufi's labour so high, did not recognize it as the necessary means for the first contact with reality, was perhaps due to the fact that they had at the back of their minds the possibility that this very hard labor could produce in the Sufi's a sense of self-righteousness verging on conceit. And this conceit was the one thing which they thought, had been the cause of Satan's downfall, about whom the Quran is very explicit: he refused and felt conceited50. It was with this in mind that the early Sufi's regarded the first contact with reality always a matter of grace rather than something earned by the Sufi just because of his working so hard.

The first contact with reality is regarded by the Sufis as just the beginning to which there is no end, because reality is infinite. But the beginning has a unique importance. Without it there would be, as one might say, no series of contacts to follow. Although there is not much explicit mention of it in the accounts of early Sufi's, scores of accounts of later Sufi's bear out the fact that sometimes a beginner may toil a year in fruitless vigils and fasts and may find its labors completely unrewarded. There is a kind of a barrier between the mortal self of the Sufi, on the one hand, and the glorious being of the creator, on the other, which must be broken for the infinite series of ever more intimate contacts between the two to follow. It is the first crack

49 Ibid. P.252.
50 Quran, ii, 34.
in this barrier, which in spite of its being just a crack gives it its unique significance. For without it there is no possibility of the more adequate removal of the barrier which has yet to come.

What happens after the first contact between the beginner and his creator is a secret which nobody has ever completely revealed, for the simple reason, among others, that the experiences of the Sufi from this point on are on a plane together different from the plane of the average mortal. Communication between the Sufi and the average mortal is consequently extremely hazardous, if not altogether impossible. If the Sufi uses the language of the average mortal, he may mean one thing and actually say another; and if he uses the language he creates in order to give expression to his unique experiences, he may not be understood at all.

All that we are in possession of therefore, in the writings of the early Sufi's regarding the states and relations through which they pass after the first crack in the barrier between them and their creator, is a collection of carefully coined and scrupulously selected terms which some of the employ to convey something at least of what they see in the course of their journey into the infinite.

Two such terms are Station (Maqam) and State (Hal). Each one stands for a specific type of development the Sufi goes through. The basis of distinction between them is the same as the one between Mujahadah and Mushahadah. Station is the general term which covers all those stages which after the initial contact with reality are considered achievable through the Sufi's own toil and labour. State, on the other hand, covers all those states which are the result of the ceaseless flow of grace of which the Sufi remains the recipient so long as he does not falter and remains steadfast in his pursuit of reality. This is expressed by Hujwiri in the following words: Maqam is consequent upon one's own actions, while Hal is one of the blessings conferred upon him independently of his actual actions.51

That of the almost infinite series of stations a perfect Sufi may achieve only a few is explicitly mentioned by the early Sufis. Hujwiri sums up the whole thing in two sentences:

1. Taubah (Renunciation of all that had been evil in the Sufi's up-to-date) is the beginning of the

Another pair of terms that was common among the early Sufis was that of Knowledge (ilm) and gnosis (ma'rifah). The difference between the two is brought out first by pointing out that, whereas the theologians (ulema) make no distinction between them, the Sufis believe that the one must never be confused with the other. For the theologian all sure and certain knowledge is ilm; therefore ma'rifah, in the sense in which the Sufi's use it, is also ilm and nothing else. They consequently think that "the possessor of knowledge" (alim) and "the possessor of gnosis" (arif) mean one and the same thing. But as Hujwiri points out, the theologians contradict themselves when they assert that whereas alim is a descriptive term and can be used for God, the term arif cannot be used thus.53

The Sufis think that between knowledge and Gnosis there is a basic distinction which should never be lost sight of. Knowledge, in their eyes, is that which is the last resort, when analyzed, never takes us beyond empty verbal form; gnosis, on the other hand, is that awareness which when analyzed ends up in direct experience of concrete facts, processes and things. Knowledge, therefore, seldom influences one's real conduct, while gnosis can seldom remain without influencing it. From their point of view, knowledge is rudimentary form of gnosis. Consequently, the possessor of gnosis must have at one stage possessed knowledge.54

Another pair of terms popular among the early Sufi's is that of Fana and Baqa. as to the definitions in detail, differences crop up. This is illustrated even in the attitudes of Qushairi and Hujwiri. For the former maintains, he whom the glory of reality overwhelms to such an extent that he observes neither in itself, nor in its effects, nor in the form of its traces and tracks, anything other than reality, is described as one who has achieved Fana, in respect of the creator.55 Hujwiri, on the other hand, maintains: Fana, is the complete lost in the vision of the real. He achieves Fana, through the vision of his own actions and Baqa through the vision of acts of God. His dealings with others are colored by reference are to him and not to his own

52 Ibid. P.224.  
53 Ibid., P.445.  
54 Ibid., P.320.  
mortal self. Hence, he who loses all that is mortal self. Hence, he who loses all that is mortal and finite in his mortal self achieves permanence proportionately in the vision of divineness of the real. 56

To sum it up Fana means the complete disappearance of three things 1. The bad actions, tendencies and conduct 2. the low and base self 3. The world at large. So far as the first form of Fana is concerned, the disappearance means their disappearing altogether from existence; so far as the second and third forms of Fana are concerned it means that, in spite of the self and others still being in existence, the Sufi has become oblivious of their existence.

A Sufi thinks of nothing, feels nothing but his beloved and of his beloved all the time, that is his creator. The result is that when one studies the lives of these Sufis, one finds that they take not even a single step in their lives of these Sufis without feeling sure within themselves that this and nothing else will please him. How they should walk when they tread the earth, how they should talk when they mix with their fellow-men, how they should dress, what they should eat, what they should drink, what they should do when they get up in morning if they go to sleep at all- each and every detail of everything relating to these matters is prescribed for them. And the basic principle underlying all such prescriptions is that even the maximum of obedience, service, sacrifice, devotion and love is not enough; so they should always regard the maximum as the minimum and constantly strive for devotion more thorough and a love more intense. It is this burning desire to lose oneself in the creator on an ever-increasing scale in everything, major or minor, over the whole period of one’s life, which distinguishes the early Sufi from everybody else.

After discussing some main tenets of Sufism, I will now focus on the Sufi literature in Persian.

Sufistic literature in Persian

The earlier mystics of Islam had made extensive use of Arabic poetry, whether by seeking inspiration in the recitation of love poetry, which could be taken as directed to either a human or a divine beloved, or by Composing verses of their own. It was in Persian poetry; however that Sufism was now to find its greatest and most widespread expression producing

56 Ibid., P.299.
what the eastern Islamic world from Turkey to India regards as the highest peaks of its cultural heritage.

In the eleventh century, eastern Iranian writer Hujwiri wrote about pseudo-Sufis who spent their time listening to ‘idle quatrains’, and in the work of Ahmad Ghazali, the use of the popular, anonymous Persian quatrain in a distinctively Iranian context. From the early twelfth century we find expressions of Sufism in other forms of Persian verse: the ode and the long didactic composition in rhyming couplets. Sana’I was considered a master of both prose and poetry who was a court poet of Ghazna in Afghanistan and he died in 1131 A.D.\textsuperscript{57} He particularly attacks the sexual misconduct of the women mystics. His work reveals him to be a pronounced misogynist, whose love lyrics are often directed to boys, as is normal in classical Islamic poetry.

Similarly Sana’i’s odes contain not only the praise of wealthy patrons and straightforward exhortations to piety, but also the language of libertinism: he extols wine-drinking, handsome cupbearers and also in contrast to his attack on their terrestrial self-manifestation in Ghazna, the dervishes who go against the religious law, the Qalandars. The Qalandars are used to represent the higher flights of ecstasy and truth, as opposed to ordinary religiosity:

Cupbearer give wine since wine shatters abstaining
So that I may lose awhile this specious world renouncing...
For a time the religion of Zarathushtra and the custom of the Qalandar
Must be made the provisions for the spirit which takes the road\textsuperscript{58}

Sana’i, also composed an extended narrative and didactic poem, called The Journey of God’s servants (Sayr al-‘ibad), which has often been compared to Dante’s Divine comedy. In this the narrator acquires a guide, an old man who is evidently the Active intelligence of the Greek philosophical tradition, that is to say the tenth and lowest of the immaterial manifestations of reason which, the philosophers believe, emanate from God. Together the poet

\textsuperscript{57} J.Baldick1989 Mystical Islam- An Introduction to Sufism,Tauris Parke Paperbacks, London,Pg.68.
and the guide journey through the material world and then the heavens, before reaching the universal soul of the neo-Platonists. The highest emotion, the first or universal intelligence or reason, is hidden by veils, which cover different classes of dervishes. Eventually the poet finds a superior rank of these and in it a dominating light which represents his patron, a local judge, whom Sana’I asks for money in end.

Sana’I is best known, however, for a longer didactic poem, the Enclosed Garden of Reality (Hadiqat al-haqiqa). In this he begins with an exposition of God’s uniqueness, before tackling the subject of asceticism, and then the teachings of the Greek philosophical tradition: the human body is a city with the heart as its king. Reason is the king’s minister, supported by Anger (the chief of the garrison) and desire (the tax gatherer), who rule over the limbs (the artisans). Again, the active intelligence appears as an old man, who gives the poet spiritual guidance, he must join the Sufis. The rest of the poem is largely taken up with the praise of the Sultan of Ghazna.

Another notable Persian poet was Attar. Who is being believed to have been perished in 1221 in the massacres committed by the Mongol followers of the notorious Chinggis Khan. His long didactic and narrative poems are usually dominated by the figure of the spirit, which is seen as God’s caliph, his deputy on earth. His most famous work was, The Language of the Birds (Mantiq al-tayr) concerns the search of a king made by a number of birds. Attar’s Book of Affliction (Musibat-nama) also has a complicated structure. In it a pilgrim runs away from his elder and asks Gabriel (who represents the spirit) for help. Since he has presumptuously sought assistance from the very summit of creation he has to descend through the universe before reascending to find the spirit again. He learns that the parts of the universe are attributes of the spirit, which is derived from the light of Muhammad.

Another work by Attar, the Book of the Divine (iiahi-nama), begins by invoking the spirit as God’s caliph. It has six sons: the lower soul, the devil, the intellect, knowledge, poverty and the realization of God’s uniqueness. In the body of the work a caliph instructs his own six sons. These sons fall into three pairs, to the trait of the lower soul, the intellect and the heart (which is transformed into the spirit); the three pairs also correspond to the neo-Platonist
triad o soul, reason and the one: and also to the hierarchy of ascetics, philosophers and Sufis. Thus the lower soul is linked to the devil (in instruction of the second pair).

Sufism like many other institutions became early in its history, a fertile ground for imitators, impostors and charlatans. The corrupting influence of these charlatans was regarded as a source of great confusion to all those who either wanted to follow the path of Sufism, or wanted honestly to understand it. One reason why this was so was that Sufism by its very nature was a discipline meant not for the average but for those who always felt ambitious for something above the average.

Besides these charlatans and impostors who put a garb of Sufism and exploited the credulous and the unwary, there was another group of men who unwillingly became the source of corruption and confusion. Since a Sufi more often than not was a man significantly different from the average, it was but natural that some among the Sufis went so far away from the norms of their societies and communities concerned, an inevitable result of which would have either a widespread skepticism regarding the erstwhile universally accepted norms, or a universal condemnation of that which such exceptions among the Sufis stood for. Neither of these two courses was considered to be healthy, for, whereas the first would have resulted in the complete demoralization of all Muslim communities, the latter could have resulted in the condemnation not only of the exceptional Sufis without exception, as deviants from the accepted norms.

Most of the early treatises on Sufism were written with two main aims in view: 1. to point out to all those who cared to read these works what Sufism really meant; and 2. to raise as strong a note of protest as possible against the current malpractices of the charlatans and impostors so that even those who may not have the time and will to follow the path of true Sufism may at least escape the clutches of these charlatans.

Sufism went through considerable development and modification as the Muslims came into contact with peoples of other races and cultures in the course of their history. Consequently, what came to be known as Sufism later on must be distinguished from what Sufism was in its early days. For, in spite of a great deal of what in later Sufism may be
recognized as nothing but an elaboration of what was there earlier, it would be instructive to find out at least what the earlier form was.

Love and universal brotherhood are the main themes which the Sufis and Sufistic literature is all about. Many of the Sufi had to undergo state persecution for their doctrines but this did not deter them from spreading the message of universal brotherhood.

The latter chapters will focus on Sufi Persian literature of Bihar and the lives and works of Sufi saints of Bihar.