Chapter One: Introduction:

It is a matter of common knowledge that the 19\textsuperscript{th} century American writers Emerson and Thoreau were deeply influenced by the oriental thought. This influence has not been a one-way affair. Emerson’s poem ‘Brahma’ is almost a paraphrase of some lines from the \textit{Bhagavad Gita}. Similarly, Thoreau’s ideas about civil disobedience and his advocacy of simple life in \textit{Walden} greatly influenced Mahatma Gandhi. Thoreau had read near about forty oriental books especially the \textit{Manu}, the \textit{Vedas}, the \textit{Upanishad}, and the \textit{Bhagvad Gita}. His first work \textit{A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers} (1849) and \textit{Walden} (1854), were extremely influenced by Indian scriptures. Naturally, there have been many studies dealing with the Indian influence on the works of Emerson and Thoreau. It is interesting to know that the entire East fascinated these two writers. Just as Emerson admired the Hindu scriptures, he was also interested in Persian literature. In fact he has one essay on the subject, ‘Persian poetry’ and a poem entitled ‘Sa’di’. He also wrote a preface to the \textit{Gulistan} of Sa’di which is translated in English and he himself also translated some \textit{Ghazals} of Hafiz whom he admired in His essay; ‘Persian Poetry’. Emerson was America’s first internationally significant writer and philosopher, and his writings drew deeply on Persian poetry and thought.

Emerson was inspired by the beauty of the Sufi poetry (which he knew through German translations) as well as by its underlying philosophy. James Russell Lowell, who was a student at Harvard at the time of Emerson, explained that it is a standard aspect of Persian Sufi poetry, from earliest times, that the great mystical revelation is – or at least verges upon -- pantheism. That is to say, the fully realized mystic discovers that what he
thought to be his individual ego, his contingent being, is irrelevant or illusory, and vanishes altogether in the great experience of self-extinction, Arabic *fana’*, in the One, in God.

This philosophy influenced Emerson’s own thought, which was fundamentally a dissident strain of Unitarianism mixed with strong doses of Neo-Platonism and German Romantic Idealism. The German Romantic poet Goethe was among the first in the West to promote Persian poetry, and Emerson took up the cause in America, translating from the German many Persian poems (especially those of Hafiz) and writing an essay on the subject. Although Emerson’s poetry does not hold up as well today as his essays, both were influenced those who came after him, such as Thoreau and Whitman.

What Emerson found in the Persian poets, as well as in the Neo-Platonists, Indian sages, and German Romantics, was the idea that personal revelation, the conviction of that truth that ‘God is within us,’ is the irreducible source of democratic ideals.

British and American critics of Thoreau also, did some pioneering work and they discovered some affinities between Thoreau’s ideas and the Indian systems of philosophy. Canby, Christy, Carpenter and some others did good work in this direction. Arthur Christy, in his ‘The Orient in American Transcendentalism’, takes the argument a step further and admits of a much greater debt to the Indian thought. Quoting many passages from the Journals and his other writings and suggesting that many more of the same type could be quoted, he says, ‘Through the two remaining decades of his life Thoreau read avidly from these books and his comments on them became more penetrating. The delighted ejaculations of the first discovery turned into community which disclosed his insight into what the books taught, community
that is remarkably suggestive of the later trend of Thoreau’s own life and gave ample warrant for believing that it was not curiosity alone that led him Eastward.¹

So, as mentioned there are ample studies of Indian influence on Emerson and Thoreau but unfortunately, the Persian influence on the writings of Emerson and Thoreau has not been studied in any great detail. Therefore, the present study expects to fill up this lacuna. The study shows some Persian Sufi poets and elements of Sufism in the selected prose and poetry of Emerson and Thoreau in next chapters.

**B. The writers and their works:**

**Ralph Waldo Emerson** (May 25, 1803 – April 27, 1882) was an American essayist, philosopher and poet, best remembered for leading the Transcendentalist movement of the early 19th century. His teachings directly influenced the growing New Thought movement of the mid 1800s, while he was seen as a champion of individualism and prescient critic of the countervailing pressures of society.

Emerson gradually moved away from the religious and social beliefs of his contemporaries, formulating and expressing the philosophy of Transcendentalism in his 1836 essay, *Nature*.

Emerson graduated from Harvard in 1821 at the age of eighteen, then he assisted his brother in a school for young ladies established in their mother's house, after he had established his own school in Chelmsford. When his brother went to Göttingen to study divinity, Emerson took charge of the
school. Over the next several years, Emerson made his living as a schoolmaster, then went to Harvard Divinity School, and emerged as a Unitarian minister in 1829. A dispute with church officials over the administration of the Communion service, and misgivings about public prayer led to his resignation in 1832.

Emerson was associated with Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry David Thoreau and often took walks with them in Concord. Emerson encouraged Thoreau's talent and early career. The land on which Thoreau built his cabin on Walden Pond belonged to Emerson. While Thoreau was living at Walden, Emerson provided food and hired Thoreau to perform odd jobs. When Thoreau left Walden after two years' time, it was to live at the Emerson house while Emerson was away on a lecture tour. Their close relationship fractured after Emerson gave Thoreau the poor advice to publish his first book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, without extensive drafts, and directed Thoreau to his own agent who made Thoreau split the price—risk of publishing. The book found few readers, and put Thoreau heavily into debt. Eventually the two would reconcile some of their differences, although Thoreau privately accused Emerson of having drifted from his original philosophy, and Emerson began to view Thoreau as a misanthrope. Emerson's eulogy to Thoreau is largely credited to the latter's negative reputation during the 19th century.

Emerson was noted as being a very abstract and difficult writer who nevertheless drew large crowds for his speeches. The heart of Emerson's writings was his direct observations in his journals, which he had started keeping as a teenager at Harvard. Emerson elaborately indexed the journals. He went back to his journals, his bank of experiences and ideas, and took out
relevant passages, which were joined together in his dense, concentrated lectures. He later revised and polished his lectures as his essays and sermons.

He was considered one of the great orators of the time, a man who could enrapture crowds with his deep voice, his enthusiasm, and his egalitarian respect for his audience. His outspoken, uncompromising support for abolitionism later in life caused protest and jeers from crowds when he spoke on the subject. He continued to speak on abolition without concern for his popularity and with increasing radicalism. He attempted, with difficulty, not to join the public arena as a member of any group or movement, and always retained a stringent independence that reflected his individualism. He always insisted that he wanted no followers, but sought to give man back to himself, as a self-reliant individual. Asked to sum up his work late in life, he said it was his doctrine of ‘the infinitude of the private man’ that remained central.

In 1845, Emerson's Journal records that he was reading the Bhagavad Gita and Colebrook’s Essays on the Vedas. Emerson was strongly influenced by the Vedas, and much of his writing has strong shades of non-dualism. One of the clearest examples of this can be found in his essay ‘The Over-soul’:

We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related, the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist and whose beatitude is all-accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are shining parts, is the soul.²
Emerson was strongly influenced by his early reading of the French essayist Montaigne. From those compositions he took the conversational, subjective style and the loss of belief in a personal God. He never read Kant's works, but, instead, relied on Coleridge's interpretation of the German Transcendental Idealist. This led to Emerson's non-traditional ideas of soul and God.

Emerson's *Collected Essays* – First (1841) and Second (1844) Series, including his seminal essays on ‘History,’ ‘Self-Reliance,’ ‘Compensation,’ ‘Spiritual Laws,’ ‘Love,’ ‘Friendship,’ ‘Prudence,’ ‘Heroism,’ ‘The Over-soul,’ ‘Circles,’ ‘Intellect,’ and ‘Art’ in the first and ‘The Poet,’ ‘Experience,’ ‘Character,’ ‘Manners,’ ‘Gifts,’ ‘Nature,’ ‘Politics,’ and ‘Nominalist and Realist’ in the second – is often considered to be one of the 100 great books of all time.

**Henry David Thoreau** (July 12, 1817 – May 6, 1862) was an American author, naturalist, transcendentalist, tax resister, development critic, and philosopher who is best known for *Walden*, a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, and his essay, *Civil Disobedience*, an argument for individual resistance to civil government in moral opposition to an unjust state. Thoreau studied at Harvard between 1833 and 1837. He lived in Hollis Hall and took courses in rhetoric, classics, philosophy, mathematics, and science.

During a leave of absence from Harvard in 1835, Thoreau taught school in Canton, Massachusetts. After graduating in 1837, he joined the faculty of Concord Academy, but refused to administer corporal punishment and the school board soon dismissed him. He and his brother John then opened a grammar school in Concord in 1838. They introduced several progressive concepts, including nature walks and visits to local shops and businesses. The
school ended when John became fatally ill from tetanus in 1841. Upon graduation Thoreau returned home to Concord, where he befriended Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson took a paternal and at times patronizing interest in Thoreau, advising the young man and introducing him to a circle of local writers and thinkers, including Ellery Channing, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne and his son Julian, who was a boy at the time. Of the many prominent authors who lived in Concord, Thoreau was the only town native.

Once back in Concord, Thoreau went through a restless period. In April 1844 he and his friend Edward Hoar accidentally set a fire that consumed 300 acres of Walden Woods. He spoke often of finding a farm to buy or lease, which he felt would give him a means to support himself while also providing enough solitude to write his first book.

Thoreau’s books, articles, essays, journals, and poetry total over 20 volumes. Among his lasting contributions were his writings on natural history and philosophy, where he anticipated the methods and findings of ecology and environmental history, two sources of modern day environmentalism.

He was a lifelong abolitionist, delivering lectures that attacked the Fugitive Slave Law while praising the writings of Wendell Phillips and defending the abolitionist John Brown. Thoreau’s philosophy of nonviolent resistance influenced the political thoughts and actions of such later figures as Leo Tolstoy, Mohandas K. Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Some anarchists claim Thoreau as an inspiration. Though Civil Disobedience calls for improving rather than abolishing government — ‘I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government’— the direction of this improvement aims at anarchism: ‘That government is best
which governs not at all;’ and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have.’ ³

Thoreau’s writings had far reaching influence on many public figures. Political leaders and reformers like Mahatma Gandhi, President John F. Kennedy, Civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr., Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, and Russian author Leo Tolstoy all spoke of being strongly affected by Thoreau’s work, particularly *Civil Disobedience*. So did many artists and authors including Edward Abby, Willa Cather, Marcel Proust, William Butler Yeats, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, E. B. White and Frank Lloyd Wright and naturalists like John Burroughs, John Muir, E.O. Wilson, Edwin Way Teale, Joseph Wood Krutch and David Brower. Anarchist and feminist Emma Goldman also appreciated Thoreau, and referred to him as the greatest American anarchist.

Mahatma Gandhi first read *Walden* in 1906 while working as a Civil Rights Activist in Johannesburg, South Africa. He told American reporter Webb Miller, ‘[Thoreau's] ideas influenced me greatly. I adopted some of them and recommended the study of Thoreau to all of my friends who were helping me in the cause of Indian Independence. Why I actually took the name of my movement from Thoreau's essay 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience,' written about 80 years ago.’ ⁴

Martin Luther King, Jr. noted in his autobiography that his first encounter with the idea of non-violent resistance was reading ‘On Civil Disobedience’ in 1944 while attending Morehouse College. He wrote in his autobiography that it was here, in this courageous New Englander's refusal to pay his taxes and his choice of jail rather than support a war that would spread slavery's territory into Mexico, I made my first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance.
Fascinated by the idea of refusing to cooperate with an evil system, I was so deeply moved that I reread the work several times.

I became convinced that non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good. No other person has been more eloquent and passionate in getting this idea across than Henry David Thoreau. As a result of his writings and personal witness, we are the heirs of a legacy of creative protest. The teachings of Thoreau came alive in our civil rights movement; indeed, they are more alive than ever before. Whether expressed in a sit-in at lunch counters, a freedom ride into Mississippi, a peaceful protest in Albany, Georgia, a bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, these are outgrowths of Thoreau's insistence that evil must be resisted and that no moral man can patiently adjust to injustice.  

Thoreau wrote near about 20 works of arts during his short lifetime. The more important one is *Walden* (1854) in which he reveals his two years life in Walden Pond. His famous work is *Civil Disobedience* (1849) which influenced so many great people. His first book entitled *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849). And some other writings like *Slavery in Massachusetts* (1854), *A Plea for Captain John Brown* (1859), *Cape Cod* (1865), *Wild Apples: The History of the Apple Tree* (1862), and some poems.

C. Review of Previous studies:

A glance at the previous studies of Emerson and Thoreau show that there are many works tracing the Indian influence on those authors but hardly any that shows the Sufi elements in their works.

Frankly speaking, there are so many studies on the works of Emerson and
Thoreau. Even Indian writers and researchers investigated the influence of the East (India) on the prose and poetry of Emerson and Thoreau, but all of them are from other points of view and not the Sufi point of view.

Only Ekhtiar, Mansure in his book *Emerson and Persia* has shown mystical elements in Emerson.

Shrinibas Tripathy in *H. D. Thoreau: Quest for Hindu Idealism* shows the Hindu elements in Thoreau’s various works especially *A week* and *Walden*. He brings out the elements of the *Vedas*, the *Gita*, and other Indian scriptures and claims that Thoreau’s absorption of Hindu thought is one of the greatest events of cultural interaction between India and America.

*The Influence of Indian Thought on R. W. Emerson* is a book by Shanta Acharya an Indian writer. In her work Acharya gives information about Emerson’s initiation to India. Then she speaks about the imperial Self as ‘Indian Superstition’. Later she explains Emerson’s Indian career (1820-1845), and in forth and fifth chapters she analyses issues and themes in Emerson in the light of his Indian awareness.

D. G. Deshmukh tries to reveal the impact of Indian thought on the life and writings of Thoreau in his book *Thoreau and Indian Thought*. He also explains various works of Thoreau, which are influenced by Indian Holy Scriptures. After giving a bibliographical background of Thoreau, he surveys the *Journals* and other works of Thoreau especially *Walden* and *A Week* to bring out the texts which came to the mind of Thoreau after reading the *Vedas, Upanishad, Bhahagva Gita* and other Indian works. He gives numerous examples, which show the Indian influence.

*Emerson and Asia* is one more book about Eastern influence on Emerson by Frederic Ives Carpenter. In the second chapter, entitled ‘Mine Asia’, he says,
‘As we have seen, Emerson had always been vaguely attracted to Asia as an El Dorado or wonderland of literature and philosophy. It was distant country whose very strangeness was fascinating. It was the other half of the world, proverbially unknown to the dwellers of the West. It was the primeval source of civilization. As a boy it had stimulated his imagination and inspired him with large and vague ideas.’ In chapter six he elaborates on the Persian poetry, which fascinated Emerson. He begins this chapter as follows:

The Persian poets probably affected Emerson more profoundly than any other Oriental writers except the Hindus – and, of course, the Neo-Platonists. He came upon them later in life than he did upon Hindu Literature, but was attracted to them more immediately. He first read selections from them in 1841; in 1842 he wrote his poem ‘Sa’di’ for the Dial, and in 1843 he read the Gulistan, and confided to his Journals that In Sa’di’s Gulistan I find many traits which comport with the portrait I drew [in the poem ‘Sa’di’].

In 1846-7 he read all the Persian poets more fully in the German anthology of Von Hammer Purgstall, and to some extent, perhaps, in Chodzko’s Specimens of Ancient Persian Poetry. Throughout the rest of his life he continued to read them – usually in selections, although in 1853 the Shah Nameh of Firdousi is listed among his reading and he noted down many comments on these poets in his Journals, and quoted them often in his Essays.

W. B. Stein in his excellent article ‘Thoreau’s First Book – A Spoor of Yoga’ asserts the profound influence of Indian thought on the book and says:

The different stages of the journey (and his illumination) roughly correlate with the progression of spiritual knowledge in the traditional meditative discipline of the Indian yogis. Historical evidence indicates that Thoreau had culled the
important primary (through translations) and secondary sources available on the subject. Though on occasion he alludes to the writings of the Chinese and Muslim sages, more often than not, he invokes the authority of the Hindu Wisdom books to orient his speculations.  

C.R. Anderson in his profound study of *Walden*, entitled ‘The Magic Circle of Walden’ has very freely and frankly admitted the Hindu atmosphere of the book. Apart from the fact that one of the chapters, incidentally, is entitled ‘Maya’, the entire book is interspersed with sentences like these: “Thoreau found in the Orientals what neither Neo-Platonists nor Christians could give him. He was more deeply read in the oriental scriptures than any of the other transcendentalists. The Oriental Bibles proved his best source for imagery of the spiritual life.”  

‘Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Sufis: From Puritanism to Transcendentalism’, is an article by Frahang Jahanpour. He describes the Calvinist influences in the United States and the rise of Unitarianism in the U.S. So he indicates the influences of Unitarianism on Emerson. Later he states the principles of Transcendentalism and Emerson’s interest in the East. He also gives some similarities between transcendentalism and Sufism.  

Carl T. Jackson also in his book entitled *The Oriental Religions and American Thought* surveys the first American contacts with the orient in the 18th century and later in chapter III he speaks about Emerson’s discovery of the East. Further he indicates the transcendental explorations especially by mentioning Thoreau and reveals the Oriental thoughts in American transcendentalism.  

Thus, as mentioned before, they are ample works on the Indian influence on
Emerson and Thoreau, but very few on Persian influence. Also, nobody has tried to reveal the Sufi elements in the works of these writers. Therefore, the present study tries to trace out the Sufi element in the works of these two authors.

D. Aims and objectives:

The main aim of the study is to trace the Sufi element in Emerson and Thoreau. As both of them have been influenced by the Eastern religious scriptures and literature, so the study expects to show that there is considerable Sufi and mystical influence both on their poetry and prose. A secondary aim of the study is to show how through the example of cross-cultural influence, literature has a transcendent appeal. This will enable us to show how Edward Said’s picture of the West in his book Orientalism is incomplete and one-sided. Both Emerson and Thoreau have been influenced by various Oriental works especially Indian and Persian. Emerson himself had appreciated the Bhagvad Gita, Hafiz, Sa’di, and others. Also Thoreau had read Indian Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagvad Gita and his first work A Week and also his masterpiece Walden are full of Indian and Sufi thoughts.

E. A Brief Glance at Similar elements of Sufism and Transcendentalism:

Transcendentalism is a philosophy, based on Immanuel Kant's statement that some notions (such as space/time, morality, and divinity) cannot be directly experienced, yet still add to empirical knowledge. These notions are Transcendental, in that they have a higher order of existence than what we experience directly in the physical world. Kant called these notions noumena
Transcendentalism was a philosophical and literary movement that flourished in New England as a reaction against 18th century rationalism, the skeptical philosophy of John Locke, and the confining religious orthodoxy of New England Calvinism.

Its beliefs were idealistic, mystical, eclectic and individualistic, shaped by the ideas of Plato, Plotinus, as well as the teachings of Confucius, the Sufis, and the writers of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

At its fundamental base was a monism holding to the unity of the world and God, and the immanence of God in the world. Because of this indwelling of divinity, everything in the world is a microcosm containing within itself all the laws and the meaning of existence. Likewise, the soul of each individual is identical with the soul of the world and latently contains all that the world contains.

Man may fulfill his divine potentialities through rapt mystical states into which the divine is infused into the human, or through coming in contact with the truth, beauty, and goodness embodied in nature and originating in the over-soul.

Thus occurs the correspondence between the tangible world and the human mind and the identity of moral and physical laws through the belief in the divine authority of the soul's intuitions and impulses.

Based on the identification of the individual soul with God, they developed the doctrine of self-reliance and individualism, the disregard of external authority, tradition and logical demonstration and the absolute optimism of the movement.

Here it will be useful to mention the principles of Transcendentalism briefly.
1. The Over-Soul is the universal mind or the universal being.

2. The universe consists of man, the projection of the Over-Soul and nature.

3. Man is not a physical body, but a projection of the Over-Soul, or he may be the peak of an evolutionary process. Emerson contemplated both ideas.

4. Nature is perhaps matter, perhaps idea projected through man; it is unconscious, but has its source in the Over-Soul.

5. The sensory world is man’s reality through his senses, his temperament. He creates an illusion of reality and exists in the realm of circumstances and limited ‘fate’.

6. When man wakes up and asks himself the question of his origin, the reason for his existence, and his aim in life, he almost inevitably loses himself in the physical world. The outer world for Emerson and for Persian Sufi exists only according to the constitution of one’s nature or temperament. Out of this comes the Sufi concept of emancipation of soul from illusions of senses and moods. After this, one finds in oneself a law of consecutive changes showing that man creates the outer world in his illusion; in Persian this mystical concept is called ‘tsalsol’ or succession.

7. Self-reliance is the channel, which relates man to the Over-Soul; it is one’s trust in his peculiar genius or calling. Emerson asserts in ‘The Over-Soul’ that we do nothing of ourselves, but allow passage to its beams.

8. Self-reliant man becomes aware of the Over-Soul through both reason and intuition. Thought comes in these moments of awareness of intuitive truth and abstraction which man reflects from the Over-Soul. Man by not
interfering may let the pure-spirit act through him at the moment of intoxication to create talent, art, beauty, discipline, language and goodness.

9. Imagination is the use that reason makes of nature.

10. The intoxication, the emanation and influx of the Over-Soul create in man love or ‘wine’.

11. Quest for God through nature.

12. Finding of God through contemplation and meditation.

13. Self-knowing leads to God-knowing.


15. Transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau commend reality, truth, faith, and contribution to others.

The individual spirit is instrumental in creating a world power. This feeling of individuality encourages the country's residents to be content in being a citizen. Since the beginning of America, individuals have made up a society that prides itself on the unique diversity of its people. The transcendentalism movement gave Americans a sense of self, and added to the American tradition of individualism. Although the movement had many varied and intellectual minds expanding it, most of them shared a similar basic philosophy. This philosophy has affected the average American citizen and the whole of American society since, through its ideals of reason, personal spirit and intuition, and a rejection of established institutions.

Transcendentalism finds its predecessors in Europe, not long before the movement began. Romanticism was in the forefront in the early 1800s, as painters, philosophers, and writers began to leave behind the Age of Reason, a time of harsh moral standards, for a more spirited era. In Germany, Immanuel
Kant began a new style of philosophy and intuition, defining reason in two parts: theoretical and practical. Practical reason decides what things are as the individual mind perceives them. Theoretical reason goes beyond that and calls upon the mind to think of things, as they should be. John Locke added to Kant's ideals with his scepticism of the accepted process of reason and thought, which he felt was so clouded by society's predetermined structure for reason that it became useless. With so many different and extreme perspectives, the single person's opinion can get lost in a sea of voices, and Locke proclaimed that being influenced by such a cloudy majority of opinion without question is irrational. But transcendentalists also disagreed with certain facets of Locke's philosophy. Locke believed that every idea must first be witnessed by the senses before being internalized and analyzed by the mind. Kant disagreed, saying that ‘intuitions of the mind’ could bring about thoughts and ideas without using the senses first. Transcendentalists believed that one's perception of the world was only a reflection of one's spirit. Taking advantage of expanding communication technology, intellectuals began to read pieces of Eastern thought, such as Indian and Chinese religious scriptures. With these diverse influences, a new group of intellectuals emerged emphasizing the individual's search for truth, all the while rejecting society's current social codes.

After the rigid morals of the Puritans, Quakers, and other devoutly religious institutions, America was prepared for a more spiritual and introspective philosophy. But while the Romantics stressed pure spiritual learning and exploration, the Transcendentalists broke off in a different direction and included independent reason with the spiritual learning and exploration, taking elements from both the Age of Reason and Romanticism. Transcendentalism
had a pure American twist to it, thanks in part to Ralph Waldo Emerson. America has always prided itself in the individual's involvement in one of the first democracies, and stresses the ‘American Dream’, where a single person can do whatever he wishes if he puts his mind to it. Emerson emphasized the individual and the great potential of its mind. In his essay ‘Self-Reliance’, the first paragraph criticizes society's honour of ‘genius works’, and claims that genius is believing “...your own thought, [believing] that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men.” Emerson redefines genius as just believing in one's own convictions and ideas. One's own thoughts are complex, unique, and unconventional, but must also be communicated to others. If one believes that everyone else agrees with him, and talks to others about his ideas, he will find someone who disagrees, prompting an enlightening exchange of thought. Every person must have a little self-confidence as well, in order to recognize unique thoughts as profound. Emerson also tells us “a man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the luster firmament of bards and sages.” A man must identify and expand on his unique ideas, and not dismiss them just for the fact that they are his own. Also, one cannot be influenced greatly by ‘bards and sages’ (society) without questioning them, especially if one wishes to achieve greatness. Emerson realizes that the greatest thinkers...Moses, Plato and Milton...set at naught books and traditions... . These men ignored the current ideas and beliefs because they either realized that these ideals were not their own or unique, or that the accepted beliefs were incorrect. They decided to think for themselves and find a set of beliefs they could call their own.

A main part of American transcendentalism was questioning or rejecting set
beliefs, allowing one to search for one’s own beliefs without the overwhelming influence of others. As transcendentalism impacted the American individual, spiritual and religious questions began to rise. The current religious churches were corrupt and seemed to be blocking the individual's connection with God in the transcendentalists’ eyes, prompting some to join and support the Unitarian church. But many transcendentalists believed that a personal connection with God was all that was necessary, and that the bureaucracy of the church was preventing that. Since the world is God's creation, and is still unaltered in some parts by human existence, nature became a constant focus of the transcendentalists. Henry David Thoreau lived in the Walden woods for more than two years while writing and reflecting on various topics. Thoreau went to the woods because [he] wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts to life. Although not exclusively immersed in nature (Thoreau dined often at Emerson's local tavern), Thoreau's many writings coming from his time at Walden Pond opened the literary world to nature through new eyes, and gave a different perspective to the understanding of nature.

Thoreau also stressed the individual's call to be unified as one with the natural world. Although individualism was a very important part of transcendentalism, unification with nature was a way to get away from the wasting of life. The complications of work, connections to materialism, and other trivialities of the consumer driven society did not and do not allow anybody to expand their mind in search of ‘Absolute Truth’, and distract the person from using personal intuition to reach the ultimate goal of absolute goodness. In the average, every-day life, Thoreau observed a life ‘frittered away by detail.’ By going to the woods and living simply, details became
meaningless, and one is able to reflect introspectively in the simplest form. After two years, Thoreau ‘left the woods for as good a reason as [he] went there.’ He had lived within himself with only nature as a companion for a while, and had realized many things about himself and society. He was now ready to express his new ideas and expand on them with others, using his writings as reference and a means of expression.

Transcendentalists established the idea of individualism and the individual, also instilling it within American culture. But they also worked on a broader span to touch as many people as possible and create change in a society that was not fully allowing thought to take place. Many poems and essays that would affect the everyday person appeared in Henry David Thoreau's *The Dial*, to which most transcendentalists contributed at one time or another. Thoreau also wrote the widely read ‘Civil Disobedience’, which is still used today by activists. In response to being jailed for not paying a war tax, Thoreau wrote ‘Civil Disobedience’ to express his grievances over the current government and its actions. Thoreau points out many reasons for resisting an unjust government, and believes that “under a government which imprisons unjustly, the true place for a just man is also in prison.”10 One who disagrees morally with the immoral government will eventually be jailed for their actions in the name of morality. Thoreau knows that his government was hindering his ability to live as he would wish to and the only way to change the government's ways was to refuse to follow them. There is no reason to follow laws that one is morally opposed to, because “if a plant cannot live according to its nature; it dies; and so a man.”11 This outcry for making change reforms society for the sake of preserving the individual.

Transcendentalists brought about a whole new set of ideals in America.
Nationally, Americans realized that they had the freedom to think for themselves and be individuals. This would also lead to a sense of jingoism in some, and an overall feeling of national pride would lead to the ‘people's government’ violating the people's rights. The transcendentalists also ran one of the first experiments in utopian communistic living, Brook Farm. Started by George Ripley, a leader of the Transcendental Club, editor of *The Dial*, and a former Unitarian minister, Brook Farm combined the minds of the thinker and worker. Mostly intellectuals participated, and the visitors included Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Peabody, Theodore Parker, and Orestes A. Brownson. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Charles A. Dana were among the original shareholders. At Brook Farm, these thinkers worked together to form a cooperative living atmosphere, helping each other while expanding one another's minds as well.

Transcendentalists have inspired many to create reform. The Beat movement of the 1950s, also dominated by literary intellectuals, expressed their alienation from society and its moral codes through writings and music. The beatniks, including Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, focused on the release of the human mind and spirit. Their poetry also had much in common with Walt Whitman, as the unconventional style (frequently laced with obscenities) exposed their rejection of the norm.

Transcendentalism was the first real, full-fledged American movement after the revolutionary war. Its ideas of freeing the individual spirit, using reason to find Absolute Truth, and rejecting a materialistic and corrupted society gave American citizens a sense of self. Transcendentalists affected the world through America's new sense of pride, but also showed Americans that they were not using their minds to their full extent. Citizens now had a voice,
through civil disobedience and the rejection of established institutions. But they were also being advised to think for themselves and not get caught up in a monotonous, materialistic society. The American transcendentalist movement created an identity for citizens throughout the nation, giving them the inspiration to live as individuals and use their minds to the fullest extent.

It is clear that Sufism and transcendentalism are the means of revolution against Calvinistic orthodoxy and deistic realism on the one hand and foolish religious fanaticism on the other. Therefore, the greatness of soul and the importance of the individual are stressed; the direct relation between man and God is the greater concern. The aim of both is to see God from inward. Consequently, the last end of man, according to them, is knowledge of the Divine. Such knowledge is presented in all nations, religions, movements, creeds, and societies from Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Sufis, Mystics, Transcendentalists, and Gnostics. It is a free and unbounded phenomenon that is known to all. Of course, love plays a major and significant role to link the God-soul relation. Love is a shortcut to discover God. Entering the realm of love removes all dualities. In Persian mysticism there is a stage which is called *fana* (annihilation) during which the Sufi denies his self and finds nothing but the revelation of God’s grace and grandeur. After *fana* there is *vesal* (union), which is his ultimate goal. The Sufi becomes a *salik* (seeker) a pilgrim and seeker in quest of reality. He is driven towards selflessness and joins Him. The following Sufi doctrines stand out from the works of Persian mystics:

1. The concept of ‘absolute unity’ and the idea of ‘oneness’ (*tawhid*).
2. The thought of the ‘universal mind’ or the ‘universal soul’ (*aqle kol* or *jane kol*).
3. Trust in the perfect soul (*tavakkol*).
4. Love (*mohabbat*), a consequence of God’s love for man.
5. The negative existence of evil (*nafie shar*).
6. The idea of independent origin (*esalat*).
7. The mystic pride in the moment of intoxication (*eshq* or *sowq*).
8. Constant awareness of God (*moraqebat*).
9. Symbolism and idealism (*surat va ma’na*).
10. Sincerity and friendship (*ekhlas*).
11. Gnosis (*ma’refa*).
12. Satisfaction (*reza*).12

Some other Sufi elements, which are shown in Sufi poetry, are as follows:

13. Simplicity (*sadagi*)
14. Poverty (*faqr*)
15. Austerity (*Riazat*)
16. Union (*vesal*)
17. Meditation and Contemplation (*Tamigh va zharfandishi*)
18. Live in moment (*zendeghi dar hale hazer*)
19. Death (*marq*)
20. Knowing of oneself is the knowing of God (*Khodshenasi baad khodashenasi*)
21. Annihilation (*fana*)
Plan of thesis:

The present study envisages seven chapters. This chapter examined the importance of the topic, main aims and objectives, related biographical facts of the authors, some previous studies, and similarities between Transcendentalism and Sufism.

The second chapter is an account of Sufism, its history and its salient features. These features are illustrated by suitable examples from Sufi Literature.

The third and fourth chapters indicate the Sufi elements in selected prose and poetry of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the same procedure is followed in fifth and sixth chapters for Henry David Thoreau’s works.

The seventh chapter would be the conclusion of the thesis and it includes some suggestions for further studies along the same line in some other writers. It will also indicate the partial nature of Edward Said’s picture of the West regarding its relation with the East.
Notes and References:


5. King, M.L. *Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* chapter two


8. Deshmukh. p. 71

9. Ibid. p. 73

