Chapter 2: Sufism and Sufi Literature:

“Sufism is the essential core of all religions”

Osho

Origin of ‘Sufi’ and the Nature of Sufism:

Who was the first Sufi? Who started this astonishing flowering of spiritual love in life? No one knows.

Early in the history of Islam, Moslem ascetics appeared who from their habit of wearing coarse garments of wool (suf), became known as Sufis. But what we now know as Sufism dawned unheralded, mysteriously, in the ninth century and already in the tenth and eleventh had reached maturity. Among all its exponents there is no single one who could be claimed as the initiator or founder.

Sufism is like that great oak-tree, standing in the middle of the meadow: no one witnessed its planting, no one beheld its beginning, but now the flourishing tree speaks for itself.

Sufism has its great names, its poet-preachers, its 'saints', in the broad, sense in which the word can be used. Names Prophet Mohammed, Ali-Ibn-Abitaleb, Mawlama Rumi, Ibn-al-'Arabi, Jami, Mansur-al-Hallaj are household words in the whole Islamic world and even beyond it.

The word "Sufi" is derived from the Arabic word "suf," meaning "wool," Garments woven from wool were generally worn by early mystics, who came
to be known as "Sufis." There are other explanations and meanings of the word 'Sufi' but the one given is generally accepted by most Sufis and Sufi scholars. It seems strange. Why should wool become the symbol of Sufis? The scholars opine that it is because Sufis used to wear woolen robes. That’s true, but why do they wear those robes? Nobody has answered it. Prophet Mohammad says in the Koran that even Moses was wearing a woolen robe when he faced God. But again the question is why the woolen robe. It seems there is a deep and meaningful symbolism in it. The symbolism is that wool is the garb of the animals and a Sufi has to become as innocent as an animal. He should attain to a primal innocence. That’s why when you face a Sufi; you see such animal innocence in his eyes and in his being. Such freedom, such joy as only animals know or trees, rocks and stars.

There is another possibility for the meaning of Sufi and it is derived from the word “sufia”, which means chosen as a friend by God. It means that you cannot search for God unless He has already chosen you. How is it possible to search the unseen and the unknown? So, it is better to say that first God chooses the man and then the man starts feeling a thirst for God.

One more root of the word Sufi derives from the Greek word “sophia”.1 Sophia means ‘wisdom’. Here wisdom is not a synonym for the word knowledge – knowledge is through scriptures, through others, and is borrowed. But wisdom arises from one’s own being. So, wisdom does not believe. Someone says “God is” and you believe. This is knowledge not wisdom. Wisdom knows those things, which man is searching for through his senses, on one’s own. One can be a Sufi only when one has known. When one has known oneself, one has touched the Reality, and has seen the face of God only then can one be a Sufi.
There is may be another origin for word Sufi, and it is the Hebrew root “ain sof”, which means the absolutely infinite, the search for it. It is the curiosity to know the unbounded, the eternal, and the timeless.

The word Sufi also derives from the word “sufa’. Sufa means purity, cleanliness, and purification.

And finally there is one definition for the word Sufi in an Old Persian Dictionary. It goes in rhyme: Sufi Chist – Sufi Sufist. It means who is a Sufi? A Sufi is a Sufi. It says the word is indefinable. And there is no synonym for it and it cannot be defined linguistically. One should live it and know it through the mind, through the senses; it is not possible to get it through intellelection. Then one should taste the reality of it by oneself. One need not look for it in books but should go to existence.

A Sufi is a mystic, if by "mystic" we mean a person who strives towards intimate knowledge or communion with God, through contemplation, meditation and or ‘inner vision.’ The origin of Sufism goes back to the Prophet Muhammad, who received the Divine Revelation known as the Holy Koran over a period of 23 years. As all Muslims know the Holy Koran is a "multi-layered revelation," whose verses can be interpreted literally, metaphorically, philosophically, and mystically. Osho also has good opinions about the Sufi. He says:

The Sufi lives in the present. To live in the present, the basic need is to withdraw yourself from the past, to withdraw yourself from the future. Then there comes a concentration of energies; then this small moment becomes luminous, you pour total energy into it. Then there is joy and benediction. If you are miserable, it is only because you live in the past and in the future. A miserable man has past and future; a man who lives in bliss has only the moment, this moment he lives in now.
Furthermore, each individual ‘spark’ or ‘spirit’ separated from the Universal Spirit, desires to return and reunite with the Universal spirit. This is confirmed by another verse in the Koran, which says, "surely we belong to God, and to Him we return." This ‘returning’ is vital and central to the Sufi doctrine. Now, the Sufi embarks on a spiritual journey known as the Sufi Path; a path of devotion and love; which leads to none other than God Himself. The Sufi is the locus of connecting the outer, physical reality with a timeless, space-less dimension, which is experienced within the self. The Sufi lives like the tip of the iceberg, which is apparent only partially in the seen world, while experiencing aspects of the hidden and veiled world, which is the foundation of what is visible, and which forms the rest of its reality. He does his best to understand the causal, physical outer life while awakening to an immense inner Reality, which encompasses both the known and the unknown worlds, the unitive Reality of the seen and the unseen, of time, space, and non-time-space.

It is for this reason that the inner life of the Sufi has no bounds, and yet he acknowledges and accepts the outer bounds with courtesy towards nature and the natural creation.

The Sufi is totally content with the immeasurable bliss within. Yet he struggles outwardly towards a better quality of life on earth and does his best without being too much concerned about the ultimate results. Outer struggle and work are necessary companions to inner purification and contentment. For a Sufi God is not an idea but is his life. It is not somewhere sitting on a throne high in the heaven, no – it is here and now, it is all over the place and it is everywhere. In the Holy Koran also God says, “I am nearer than your jugular
to you.” So, for a Sufi God is in here, God is in there, and God is everywhere. So God is the Ultimate aim of a real Sufi.

A Sufi invariably has an uneasy relationship with his society. A Sufi leads such a rebellious life that the society almost always kills him. Society crucifies them because the Sufis make people aware of their falsity. So, society cannot bear the Sufis who are the people of God and Goodness, as T. S. Eliot has said marvelously in *Four Quartets*: Humankind cannot bear too much reality. The story of Hallaj Mansour who said, “I am God” illustrates this:

Somebody asked al-Hallaj Mansour, the greatest mystic and Sufi ever, “What is the Ultimate in Sufi experience?”

Al-Hallaj said, “Tomorrow, tomorrow you will see what the ultimate in Sufi experience is.”

Nobody knew what was going to happen the next day. The man asked, “Why not today?”

Al-Hallaj said, “You just wait. It is going to happen tomorrow – the ultimate.”

The next day he was crucified. And when he was crucified he shouted loudly for his friend who had asked the question. He said, “Where are you hiding in the crowd? Now come on and see the ultimate in Sufism. This is what it is.”

It is noteworthy to mention one more story about the Sufi and society, which happened to Abu Yazid.

It happened that Abu Yazid, a Sufi mystic, was praying and God spoke to Abu Yazid and said, “Yazid, now you have become one of my chosen people. Should I declare it to the world?”
Abu Yazid laughed and said, “Yes, You can – if You want me to be crucified, declare. You declared about al-Hallaj and what happened? They crucified him. Whenever You declare that somebody has been chosen, people crucify him immediately. They don’t love You and they cannot tolerate Your people, so if you want me to be crucified, declare.”

A real Sufi always searches for truth, reality, and his origin. His target is the original Reality (God) and in this he is not afraid of anything even death. Death for a Sufi is a bridge. Death for him is joyful and cheerful. In his mind death is a door to God. Sufi knows how to die and how to enter to the realm of God. He never murmurs for death. For a Sufi death is there every time. Death is busy around everywhere and no one can get rid of it.

Uwais one of the great Sufis says, “I am always facing death and waiting for it. And I am thrilled by the philosophy of it.” He added also “be ready like one who has arisen in the morning and does not know whether he will be dead in the evening.” A Sufi has an eye to see but it is not the eye of body, it is the eye of heart. He can see the face of reality and truth by the mind’s eye. For a Sufi there is no veil over Reality as it is there for other people. In Arabic and Persian literature there is the story of Majnoon and Leila. For Majnoon, Leila always was absent, but everywhere and every time she was with him as Majnoon could see her by the eye of his heart. He was mad in love and symbolically for love of God. Leila was the beloved — was the God for him. So, one should be aware of his heart and should awaken the eye of his heart to see the unseen (veils).

Sufis observed that the life is caused by ‘Love’, and is governed by ‘Love’. In His perfect isolation God, in the beginning, was illumined by ‘Love’ and from this illumination caused the multiplicity of His attributes and names.
Similarly man can return to God through love of Him. Love is a more effective means than renunciation, even than any other means, to return to God. For Al-Ghazali the love of God is the supreme end of man. He shows its possibility and supreme value on the basis of the *Holy Koran*. Knowledge of God is related to the love of God. The highest and the most complete love is associated with intuition, the highest type of knowledge. God also loves His creature, but His love for man is like His love for His works. God’s love for man means that after man has purified his heart, God admits him to His proximity and removes the veil from his heart, in order to enable man to observe Him with his heart’s eye.\(^9\)

Now the love of God became the religious duty of man in order that he might successfully practise detachment from the day-to-day world. Though the miseries of life did drive some men to the mystic way of life, the miseries ceased to be the principal motivating factor from the 9\(^{th}\) century onward. The Sufis principally acknowledged that the love of God is the end of man. Ibn Arabi believed that “God and his existence are one: according to him, the apparent separation is due to ignorance”.\(^{10}\)

Through the successive stages of Sufi illumination (*Tajalli*) the Sufi by retracing the order of his descent, stripping off every attribute returns once more as Absolute to Absolute. Such is the perfect man. The perfect man is present at all times under different names. In him all divine attributes are manifested. He is illuminated by divine names and in his turn illumines the world with life and virtue. He is the intermediary between the Creator and creatures. “He is the Pole (*qutb*) around which the universe revolves. In his essence he is the *ruh* called by various epithets such as *Haqigat-i-
Mohammadi, *aqle-awwal* (the first intelligence), and *Ruh-ul-Quds* (the pure soul)."\(^{11}\)

In brief, the essence of Sufi thought is that life is full of miseries and that man can get salvation from these miseries only by renouncing the worldly possessions.

Sufi theory provides a map of the cosmos that allows people to understand their situation in relation to God. It explains both what human beings are, and what they should aspire to be. It sets down a practice that can lead people from their actual situation to the final goal of human life, or from imperfection to perfection.\(^{12}\)

Junaid of Baghdad says:

Sufi should have eight qualities: liberality such as that of Abraham, acceptance of his lot as Ishmael accepted, patience as possessed by Job, capacity to communicate by symbolism as in the case of Zacharias, estrangement from his own people, which was the case with John, woolen garb like the shepherd’s mantle of Moses, journeying like the traveling of Jesus, and humility as Mohammad had humility of spirit.\(^{13}\)

Sayyed Imam Ali Shah has his own idea of a Sufi:

To be a Sufi is to become what you can become, and not to try pursuing what is, at the wrong stage, illusion. It is to become aware of what is possible to you, and not to think that you are aware of that of which you are heedless. Sufism is the science of stilling what has to be stilled, and alerting what can be alerted; not thinking that you can still or alert where you cannot, or that you need to do so when you do not need it. The following of dervish path is pursuing a concealed Unity in spite of, and not by means of, the claims of diversity. It is taking into account the means, which are presented in diversity, without
thinking that the externals of diversity are important in them. It is approached by studying the factors of learning how to learn; not by trying to gain knowledge without correct practice in approaching it. You come closer to being a Sufi through realizing that habit and preconception are essentials only in some studies; not by forming habits and judging by means of unsuitable preconceptions. You must become as aware of insignificance as you think you are of significance; not seek feelings of significances alone. The humble are so because they must be so; and worst of all men or women are those who practise humility for the purpose of pride, not as a means of travel.

The method of Sufism is as it always has been, to adopt that which is of value, when and where it is of value, and with whom it is of value; not to imitate because of awe, or to copy because of imitativeness. The success of man in raising himself higher comes through the right effort and the right method, not merely by concentrating upon the right aspiration or upon the words of others directed to yet others. It is as if it were a trap laid for the ignoble element in you when a man, a book, a ceremonial, an organization, a method, appears, directly or by recommendation, to have something which is applicable to all, or attracts you strongly though incorrectly.  

Really Sufism is an ocean, an infinite ocean, with pure water, with so many calamities and catastrophes. It is not the cup of tea of an amateur sailor to set sail in this ocean. One who will have a voyage through this ocean should be sober, expert, and full of knowledge. There are serious ups and downs in it, which are almost unbearable. It is a long journey with dreadful storms and waves. One should have the daring of a lion to enter to this ocean because the destination is so far and unknown. Yes, the ultimate destination of this trip is God and He is an unknown phenomenon for the passenger. Therefore, one should not commit any mistake in this journey otherwise one will sink into the depth of this deep ocean. The great Sufi Muhyi’D-Din Ibn Arabi, used to pray:
‘Enter me, O Lord, into the deep of the Ocean of Thine Infinite Oneness,’ and in Sufism ‘Ocean’ is mentioned again and again as a symbol of the final destination. So, in answer to what is Sufism, we can say, from time to time a Revelation ‘flows’ like a great tidal wave from the Ocean of Infinitude to the shores of our finite world; and Sufism is the vocation and the discipline and the science of plunging into these waves and being drawn back with them to the Eternal and the Infinite Source. Even studying Sufism is a hard task. It is a forked field and one cannot study all the branches of it even in a lifetime. Sufism has many faces. It contains a variety of rituals. This study would like to focus only on the concept, the theory of Sufism and its salient features.

Martin Lings in his book *What is Sufism* says:

Sufism is nothing other than Islamic mysticism, which means that it is the central and most powerful current of that tidal wave which constitutes the Revelation of Islam; and it will be clear from what has just been said that to affirm this is in no sense a depreciation, as some appear to think. It is on the contrary an affirmation that Sufism is both authentic and effectual.  

Sufism simply means a love affair with the Almighty and the Ultimate. Sufism means finding of God by ‘inner light’ and by ‘contemplation’ or ‘meditation’ (*fikr*). Sufism knows no formality, every one can be a Sufi, whether a Christian, a Moslem, a Buddhist, a Jew or a Hindu. It is a relationship with God and really it is a dangerous relationship because the closer you come to God the more you evaporate. It is suicidal, but this suicide is so beautiful because to die into God is the only way to really live.

“Sufism is spiritualism against materialism. As an ascetic philosophy, Sufism guarantees redemption from miseries of life, the knowledge as redeemer is
identified with God. Thus according to Sufism, the supreme Truth or Reality is God."

Since God as Pure Being is the object of realization in Sufism and further is above thought and knowledge, a certain mystic condition of ecstasy becomes the means and sign of unity with Him. Its philosophy, as a theory of the means of attaining this mystic unity, tends to become ‘theology’.

Osho also claims that Sufism is a vision – a love vision, a loving approach towards reality. It is falling in love with existence. Existence is waiting for you to come close so that it can reveal its heart. Existence is waiting for you to fall in love with it. If you are deeply in love with existence, it starts opening, it starts revealing its secrets. It has been waiting long for you to come close. Sufism is a world, but not a world-view. It is transcendence, but not a philosophy of transcendence. It does not preach any theories; it simply gives you practical hints. Sufism is not speculative. It is utterly realistic, pragmatic, and practical, it is down-to-earth, and it is not abstract. Sufism is the mystical dimension of Islam based on the esoteric, or "inner-meaning" of its scripture, namely the Koran. Sufism's central doctrine is based on a verse of the Koran; in which God says, "I created man and breathed My spirit into him." This "Divine spark" placed into every individual, says the Sufi, must be nurtured and cherished.

Sufism is known in Arabic as 'Tassawuf' or Islamic Mysticism.

Characteristics of Sufism are beauty, love, poetry, and music which illustrate the dimension of divine beauty and mercy. When Gibb writes “the aesthetic element in Sufism plays a part which can hardly be overemphasized in its later expression,” he is pointing to the appreciation of beauty and love that is the hallmark of the Sufi tradition.
In the 10\textsuperscript{th} century, some 300 years after the Prophet Mohammad, Abu’l-Hasan Fushanji said, “Today Sufism (\textit{tasawwuf}) is a name without a reality. It was once a reality without a name.”\textsuperscript{19}

A wondrous aspect of Islamic mysticism is the recognition that every one of us is on an individual path to God. Islamic iconography uses the circle, with its circumference and its centre connected by spiraling paths, to portray that path. It is delightful to consider that the dance of the Sufis, \textit{sama}, is a dance in which dancers whirl so that their wool skirts form circles while they move in a circle around their centre, the leader or master.

Early Sufis believed that the path to the centre was the way of asceticism, which led to their reputation for poverty. However, in the second half of the eighth century, a woman from Basra, Rabi’ah al-’Adawiyah (died 801CE), formulated the Sufi ideal of pure love of God that was unattached to ideas of salvation or damnation. This belief accompanied a developing belief in the need for a Muslim to adopt complete trust in God. Both beliefs remain at the core of Sufism today, as they were also at the core of Rumi’s life and teachings.

A final component of Sufism that Rumi believed in and taught was that Man is the Caliph of God, the leader of God’s polity here on Earth. He becomes that of his own choice, and when he does, he moves towards the divine human archetype of the Perfect Man who is at the heart of the Universe. To become the Perfect Man means the annihilation of one’s self. “He has been able to discover in himself that hidden treasure that one seeks elsewhere in vain, and which can only be found in the renouncement of carnal existence.”\textsuperscript{20}

Martin writes:
Ghazali in fact defines Sufism as *dhawq* (taste); a term much used by the Sufis following the Prophet to denote the directness of Heart-knowledge as opposed to mind-knowledge, and in order to understand how this knowledge, which belongs to the summit of the soul and the threshold of Heaven can have need of a term borrowed from the knowledge, which is experienced at the soul’s lower boundary, the threshold of the body, it is necessary first to understand the universal law of which this ‘need’ is particular application.  

**Sufi Precepts and Practices:**

1. **Absolute Unity (*tawhid*)**

   According to the Islamic doctrine of Unity, the Divine Infinitude is without parts. The Name *Ahad* (One), to do full justice to its meaning, must be translated as ‘the Indivisible One-and-Only’. The doctrine of Oneness of Being means that what the eye sees and mind records is an illusion, and that every apparently separate and finite thing is in truth the Presence of the One Infinite. The *Koran* says: “Whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God. Verily God is the Infinitely Vast, the Infinite All-Knowing.”

   In the religions of Islam and Christianity God is presented with certain human emotions such as kindness, affections, mercy, anger, wrath, and so on. In other words, there are many passages in the *Bible* as well as in the *Holy Koran* in which God is described in terms of human emotions or at least He is conceived in such a way as to be understandable to man. The relation between man and God is the chief concern of these holy books. Moreover, in the *Koran* God is given 99 names, which is a classical list of Allah, the Muslim name for God; kind, compassionate, forgiving, and so on. In the *Holy Koran* God refers to Himself as the *al-zahir* (Outward) and the *al-batin* (Inward).
The Islamic tradition recognizes three basic domains of a religious temperament — body, tongue, and the depths of heart. These are the domains of right doing, right thinking, and right seeing. The three realms can also be called perfection of acts, of understanding, and of self. “O God” the Sufi likes to quote the Prophet as saying, “show us things as they are.” One does not see things as they are with the eyes or the mind, but rather with the core of the heart. From the heart, right seeing will then radiate forth and permeate every pore of the body, determining thought and activity.

Shahadah in Islam means, “There is no God, but God” and that “Mohammad is His messenger” in Arabic “La iaha illa- Allah Mohammad rasol-o-Allah”.23

Sufi teachers have frequently explained Sufism’s role in the context of tawhid, the assertion of God’s unity that is given its most succinct expression in the first Shahadah, there is no God but God. Union with God in one interpretation or the other is the central idea of the Sufi thought.

Love of Tawhid then means to be free from everything in the created world and to choose God. It is to serve God, nobody else. Human beings alone were created such that they can love God in His infinite, all-comprehensive reality, embracing the attributes of beauty and majesty, gentleness and severity. When they focus on God by realizing Tawhid, they escape the limitation of possessing certain attributes rather than others. According to Sam’ani, God addresses His creatures like this:

“O Ridwan, paradise belongs to you! O Malik (bad person), hell belongs to you! O cherubim, the Throne belongs to you! O you with the burnt heart, you who carry the seal of My love! You belong to Me, and I belong to you.”24

The fall of Adam is the veil on the face of love. The universe itself is a veil, and so also are all things within it. God’s face is hidden behind every veil, just
as His beauty infuses every form, every object of love, and every desire. If we could see through the veils, we would see there is no motivating force but mercy and no object of love but God, for “There is nothing real but the Real.” All the veils are ladles that pour God’s attributes and beauty into our cups. All of them display God’s signs in the manner appropriate to their own level of being. They appear to us as the western horizon, but in fact the west is the east. In the last analysis, “All veils are He.” Yet, none are He. This simultaneous identity and difference is the paradox. The veil, the thing, the creature, is not God, yet, at one and the same time, it is God. What is more, there is no way to find God, no way to see God, except in the veil, which will always conceal Him. The true sun will always rise exactly where it has set. God can never be found, yet He is found in everything, because there is nothing that is not His self-disclosure. Jami writes,

I said to my rose-cheeked lovely, “O you with bud-like mouth, Why keep hiding your face, like flirting girls?”
She laughed and said, “Unlike the beauties of your world, In the curtain I’m seen, but without it I’m hidden.”

The paradox of the veil is simply that things are not God, but God is present in the things. For those who see, the veil is the face. The dialectic that infuses Sufi teachings – the affirming and denying the drunken shouting and sober circumspection, the rending of veils and hanging down more curtains, the voicing of what cannot be voiced – all of this is the face appearing in veils. All of it tells us that the name is nothing but the reality, but the reality stands infinitely beyond the name. To find the reality behind the name we need to speak the name with awareness. To be aware, we must know our Lord and
ourselves. Self and Lord are inseparably intertwined, like name and reality, veil and face.

Sufism differentiates itself from other perspectives in Islamic thought by holding that true understanding is the lifting of the veils that obscure the face of the heart. The most general and common term for this sort of understanding is *kashf*, a word that can best be translated as “unveiling.” Hence, though there is a veil between the lover and Beloved, the true lover always cries and seeks his Beloved in everything, everywhere and every time. He bears nuisances for the sake of the Beloved and he is even ready to lose his head as Hafiz in his *Ghazal* dedicates his head for the Beloved:

My heart has become confused from the world and what is in it.  
Within my heart there is nothing but the Friend.  
If perfume from the rose-garden of Unity comes to me 
My heart, like a rosebud, will burst its outer skin. 
Speak to the recluse in his solitude and say: 
Because the very edge of our prayer-niche is as the curve of the Eyebrow 
There is no real difference between the Kaaba and the idol-house 
Wherever you may look, there equally is He.  
The being of a dervish is not what his beard and head are like: 
The Path of the dervish is in qualitative exactitude. 
A dervish may easily shave his head without regrets 
But he is a dervish who, like Hafiz, gives up his head.  

2. Love of God (*eshgi khoda*)

Love cannot be defined, though its traces can be described. On this point Ibn Arabi the theoretician and Rumi the poet agree completely:
Love has no definition through which its essence can be known. Rather, it is given descriptive and verbal definitions, nothing more. Those who define love have not known it, those who have not tasted it by drinking it down have not known it, and those who say that they have been quenched by it have not known it, for love is drinking without quenching.\(^\text{27}\)

Rumi says:

Someone asked, “What is lover-hood?”
I replied, “Don’t ask me about these meanings –
“When you become like me, you’ll know;
when it calls you, you’ll tell its tale.”\(^\text{28}\)

Or

What is it to be a lover? To have perfect thirst.
So let me explain the water of life.\(^\text{29}\)

Rumi frequently points to love as God’s motive for creation by commenting on a divine saying addressed to Mohammad: “But for you, I would not have created the heavenly spheres.” The Prophet is the fullness of realized love, through whom and for whom the universe was created.

Love makes the ocean boil like a pot,
Love grinds mountains down to send.
Love splits the heaven in a hundred pieces,
Love shakes the earth with a mighty shaking.
Pure love was paired with Mohammad –
Because of love God said to him, “But for you.”
Since he alone was the goal of love,
He was singled out from all the prophets.
“If not for pure love,
why would I give existence to the spheres?
“I raised the celestial wheel on high
so that you might understand love’s elevation.”

God created the world through love, so love produces the multiplicity that fills the universe. He never ceases loving the creatures, so He never ceases creating them, and this keeps the universe in a perpetual state of transformation and flux. All things are infused with love, because God’s attribute of love brings them into existence and motivates all their activities. The Prophet said, “God is beautiful and He loves beauty” and this is an established hadith. So, He described Himself as loving beauty, and He loves the cosmos. Hence, there is nothing more beautiful than the cosmos. And He is beautiful, while beauty is intrinsically lovable, so the whole cosmos loves God. The beauty of His artisanry permeates.

Arabi Says, “His creation, while the cosmos is the loci wherein He becomes manifest… Therefore the love of some parts of the cosmos for other parts derives from God’s love for Himself.”

And Rumi chants:

God’s wisdom through His destiny and decree
Made us lovers of one another.
That foreordainment paired all the world’s parts
And set each in love with its mate….
The female inclines towards the male
So that each may perfect the other’s work.
God placed inclination in man and woman
So the world may subsist through their union.
Love’s creative power does not stop at the externalization and maintenance of the cosmos. Although the jewels of the Hidden Treasure have been thrown out into the open, most creatures do not recognize them for what they are, nor do they understand that their own loves and desires externalize God’s love. Their love is simply God’s own love reflected in the creatures. It follows that, as Ibn Arabi puts it, “None loves God but God,” and “There is no lover and no beloved but God.” Lovers grasp this when they reach the point of seeing God in everything that exists. Ibn Arabi and especially Rumi constantly remind their readers that love for any creature can only be love for God. Only ignorance veils people from perceiving what they love. In his major prose work, Rumi makes the point with these words:

All the hopes, desires, loves, and affections that people have for different things – father, mother, friends, heavens, earth, gardens, palaces, sciences, deeds, food, drink – all these are desires for God, and these things are veils. When people leave this world and see the Eternal King without these veils, then they will know that all these were veils and coverings and that the object of their desire was in reality that One Thing. All their difficulties will be solved, all the questions and perplexities that they had in their hearts will be answered, and they will see all things face to face.

All love is in truth love for God. Love is good because it is divine, but it remains a deceptive veil so long as lovers do not recognize its true object. Rumi asserts:

Love is an attribute of God, who has no needs –
Love for anything else is a metaphor.
The beauty of the others is gold-plated:
Outwardly it is light, inwardly smoke.
When the light goes and the smoke appears,
Metaphorical love turns to ice.
The beauty returns to its own root,
The body is left – putrid, disgraced, ugly.
The moonlight goes back to the moon,
The moon’s reflection leaves the wall.
Water and clay remain with no picture –
Without moon, the wall becomes fiendish.
When gold jumps from the face of counterfeit coin,
It returns to sit in its own mine.
The disgraced copper stays like smoke –
And even more ashamed of its lover.
Those with eyes turn their love to the mine of gold,
Each day their love increasing.
The mine has no partner in its goldness –
Hail, O Mine of Gold! In you there is no doubt.  

In short, love for God grows up from the basic declaration of faith, the assertion of God’s unique reality – “No God but God”. Since love is a divine attribute, it follows that “There is no true lover and no true beloved but God.” Once the lovers see things clearly, they display God’s beauty, and their own love displays God’s love. Ibn Arabi tells us that when the seekers pass beyond “natural” and “spiritual” love, they reach the stage of “divine” love, where they love God in all things through God’s own love the things. They love all things in every dimension of existence.

The Prophet says that Faith is to acknowledge with the heart, to voice with the tongue, and to act with the limbs.
As a domain of learning, voicing faith belonged to those Muslim scholars who investigated the best ways to understand God, the universe, and the human soul.

The Prophet says: “Faith is a light that God casts into the heart of whomsoever He will.”

Intoxication in Sufism is the fruit of finding God. The Sufis commonly express the quest for God in the language of love, the most intense and profound of human experience. In employing this language, they are following not only the realities of human nature, but also explicit Koranic verses and hadiths. Especially significant is this verse: “Say [O Mohammad!]: ‘if you love God, follow me, and then God will love you’” In a typical Sufi reading of this verse, love for God drives the seeker to search for the mutuality of love, which is to say that the lover wants to be loved by his Beloved and to taste the wine of his Beloved’s embrace.

Once the seekers love God, He will love them in return. God’s love may then intoxicate them and annihilate all their human failings and limitations. It may drive away the darkness of temporality and contingency, leaving in its place the radiance of God’s own eternal being. Note here that the hadith says, “When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears.” As some Sufis have pointed out, the words I am alerts us to the fact that God is already our hearing with which we hear, our sight with which we see, and our hand with which we grasp. The problem is not God’s nearness to us, because He is eternally near and closer to us than our jugular vein. The problem is our nearness to God, which we cannot see and cannot fathom. The seeing of God’s nearness has to be achieved, and the way to do is to devote oneself to the Prophetic model. Although we do not see Him now, we can achieve the seeing of Him if we worship and serve Him as if we see Him.
The way of love in Sufism has more significance. All the great lovers recognized that what stirs up love for God in the first place is God’s love for human beings. People could not love God if He did not already love them. The Hadith of the Hidden Treasure makes precisely this point – I was a Hidden Treasure and I wished to be known, and so I created the world.\textsuperscript{41} The most often cited Koranic text for this hierarchy of love is the verse, “He loves them, and they love Him.”\textsuperscript{42} First God loves human beings, then human beings love God. Once they come to love Him, His love for them will increase to the extent that they follow the Prophet, purify and cultivate their souls, remember God ceaselessly, and become perfect human beings.

3. Austerity and solitude (\textit{riazat va khalvat})

There is austerity and hardship for a real Sufi and he should be ready for every calamity and catastrophe during his path. As mentioned before it is sailing in a stormy ocean and a walking through windy desert with plenty of thorns. Prophet Mohammad with his fellows in the valley of Shoayb stayed for several days as they were surrounded by enemies and they had nothing to eat. They tasted one date together to remove their starvation under the oppressive sun. But they tolerated it because they were the pilgrims of God. In the hot weather of the Mecca Mohammad was working by his hands as a farmer. Hence, a Sufi must get through many difficulties and sorrows to be pure both in his soul and body.

One of the states of Sufism is austerity and it means that a Sufi should have iron will. He must be as sturdy as the rocks and cliffs. He should not complain of the hardships, which are predestined for him on his way. Strictness and rigidity are the blessings of God to him and he is unperturbed by all calamities.
The other feature of Sufism is solitude. A Sufi should get seclusion for worshiping God. No disturbance is allowed between a Sufi and his Beloved when he is talking and praying Him. Sufis sometimes go far from society and family, and they stay in a small convent (*Khaneghah*) at least for forty days to worship the Almighty, as it is the most important state of Sufism. In his hermitage there is no one except the all-Merciful. The Sufi is free from all the mortal and worldly things and he thinks on the immortal and spiritual One. In his privacy he can recognize his Origin as well. Others are interference to one who is seeking the Real and the True; therefore, he prefers to be alone for better searching. Nobody can disturb a Sufi in his solitude even the king of kings, because the Real King is there with the Sufi during his seclusion. The story of Sa’di illustrates this:

A dervish under a vow of solitude sat in a desert as a king passed with his retinue. Being in special state of mind he took no notice, not even raising his head as the procession passed. The king emotionally overcome by his regal pretensions, was angry and said:

‘These wearers of the patchwork robe are as impassive as animals, possessing neither politeness nor due humility.’

His vizier approached the dervish, saying:

‘O dervish! The Sultan of the whole of the earth has just passed by you. Why did you not pay the required homage?’

The dervish answered: ‘Let the Sultan look for homage from those who seek to benefit from his goodwill. Tell him, too, that kings are created for the protection of their subjects. Subjects are not created for the service of kings.’

Consequently, a Sufi should face all the calamities and difficulties and should get solitude to pray his Friend with a pure heart.
4. Simplicity and Poverty (sadagi va faqr)

Other synonyms of Sufi can be darvish in Persian, dervish in English and al-faqir in Arabic, all of which mean some one who is poor and needs God. According to the Holy Koran the root of the word Sufi is driven from this verse of the Koran: “God is the rich and ye are the poor.” And also this verse: “O men, ye are the poor unto God, and God – He is the Rich, the Object of all Praise.” So those who are poor in their needs of God are the friends of God and spiritually speaking, they are not poor but so rich, as they only need God and nothing else. Sufi is a simple man, without mundane ambitions. There is no desire for having palace, or any thing, which belongs to this mortal and temporal world. Instead, he desires the love of the Real Beloved and the eternal objects of the next world. He satisfies himself with a loaf of bread and some drops of water in a small shanty.

Sufi has a simple life and he can enjoy his simplicity and a little bit of everything is enough for him as Sa’di cites:
Ten dervishes can sleep beneath one blanket; but two kings cannot reign in one land. A devoted man will eat half his bread, and give the other half to dervishes. A ruler may have a realm, but yet plot to overcome the world.

Human love grows up out of need (niyaz). Sam’ani calls need “a fire in the heart, a pain in the breast, and dust on the face.” Those who have something have no need for it. God possesses everything in Himself and has no needs, only those who possess no perfections whatsoever can truly love God, for only they have absolute, unqualified need. To the degree that people find wealth and independence in themselves and see themselves as positive and good, they will be empty of love for God. The secret of Adam’s love was that he saw himself as nothing. It is this self-understanding that the Sufis call “poverty,” in
keeping with the Koranic verse, “O people, you are the poor toward God; and God – He is the Wealthy, the Praiseworthy” Adam’s need distinguishes him sharply from all other creatures, who are satisfied with what they have. Adam can never be satisfied, because he needs God, and God is infinite.

Adam’s need implies that he recognizes his own incapacity and worthlessness. Need is based on humility, which is the recognition of weakness and nothingness in the face of divine Reality. Humility sees all good as coming from God and all evil as coming from self.

A Sufi satisfies himself with less of everything and that is why he does not need extra things and can live a pleasant life. Sa’di explains the way in this story:

When we were heading for southern Arabia, a barefooted and bareheaded dervish joined our caravan at Kufa (in the north). I saw that he was penniless, but he strode along purposefully, reciting as he walked:

Neither do I burden a camel.
Nor do I carry a camel’s burden;
Neither do I rule, nor am I ruled.
Neither have I anxieties about the
Past, the Present or the future.
Fully I breathe, fully I live life.

A certain merchant, mounted on a camel, advised him to turn back. Otherwise, he said, the dervish would certainly die of hardship and lack of nourishment. Ignoring this advice, the dervish marched on. When we reached Beni Hamud oasis, the merchant died. The dervish, standing by the bier, exclaimed:

I did not die of my hardships; but you, on your camel, have died.

Then he added:
Fools burn lamps during the day. At night they wonder why they have no light.49

The knowledge of human inadequacy is the knowledge of our essential nothingness. The Koran sometimes calls this human nothingness “poverty” (faqr), a word that, in Islamic language, is a far more common designation for what we have been calling “Sufism” than the word tasawwuf itself. Both fakir (Arabic faqir) and dervish (Persian darwish) mean “poor man,” that is, a traveler on the Sufi path. The term is taken from the Koran, especially the verse, “O people, you are the poor toward God – He is the Wealthy, the Praiseworthy”50 As Ibn Arabi says, “Poverty is an affair that is inherent in everything other than God. There is no way to escape from it.”51

Rumi also writes:

Poverty is not for the sake of hardship –
No, it is because nothing exists but God.52

Also in Divan of Shamsi Tabriz he says:

I am that poor who make supplication to Thee;
The anguish inspired by a charmer like Thee hath for me a thousand charms.
Thou art the sun of mine eyes-they are radiant with Thy beauty
If I draw them away from Thee, to whom shall I look again?
I will not become inconstant to thee on account of Thy cruel treatment;
By remaining constant myself I will restrain Thee from cruelty.
I complained of Thee, Thou sadist: ‘Provide thine own remedy.’
I am one whose heart provides a remedy for Divine affliction.
I will not tell Thee my heart’s grief, for it would weary Thee;
I will shorten this tale, for mine is a long grief.53
Sufism is poverty towards God. To be poor towards Him is to acknowledge one’s need for Him, and the deeper and more sincere this acknowledgement becomes, the more it turns into an overpowering drive to reach the Beloved. Few pains are as deep as the lovers’ pain in their separation. Knowing their own pain, the lovers yearn for the cure of every pain, and that is their Beloved. The end result is deliverance from pain and union with all joy, but without pain, the journey will never begin. Rumi says:

First you empty the lovers at the hand of separation,
Then you fill them with gold to the tops of their heads!\textsuperscript{54}

5. Death (marq)

Uwais el-Qarani says, “Sleep with the remembrance of death, and rise with the thought that you will not live long.”\textsuperscript{55}

Sufi teachers have a better understanding of the goal and the seriousness of the quest. There are always people who feel drawn to God in the present life, who do not have the patience to remain separate from their Beloved until death. They follow the command of the Prophet, “Die before you die!”\textsuperscript{56} By dying to their own individual limitations, they are born into the unlimited expanse of the divine beauty. They have no fear of death, since they have died many times, and each time they have been reborn as something better. Rumi explains this in some of his most famous verses:

I died as mineral and became a plant,
I died as a plant and became an animal.
I died as an animal and became a man. Why should I fear?
When did I ever become less through dying?
Next time I will die to human nature,
spreading my wing, and lifting up my head with the angels.
Then I will jump the stream of angelic nature,
“For Everything is perishing but His Face.”
Once I am sacrificed as an angel,
I will become what does not enter the imagination.
I will become nothing, for nonexistence plays the tune,
“Unto Him we shall return.”

Rumi was a mystic of extraordinary devotion and self-dedication. A lover of God is seeking by every means a union with the Divine, and then a teacher, striving by his words and examples to lead others towards the same goal. He was peaceful and tolerant towards men of all creeds and urged his disciples to behave likewise. Although kings and princes sought his company, he preferred to pass his time with the needy and the poor. On December 17, 1273, after a long bout of illness, the mystical Master passed away. Upon his death, he was laid on a bier and washed by the hands of a beloved disciple, while others poured water for the ablution and yet others gathered it up. Not one drop was allowed to fall on the earth. Every drop was drunk as the holiest of holy water. As the washer folded Jelal's arms over his breast, unable to contain himself, he fell on the lifeless breast weeping. Suddenly he felt his ear pulled by the dead saint's hand. On this he fainted away and in his swoon he heard a voice say "Ho there! Verily the saints of the Lord have nothing to fear neither shall they sorrow. Believers die not; they merely depart from one habitation to another abode:

The day I've died, my pall is moving on –
But do not think my heart is still on earth!
Don't weep and pity me: "Oh woe, how awful!
You fall in devil's snare - woe, that is awful!
Don't cry "Woe, parted!" at my burial -
For me this is the time of joyful meeting!
Don't say "Farewell!" when I'm put in the grave -
A curtain is it for eternal bliss.
You saw "descending" - now look at the rising!
Is setting dangerous for sun and moon?
To you it looks like setting, but it's rising;
The coffin seems a jail, yet it means freedom.
Which seed fell in the earth that did not grow there?
Why do you doubt the fate of human seed?
What bucket came not filled from out the cistern?
Why should the Yusof "Soul" then fear this well?
Close here your mouth and open it on that side.
So that your hymns may sound in Where- no-place!\(^{59}\)

The word \textit{kashf} derives from the \textit{Koran}, where it is used as a verb fourteen times and can best be translated as “remove”; usually God is the subject of the verb, and He removes “harm” (in seven verses), “chastisement” (in four verses), and painful things in general. In the most significant of these passages for the Sufi use of the term, God addresses the soul that has just died; “You were heedless of this – therefore we have removed from you your covering, and your sight today is piercing”\(^{60}\). The “covering” (\textit{ghita}) – a term that is taken as one of several synonyms for “veil” (\textit{hijab}) – will be lifted at death. Then people will see clearly. This verse alone is enough to suggest why the quest for voluntary death is one of the basic themes of Sufi literature. The Sufis support this quest not only with Koranic interpretations that pay careful
attention to nuances and allusions, but also with the purported hadith, “Die before you die,” and the Gospel saying that appears in its Arabic version as “No one will enter the sovereignty of the heavens until he is born twice”\textsuperscript{61}

Voluntary death is also called by several other names, the most common is “annihilation.”

Rumi on his deathbed murmurs like this:

\begin{quote}
Go, rest your head on a pillow, leave me alone;
leave me ruined, exhausted from the journey of this night,
writhing in a wave of passion till the dawn.
Either stay and be forgiving,
or, if you like, be cruel and leave.
Flee from me, away from trouble;
take the path of safety, far from this danger.
We have crept into this corner of grief,
turning the water wheel with a flow of tears.
While a tyrant with a heart of flint slays,
and no one says, “Prepare to pay the blood money.”
Faith in the king comes easily in lovely times,
but be faithful now and endure, pale lover.
No cure exists for this pain but to die,
So why should I say, “Cure this pain”?
In a dream last night I saw
an ancient one in the garden of love,
beckoning with his hand, saying, “Come here.”
On this path, Love is the emerald,
the beautiful green that wards off dragonsnough,
I am losing myself.
If you are a man of learning,
read something classic,
\end{quote}
a history of the human struggle
and don’t settle for mediocre verse.\textsuperscript{62}

Also he says:

\begin{quote}
Our death is our wedding with eternity.
What is the secret? “God is One.”
The sunlight splits when entering the windows of the house.
This multiplicity exists in the cluster of grapes;
It is not in the juice made from the grapes.
For he who is living in the Light of God,
The death of the carnal soul is a blessing.
Regarding him, say neither bad nor good,
For he is gone beyond the good and the bad.
Fix your eyes on God and do not talk about what is invisible,
So that he may place another look in your eyes.
It is in the vision of the physical eyes
That no invisible or secret thing exists.
But when the eye is turned toward the Light of God
What thing could remain hidden under such a Light?
Although all lights emanate from the Divine Light
Don’t call all these lights “the Light of God”;
It is the eternal light which is the Light of God,
The ephemeral light is an attribute of the body and the flesh.
...Oh God who gives the grace of vision!
The bird of vision is flying towards You with the wings of desire.\textsuperscript{63}
\end{quote}

Ghazali, the great 11\textsuperscript{th} century Sufi also has written a poem about death which was found beneath his head in his last sickness.
A bird I am: this body was my cage
But I have flown leaving it as a token.\textsuperscript{64}

6. Love of Nature and other creatures (\textit{eshge tabiat va makhloq})

“The All-merciful has taught the \textit{Koran}. He created man and He has taught him the explanation. The sun and the moon, and the stars and the trees bow themselves; and heaven – He raised it up, and set the Balance. And earth – He set it down for all beings, therein fruits, and palm-trees with sheaths and grain in the blade, and fragrant herbs.”\textsuperscript{65} In this verse God says that he has created all things in this world as well as in other one. Pondering on the verse brings out an idea of attention to the creations, as they are all the gifts and bounties of the Allah. Have you been in woodland for a while? If so, have you listened to the sounds of the leaves of the various trees when the wind is blowing on them? Yes the sage one can entirely learn the lesson from them. They are murmuring the holy words and they are worshiping their Creator. See the cedar and think why it is growing tall and tall. Yes, because it desires to rend and split the sky to reach its God. Furthermore, all the nature including flowers, trees, plants, birds, animals, and colours are the signs of All-beautiful and one should respect nature and its creatures. Is it fair to cut the trees, which are shelters for us when we have got warm or are tired? Is it fair to destroy the greenness of the meadows and pastures, which are the paints of the Great Painter? Isn’t it tyranny to imprison the colourful and chanting nightingales in cages?

One should know that a flower is a gift from the paradise and it has the smell of that place. Do we have any beautiful thing than a red-rose? Listen to the peeping and chattering of birds in the early morning, can you find more harmonious music than this, which is composed by the Creator of these lovely
creatures? Every sign of nature really is an evidence of their Possessor. Hence, a Sufi always after seeing these splendid things spontaneously raises his head and hands towards the sky and chants this verse: “Al-hamdo le-allah-e-rabb-e l-aalamin, al-rrahman-e-al-rrahim (Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all being, the All-merciful, the All-compassionate).”

One should respect the rights of nature, animals, and other human beings. We must be in the service of others as all of us are same and from same Essence. In the Holy Koran we have: “taavanoo alal al-berre val-ttagva (help each other in good deeds). So, Sufism strongly recommends acquaintance with the mysteries of Nature and to help other beings.

Nature really is the best and most eloquent teacher for man. One has to go to nature to learn the best and unknown lessons of life. (Shakespeare finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.) When we look to the cataracts while the pure water of them is falling from the top of mountains, there are so many points in the drops of the water and all of them are calling you to praise the Majesty of King of kings. The various colours of leaves of different trees especially in autumn attract the attention of all keen people to adore the Creator of those beauties. Attar tells a beautiful story about the innocence of trees:

“A man cut down a tree one day. A Sufi who saw this said:

‘Look at this fresh branch which is full of sap, happy because it does not yet know that it has been cut off.’

‘Ignorant of the damage which it has suffered it may be – but it will know in due time.’

‘Meanwhile you cannot reason with it.’

This severance, this ignorance, these are the state of man.”
Sa’di in most of his poems and anecdotes gives attention to other human beings and recommends people to help and love each other as all of them are from one essence. He always thinks on the life of others and philanthropically says that the burden of others should bring pain to the others:

When I see the poor dervish unfed
My own food is pain and poison to me.\(^{68}\)

Sa’di reverences and respects the dervishes and poor people as he writes:

One night a king dreamt that he saw a king in paradise and a dervish in hell.
The dreamer exclaimed: ‘what is the meaning of this? I should have thought that the positions would be reversed.’
A voice answered:
‘The king is in heaven because he respected dervishes. The dervish is in hell because he compromised with kings.’\(^{69}\)

### 7. Constant remembrance of God (\textit{dhikr Allah})

It is important to remember here that \textit{dhikr Allah} (remembrance of God or Invocation of God) is a name of the Prophet, and that according to the \textit{Koran} this invocation is ‘greater’ even than the ritual prayer. The word in question could also be translated as ‘greatest’, ‘without comparison’, for both interpretations are linguistically possible; and in the present context it can be affirmed that calling on the Name of God, whether it be accompanied by some other experience or not, is the most powerful vibration towards the Heart. The Prophet said: “There is a polish for everything that taketh away rust; and the polish of the heart is the remembrance of God.”\(^{70}\)

The very act of bringing things into existence is an act of gentleness and kindness. The same point is made in terms of love in a saying constantly
quoted in Sufi texts: “I was a Hidden Treasure,” God says, “so I loved to be known. Hence I created the creatures that I might be known.”

Constant focus on God leads eventually, God willing, to the goal of the Sufi path, which is “union” with God, or the full realization of human perfection, or actualization of the divine image in which human beings were created. 71

Sufis also assert about the remembrance of God (dhikr). It means repeating of God’s names to remove heedlessness and forgetfulness, which are shortcomings.

To be truly human is to remember to acknowledge and confirm what we already know. “Not equal are the blind and the seeing, those who have faith and do wholesome deeds and the ugly-doer. Little do you remember!”72

What needs to be remembered is the Trust, which human beings have accepted to carry by the very fact of being human. In other terms, what needs to be remembered is the truth, the reality, the real (haqq), which is nothing but the plain fact of God’s activity and presence in the world and the soul. To remember God in His activity and presence is to remember Him as He is, and this is to see that there is nothing truly real but the Real.

To achieve a heart at peace in this world and the next, one needs to remember God, for it calls down God’s response. The verse “Remember Me, and I remember you”73 provides a specific practice that is only implied in the verse “say: ‘If you love God, follow me, and God will love you’”74

God said to him, “O Mohammad, I have made you one of the remembrances of Me. Those who remember you remember Me, and those who love you love Me,” hence the Prophet said, “Those who remember me have remembered God, and those who love me have loved God.”75

About the remembrance of God Sa’di is not speaking metaphorically when he says at the beginning of his famous Gulistan, “Every breath taken in
replenishes life, and once let go it gives joy to the soul. So each breath counts as two blessings, and each blessing requires thanksgiving.”

8. Union with Beloved (vesal)

Why a seeker (salik) bears all calamities and hardships of the path voluntarily? Why all bitternesses are sweet in mouth of a real Sufi? Why he night and day is following only the way of the Beloved? There are stormy and dreadful valleys and mountains during his path, but why is he never afraid of them? And really why does he enthusiastically run towards his destination non-stop?

It is because he is a true and faithful lover. It is because he only needs union with the Beloved. There is not any joy for him except the seeing of the Beloved’s face and embracing of Him. The last and final goal of salik really is vesal (Meeting) and nothing can stop the seeker from his strivings.

An exciting story of Farhad and Shirin will illustrate the point. They are two famous lovers in Persian literature. Once Frahad asked Shirin “What should I pay for your vesal?”

She with a big smile on her face told him, “You should dig the mount of Biston by your small hack then you can touch me.”

After a long time and stiffness Farhad finished his mission and reached to Shirin. “Now you are mine as you promised and see how by my hack I have dug the Biston.” He eagerly and proudly told his beloved.

But he was shocked when Shirin told him; “When you had your eyelashes for digging of the mount why did you do it by the hack?” and Farhad did not complain against her because he knew that after vesal all bitter hardships would be sweet for him.
Sorrows, miseries, and all catastrophes will heal when you meet your Ultimate. For a Sufi this Ultimate is God only and nothing can satisfy him except His vesal.

A Sufi is a man of God. He always thinks of God. There is no other friend to him other than the Almighty. He devotes everything to the Allah and not any other one. Rumi explains the man of God splendidly as below:

The man of God is drunken without wine:
The man of God is sated without meat.
The man of God is rapturous, amazed:
The man of God has neither food nor sleep.
The man of God is a king beneath a humble cloak:
The man of God is a treasure in a ruin.
The man of God is not of wind and earth:
The man of God is not of fire and water.
The man of God is a sea without shore:
The man of God rains pearls without a cloud.
The man of God has a hundred moons and skies:
The man of God has a hundred sun shines.
The man of God is wise through truth:
The man of God is not a scholar from a book.
The man of God is beyond faith and disbelief alike:
For the man of God what ‘sin’ or ‘merit’ is there?
The man of God rode away from Non-being:
The man of God has come, sublimely riding.
The man of God is, Concealed, O Shamsuddin!
Search for, and find – the man of God.78

Hafiz in most of his poems in various ways desires union with the Beloved. It is worthwhile to cite some ghazals of him.
At dawn I narrated the tale of my longing to the wind,
I was addressed with these words: “Rely on God’s favour.”
The Morning Prayer and the night’s sigh is the key to the treasure of one’s purpose.
Thus proceed on this path so that you may join the Beloved.79

A Sufi eagerly seeks his Beloved and beseeches Him:

Separate not from me, for, You are the light of my eye,
The ease of my soul, and companion of my affrighted heart.
Lovers would never keep back their hand from Your Lap;
For, You have rent their shirt of patience.80

It is interesting to see how Hafiz elucidates the states of real Lover of Path:

Do you know what joy lies in meeting a Beloved?
And choosing beggary in His Street over royalty?
It is easy to sever one’s desire for life,
But so hard to do so from Dear Friends.81

9. Searching of God through Meditation, Contemplation (fikr), and Heart (qalb)

Sufism is searching for God through contemplation and inner-light which exists in the heart of the man. Man possesses two hearts. One is bodily heart which is the vital member of the body and the other is the spiritual heart, which is saturated with flames of love and will. Through the spiritual heart one can improve one’s humanity, humility, generosity, kindheartedness, and love. The spiritual heart has keen eyes, which help the Sufi to see the unseen and veiled objects. There are so many things, which are not visible to us, and
we cannot see them by the physical eyes, but by the eyes of the heart. Here is the proof from the *Holy Koran*: “it is not the eyes that are blind but the hearts.”

In virtue of being the centre of the body, the heart may be said to transcend the rest of the body, although substantially it consists of the same flesh and blood. The bodily heart receives life from the Divinity (according to Sufi doctrine all life is Divine) and floods the body with life. Therefore, the heart is the nest of Divinity and it can be the house of God, God’s creatures, and love of all. According to the Holy Tradition (*hadith*), we can find this eloquent sentence of God, “My earth hath not room for Me, neither hath My Heaven, but the heart of My believing slave hath room for Me,” and it is an evidence to us. One more evidence is in the lovely poem of the great Sufi Hallaj which begins: “I saw my Lord with the Eye of the Heart. I said: “who art thou?” He answered: “Thou”.”

Attar said:

Someone went up to a madman who was weeping in the bitterest possible way.

He said:

‘Why do you cry?’

The madman answered:

‘I am crying to attract the pity of His Heart.’

The other told him:

‘Your words are nonsense, for he has no physical heart.’

The madman answered

‘It is you who are wrong, for He is the owner of all the hearts which exist.
Through the heart you can make your connection with God.’
Sufis stress inwardness over outwardness, contemplation over action, spiritual development over legalism, and cultivation of the soul over social interaction. On the theological level, Sufis speak of God’s mercy, gentleness, and beauty far more than they discuss His wrath, severity, and majesty.\textsuperscript{86}

There are more Koranic verses about the nearness of God such as. “And we are nearer to him than the jugular vein”\textsuperscript{87} or “And He is with you wherever you are”\textsuperscript{88}

The travellers on God’s path come to know all creation within their own souls, for they travel in a microcosm that embraces all things and all worlds. They keep on ascending in spiritual degrees until, having reached God, they begin the never-ending journey in God and with God.

\textbf{10. Self-knowing leads to knowing of God (khodshenasi va khodashenasi)}

One of the terms often used in the classical texts to designate what we call “Sufism” is \textit{ma’rifa} (or \textit{irfan}), a term that literally means “knowledge” or “recognition”. However, the term connotes a special, deeper knowledge of things that can only be achieved by personal transformation, and hence it is often translated as “gnosis”. The goal and fruit of this type of knowledge is commonly explained by citing the Imam Ali’s saying, “He who knows [\textit{arafa} himself knows his Lord.”\textsuperscript{89} As the \textit{Hadith} suggests, this sort of knowledge demands a simultaneous acquisition of both self-knowledge and God-knowledge. The texts tell us repeatedly that it cannot be found in books. Rather, it is already present in the heart, but it is hidden deep beneath the dross of ignorance, forgetfulness, outwardly oriented activity, and rational articulation. Access to this knowledge comes only by following the path of meditation that leads to human perfection.
Qunawi one of the great Sufi teachers encourages a young disciple to pursue the path of self-knowledge and says that the perfect human being is a book that comprehends all the divine and cosmic books. We said concerning the Real that His knowledge of His Essence entails His knowledge of all things, and that He knows all things by knowing His Essence. In the same way, we say concerning the perfect human being that his knowledge of his essence entails his knowledge of all things and that he knows all things by knowing his essence. This is because; he is all-things in both non-differentiation and differentiation. So, “He who knows himself knows his Lord” and he also knows all things. So, my son, if you reflect upon yourself that is enough for you, since there is nothing outside of you.

The leader of the Gnostics, Ali Ibn Abi Talib, said,

Your cure is within you, but you do not know,
Your illness is from you, but you do not see.
You are the “Clarifying Book”
Through whose letters becomes manifest the hidden.
You suppose that you’re a small body
But the greatest world unfolds within you.
You would not need what is outside yourself
If you would reflect upon self, but you do not reflect.90

11. Annihilation (fana)

Fana (annihilation) and Baqa(subsistence) are derived from the Koranic passage, “Everything upon the earth is undergoing annihilation, but there subsists the face of your Lord, possessor of Majesty and Generous Giving”91. The specific divine name with which this verse ends – “Possessor of Majesty
and Generous Giving” – is especially appropriate in the context of spiritual journey, because it alludes to the two-sided perception of things that needs to be achieved. God is the “Possessor of Majesty,” because He is Great, Distant, Wrathful, Vengeful, King, and Transcendent. His majesty and splendor are such that they annihilate the reality and existence of everything else. Only He is truly worthy to exist. But God is also “Possessor of Generous Giving,” because He is Loving, Merciful, Compassionate, Gentle, Clement, Kind, and Nurturing, and He does nothing but give generously to His creatures. Although His majestic reality annihilates the creatures, His generous bestowal gives them a new reality and true subsistence.

When the Sufis follow the long path back to their Beloved, they pass through numerous “states” (in Sufism ahwal) of the soul – hope and fear, joy and sorrow, expansion and contraction, intoxication and sobriety – and they acquire the “stations” (in Sufism maqqam) that are the soul’s virtues, character traits, and perfections. These states and stations have been described in many Sufi works. In the long poem the Conference of the Birds – one of the most famous and entertaining accounts of a spirit’s journey in Sufi literature – Attar tells how the birds gathered together and decided to travel to their king, the Phoenix. Guided by the hoopoe and undergoing many adventures on the way, they flew across seven valleys – aspiration, love, knowledge, independence, unity, bewilderment, and annihilation – before finally reaching their goal. Other Sufis have numbered the stages of journey as ten, forty, one hundred, three hundred, or even one thousand. Here is a ghazal from Attar on journey by effect of wine:

Tonight I’ll set out half drunk,
My feet dancing, a cup of dregs in my hand.
I’ll turn my head to the scoundrels market
And in one hour lose everything there is.
How long will I display myself falsely?
How long in fancy will I worship self?
The curtain of fancy must be torn,
The repentance of ascetics must be smashed!
The time has come for me to clap my hands –
How long will I remain bound in foot?
O Cupbearer, give me the heart-opening wine right now –
My heart has left me, sorrow sits in my head!
Send the cup around so that we, like Men,
May bring the wheel of heaven under our feet.
We will tear off Jupiter’s cloak
And intoxicate Venus until the resurrection.
Like Attar, we will leave all the directions
And begin dancing in the directionless because of Alast.92

Rumi speaks of the same “directionless” domain as “No-place” – the true “utopia” of the soul. ”Wine” may be an adequate symbol to suggest the drunkenness that overcomes the travellers when they enter the Beloved’s embrace, but, as Rumi suggests here, there is much more to the experience of annihilation and subsistence than mere intoxication.

I know nothing of that wine – I’m annihilated.
I’ve gone too far into No-place to know where I am.
Sometimes I fall to the depths of an ocean,
Then rise up again like the sun.
Sometimes I make a world pregnant,
Sometimes I give birth to a world of creation.
Like a parrot, my soul nibbles on sugar,
Then I become drunk and nibble the parrot.
I can’t be held by any place in the world,
I know nothing but that placeless Friend.
I’m a drunken rascal, totally mad –
Among all the rascals, I make the most noise.
You say to me, “Why don’t you come to yourself?”
You show me myself, I’ll come to it.
The shadow of the Phoenix, has caressed me so much
that you’d say I am the Phoenix, he’s the shadow.
I saw beauty drunk, and it kept on saying,
“I’m affliction, I’m affliction, I’m affliction”
a hundred souls answered it from every direction –
“I’m yours, I’m yours, I’m yours!
“You’re that light kept on saying to Moses,
I’m God, I’m God, I’m God”
I said: “shams of Tabriz, who are you?”
He said: “I’m you, I’m you, I’m you.”

Annihilation in Sufism is called voluntary death also.

12. Importance of living in the moment (zendegi dar zamane hal)

A Sufi lives moment by moment. He does not bother about what is going to happen the next moment. He has no plan for the next moment. A Sufi has no future. This moment is all. He lives in it; he lives totally in it, because there is nowhere else to go. One cannot live in the moment if one has a future – a part of one’s being will be flowing towards the future, naturally. Also if one has a past again one’s part will be in the past and one cannot live entirely in present. If one lives in the past and future, so major part of one’s being will remain hanging somewhere in the past and future and one will not be able to
concentrate in present and consequently will not have contemplation on Sufi orders in one’s path. And really speaking, to live in the mere present one should leave the past and the future and only take care of the present.

When one withdraws from past and future, there comes a concentration of energies and it makes the small moment of present luminous and it will bring joy and happiness. One who is living in the past and future is miserable and sad but a man who lives in the present is in bliss and joy. One who lives in the moment in fact lives in newness. One who can live totally in the moment has life like a child and has the quality of a child extended all over his life. The person who lives in the moment never grows old. He matures, but he never grows old. A man who lives in the moment is full of innocence, curious, thrilling, and wonder and every moment brings a new surprise to him, therefore, the life will not be boring for him. A Sufi concentrates only in the moment. Every moment a Sufi finds a new sign of God and every second of his life spends on the remembrance of God.

A famous aphorism tells us, “The Sufi is the child of the moment” (as-Sufi ibn al-waqt)\textsuperscript{94}. One of its meanings is that the true Sufi lives in constant awareness that his self is nothing but what he is at the moment.

Consequently, a Sufi lives in the present and he never thinks about the past and future because in that case he is led astray from the remembrance of God and his way.

13. Perfect Soul or Perfect Man (rawh-e-kamil ya ensanol kamil)

Human goodness and perfection can be achieved only in terms of God on the one hand and those who have already achieved it on the other, and these are the Prophets. This achievement is to actualize the divine image inherent in the soul, and this depends upon putting the shahadah into practice.\textsuperscript{95}
Man has two souls according to the precursor systems like Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism and also according to Sufism – one is rational and the other is animal called *nafs*. The rational soul is considered the true self of the man, which is different from the body. It is not in the body, but affects the body with its illuminative attribute. About *Ruh* (the self of man) Junaid says: “Only God knows its [ruh’s] essence and nature. Nothing more can be said about it than that it is an existence.”\(^96\) Abu Saidal-Kharaz says, “*Ruh* is created and due to it the body gets existence and life. Intelligence and reason are associated with it.”\(^97\) The *nafs* is associated with material life and carnal desires. The rational soul in its essence is potentially good and pure, and, therefore, can succeed in killing the animal soul, *nafs* and join its original source, which is God. *Ruh* is restless because of its separation from its source and seeks union with it (God).

The precondition for human perfection is to recognize one’s own imperfection and to remember the perfection of the one Reality. But in order to remember the Real in Its fullness, seekers must forget the unreal, which is the western face (as we know the sun rises in the east and sets in the west and west is dark and unclear face) of their own selves and the world. The basic insight here is that awareness is the fundamental reality of human nature, and its content determines who we are. As Rumi puts it,

> You are your thought, brother,  
> The rest of you is bones and fiber.  
> If you think of roses, you are a rose garden,  
> If you think of thorns, you’re fuel for furnace.\(^98\)
In order to learn how to see God in oneself and things, one has to learn how to be aware of God constantly. One has to see the shining light of the risen sun in a landscape that others perceive as shrouded in midnight. All the practices of Islam and Sufism are focused on one goal – allowing people to open up their eyes and see. Numerous Koranic verses and Prophetic sayings speak of this goal with a great variety of images and expressions. One of the most succinct of these and one that has often been taken by Sufi teachers as the definition of the path to God is \textit{tazkiyat an-nafs}, which means “purification of the soul”. The verse is this: “By the soul and that which shaped it, and inspired it to its depravity and its god-wariness. Prosperous is he who purifies it, and failed he who buries it.”\textsuperscript{99}

The Sufis see the stages of physical life as the outward signs of the soul’s blossoming and unfolding. Rumi is well known for his description of the soul’s growth from a stage that is practically inanimate to one that surpasses the angels. The fact that the soul ascends stage by stage explains why, even though “All are He,” no one can truly be aware of this without achieving perfection. As long as people have not passed through the levels of moral and spiritual growth, they will remain ignorant of their own true nature.

The journey towards perfection begins in “nonexistence” with God. Once people hear the command “Be” and acknowledge God at the Covenant of \textit{Alast}, they descend level by level until they enter into the womb, which is the point of creation furthest from the Origin. Then they begin their ascent to God, for all things return to Him, just as all things have come from Him. The two journeys – from God to the world and from the world to God – are often called the two “arcs” of the Circle of Existence. In one sense the return to God is compulsory, since it represents the natural unfolding of the creative process, and no one has any choice in the matter. “To Him has submitted whose is in
the Heavens and in the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and to Him they shall be returned.”100 But there is also a voluntary return that is the prerogative of human beings, since they alone, made upon God’s form, have been given a sufficient share of the divine freedom to shape their own destinies.

Rumi says:

At every instant and from every side, resounds the call of Love:
We are going to sky, who wants to come with us?
We have gone to heaven; we have been the friends of the angels,
And now we will go back there, for there is our country.
We are higher than heaven, more noble than the angels:
Why not go beyond them? Our goal is the Supreme Majesty.
What has the fine pearl to do with the world of dust?
Why have you come down here? Take your baggage back. What is this place?
Luck is with us, to us is the sacrifice!...
Like the birds of the sea, men come from the ocean - the ocean of the soul.
Like the birds of the sea, men come from the ocean - the ocean of the soul.
How could this bird, born from that sea, make his dwelling here?
No, we are the pearls from the bosom of the sea, it is there that we dwell:
Otherwise how could the wave succeed to the wave that comes from the soul?
The wave named ‘Am I not your Lord’ has come; it has broken the vessel of the body;
And when the vessel is broken, the vision comes back, and the union with Him.101

According to Islamic doctrine, Perfection is a synthesis of the qualities of Majesty and Beauty.

14. Purity (tazkiyeh ya paki)

As previously mentioned, one of the meanings of the word Sufi is ‘purity’ and the Sufi is one who finally gets purity of his heart, otherwise he cannot be
a Sufi. Bisher al-Hafi, one of the great early Sufis of Baghdad, said expressly in explaining this term: “The Sufi is he who keeps his Heart pure (safi).”\(^{102}\) We got the water of life (in here water can symbolize the purity) from the God only, and this water is extremely pure as its origin is Divine Origin. A Sufi always tries to go back to his Pure Origin.

As human beings are not pure they cannot find Real Purity. Human soul has a big hindrance against itself and it is the dust of its body. God Himself in the Holy Koran has mentioned that after creating the human body from some clay He breathed His Spirit into him, and then the human body really is a cage and dust for the soul. Soul is like a clear mirror but the body is some dust on that mirror and that is why Rumi mourns about it like this:

Life/Soul is like a clear mirror; the body is dust on it.
Beauty in us is not perceived, for we are under the dust.\(^{103}\)

And again how enchantingly Rumi symbolizes the soul as sweet-voiced birds, which are imprisoned in cages.

Only sweet-voiced birds are imprisoned.
Owls are not kept in cages.\(^{104}\)

Rumi says that one should clean the dust of impurity from the mirror of one’s heart; otherwise one cannot see the Beloved.

“The Beloved is all, the lover just a veil.
The Beloved is living, the lover a dead thing.
If Love withholds its strengthening care,
The lover is left like a bird without wings.
How will I be awake and aware
If the light of the Beloved is absent?
Love wills that this Word be brought forth.
If you find the mirror of the heart dull,
The rust has not been cleared from its face.”

Famous Sufi Orders of the World:

1. The Chishti Order (Persian: چیشتنی) is a Sufi order (tariqa) of Islam which was founded in Chisht, now Afghanistan, about 930 C.E. and continues even today. The Chishti Order is known for its emphasis on love, tolerance, and openness. The order was founded by Abu Ishaq Shami (the Syrian) who brought Sufism to the town of Chisht, some 95 miles east of Herat in the present-day Afghanistan. Before returning to the Levant, Shami initiated, trained and deputized the son of the local Amir, (Khwaja) Abu Ahmad Abdal (d. 966). Under the leadership of Abu Ahmad’s descendants, the Chishtiyya as they are also known flourished as a regional mystical order. The most famous of the Chishti saints is Moinuddin Chishti (also known as Khawaja Baba) who settled in Ajmer, India. He oversaw the growth of the order in the 13th century as religious laws were canonized. He saw Muhammad in a dream and then set off on a journey of discovery.

Other famous saints of the Chishti Order are Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi, Fariduddin Ganjshakar of Pak Pattan, Mohammed Badesha Qadri of Wadi, Qutubuddin Bakhtiar Kaki and Hazrat Ashraf Jahangir Semnani of Kicchocha Sharif, Uttar Pradesh.

The Order traces its origins through various saints all the way to Imam Ali and Prophet Muhammad himself.

2. The Malamiyya (ملاومیه) is a category of persons, who, in the mystical
branch of Islam, sometimes known as Sufism, represent, according to prominent Sufis like Ibn al-'Arabi, the highest category of occulted or hidden Sufi Saint. They have also been associated with various splinter groups within Sufism that arose in Khorasan in the 9th century AD (2nd–3rd centuries AH), originally under the impetus of Hamdun al-Qassar but this association only gives a partial understanding of individuals known by this rank. They are also sometimes known as the Malamati, Malamatiyya or malamiyyah, all terms being variable derivations from Malamiyya. The legendary figure of the mysterious "Green One", al Khidr, is also often associated, as it is in the famous Koranic meeting with Prophet Moses, with those whose substance is concealed from men and who, in teaching Moses, breaks with conventional ways of acquiring true knowledge of God. Farid, in one of his Odes quoted by R.A. Nicholson in his Studies in Islamic Mysticism, describes the Malamiyya thus: "My fellows in the religion of love are those who love; and they have approved my ignominy and thought well of my disgrace". Ibn al-'Arabi, by contrast, calls the Malamiyya "the most perfect of the gnostics", those who "know and are not known".

3. Qadiriyyah (Arabic: القدريه) (also transliterated Qadiri and Qadri), is one of the oldest Sufi tariqas, derives its name from Abdul Qadir Jilani (also transliterated as "Jil lani" or "Jailani") (1077-1166), a native of the Iranian province of Gilan. In 1134 he was made principal of a Hanbalite school in Baghdad.

The Order is the most widespread of the Sufi Orders in the Islamic world and can be found in India, Pakistan, Turkey, the Balkans as well as much of the East and West Africa. There are even small groups in Europe and America. The famous traveller and writer Isabelle Eberhardt also belonged to
the Qadiri order.

4. The **Mevlevi Order** or the **Mevleviye** is a Sufi order founded by the followers of Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi in 1273 in Konya (in present-day Turkey). They are also known as the **Whirling Dervishes** due to their famous practice of whirling as a form of dhikr (remembrance of Allah). Dervish is a common term for an initiate of the Sufi Path.

The Mevleviye, one of the most well known of the Sufi orders, was carried on in 1273 by Rumi's followers after his death, particularly by his successor Hüsamettin Çelebi who decided to build a mausoleum for Mewlâna, and then Mewlâna's son, Sultan Veled Celebi (or Çelebi, Chelebi) (the word "Çelebi" means " fully initiated"). He was an accomplished Sufi mystic with great organizing talents. His personal efforts were continued by his successor Ulu Arif Çelebi.

5. The **Mouride brotherhood** (**Muride brotherhood** in Wolof, الطريقة المريدية, **Aṭ-Ṭariqat al-Muridiyya** or simply **مريدية, Muridiyya** in Arabic) is a large Islamic Sufi order (**ṭariqa**) most prominent in Senegal and The Gambia, with headquarters in the holy city of Touba, Senegal (**Tuubaa** in Wolof, طيبي, Ṭuba in Arabic). Mourides sometimes call their order the **Way of Imitation of the Prophet**. The followers are called **mourides** (**murid** in Wolof), from the Arabic word **murid** (literally "one who desires"), a term used generally in Sufism to designate a disciple of a spiritual guide (**murshid**). The beliefs and practices of the Mourides constitute **Mouridism**.

The Mouride brotherhood was founded in 1883 in Senegal by **Shaykh Aḥmadu Bamba Mbâkke**, commonly known as **Amadou Bamba** (1850-1927). In Arabic he is known as **Aḥmad ibn Muhammad ibn Habib Allah, or Khadimu r-Rasul, "Servant of the Prophet". In the Wolof language he is called
Sëriñ Tuubaa, "Holy Man of Touba". He was born in the village of Mbacké in the Kingdom of Baol, the son of a marabout from the Qadiriyya brotherhood, the oldest of the Muslim brotherhoods in Senegal.

6. **Naqshbandi (Naqshbandiyya)** is one of the major Sufi orders (tariqa) of Islam. Formed in 1380, the order is considered by some to be a "sober" order known for its silent dhikr (remembrance of God) rather than the vocalized forms of dhikr common in other orders.

The Naqshbandi order is also notable as it is the only Sufi order to trace its spiritual lineage (silsilah) to Muhammad through Abu Bakr, the first caliph. In contrast, most other turuq trace their lineage to Ali ibn Abu Talib, Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law and fourth caliph.

The word Naqshbandi is Persian, taken from the name of the founder of the order, Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari. Some have said that the translation means "related to the image-maker," some also consider it to mean "Pattern Maker" rather than "image maker," and interpret "Naqshbandi" to mean "Reformer of Patterns", and others consider it to mean "Way of the Chain" or "Golden Chain."

7. **Maktab Tarighat Oveyssi Shahmaghsoudi** (School of Islamic Sufism) traces its roots through an unbroken lineage of successive Sufi masters extending back to the Islamic prophet Muhammad, Imam Ali, and Oveys Gharani (Arabic: أويس القرني Uwais al-Qarni), who lived in Yemen at the time of Muhammad. Imam Ali represents the essence of the teachings of the School of Islamic Sufism. He was not only the closest companion of Hazrat-e-Muhammad, but had also received and recognized the teachings of Muhammad inwardly. Oveys on the other hand, had received the teachings of Islam inwardly through his heart, and lived by the principles taught by him.
although he had never physically met Muhammad.

At times Muhammad would say of him. "I feel the breath of the Merciful, coming to me from Yemen." Shortly before Muhammad died, he directed Omar (second Caliph) and Ali (the first Imam of the Shi'a) to take his cloak for Oveys. According to Hujwiri, Farid al-Din Attar, and Sheikh Mohammad Ghader Bagheri, the first recipient of Mohammad’s cloak was Oveys Gharani.

8. The Rifa'i (also Rufa'i) is a Sufi order most commonly found in the Arab Middle East and also in Turkey and the Balkans. They have sometimes been (somewhat pejoratively) called the 'howling dervishes' due to what some see as their 'excessive' practices during their dhikr. Much of this may be due to cultural misunderstanding from 19th century Western travellers to the Middle East who may have viewed their practices as strange or excessive. They have been known to pierce their bodies using skewers and place hot irons in their mouths without injury, practices that, though having caught the imagination of Western travellers such as E.W. Lane in the last century, have also incurred the wrath of both strict theologians such as ibn Taymiyyah and modern reformists alike.

It is said that founder Sheikh Ahmed ar-Rifa'i was an extremely pious man of a humble nature who preferred to be amongst the poor and weak of society. He was born in 1118 in Basra in southern Iraq and died in 1181 in West in Iraq. He was a descendant of Muhammad and related to Sheikh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani. It is also said that the story of his followers being able to pierce their bodies without injury relates to a time when Sheikh Ahmed ar-Rifa'i went to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. On arriving at Medina and wishing to visit Muhammad's burial site the guard would not permit him entry due to the fact that he was not wearing the clothes of a 'Sayyid' (descendant of Muhammad)
at this he is reported to have said: "As-Salam alayka ya jeddi" (Peace be upon you O my ancestor). At which Muhammad replied: "Alaykum salam Ya walidi" (Upon you be peace O my son) and his hand came out from the tomb which Ahmed ar-Rifa'i kissed. On seeing this people around him fell into ecstasy and began stabbing themselves with knives and swords. When this moment had passed and on seeing the injured people lying around him Sheikh Ahmed ar-Rifa'i went amongst them and healed them, since then the Rifa'i Tariqa has always had this gift to heal.

9. The Tariqa ash Shadhiliya is the Sufi order founded by Abu-l-Hassan ash-Shadhili. Followers, or murids (Arabic: seekers), of the Shadhiliya, are often known as Shadhilis.

It is the most popular Sufi order in North Africa and many of its followers have made great contributions to Arab and Islamic literature, most notably Sheikh Ibn 'Ata Allah, author of the Hikam amongst other works, Sheikh Ahmed Zarruq, who died in Libya, who was the author of a commentary upon the Risala of al-Qayrawani (a standard work in Maliki Islamic jurisprudence) and a commentary upon the Hikam, he also wrote extensively on religion (Sufism) and law. Sheikh ibn Ajibah also wrote a commentary upon the Koran. Many of the sheikhs of al-Azhar University in Egypt have also been followers of the Shadhili tariqa.

The Swedish impressionist painter and Sufi scholar Sheikh Abd Al-Hadi Aqhili (1869-1917) was the first official Moqaddam (representative) of the Shadhili Order in Western Europe.

The Hamadiyya Shadhili branch is most popular. The Darqawi Shadhili branch is found mostly in Morocco and the Alawiyya (no connection to the Turkish or Syrian Alawi or Alevi groups) is found mostly in Algeria but now
also in Syria, Jordan, and France amongst French North-Africans. The British Muslim convert Martin Lings wrote an extensive biography of the founding Sheikh of this branch, Sheikh Ahmad al-Alawi, entitled 'A Sufi Saint of the 20th century.'

10. **Suhrawardyya** (Arabic: سهروردية) is the name of a Sufi order founded by Iranian Sufi Diya al-din Abu 'n-Najib as-Suhrawardi (1097 – 1168). Many Sufis from all over the Islamic world joined the order under the founder's nephew Shihab ad-din Abu Hafs Umar (1145 – 1234). Later the Order spread into India.

A well known member of the order was Shihabuddin Yahya as-Suhrawardi (1153 - 1191).

11. The **Tijaniyyah** (Arabic: الطريقة التجانية, transliterated: Al-Ţariqah al-Tijaniyyah, or "The Tijani Path") is a sufi ʿtariqah (order, path) originating in North Africa but now more widespread in West Africa, particularly in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, and Northern Nigeria and Sudan. Its adherents are called **Tijani** (spelled Tijaan or Tiijaan in Wolof, Tidiane or Tidjane in French). Tijani attach a large importance to culture and education, and emphasize the individual adhesion of the disciple (murid). To become a member of the order, one must receive the Tijaniwert, or a sequence of holy phrases to be repeated twice daily, from a muqaddam, or representative of the order.

Sidi 'Ahmad al-Tijani (1737-1815), who was born in Algeria and died in Fez, Morocco, founded the Tijaniorder around 1781. Tijani Islam, an "Islam for the poor," reacted against the conservative, hierarchical Qadiriyyah brotherhood then dominant, focusing on social reform and grass-roots Islamic
revival.

12. **Universal Sufism** (Arabic: الطريقة للصوفية عالمية "At-Tarīqat As-Sūfīyyat 'Alamīyya") is a spiritual and universal movement founded by Hazrat Inayat Khan in the early 20th century. The philosophy of Universal Sufism is based on unity of all people and religions, and the presence of spiritual guidance in all people, places and things.

Universal Sufism is one of the forms of Sufism that has its root in but does not exist within the traditional framework of Islam. Universal Sufism is characterised by its respect for other devotional traditions and for spiritual liberty. Universal Sufis come from all the major religions and often continue to practise their original root religion concurrently with Universal Sufism.

Universal Sufism is sometimes alternatively named the "Chishtiya Inayati" Order in honour of its origins in the Chishti Sufi Order.

**Sufi Literature:**

Around 1000 AD, Sufism’s teachings and doctrines were put into writing. For the next four centuries, Sufi literature flourished in the form of manuals, mystical tales and anecdotes, treatises on Islamic theology, philosophy, metaphysics and mystical poetry. Sufi manuals were for the instruction and practice of new "initiates," in various orders. They took a form of "master-disciple" instruction on correct behavior and conduct within the order. They also dealt with strict "obedience" to the master, methods of "dhikr" and meditation, and also with piety and devotion to God. A famous classical manual is by Ibn Arabi called, *Journey to the Lord of Power*, which is a handbook on spiritual retreat. Tales and anecdotes in the form of literature are
really meant as "teaching tales," with the purpose of driving home a moral or mystical point.

Some of the tales are elaborate and allegorical in their content. A classical example is Attar's *Conference of the Birds*, and Sa’di's *The Rose Garden*, and many others by Arabic and Persian authors and poets. Classical Sufi treatises on the nature and essence of Sufism and Islamic theology were written by the famous Sufi philosopher Al Gazali, who lived in Damascus, Syria around 1100 AD. His famous work called *Reconstruction of Religious Sciences* and *Alchemy of Happiness* are classic examples. Another Sufi master Ibn Arabi, born in Spain around 1160 AD, is perhaps the most profound Sufi author of his time. Two of his famous works are called *Bezels of Wisdom*, and *Meccan Revelations*. They deal with theories of pantheism and monotheism, such as the theory that asserts that "God is Nature, and Nature God." The other theory differentiates God from Nature, by asserting that "God is above Nature, which He created." Yet other theories deal with the "Unity of Being," and the "wisdom of prophecy," and so on.

Studies based on such works are still subjects for Sufi contemplation and meditation. Sufi poetry is recited by Sufis to enhance mystical awareness. Such poetry written in the "classical era" was by Arabic poet Ibn-al-Farid, and Persian poets such as Hafiz, Sa’di, Jami and Rumi. Rumi perhaps is the best known in the West for his monumental poetic works called the *Mathnavi* and *Divan-i-shams*. Rumi wrote over 70,000 verses of intoxicating poetry in Persian language. He sings constantly of the trials of separation from the Beloved and the joys of union with Him.

Poetic imagery both symbolic and mystical depicts the central themes with which all Sufis are familiar. They are the "pangs of separation of the lover from the Beloved," the individual soul's" desire for mystical union with the
"Universal soul". These are some of the important themes. Classical and modern Sufi poetry can be found from North Africa and Middle East, to India and Indonesia.

The grand theological theme of the Sufi authors is epitomized in the Hadith of God’s precedent mercy, which the Sufis understood to mean that God’s nearness is more real than His distance. God is always present, and the perception of His absence will eventually disappear. In the Koran it is mentioned that “wherever you turn, there is the face of God.”

It is noteworthy to mention here that the best selling poet of America in 2006 was not Whitman, Dickinson, Frost or Emerson but a Sufi mystic; Jalal-uddin Rumi, who was born in Afghanistan, on the borders of the Persian Empire (Iran). Rumi is one of the best-known Sufi poets but digging deep into the realms of Persian literature we find a wealth of Sufi poetry, which even today retains a universal and timeless appeal.

Sufism is the mystical branch of Islam. It has its roots in the Koran and the Islamic tradition, but at the same times encompasses the universal mysticism that we see in other spiritual traditions. The essence of Sufism is the simple path of loving God. The Sufi Masters sing of the all-pervading love which inundates their being when they become one with their “Beloved”. If there is just one goal of Sufism, it is to overcome the attachment to the binding ego and attain liberation through realizing one’s identity with God. And thus the Sufi poets speak of dying to be born again, a concept similar to other mystical traditions such as transmigration in Hinduism.

Often the great Sufi poets lived during times of religious fundamentalism. The authorities censored them, because they openly taught that man could have a direct contact with God. As a result poets such as Hafiz developed an
increasing array of metaphors and synonyms to describe God. Frequently we come across references such as Friend, Beloved, Father, Mother, the Wine seller, the Problem giver, and the Problem solver. This ambiguity in describing God served a dual purpose. Firstly it made it difficult for his poetry to be censored for its unorthodox mystical ideas. It also illustrates the inherent difficulty a poet has in describing the nature of God. The infinite is beyond all names and form. How can the poet describe that which is beyond words?

Poetic license allows the Sufi poets to convey the experience of God’s presence with imagery that shocks the conventionally pious and flies in the face of juridical and theological discourse. In the best examples, such as those in Ibn al-Farid in Arabic, Attar, Rumi, and Hafiz in Persian and Yunus Emre in Turkish, simply hearing the poetry – especially when well recited or sung – gives rise to marvelous joy.  

Sufis commonly called the direct knowledge of God “unveiling”. Partly because unveiling often takes the form of a visionary, imagistic knowledge, they made frequent use of poetry to express their teachings about God, the world, and the human soul. Many of them felt that poetry was the ideal medium for expressing the truths of the most intimate and mysterious relationship that human beings can achieve with God, that is, loving Him and being loved by Him.

**Four major Persian Sufi Poets:**

**Rumi** (30 September 1207 – 17 December 1273)

Mawlanā – literally ‘our master’ – Jelal-ud-Din Mohammad Ibn Mohammad Husain al-Rumi, is considered by both East and West, as one of the greatest mystical poets the world has ever seen.
Born in Afghanistan in the province of Balkh in 1207 A.D, he was of royal descent. His mother belonged to a princely house whose roots could be traced to the immediate family of the prophet Mohammed and his father; Baha-ud-Din Velad was a descendent of the Caliph Abu Bekr. He himself, according to legend, was born a self-realized soul. His father adhered strongly to orthodox Islamic values, even when they conflicted with those at the royal court. Perhaps on account of this, or of the advancing Mongol hordes, in 1219, Baha-ud-Din was obliged to flee Balkh, which was until then capital of the Khawarzam Shahi dynasty and renowned for its cultural and intellectual enrichment. Jelal, just five years of age at the time, spent his early childhood as a fugitive, moving along with the family from city to city. Jelal-ud-din was a strange child, who, even at this tender age, saw visions and went into ecstasies, but often, also became restless and uneasy. His father would soothe him, saying that these were angelic presences that came to greet him from the invisible world. Word of these visitations spread and people looked upon the boy as khudavendgar—God absorbed. While traveling extensively through the East, at Nishapur in Iran, the family met the Sufi saint Attar, an aged and revered figure. Attar divined Jelal's spirituality and presented him with a copy of his Asrar-namah - the book of mysteries, and told Baha-ud-Din “soon your son would set on fire the consumed ones of the world.”

Rumi’s major work, generally considered to be one of the world’s greatest books, is his Mathnavi-I-Maanavi (Couplets of Inner Meaning). His table-talk (Fihi Ma Fihî), letters (Maktubat), Divan Shams Tabriz, and the hagiography Munqib el-Arefin, all contain important parts of his teachings. Rumi, like other authors, plants his teachings within a framework, which as effectively screens its inner meaning as displays it. This technique fulfils the purpose of
preventing those who are incapable of using the material on a higher level from experimenting effectively with it; allowing those who want poetry to select poetry; giving entertainment to people who want stories; stimulating the intellect in those who prize such experiences. Rumi had the uncomfortable Sufi habit of excelling in literary and poetic ability beyond all his contemporaries, while constantly affirming that such an attainment was a minor one compared with Sufi-hood.

Hafiz (1325 AD-1390 AD)

Shemsuddin Mahommed, better known by his poetical surname of Hafiz, was born in Shiraz in the early part of the fourteenth century. His names, being interpreted, signify the Sun of the Faith, the Praiseworthy, and one who can recite the Koran; he is further known to his compatriots under the titles of the Tongue of the Hidden and the Interpreter of Secrets. The better part of his life was spent in Shiraz, and he died in that city towards the close of the century. The exact date either of his birth or of his death is unknown. He fell upon turbulent times. His delicate love-songs were chanted to the rude accompaniment of the clash of arms, and his dreams must have been interrupted often enough by the nip of famine in a beleaguered town, the inrush of conquerors, and the flight of the defeated.

Hafiz is a name that has found its way into many parts of world, and lovers of fine poetry have become familiar with this great Iranian poet’s lyrics (ghazal), through the translation of his sonnets into various languages. Iranians read his poems, not only as an entertainment, but very often they open Divan of Hafiz at random as a means of divination and augury. They regard Hafiz’s poems as a good omen for starting their works such as marriage, travel, job starting, and so on. His sonnets contain an atmosphere of
faith, sincerity, mysticism, spirituality, theology, love, and religiousness. The word “Hafiz”, meaning “memorizer” is a word chosen by the poet himself as a pen name after he had memorized all the verses of the *Holy Koran* and had also undertaken the task of teaching the *Koran*. He used this pen name in the last couplet of all his sonnets, addressed to himself as a concluding point in that piece. Later on in his life, Hafiz got the name “khajeh”, to indicate his intellectual and spiritual position as a master of poetry and a reverent man of learning.

**Sa’di** (1184 – 1283/1291?)

A new height in Persian lyric poetry is reached in the thirteenth century with Sa’di, a versatile poet and writer of rare passion and eloquence. He holds a position in Persian literature, in terms of the power of expression and the depth and breadth of his sensibilities, comparable to that of Shakespeare in English letters. His sparkling *ghazals* display a youthful love of life and passion for beauty, be it natural, human, or divine. Sa’di’s dexterous use of rhetorical devices is often disguised by the beguiling ease of his locution and the effortless flow of his style; his masterly language has been a model of elegant and graceful writing. Poet, prose writer and thinker, Muslihuddin Abu Muhammad Abdullah ibn Mushrifuddin Sa’di, also referred to as Shaykh Sa’di and Sa’di Shirazi, was born in Shiraz in or around 1200. He died in Shiraz in or around 1292 of old age.

After the composition of the *Gulistan*, in 1258, Sa’di went into retirement and was heard of no more. He is the quintessential Muslim humanist, the first such wise man to be recognized in the West. The world honours Sa’di today by gracing the entrance to the Hall of Nations in New York with this call for breaking all barriers:
Of one Essence is the human race,
Thusly has Creation put the Base;
One Limb impacted is sufficient,
For all Others to feel the Mace.

The opening statement of the *Gulistan* followed by this:

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MERCIFUL THE CLEMENT,

Laudation to the God of majesty and glory! Obedience to him is a cause of approach and gratitude in increase of benefits. Every inhalation of the breath prolongs life and every expiration of it gladdens our nature; wherefore every breath confers two benefits and for every benefit gratitude is due.

Whose hand and tongue is capable
To fulfill the obligations of thanks to him?

Words of the most high: Be thankful, O family of David, but few of my servants are thankful.

It is best to a worshipper for his transgressions
To offer apologies at the throne of God,
Although what is worthy of his dignity
No one is able to accomplish.

**Omar Khayyam** (1048 AD-1131 AD)

Omar Khayyam's full name was Ghiyath al-Din Abu'l-Fath Umar ibn Ibrahim Al-Nisaburi al-Khayyami. A literal translation of the name al-Khayyami (or al-Khayyam) means tent maker and this may have been the
trade of Ibrahim his father. Khayyam played on the meaning of his own name when he wrote:

Khayyam, who stitched the tents of science,
Has fallen in grief's furnace and been suddenly burned,
The shears of Fate have cut the tent ropes of his life,
And the broker of Hope has sold him for nothing!

Omar Khayyam was an important philosopher, scientist, and practical instructor in Sufism. His name is well known in European literature mainly because of Edward Fitzgerald, who in Victorian times published a few of Omar’s quatrains in English.\footnote{109} Omar Khayyam’s teaching-poems, and those of other members of his school which have become an accepted part of this material, are based upon the special terminology and allegory of Sufism. Swami Govinda Tirtha made a full investigation and translation in 1941, published under the title of The Nectar of Grace.\footnote{110}

This chapter shows the history, origin, salient elements, and literature of Sufism and eminent Persian Sufi Poets. The next chapter will examine the elements of Sufism in various essays of Emerson and also it shows the impact of the East on Emerson’s prose.
Notes and References:

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6. Osho. p. 11
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8 Osho. P. 21
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14. Ibid. P. 223
16. Ibid. Pp. 15-6
17. Sharda. P. 23
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26. Shah. P. 222  
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92. Chittick. P. 93
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