The present study aimed at studying Sufism in the context of a few modern disciplines. Sufism has always been a favourite research topic for historians as well as theologians. As a result a lot of historical and theological accounts of Sufism are available. A lot of biographical studies of the prominent Sufis are also available and people like to write and read the biographical and historical accounts of Sufism.

Many philosophical (theological) studies have also been done that involves a tough discussion on different issues like *tawhid, nabuwat, rasalat* etc. But very few studies, say no study, are available that studies Sufism juxtaposing with the modern studies. This present study was an attempt to fill up this gap.

The present research believes that Sufism like all other mystic approaches is an esoteric science of soul. The great Sufi masters tried to study and transform the human nature by applying their own methods.

With this basic proposition that Sufism is a science of the soul, the present researcher attempted to juxtapose it with two of the modern sciences of the soul – Psychoanalysis and the Transpersonal Psychology.

Psychoanalysis as we studied in the first part, originated in the clinic of a neurologist who discovered the causes of the physical sickness in the mind and found out that as the sick mind was cured of its aberrations the physical symptoms vanished. The cure of the unhinged mind entailed a method that was called Psychoanalysis by its propounder Sigmund Freud. He emphasized the role of the unconscious mind in controlling our behaviour.

Psychoanalysis traced the roots of mental aberrations in childhood. Thus psychoanalysis, then, devoted its complete attention to the study of childhood
experiences and deduced from it the later abnormalities in behaviour. It proposed a few psychosexual developmental stages. These stages describe how a child develops its instinctual energies and reaches adolescence. Psychoanalysis does not say much about the developmental stages beyond adolescence. It keeps mum what it means to be a mature human being (although later psychoanalysts like Erikson tried to explore this dimension but he is more concerned with the identity problems).

Despite many disparities there are a few basic common similarities between Psychoanalysis and Sufism. The aim of psychoanalysis is ‘insight into one’s own nature, the achievement of freedom, happiness and love, liberation of energy, salvation from being insane or crippled.’

The aim of psychoanalysis is to make the unconscious conscious. It means to have a deep insight into oneself, to know the repressed and the unknown ‘contents’ of the mind. It means to know oneself. This is what is aimed in the Sufi Suluk. Sufis believe that ‘who knows one’s self knows God’. ‘Murakkaba’ and ‘Mushahada’ and Muhasiba aim at this process. The Sufi delves deeper into his self in ‘Murakkaba’ and Muhasiba where he achieves the ‘Mushahada’ of his deeper Self. The Sufi way to the spiritual growth is called tazkiya. The word tazkiya (as we discussed earlier) means – de-repression, it means growth. The term ‘tazkiya-i nafs’ includes the methods of psychoanalysis. It rather is a spiritual psycho-synthesis in which the discordant elements of the mind unite to make a vital experience of ecstasy and love.

Psychology as a science of behavior was called Behaviorism that tried to work upon the principles of the natural sciences. It avoided the study of mental phenomena called soul, mind, consciousness, subjective experiences etc. The study of mysticism and religious experiences was dubbed as unscientific and beyond the parameters of the modern psychology. The people who advocated materialism dominated the fields of
psychology. Behaviorism suited their approaches and ideologies. Gradually it so happened that psychology declared that no such experiences as mystic and religious exist as such. As a reaction to this reductive approaches there arose Humanistic Psychology under the leadership of Abraham Maslow. Proceeding in the same line there came to exist Transpersonal Psychology.

'Gradually it became apparent that Western culture and psychology are what anthropologists call monophasic. That is, we value and conceive our worldview almost exclusively from a single state of consciousness our usual waking state. By contrast, polyphasic cultures and psychological desire their world view from a multiple estates, including waking, dreaming, and various contemplative states. One of the goals of transpersonal psychology was to expand the scope of Western psychology to encompass a polyphasic perspective.

'Transpersonal experiences can be defined as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (trans) the individual or personal to encompass wider and deeper aspects of humankind, life, psyche, and cosmos.'

With this development in psychology, the psychologists have started taking interest in the traditional disciplines.

'That is, contemporary Western psychology and ancient contemplative disciplines from around the world are beginning to intersect in their mapping of transpersonal development.'

In this transpersonal approach in psychology "spirituality and mysticism are regarded as important human dimensions." 

Sufism is an ancient science of the soul but has a possibility to re-interpret itself.

2 Ibid, p. 111
3 Ibid, p. 112
in the modern terms, has been taken as a study in the Transpersonal Psychology. The Sufi texts are full of the descriptions of the transpersonal and growth experiences of the great Sufi masters. They describe the growth of the person’s spiritual experiences in compact as well as detailed descriptions. They elucidate what are the further maturity levels after a person has resolved its basic existential crises. Psychoanalysis has kept silence on what happens when a person grows spiritually. Freud interprets every psychological experience reducing it to the psychosexual developmental stages. Freud’s psychoanalysis does not leave any scope for the spiritual maturity levels.

Sufism described a few other developmental stages (as we studied in previous chapters) which results in the deepest transformation of identity, life-style and relationship to the world and cosmos.

The Sufi practices termed in short mujahida and mushahida, and Muhasiba or tazkiya-i nafs serve almost the same purpose of knowing, resolving and sublimating the intra psychic conflicts as is done in Psychoanalytic process of psychotherapy. Even Freud despite himself has to accept it though very cautiously when he writes (while describing the conceptions of human mind constituting of the three agencies id, ego and superego).

'It is easy to imagine, too, that certain mystical practices may succeed in upsetting the normal relations between the different regions of the mind, so that, for instance, perception may be able to grasp happenings in the depths of the ego and in the id which were otherwise inaccessible to it. It may safely be doubted, however, whether this road will lead us to the ultimate truths from which salvation is to be expected. Nevertheless it may be admitted that the therapeutic efforts of psychoanalysis have chosen a similar line of approach.'

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1 New Introductory Lectures, op. cit., p. 112
Transpersonal Psychology in fact came into existence only after reviewing the ancient sciences –

‘Gradually there emerged the recognition that aspects of certain non-Western psychologies, such as those associated with Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism and Taoism, were sophisticated systems especially concerned with well-being and human potential. The accumulation of empirical research in such areas as bio-feedback, meditation, lucid dreaming and various altered states of consciousness gradually lent research support to the emerging transpersonal perspective.’

Sufism as a transpersonal psychology seeks for those experiences in which the sense of identity or self spreads beyond the individual personality or ego to embrace aspects of the whole cosmos. These are those experiences what Abraham Maslow called “The farther reaches of human nature.” But whereas Maslow only hints and have a meager idea only of these transpersonal beings, Sufi texts describe in detail the contents of these experiences. (Though one has to first train himself for perceiving the esoteric meanings hidden in those texts). For example Hallaj’s text ‘Tawasin’ when read carefully reveals how the ‘personal “I” of the recipient of experience becomes the Universal “I”.’

This is what we mean by the transpersonal growth of the self in Sufism and this we have tried to study in the previous chapters in the context of a few modern approaches. Ibn Arabi and Attar’s works describe the cosmic bearings of the human soul. Sufi conception of human being unlike Psychoanalysis is not libidinal. Sufis conceive man in a healthy self-conception and believe that our behaviour depends on our self-conceptions. They preach to form a better self concept. So says Mulla Sadra the great sage and philosopher of Shiraz --

و نسلمکاً و هرکک م نخیر باد تخد را

For religion and mysticism self is a problem. Self is something to be surmounted, crushed, repressed or removed. All the religions consider the individual self as something to remove away. For a mystic and religious person self is always an obstacle in the way of self-realization. The self is dirty, lusty, it causes sufferings it makes you feel embarrassment in various situations.

But the self ceases to be a problem when it functions in a certain prescribed way. In Sufism the ‘nafs-i ammarah’ is a cause of suffering but when it is transformed into the ‘nafs-i-mutmaina’ it is a problem no more. The self becomes a bliss in its transcendence.

In Sufism also the self is presented in two modes –

a) As a problem
b) As a bliss.

When the self is narcissistic and egotistic it causes anguish and pain's. But when the same self is purified, it becomes bliss. But between these two stations there is a very tedious journey to be traveled by the self as described by the mystic in their wonderful texts like Fariduddin Attar’s Mantiq al-Tair and many others.

Psychoanalyst studies the self as a problem and Transpersonal Psychology studies self as a bliss. Sufi texts describe how the problematic self is disciplined to achieve the state of blissfulness.

Lewisohn (1999) presents this in a better way. While describing the views of the great Sufi thinker Shaikh Suhrawardi Maqtul –

‘The methodology employed by Suhrawardi in order to bring the self to its fullness can be formulated into four steps or journeys, as follows: realization, separation, destruction and annihilation. The first two, that is, the realization that there is an ‘I’, and

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that it is separate from its attributes, is the task of philosophy. Destruction of the accidental qualities of the self, that is to say, worldly desires and finally, annihilation is the task of the ascetic practices and Sufism.¹

Sufi conception of man is theandric (theos-God, plus andros man, means union of the divine and the union). Man is considered as the astraf al makhkhat. He is superior to the cosmos. He embraces the cosmos ‘in principle’. Sufism advocates the presence of the divine principle in man, yet it does not admit monistic identity. The divine principle is termed as the ruh (spirit), which is the breath of the Divine. Spirit (sometimes termed as the heart) is the sphere where the divine and the human interact.

Sufism considers human personality as a microcosm (alam-i asghar). Man in principle contains the cosmos completely. He has to actualize his divinity in actuality. Every man is an ‘Ego’ before he becomes a Self.

A Sufi has to realize his Self. The self is spirit that is a link between man and God. Man may not realize his Self. In that case he is ruled by the soul (nafs-i ammarah). Insofar as man is ruled by his soul, he is human and not divine. But when the ruh (the spirit) gains ascendancy, man is human and also divine. Such a psychology proclaims an alternative to the computerized knowing of the mind. The spiritual principle alone makes up personality and gives it a permanent center. The individual person is an image of the Divine and seeks to improve this image in order to realize in himself the true Reality. This improvement we have termed as the Growth of the Human Self.

Modern science of soul called psychology studies objectivized mind. It studies man stripped off its cosmological moorings. On the other hand the Sufi sciences do not see the visible world except in relation to the higher reality. The Sufi sciences develop some special methodologies in which the ‘psychical’ is related to the spiritual. They term

it ‘fana’ and ‘baqa’ in which man is illuminated and transfigured in his divine experience. It is a transfiguration of the human soul by the spirit.

Modern man’s consciousness is one-dimensional. It misses the dimensions of depth or height. By this we mean that it is without the cosmic awareness. God is expelled from the modern consciousness as a harmful bacteria. The result is Becketian consciousness of absurdity. Human existence has been reduced to tramps who do not know whom they are waiting for. They have sent the divine to exile, yet unconsciously wait for Him.

This absurd consciousness is ruled by meaninglessness, emptiness, alienation, temper tantrums, obsessions with abnormal proclivities, sadomasochistic relationships, suicide manias, neuroses and a spiritual vacuum. According to Sufism these are the states of qabz or contraction. Modern consciousness is in the state of ‘qabz’.

On the other hand the Sufi consciousness is a consciousness of ‘fullness’, joy, intoxication, love and ecstasy. Sufis call this ‘bast’ or expansion. Basically, this consciousness is a consciousness of a lover, the divine lover who always feels himself in the presence of his Beloved. This dimension has been lost by the modern man. Hence he needs psychiatrists and the mental hospitals in addition to the jails.

The Sufi conception of consciousness added to the one-dimensional awareness of the modern man can help him of alleviating many of his soaring ailments. In the present study we aimed at such a synthesis. We are in the opinion that psychology as a modern science can help creating a new man in the twenty-first century if it incorporates a few principles laid down by the great Sufi masters who had a very keen insight into the human nature.