Chapter 4

Syncretic Mystical Literature

of

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1. The Way of the Sufi: Sharafuddin Maneri

Popularly known as Makhdum ul Mulk Bihari (i.e. The Spiritual Master of the Realm), his full name was Sharafuddin Ahmed ibn Yahya Maneri, who is now referred by the people of Bihar as Makhdum Sahib (i.e. the Served One). He was born on the last Friday of Sha’ban in August 661 A.H./1263 C.E. at Maner - hence the name, ‘Maneri’, meaning ‘of Maner’ - twenty nine kilometers west of Patna in Bihar to Hazrat Makhdoom Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri and Bibi Razia. Hazrat Makhdoom Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri claimed to be the descendent of Prophet Mohammed’s uncle, Zubair ibn Abdul Muttalib, belonging to the Hashimite clan of Quraish of Mecca. His mother too came from the lineage of Imam Hussein, son of Fatima and the grandson of Prophet Mohammed. Sharafuddin Maneri was thus a lineal descendant of Prophet Mohammed from both sides.

His father, Yahya Maneri, whose complete name was Kamaaluddin Yahya Maneri, was the son of Makhdoom Israel, son of Maulana Muhammad known as Taj Faqih Hashmi (also called Sheikh Al Hind) who was a celebrated scholar and mystic who had emigrated from Al Khalil in Syria to Manyar in Bihar (present day Maner), and the first to have brought Maner under Turkish control, thus came to be called Maner Sharif. Al Khalil, which is about 24 kilometers from Jerusalem, draws its name from Prophet Ibrahim (Biblical Abraham) who is believed to be buried there, which is now a part of Jordan. The name Maneri refers to the region of Maner, which some centuries ago was situated on the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Son, joined by river Saryu from the
north. The remains of an old time fortress on the bank of the channel of the Son reminds one that Maner was a strategic point in ancient times. It appears as if it were the western gate of Patliputra in the Mauryan times. Yahya Maneri studied Islamic law at Al-Nizamiyya of Baghdad Academy and a disciple of Sheikh Shahab al-Din Abu Hafs Umar al-Suhrawardi of the Suhrawardiyya Sufi order, also known as Sheikh Taqiuddin of Mahsum in Bengal, and Bibi Razia was under her father Shihabuddin Jagjot’s (the light of the world) own influence who was a Suhrawardi Sufi of Jethuli or Jathli or Jaitley about five kilometers from Patna, who had come from Kashgar. Obviously Sharafuddin grew up in a Muslim household with pious parents coupled with a sense of one’s duties to one’s fellowmen, ‘God’s creatures’ (Khalq-i Khuda).

Sharafuddin Yahya Maneri had his early education in a local mosque-school, after which, he accompanied Abu Tau’ama al-Hanbali, to Sonargaon, near modern-day Dhaka in Bangladesh, where he received a thorough education and esoteric training, thus becoming proficient in all branches of Islamic learning current at that time, like tafsir or Qur’anic commentary, Sunnah or tradition of the Prophet, jurisprudence, theology, logic, philosophy and mathematics. He was also acquainted in Sufism and spent much time in meditation and spiritual exercises. He married his Hanbali mentor’s daughter (as per tradition, against his wishes) and begot one son with whom he returned to Maner on receiving the news of his father’s death, leaving his young wife in Sonargaon and adopting a life of celibacy. In late 1280s, after entrusting his little son to his mother, he came to Delhi in search of a spiritual guide and became the disciple of Najibuddin Firdausi. On his way back to Maner he veered off to the jungle of Bihia to be alone with God, and as the stories relate he received the timely assistance of a local Hindu landlord.
He spent a year or so in Bihia jungle and then moved to a cave in Rajgir Hills - near a water spring at the foothill which is now known as Makhdum Kund - which is a holy place because of its association with the Buddha for Buddhists; with Mahavir for Jains; with various sadhus for Hindus; and also with Maneri for Muslims. After thirty years, with much persuasion, he attended Friday prayers in Bihar Sharif and lived there for about fifty years until his death on Wednesday, 2 January 782 A.H./1381 C.E. 6th Shawwal.

The tomb of Sharafuddin Maneri is in the town of Bihar Sharif, eighty kilometers south-east of Patna, the capital of Bihar in North India. The word ‘Sharif’ was added after his death in order to indicate that the town was ‘honoured’ by his tomb. Thousands gather for the annual feast, marking his death anniversary, known as urs (wedding), the day on which he was united to God. Devotees come to honour him and make special petitions to him, believing that God will grant their prayers through his intercession.

Sharafuddin is widely known for his Maktubat or Letters (747/1346 C.E.) on various spiritual topics addressed to Qazi Shamsuddin, the governor of Chausa in western Bihar, which became a basic Sufi text in khanqas (monasteries) throughout India. His Khwani-i Pur Ni'mat: A Table Laden with Good Things (1348-50) belongs to the malfuz genre of Sufi literature, i.e. a record of what occurred during the assemblies presided over by the Sufi Master in question-answer mode. This type of Sufi literature attained an early prominence in India on account of the great reluctance of the early Chishti saints to put pen to paper, thus resulting in what is currently the best and most highly esteemed malfuz produced in India, Fawa'id ul-Fu'ad. Further, his In Quest of God: Maneri’s Second Collection of 150 Letters (1367-68) outlines the path to God, offering personalized
guidance and encouragement to a variety of individuals such as scholars, officials, merchants et al. Zain Badr Arabi compiled all three works with his own introductory preface.

2. Syncretic Mystical Literature of Sharafuddin Maneri

Sharafuddin Maneri says that the knowledge of renowned men of the Way consists of a state, and it is the soundness of their state with the Lord that they call ‘mystical knowledge’, while others, from among religious scholars and jurists also call their knowledge about the Lord ‘mystical knowledge.’ As a renowned Sufi, Sharafuddin has copious mystical writings to his credit in Persian, which are translated into English by Paul Jackson SJ, thus opened the coffers of these opulent spiritual-cum-literary caches to the wider world. Let us cast a glance at the syncretic elements prevalent therein:

3. Greek Syncretism in Sharafuddin’s Literature

Innumerable religious philosophies, especially Semitic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam have assimilated Greek philosophical cum literary theories into their corpus thus making the very fabric of their theosophical cum mystical theorem. Islamic thought was influenced by Greek philosophy, especially the ideas of Aristotle and Plato (cf. Greek Philosophy in Sufi Literature, 8.1., p. 203), and so does Sharafuddin’s literature.

3.1. Nazar ela ’l-murd or ‘gazing at beardless boys’

Nazar ela ’l-murd or ‘gazing at beardless boys’ is a distinct Sufi practice, has its roots in Plato, which Sufism justifies saying that ‘one is contemplating Absolute Beauty in human form.’ As per speculations, this was a directly inherited tradition, passing from late antiquity into Islam. This literary tradition of expressing love for beardless boys
comes from later Greek literature into classical Arabic prose. But the Sufi practice of ‘gazing’ itself could either have been inspired by Plato’s writings or come from central Asian sources. Though this practice has invited condemnations galore, it has also provided much inspiration to classical lyric poetry in Sufi literature. Sharafuddin opposes this prevalent Sufi practice saying:

It is entirely improper to associate with beardless youths, for many calamities result from this practice. Some venerable Sufis have observed that, for young people, the desire of associating with revered elders can be a grace and lead to an increase in knowledge and a stimulation of their mental development, but it would be shameful and foolish for elders to seek to associate with youths.¹

3.2. Shituta / Malama - deliberately incurring ‘blame’ in Sharafuddin’s Literature

The practice of deliberately incurring ‘blame’ (shituta in Syriac; malama in Arabic) through apparently reprehensible conduct, such as, pretending to engage in illicit sexual relations, behaving like diwana² or madman, sitting on a dunghill, etc. has come into Sufism from Greek philosophical tradition via Syrian Christianity (cf. Greek Philosophy in Sufi Literature, 8.1., p. 203). This has remained an important facet of Sufi literature to this day, and that of Sharafuddin which is clearly spelt out when he said: “This path is called the path of blame. Those who follow it are called the blameworthy ones…”³ And it is affirmed in this verse:

As far as possible, remain a stranger to intellect:

Plunder your intellect and become a madman.

² The term diwana refers to a person who is ‘mad’, or so deeply in love as to be out of his senses.
If you rely on intellect in dealing with Me.
You will receive many wounds in My lane.
Yet, if you come as a madman.
No one can do anything to you.⁴

Sharafuddin confirms this strand on ‘blame’ through a pithy anecdote.
A holy man was asked: “When did you come to know God?”
He replied: “From the time people began to call me a madman.”⁵

Further, assimilating the Majnun-Layla,⁶ a love story from the Middle East into his literary corpus Sharafuddin says:

Majnun was asked: “What is your relationship with God?”
He replied: “When I recognized Him, I ceased all oppressive behavior!”
“When did this occur?”
He replied, “From the time people began calling me ‘Majnun’ [a madman].”⁷

Here when Majnun said, ‘When I recognized Him, people called me mad’, he meant that when a mystic is bestowed with mystical knowledge there is a corresponding turning away from what is not God. It is the way of the world that whoever turns away from the mortals to the immortal becomes a madman in the eyes of the former. For, his qualities, actions, deeds and states are paradoxical to the living souls, due to which he is called mad. As the saying goes, “heavenly minded people are usually considered to be

⁵ Ibid., p. 213.
⁶ Majnun Layla (in Arabic Majnun Layla, “Possessed by madness for Layla” and in Persian Leyli o Majnun, “The Madman and Layla”) is a love story from the Middle East, later adopted and popularized by the Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi, which is the third of his five long narrative poems, Khamsa (the Quintet).
rather foolish”, those who flee from people and from the world are labeled as foolish.

There is nothing strange about this, for the simple reason that just as the mad are adjudged mad by intelligent folk, so the mad deem the intelligent to be mad! Actually, the truth is the very opposite of this! A madman is one who brings anything other than God into his heart, not the one who brings God into his heart in place of the world!

I desire no chains other than Your tresses.

See what a wise madman I am!8

Sharafuddin quotes the life of one such Sufi thus:

Time and again it happened that the mad lover from Iraq9, because he was consumed by the fire of separation, would exclaim, “O that I were dust and had nothing to do with these affairs!” (Qur’an surah An-Naba’ 78:40) At other times he would plead, “Where are the angels of the firmament and those who inhabit the heavenly court, that they might line up before the throne of my wealth?”10

The beloved of God, says Sharfuddin, has to be ‘born again’ into the assembly of lovers bearing all insults and derision, who in turn is seen as an insane and fool by the so-called sane and wise:

Until you become the laughing-stock of people and taste derision.

And are slandered like the Jew and Christian,

And still resolve not to detest your own religion.

How can you be born into the assembly of lovers?11

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8 Ibid., p. 278.
9 The reference here is clearly to Mansur al-Hallaj.
11 Ibid. pp. 197-98.
According to Sharafuddin, such mad divine lovers consider the world’s joys transient and take recourse of a self-emptying but God-centered ‘you must increase, I must decrease’ attitude. Those lovers who tread the path of reprobation, and the seekers who suffer for their unconventional behaviour, say to those who follow the safe path:

We are not fellow travelers! Take your own road and go!

May your way be full of peace and ours full of shame!12

Calling such mad divine lovers ‘masters of religion’, Sharafuddin mentions a couple of them, who led a life of austerity. According to him, the leader and initiator in this is Uways Qarani,13 who so restricted his necessities of life and his involvement in the world that he appeared to have gone mad, so much so that he vanished for a couple of years. His food was dates picked up along the way, and his clothing was sacks that he picked up and sewed into a garment. Wherever he went, the children hurled stones at him as though he were a madman:

Those who shine like the moon above the eight heavens
Are, on the chessboard, those who checkmate the King!

They are aware of the secret of this saying:

Those considered mad by the people are actually treading the Path!14

Shibli (d. 945), a government official in Baghdad after having a conversion experience showed signs of strange behaviour, for which, several times he was confined to an asylum. His sayings and eccentric behaviour provided food for thought for later

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12 Ibid., p. 198.
13 Uways al-Qarani was an Arab Muslim mystic, martyr and philosopher of Yemen who lived during the lifetime of Prophet Mohammed, but never met him.
Sufis. Like Uways Qarani, he too disappeared and his disciples saw him in the garb of hermaphrodites, seated in their midst, looking just like one of them.

They threw dust upon their heads and cried out: “O Leader of the Age, what is this all about?” He replied: “I saw that I could not be called a man, nor did I have the features of a woman. Thus I could not be anything else than a hermaphrodite. And what could be better for a hermaphrodite than to be among kindred folk?”

Sharafuddin acknowledges Shibli’s eccentrically ecstatic behaviour and to confirm his strand he finds solace in Attar who’d said:

When a madman speaks with such artful boasting.
Don’t blindly rush to do battle with him.
Keep your tongue far from his enticing words:
Hold excused a lover in his madness.
The Law is a burden for intelligent people,
But love comes to those not owning hearts.
Without doubt a madman, even if at fault.
Speaks heedlessly, no matter what he says.\footnote{Ibid.}

Further, Sharafuddin quotes an incident in the life of Shibli showing the depth of his ‘madness.’

Imam Shibli was once apprehended on the suspicion of madness. A group of people came to up to him. He asked them who they were. They replied: “we are your friends.” He began to pelt them all with stones so they all fled. He called out: “O lying tongues, you claim to love me. Why are you fleeing from my unjust

\footnote{Ibid.}
action?" This is to make you realize that a claim alone, apart from proof and demonstration, would be false. The hypocrites say: "We bear witness that you are the Apostle of God" (Qur'an surah Al-Munafiqun 63:1). This word of theirs is right and correct, yet they are bereft of proof and demonstration. In other words, when righteous words are not accompanied by a righteous state, falsity exists, as God Most Exalted says: "They hypocrites are liars." (Qur'an surah Al-Munafiqun 63:1).¹⁷

Acknowledging the saying of the wise, Sharafuddin states that the lowest rank of the one who treads the path of the righteous is that he is made mad for the next life; hope is inscribed in his heart, that he might remain a stranger to this world forever, thus become acquainted with the next. He strengthens his argument by basing it on Mohammed himself:

Consider, for example, what happened to the Apostle himself, who was the outstanding lover of God and the leader of the entire community. Until revelation came upon him and he made it known, he enjoyed a good reputation among one and all. He was considered a great man. He used to be called "Muhammad the Trustworthy." When the role of revelation was drawn over his head, people began to loosen their tongues to reproach him. One called him a soothsayer; somebody else, a poet; one group called him a liar; yet another considered him to be a madman, but he paid no attention to any of them.¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 51.
Further, to bolster up his statement Sharafuddin quotes the ‘friends of the Messenger’ from Kwaja Hasan Basri:

A person associated with Khwaja Hasan Basri said: “Khwaja, what were the friends of the Messenger like?” He replied: “They were such that, if you had seen them, you would have said they were all out of their minds. Moreover, if they had seen you, they would have said that you were all devils…” Men with human features but devilish qualities call them mad, but they themselves know who is in fact mad. O that the whole world were mad in this fashion!¹⁹

From the above, it is obvious that Sharafuddin has incorporated the Greek ‘Shituta / Malama - deliberately incurring blame’ into his mystical literature. As Shakespeare says in Midsummer Night’s Dream “the lunatic, the lover, and the poet are of imagination all compact,” so does a Sufi mystic.

### 3.3. Platonism in Sharafuddin’s Literature

According to the Republic, Plato’s tripartite theory of soul is a theory of psyche wherein Plato states that the soul is a three-fold component - logical (rational), spiritual (spirit), and appetitive (carnal). Before birth, the human souls used to contemplate the pure and perfect forms in the Ideal World. Due to some mysterious fault (here we are back to the age-old myth of a Fall) they are born here, imprisoned in the body (Greek soma means body and/or prison) and prevented from soaring up to the contemplation of these Ideas. Plato’s body-soul union as something harmful and negative was to have far-reaching effects on human thought down the centuries. If the body is the prison of the soul, then death is the moment of its joyful release. It is the moment when the soul is set free.

free at last from the *soma*. Knowledge is when we are able to triumph over forgetfulness of the Ideal World and recall - be it ever so dimly - these forms we had once contemplated.

Plato’s tripartite theory of soul came into Islam via Christianity, wherefrom to Sharafuddin. For, he says in *The Hundred Letters*:

Know that the perfect man, according to investigators of Truth, consists of three constituents: One is spirit, another is the lower soul, while the third is the body. Man is a microcosm of the entire world, that is to say, both this world and the next. We get some idea of both from man himself. This world is water, dust, air, and fire, and man is composed of phlegm, blood, bile and melancholy. At the same time, man is a sign of the next world, of paradise, hell, and the heavenly courts. His spirit anticipates heaven on account of its refinement; his animal soul, hell on account of its baseness; while his body presages the celestial courts. We can say that it is the spirit that draws the believer toward paradise, for in this world it exemplifies paradise; while his animal soul impels him toward hell, of which it is the prototype in this world.²⁰

Sharafuddin Maneri’s *Khwani-i Pur Ni’mat: A Table Laden with Good Things* resembles Plato’s *Dialogues* - both in form and content. Sharafuddin’s body-soul concepts are absolutely Platonic which this statement proves:

Before souls were sent into this world they were absolutely pure. After they became related to the world of the body two things were acquired by them: one, the acquisition of good; and the other, the acquisition of evil. In so far as they

acquire evil, to that same extent a stain causes a blemish in their purity. Thus it is that they do not remain spotlessly pure as they were when they came. On account of this stain they were deceived and end up in rejection… Because he has been stained by the acquisition of evil such a one will be burnt tomorrow in the fire until his stain is far removed from him. for it is said: ‘Whoever cleanses himself in the fire of struggle with self and austerities will have nothing within himself for the fire of tomorrow.’

In the above passage, “Before souls were sent into this world they were absolutely pure” clearly resembles Plato’s ‘Ideal World.’ Similarly, “After they became related to the world of the body two things were acquired by them: one, the acquisition of good; and the other, the acquisition of evil” is the assimilation of Plato’s ‘body-soul union as something harmful and negative.’ Further, when Sharafuddin says, “Because he has been stained by the acquisition of evil such a one will be burnt tomorrow in the fire until his stain is far removed from him” resembles Plato’s Tartarus. The immortality of the soul is argued in the Phaedo from the fact that it is, unlike the body, not made up of parts. In the myth of Er (cf. Republic) Plato presents his eschatology. He believes in transmigration of souls and finally settles for an ultimate and irrevocable retribution where the good enter a kind of paradise and the recalcitrant are consigned forever to the torments of Tartarus. We can see Platonism looming large in Sharafuddin in the following discourse as well.

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22 In Greek mythology, Tartarus is the Underworld zone of eternal torment, where the greatest sinners were punished for their transgressions. The worst of these offenders were deemed to be those who had sinned against the gods themselves, and the greatest crime of all was to abuse the gods’ hospitality.
Sheikh Ahmad asked: “During this life the body executes the commands of the soul, but in the next life, after a man dies, does his soul remain in the condition it was previously in?” The Venerable Master replied: “Yes, the soul remains as it was... Before death the relationship of the soul to the body is like that of an artisan to an instrument. The relationship of an artisan to an instrument is no more. For example, it does not mean that, if the instrument does not perdure, the death of the artisan takes place. The same is true for the soul: the soul has no dependence on the body for its continued existence. It is no more than this: the soul operates through the instrumentality of this body. Through the instrumentality of the tongue, it speaks; through that of the feet, it walks; while eyes enable it to see.”

In the above discourse, ‘soul’ refers to the Greek ‘ruh’ [spirit] not ‘nafs’ [carnal soul] which is the life-giving principle in the humans. The Islamic concept of heaven cum Sharafuddin’s words “the soul remains as it was...” resemble Plato’s kind of paradise. Further, in the Timaeus. Plato says that the world was generated through the agency of a divine craftsman or demiurge.

The Helpless One asked: “Is the body the place where the commands of the soul are manifested?” He replied: “Yes, in this visible world, but by the will of God... Just as the activities of the soul in this visible and tangible world make their appearance in the body, so too the commands of God Most High from the ‘greater world’ are made manifest in the soul. Again he said: “When the soul operates through the body, the latter is ignorant of the former. It does not know what has

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come into existence through the soul as its origin. Does the same apply to the soul in so far as it perceives the manifestation of the commands of God?” He replied: “The soul does become aware of this, and perceives that the commands of God make their appearance within it. The soul bears witness to that. The soul is aware, and knowledge is one of its qualities, but the body is inert, so what can it know about soul?”

In the above discourse, Sharafuddin speaks of ‘soul’ as ‘jan’ [soul], followed by ‘Ruh’ [spirit], and then he reverts to ‘jan’ [soul] and so on. Both are used in this whole discourse to refer to the soul, for, in Christianity and Islam ‘soul’ refers to both ‘ruh’ [spirit], and ‘jan’ [soul]. For instance, “Just as the activities of the soul [jan] in this visible and tangible world make their appearance in the body, so too the commands of God Most High from the ‘greater world’ are made manifest in the soul [ruh]. Again he said: “When the soul [jan] operates through the body, the latter is ignorant of the former.” Here there is a definite Platonic, rather than Aristotelian stamp to Sharafuddin’s concept of the soul.

3.4. The state of ‘nothingness’ in Sharafuddin’s Literature

‘Nothingness’ is the state of being nothing, the state of nonexistence of anything, or the property of having nothing. Parmenides (5th century B.C.E.) of the Greek monist school was one of the earliest western philosophers to consider ‘nothing’ as a concept. He said that ‘nothing’ cannot exist: “To speak of a thing, one has to speak of a thing that exists. Since we can speak of a thing in the past, it must still exist (in some sense) now and from this concludes that there is no such thing as change. As a corollary, there can be

\[24\] Ibid., p. 50.
no such things as coming-into-being, passing-out-of-being, or not-being.” Parmenides influenced other philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Leucippus (early 5th century B.C.E.), one of the atomists attempted to reconcile this with motion and change was the first to say that ‘nothing’ has a reality attached to it. He accepted the monist position that there could be no motion without a void, and void is the opposite of being, it is not-being.

In Eastern philosophy, Sunyata (emptiness), unlike ‘nothingness’ is a state of mind in some forms of Buddhism (Nirvana, mu. and Bodhi). Here achieving ‘nothing’ as a state of mind allows one to be totally focused on a thought or activity at a level of intensity that one would not be able to achieve it if he/she were consciously thinking. Some Eastern philosophies characterize nothingness as an egoless state of being in which one fully realizes one’s own small part in the cosmos. The Kyoto school deals with nothingness. Some authors have pointed out similarities between the Buddhist conception of nothingness and the ideas of Martin Heidegger and the existentialists like Sartre, although this connection has not been explicitly made by the philosophers themselves.

Throughout King Lear, Shakespeare plays on the word ‘nothing’ and the idea of nothingness or emptiness. In Act 1, when Lear stages his love test and asks Cordelia “What can you say to draw a third [of the kingdom] more opulent than your sisters?”, Cordelia replies, “Nothing.” Lear can’t believe what he’s hearing. “Nothing will come of nothing,” he tells her. The phrase “Nothing can come of nothing” is a variation on the Latin phrase “ex nihilo nihil fit” i.e. from nothing, nothing comes - an ancient Greek
philosophical and scientific expression. It is the opposite of the biblical expression *ex nihilo*, i.e. God created the world out of nothing (Genesis 1:1).

Sharafuddin says, “There is peace in nothingness, or in pre-existence. Moreover, all misfortunes and calamities constitute a proving for a being situated between one nothingness and another. When a mystic was asked what the cause of all troubles was, he answered, ‘Existence.’” The following couplet rightly puts it:

O that my name had never existed.
And I had known neither agitation nor rest!\(^{25}\)

‘Nothingness’ in Sufi literature and in Sharafuddin is like ‘paradise’ or a ‘happy world’ which the following excerpt clearly brings out:

A dervish was on the point of dying. He was asked: “Do you have any wish we could fulfill?” He replied, “Nothingness, for it has no existence.” In this fashion you might understand that all our calamities and disorders stem from existence itself...nothingness is a happy world. It is very comfortable indeed. It is a paradise wherein there is no hell.\(^{26}\)

Burn and destroy everything except God:

Purify yourself of everything except faith.\(^{27}\)

Sharafuddin confirms his strand on ‘nothingness’ with the quote of a friend of God: “No matter how much I say about the happiness and comfort of the world of nothingness, I would not describe one percent of it: while, no matter how much I describe the unhappiness and toil of the world of existence, I could not describe one percent of


\(^{26}\) Ibid., pp. 53-54.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 55.
There is peace in nothingness or in eternity, but for an existent being, which is between the one and the other, for the sake of testing, all is misfortune and calamity. Men renowned for insight as well as advanced Sufis, out of fear of the consequences of this tradition, are continually desirous that they might cease to exist and be turned into nothing. Yet if they are turned into nothing, what could they do? This is what they all say:

Your pain has proved medicinal for me:
Your dust has acquired value for me.
I am about to offer my life for You:
After seeing You, I have become content.

They rise body and soul saying:
I have a life to bear the burden of Your love:
I shall not pass away until I complete Your work.  

Speaking about ‘real men’ Sharafuddin says: “In the opinion of men of insight, those people who consider themselves real men are still in their mothers’ wombs; or rather, are still sperm in their fathers’ loins; or even more precisely, are still in the world of nothingness.” When Sharafuddin says that the ‘real men’ are ‘in their mothers’ wombs’ or are ‘still in their fathers’ loins’ or ‘in the world of nothingness’ it syncretically bears resemblance to Plato’s Ideal World or the Real world.

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28 Ibid., p. 245.
29 Ibid., p. 103.
30 Ibid., p. 135.
Further Sharafuddin says: “An existing being whose boundaries open out to nothingness, such an existing being - if you can call it existing - is but a figure of speech. Existing “between one nothingness and another” is scarcely existing!” Peace, for Sharafuddin, is in nothingness, not in existence. For, when existence came, peace disappeared. Then he gives an anecdote. A person fell sick. A dear friend asked him about the cause of his sickness. He replied, “Existence!”

Until a person has entirely died to self
Proof of his non-existence has not been established.
Believing in One is not incarnation: it is your non-existence:
Apart from foolish talk, man does not become God.^^

3.5. Neo-Platonism: Love of Beauty in Sharafuddin’s Literature

Greek philosophy is known for its love of beauty. As per platonic philosophy of the Ideal World or the World of Ideas, absolute love and beauty is a reality in the Ideal World, and the phenomenal world (i.e. this world) is merely a copy of that Ideal World. Similarly, in Sufi philosophy, Absolute Being is also Absolute beauty. Beauty tends towards manifestation. The phenomenal world is an emanation of the Absolute Being, wherein human beings are the only ones to share the divine essence of God, because they have souls. Thus a human being is a combination of body (natural element belongs to the phenomenal world) and soul (divine element belongs to the Absolute Being). Sufi philosophy is similar and at the same time dissimilar to Neo-Platonism. Sharafuddin’s poem “Growth in Love” brings out this idea:

^^ Ibid., p. 139.

31 Ibid., p. 223.
32 Ibid., p. 139.

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If you were utterly in love with My beauty,
One word alone would suffice - if you were known here.
Clinging to self means ‘you’ - Me you cannot reach;
To come to Me you must forsake your self!\(^{33}\)

This verse emits profound mystical wisdom beyond knowledge, with platonic contemplation attached to it. However, it seems more like an affair of the intellect rather than of a person’s entire being, wherein human will enters prominently into the picture. Further, Sharafuddin appears to be pan-entheistic when he sees divine beauty manifested in each and every particle:

- His beauty has been manifested in a hundred thousand faces;
- In each and every particle, something different can be seen.
- Inevitably every particle points to the Friend, for
- In its beauty can be discerned the face of Another.
- Since He is One, the whole series begins with Him:
- As long as you exist, you are the captive of Another!\(^{34}\)

This pan-entheistic love of divine beauty is assimilated into Sharafuddin’s Islamic thought and we can see this amalgam in the following poem:

- Why should I not see Your beauty seen by a hundred worlds?
- Why should I not have news of You when many others have?
- Why should I not be united to You, O Hidden from every gaze?
- In paradise maidens and streams will be forever scattered!\(^{35}\)

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In the above poem, the first three lines are Platonic, whereas the last line depicts Islamic concept of paradise, thus an amalgam of Platonic-Islamic concepts. A review of both Sufism and Neo-Platonism reveals close similarities between the two with regard to the nature of God, the soul, the body, concepts such as goodness, evil and beauty, death and life, and creation. Moreover, the Neo-Platonic triad of the One, Reason and the Soul is apparent in the twelfth and thirteenth century Persian Sufi didactic poems, which also echoes in Sharafuddin:

I said: “For whom are you beautifully adorned?”

He replied: “For myself, since I am the One!

I am Lover, Beloved and Love.

I am the mirror, beauty and seeing!”

4. Gnosticism in Sharafuddin’s Literature

Gnosticism is a thought and belief system of various cults, developed in ancient Syria and Persia during fifth century B.C.E., and was popular in late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries, which believed matter to be intrinsically evil, and emancipation could be attained through a deep, mystic, and divine gnosis. For, there is a divine spark in the human which is imprisoned in earthly matter or body. Gnosticism had its impact on every sphere of life, thus reflecting in literature, and it cast its spell on Sharafuddin too which are spelt out in his works. He says “the Lord has many secrets hidden in His creation and works.”

37 Ibid., p. 262.
...you, my brother, had desired that I should write something especially for you concerning the knowledge of the Sufis. Realize, my brother, that the knowledge of this group is extremely precious and exalted, and cannot be contained in letters and words... As for what cannot be contained in words and sentences, why, who has written such things that I can do so too? The reply can only be, One who has not tasted, cannot understand... He concludes by asserting that this knowledge can only be obtained by experience.38

Calling Bayazid the king of the Gnostics, Sharafuddin quotes him:

“When I went to the Holy Place and saw the beauty of the Kaaba. I said to myself: ‘I have seen much better materials than those employed in the construction of this building!’ I desired the Lord of the house. I returned home. The following year when I reached the Holy Place. I opened the eyes of my conscience and saw not only the house but also the Lord of the house. I said: ‘In the divine world there is no room for anything except God, in the world of the divine Unity duality is excluded. The Beloved, the house, and I would be three. Anyone who perceived duality would be an unbeliever, and yet I see three: How can I avoid being a heretic?’ I returned home. The third year, when I reached the Holy Place, the divine favor swept me into my power of discernment; my heart was illumined with the flame of mystical knowledge, my being was inflamed by the lights of divine illumination; and this saying filled my head: ‘You have come to visit Me with an honest heart, and the One who is visited has the right to bless the one who visits Him!'”

When I opened my eyes, I saw the light of Your countenance;
When I listened, I heard the sound of Your voice!^39

Gnosticism in the above passage is evident as it speaks of ‘duality’, ‘divine
illumination’ (divine spark in Gnosticism) and ‘mystical knowledge’ (divine gnosis in
Gnosticism). Moreover, when he says ‘I have seen much better materials than those
employed in the construction of this building!’ he seems to be referring to Plato’s Ideal
World or the Real World, of which, the phenomenal world is merely a photocopy.
Further, Sharafuddin’s following couplet speaks of the necessity of divine gnosis to enter
the divine realm:

The Beloved instructed me: Sit at My door!
Do not let anyone in till he has grasped My secret!^40

Acknowledging the power of gnosis on the Sufis and also its non-revelation to
some others, Sharafuddin says, “Much can be manifested to the righteous on account of
the abundance of their devotion and the correctness of their discernment, and future
events can become illuminated for them. Yet it also happens that these secrets are not
revealed to some.”^41 Divine gnosis, says Sharafuddin, is the spiritual nourishment in both
worlds - the world of souls and the phenomenal world - which is evident in the following
couplet:

In the world of souls, the wine of divine gnosis forms our nourishment;

For unlike you, we are not enamored of bread in either world!^42

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40 Ibid., p. 214.
41 Ibid., p. 403.
42 Ibid., p. 226.
In the above couplet 'we' refers to 'the chosen ones' or the Sufis possessing divine *gnosis*, which is similar to the Gnostic freemasonry; 'the world of souls' resembles Plato's World of Forms. The following excerpt brings out Sharafuddin's views on the secret divine *gnosis*, which proves his assimilation of Gnostic ideas. For, he reiterates *gnosis* by attesting the secret prophetic *gnosis* down Islamic, rather Sufi memory lane.

In short, every affair not conducted with knowledge is simply vain. Every austerity and mortification not in accordance with the Law is an error and belongs to the faith of Satan. All the doors of eternal bliss opening onto the truth of gnosis can be recognized only by knowledge. The secrets of those renowned in the faith and the kingdom, the pride of Islam, the dignity of the call of the prophets, the mystical perception of the divine blessings, the various ranks of holiness of those devoid of sin, the distinction of the grades of those near God, the secrets of Adam’s descendents, the secrets of those guilty of grave faults, the recompense of those of deep faith, the respect for ordinances, including the observance of what is commanded and the avoidance of what is prohibited - all of these can be recognized only by means of knowledge, and can be found only on its plain! Until a man emerges from the wilderness of his own ignorance and places his footsteps on the open plain of knowledge, these blessings of faith will not become manifest within him.43

The one who possesses *gnosis* is held with high esteem, for, he knows divine secret. The following poem reveals the surpassing value of one such:

Let him be your guide: don’t go seeking the Way:

Let him be our tongue: don’t engage in idle chatter.

43 Ibid., p. 373-74.
Consider his every word a profound secret:
Whatever he does, consider it an act of God.
An intermediary has arisen for this people:
Whatever he says must surely be correct.
Since you cannot see the Other, except in metaphor,
Listen to all he says, then speak through him.\(^{44}\)

As per the poem, the one possessing *gnosis* is an ‘intermediary’ between God and humans, a mouthpiece of God to people and vice versa. ‘His every word is a profound secret’ (Gnostic idea) which ‘must surely be correct’ because of its divine source, and his deed is ‘an act of God’ Himself. Further, through the following couplet Sharafuddin calls Sufis to learn the divine secret.

Learn My secret, or you will remain far from My threshold:
I slay My friends! You don’t know My secret.\(^{45}\)

Like the inclusive Gnostic society concealing secrets from others, so does Sharafuddin’s poem calls Sufis to maintain secrets within the secret Sufi society:

If secrets were revealed to you while you were at work,
Keep these secrets hidden; they are meant to be concealed.
Restrain heart from desiring and tongue from speaking:
Consider that happiness itself lies in the erasing of self.\(^{46}\)

\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 105.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 208.
The divine *gnosis* is a secret within the Sufi circle which can never be revealed to strangers just like the Gnostic freemasonry. And so Sharafuddin says:

I gaze on the rose: thornless, it would be better!

So too if strangers were not to know the secret thoughts of friends.\(^47\)

Sharafuddin says that only the devout can possess divine secrets, which is inaccessible to the common people - a syncretic Gnostic element - is brought out in the following poem:

All this pain and happiness people experience

Contains within itself a secret concerning God.

Plumbing divine secrets is the work of the devout:

How could common people know or grasp it?\(^48\)

Asking the Sufis to maintain the secrecy of divine *gnosis* Sharafuddin’s following excerpt says:

It is not fitting for scholars to speak out everything they know. Keep the concealed secrets which should not be divulged. Thus some theologians say, “There is a profound secret between God and His beloved.” In *Qui ul-Qulub* Imam Abu Talib Makki has stated that “knowledge is of three kinds: knowledge of what is manifest; knowledge of what is interior; and knowledge between God and His servant.” Knowledge of what is manifest should be shared with externalist scholars, whereas knowledge of what is interior should be shared with

\(^{47}\) Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), *Khwan-i Pur Ni'Mat: A Table Laden with Good Things*, Idarah-i Adabiyyat-i Delli, Delhi, 2009, p. 47.


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those who have an inner knowledge of man. The knowledge which exists between a servant and the Lord, however, should not be revealed to either group.

There is a secret between You and me to which none is privy:

Even if I lose my head, I'll not reveal Your secret to a soul.49

The above excerpt clearly brings out Sharafuddin's idea of concealing secrets which he confirms by quoting Abu Talib Makki's *ut ul-Qulub* - a syncretic Gnostic element. Sharafuddin opines, if someone says: "Reveal the divine secret", it would be infidelity on his part, and "it is better to kill the person who speaks openly about divine oneness than allow him to live":

If anyone reveals His secret while intoxicated,

His recompense along the Path would be the gallows.50

Sharafuddin quotes a saying, "A seeker is a talker, but one who has found is dumb." Thus, deaf, dumb and blind are the qualities of mystics. Further, he narrates the vision of Bayazid Bistami, the king of mystics, who, on seeing a skull with writing, "Deaf, dumb and blind" exclaimed, "This was the head of a mystic."

He listens to no knowledge, so we seal our lips:

He does not value intellect, so we become mad.

As far as possible, be a stranger to your intellect:

Sally forth against your intellect: become a madman.

Do you know why the pure ones are silent?

In their innermost hearts they strive to erase all trace of self.

They continually drink wine proffered by the Friend:

49 Ibid., pp. 208-9.
50 Ibid., p. 209.
They play with their heads, yet hide the divine secret.51

Quoting Ghazali’s Gnostic ideas Sharafuddin says, “Man’s exalted quality stems from this saying: ‘The reality of man is that he manifests the secrets of the divine essence.’”52 He exclaims, ‘That handful of clay was a box containing the secret of the heart.’

At the time of union, if you gain admittance,
You become holy and discover the pleasure of praise.
Enter courageously the divine threshold:
You will obtain strength to hide divine secrets.
When your soul reached such a stage,
You were exalted to the company of the pious.53

There are Gnostic elements in the Qur’an. When the angels said, “Will You put there one who will do evil”, God Most Glorious and Exalted did not reply that they would not do evil but said, ‘I know what you do not know’. (Qur’an surah Al-Baqarah 2:30) The Sufis fall back on this Gnostic Qur’anic verse, thus making their form Islamic even though the matter is Gnostic.

5. Pantheism in Sharafuddin’s Mystical Literature

Pantheism is a philosophic-religious belief that the spirit of God manifest in all things, and finite objects are at once both God and the manifestation of God. We have seen pantheistic elements in Sufi literature (cf. Pantheism in Sufi Literature, 8.5, p. 221). Sharafuddin says that the whole thrust of finding God in His creatures bears us to the pinnacle of love, the great unifier. For him, God Himself is all of it - the entire creation is

51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., p. 222.
53 Ibid., p. 257.
of God, and He can be found and loved therein. He says that the Beloved should essentially be only one, but there is no harm if other things are loved because of their dependence on the real Beloved. This covers the entire creation, for every single creature is dependent on the real Beloved. He says:

“If a man loves Almighty God, inevitably he will also love the prophets and his spiritual masters and teaches. It is also entirely reasonable that he will love all things associated with Him. The whole world is His masterpiece, His structure and His writing. Inevitably, He himself is all of it - if such a further determination can be made!”

Pantheism in Sharafuddin gets confirmed in the following passage wherein in says:

Several writers have stated that “I have never seen anything in which God could not be perceived!” “Seeing God in things is a Way, a proof, going from the artifact to the Artisan, for everything that has been made bears witness to its Maker, and all activities prove that there is an Agent. Further, Sharafuddin’s following poem bears witness to the pantheistic element immanent in him

Come, open your eyes, and see that each particle of dust,

If you look carefully into it, contains a world-revealing cup.

Whoever arrives at this stage, it is said.

Cannot distinguish God’s splendor from His immanence.

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56 Ibid., p. 179.
No doubt, the above literary pieces seem to be pantheistic to the naked eye. However, a deeper look might stir the reader whether Sharafuddin meant to be pantheistic or pan-entheistic, which is unclear. For, Islam is strictly not pantheistic. All the more, the mystics might - and there are cases - be luminal, and thus cross the boundaries.

6. Syncretic Zoroastrian Elements in Sharafuddin’s Literature

Although the term ‘fire-worshippers’ is primarily associated with Zoroastrians, the idea that Zoroastrians worship fire is originally from anti-Zoroastrian polemic. Instead, fire - even in a Fire Temple (means ‘house of fire’) - is considered to be an agent of purity, and a symbol of truth and righteousness. Sadeh and Chaharshanbe Suri are both fire-related festivals celebrated throughout Greater Iran which go back to Zoroastrianism when it was the predominant religion of the region. The concepts like angels and demons, light and darkness, God and adversary, stories about God, creation, a sacred time-line, duality of good and evil, end of the world, divine judgement, eschatology, along with the symbolism of fire, light and darkness, yazatas or intermediate spiritual beings enter the Sufi world, through Islam via Judaism and Christianity. Coming to its syncretic practice in Semitic religions, in Judeo-Christian Bible fire is an element of theophany in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-12), pillar of fire (Exodus 13:17-22), and the eternal flame of the Menorah (Exodus 25:31-40; 37:17-24; Leviticus 24:1-4). The highest form of sacrifice was the Korban Olah, performed twice-daily, which was an animal sacrifice completely consumed by fire. In the New Testament, on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was manifest in ‘tongues of fire’ (Acts of the Apostles 2:1-42).
Fire in Islam has little signification but symbolic, which is due to the syncretic influence of other religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, etc. Taking the Qur’nic verse “We made a light for your soul...” (Qur’an surah Ash-Shura 42:52) Sharafuddin interprets it thus: “I have given the noble spirit of light to many great men, but not to others, so that by means of that light they might find the Way to the world of divine attributes.” Sharafuddin quotes Abu Bakr, the Righteous one, “We recognized God by means of God, and other than God by the light of God.” In Sharafuddin’s *The Hundred Letters*, the twelfth letter is on “Lights”, wherein he says that when the mirror of the heart is cleansed of the rust of human nature and selfish qualities, it reflects lights from the extrasensory world - a syncretic Zoroastrian influence. Once a disciple of Sheikh Abu Sa’id Abul Khair, says Sharafuddin, entered the prayer place where as soon as he saw the light he shouted, “I have seen God!” - absolutely Zoroastrian. Sharafuddin says:

If a person sees lights that are comparable to various types of chandeliers, that would mean that he has seen what was just stated. But if he sees them in the form of sublime lights, such as the stars, moon, or the sun, then they are generally held to be spiritual entities manifest in a pure form on the highest stratum of the soul. Sharafuddin’s above idea, ‘lights’ as ‘spiritual entities’ is certainly Zoroastrian.

The Zoroastrian influence on Sharafuddin is confirmed when he says:

In the temple of fire worshipers while in a state of ecstasy, you may hear a voice from the fire telling you: “Even though we ourselves are being consumed, still we have the quality that we care not for this handful of graceless people!”

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58 Ibid., p. 176.
59 Ibid., p. 56.
60 Ibid. pp. 216-17.
Sharafuddin says that if a pure heart reflects stars as though in a mirror, then the light of the soul appears like the star; if it reflects the full moon, it has been completely purified; when it attains perfection of purity, it reflects the sun, which is his very soul. It is due to the lights of divine attributes that the heart becomes illuminated which is sensed through inner bliss. Sharafuddin proves his point by quoting a Sufi: “I have not looked at anything without seeing the Lord in it; and when the light of God throws a reflection on the light of the soul, the vision is mixed with bliss.”\(^5\)

The first part of the statement is pan-entheistic, whereas the second part is Zoroastrian. Furthermore, in the following couplet Sharafuddin compares mosque with paradise - divine presence, and fire-temple with hell - divine absence:

With You, my heart is a mosque: without You, it is but a fire-temple:
Without You, my heart is hell itself: with You, it becomes paradise!\(^6\)

As we have already seen the Hebrew word Satan is originally Persian - a syncretic adaptation from Zoroastrianism into Islam via Judeo-Christian Bible. In the Bible (Numbers 22:22), Yahweh in the guise of mal’ak Yahweh, is ‘a Satan’ for Balaam and his donkey, which is also found reflected in Sharafuddin:

“And do not forget the wiles of Satan and Balaam! The works of both were sinful from the very beginning and, at the end, both became unbelievers... Beware of not succumbing to Satan’s attempt to prevent you from repenting of your sins!... Know that such ideas are really the way Satan deceives people.”\(^7\)

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\(^5\) Ibid., p. 57.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 250.
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 20.
Satan, says Sharafuddin, sprang from luminous fire, whom he dramatically personifies:

One evening, Khwaja Junaid decided to go to the mosque. When he arrived at the door, he saw a glowering person in front of the door. He said, “Who are you, for my heart is set against you?” “I am Satan,” he replied, “you wanted to see me.” He said, “I have a question to ask you.” “Ask away!” He said: “Do you have any power over God’s friends?” “No,” was the reply. “How is that?” I inquired. He said: “If I want to snare them in this world, they fly to the next. If I want to catch them in the next world, they fly to the Lord Himself, where it is impossible for me to go.” Then he said: “O accursed one, who would believe that you could tell us about their secrets?” He replied, “True, but there is one occasion when I know what is manifested in them, and that is when, during a prayer-gathering, they fall into ecstasy.” Saying this, he disappeared.

The above dramatic narration cum its genre are similar to the conversation between God and Satan on Job in the Bible (Job 1:6-2:6), wherein both God and Satan are personified.

The idea of angels comes to Islam from Zoroastrianism via Judeo-Christian Bible (cf. Ch 2. Syncretic Mystical Literature, 1.3.4.2. Angels or Subordinate Deities, p. 105). Sharafuddin’s following passage clearly brings out the concept of ‘angles’ and ‘Satan’:

A person can attain the dignity of the archangels Gabriel or Michael in a flash, but he can just as suddenly appear to be like a dog or a pig! When there is knowledge and the illumination of wisdom, a man may become like an angel - “Lo, this is no man, but a blessed angel!” (Qur’an surah Yusuf 12:31)... But if a person’s heart is completely under the influence of lust and his heart is in Satan’s nest, then he is
like a dog or a pig. “He is like a dog! Whether you attack it or ignore it, he still pants!” (Qur’an surah Al-An’am 7:176).64

Calling up spirits, both for good and for evil, was commonplace in the Kabbalah (cf. Ch 2. Syncretic Mystical Literature, 1.3.4.3. Spirits). This practice was a syncretic adaptation by the Kabbalah from Zoroastrianism, and then came into Sufism. Sharafuddin’s following anecdote elaborately brings out the role of spirits in Sufism:

One day, Solomon emerged from his cell and stood outside. All the devils were busily engaged in their allotted tasks. He noticed that the Angel of Death arrived that moment with orders to the effect that he should take away his life. The Prophet Solomon said: ‘May I have a short respite?’

He replied: ‘No.’

He continued: ‘No even time enough to go to the women’s quarters and bid them farewell?’

‘No.’

‘May I sit down?’

‘No.’

The Prophet Solomon rested his blessed breast upon a staff and exclaimed, ‘God is Great.’ The Angel of Death carried away his blessed soul.

He continued: “The Prophet Solomon remained in this state for a whole year while the devils went about their own tasks and were engrossed in their own affairs. They thought that the Prophet Solomon was alive. All of them, out of awe of him, remained busily engaged but said to one another: ‘The prophet is spending a long time in worship.’”

64 Ibid., p. 77.
The Helpless One (i.e. Zain) enquired: “Weren’t any of the bystanders or servants aware of this?”

He replied: “Well, no. everybody thought that some divine revelation had been made manifest to the apostle of God and that he was engrossed in that. Afterwards white ants invaded the blessed staff, from bottom to the middle. It was no longer able to bear the weight of his blessed breast. The staff snapped. He tumbled to the ground. At that moment it was learned what the real situation was. After that, all the devils dispersed and loudly proclaimed that the prophet Solomon was dead.”

Furthermore, the following anecdote tells the impact of the Zoroastrian Devil on Sharafuddin. From Zoroastrianism, the devil has made inroads into Sufism via Judeo-Christianity:

In “Provisions for Souls” Wahb bin Munabbih said: “In some earlier books I saw that the Devil had met Moses near Mount Sinai. Moses said to the Devil” ‘What have you done by not prostrating before Adam?’ The Devil replied: ‘I did not want to disavow my claim. I would then become like you. I had claimed to love Him. That is why I prostrated before no one else. I was severely punished for this and accept the punishment. You claimed to love Him. He commanded you to look towards the mountain. If it stayed in its own place, then you would shortly see Him just as you saw it. If you were to lower your gaze from the mountain, then you would certainly see Him.”

66 Wahb bin Munabbih, as mentioned by Guillaume, was an early Muslim from Yemen who narrated the story of the origin of Christianity in that part of Arabia.
Thus, Zoroastrian elements in Sharafuddin’s literature are evident. Besides fire, spiritual entities like angels, Satan, devil and spirits have been assimilated into Sharafuddin’s mystical literature.

7. Syncretic Jewish Elements in Sharafuddin’s Literature

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are three sisters of the one Semite family. Hence, there are a number of shared customs and traditions including literary genres. All the more, Judaism is the first among the rest, and so has greater influence on the other two than the contrary. Let us have a glance at some of the syncretic literary elements found in Sharafuddin Maneri. To begin with. In Quest of God Sharafuddin writes: This sign was given: “He created Adam according to His image,” not by way of allegory or metaphor. “This is a great secret.” Adam, the first man created by God in His own image and likeness is a Judeo-Christian biblical figure (Genesis 1-3), whom Islam incorporated into the Qur’an was later assimilated by Sufi literature.

7.1. Covenant

All the three Semitic religions, i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are known as covenantal religions - a covenant between God and man - which is found reflected in Sharafuddin’s literature as well. Islam calls these three Ahle Hadith, i.e. People of the Book (Book of the Covenant.) The covenant concept has its origin in Judaism which has syncretically come into Sufism via Christianity. Covenant is the one central theme, to which Sharafuddin returns time and again, for, the Sufi this eternal covenant exists between God and the entire human race:

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68 Ibid., pp. 222-223.
And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their loins, their seed (or from Adam’s loin his offspring) and made them testify as to themselves (saying): “Am I not your Lord?” They said: “Yes, we bear witness.” (Qur’an, surah Al-A’raf 7:172)

Commenting on the above passage Sharafuddin says that God asked ‘the seed’ of the children of Adam before their actual creation and made them testify of themselves. This covenantal Qur’anic verse is at the very heart of Sharafuddin’s conception of the Way to God, which became the leitmotif of his life, wherein the words ‘Am I not’ gave him so much pleasure that they were not erased through his entire lifetime. And so, he bursts into song:

Your lovers have been intoxicated by “Am I not”!
They have come, their heads swimming with “Am I not”!
As they imbibe this wine and drink of its fragrance,
“Am I not,” turns them into devotees of wine.  

Sharafuddin says that the covenant is an expression of the paradox of the mystic’s life, wherein the pain involved is graphically expressed:

“All the time the Beloved says, ‘Stay away, lest you be destroyed,’ but they say, ‘we made an offering of our lives on the very first day. We have destroyed ourselves on the very first day. It would be better to die than to have to live without you. If we had to live without You, we would turn our faces towards nothingness.”

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70 Ibid., p. 205.
In the above passage ‘we made an offering of our lives on the very first day’ refers to the first covenant. Thus, the Jewish concept of covenant is syncretically present in Sharafuddin’s literature as well.

7.2. Monotheism (Tawhid)

The word monotheism is derived from the Greek monos meaning ‘single’ and theos meaning ‘god.’ Monotheism is the belief in the existence of one God or in the oneness of God. The English term was first used by Henry More (1614-87). Judaism is the first monotheistic religion with Christianity and Islam as its offshoots. Yahweh (Exodus 3:14, 6:3), the God of Judaism is strictly monotheistic. The very first commandment in the ‘Ten Commandments’ is a call to monotheism:

And God spake all these words, saying,

“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” (Exodus 20:1-3)

The popular Jewish prayer “Shema Yisrael” states: Sh’ma Yisra’el Yahweh Eloheinu Yahweh E’had, i.e. Hear O Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh alone.

Tawhid constitutes the first and foremost article of the Islamic profession of faith: “There is no god but God, and Mohammed is His Prophet.” The source of Tawhid is the Hebrew Bible, the Jewish scripture. Muslims believe that God is a single, indivisible being, with none being equal or related to him, which is reflected in Sharafuddin’s following lines:

You agree it has been well said. “In the Essence

Unity expels all attributions!”
Why should we join anything to Your Unity?
You are both the Sought and the Seeker: what more can we say?

Since you know and speak only of One,
Why do you ask about two, three, and four?
The letters \( b \) and \( t \) are on the same line as \( a \)
Yet they combine to form “but” [idol], while \( a \) forms “Allah!”

The whole Islamic philosophy lies on five pillars - *Shahada* (profession of faith),
*Salat* (prayer), *Zakat* (almsgiving), *Sawm* (fasting), and *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca).
However, Sharafuddin quotes one beloved of God who says if there is the first one
(*Tawhid*), why other four?:

Since there is only one God in both worlds,
Why be occupied with four pillars?
Pronounce One, desire One, and seek only One!
See One, and speak of One and One alone!^{71}

Thus monotheism, staunchly a Jewish article of faith, syncretically became first of
the five pillars of Islam, wherefrom into Sharafuddin’s mystical literature.

7.3. Jewish Law (*Halakhah*)

*Halakhah* is derived from the Hebrew root *Hei-Lamed-Kaf*, meaning ‘to go’, ‘to
walk’ or ‘to travel.’ It is usually translated as ‘Jewish Law’ although literally it means
‘the path that one walks.’ Judaism is not merely a set of beliefs about God, humans and
the universe, but a comprehensive way of life, filled with rules and practices that affect

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170-71.

^{72} Ibid., p. 173.
every aspect of life. *Halakhah* contains 613 *mitzvot*, i.e. commandments that God gave to the Jews in the Torah, laws instituted by the rabbis, and customs. Hence, Judaism is known as the religion of law.

In *The Hundred Letters*, in letter 25 “The Law and the Way” Sharafuddin says:

At all times, according the exigencies of the particular people, prophets lay the foundation that governs and regulates that people, through the revelation of the Lord. The acceptance by the prophets of the divine utterances is called “revelation.” When they explain things on the basis of that revelation, it is called “invitation.” Those who listen to them and follow them form a “community.” The collection of commands and prohibitions, of principles and their institutionalized expressions comprise the “Law.” Following this path is called “submission.” Accepting the burden of all these matters is “Islam,” while showing constancy in all these matters is called “faith.” So, then, a Law is a path established and maintained by a prophet. The wide road is called a “Highway.” The Law should be a wide road, for many roads branch off from it; as the Prophet said, “My people will be divided into seventy-three different sects, among whom seventy-two will be deviations, and one the path to salvation.”

In the above passage, the terms ‘prophet’, ‘revelation’, ‘community’, ‘law’, ‘commands and prohibitions’, etc. resemble the Jewish *halakhah*. Further, speaking about the Way (i.e. Sufi path) and the Law Sharafuddin says:

The Way is a path that stems from the Law, which expounds divine Unity, purity, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, the holy war, religious tax, together with other obligations and concerns, while the Way seeks the reality behind all these

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73 Ibid., p. 101-102.
prescribed things... In short, everything that is connected with outward purity and sanctification pertains to the Law, while everything connected with inner purification and sanctification pertains to the Way... In general, the observance of all that pertains to the senses comes under the ambit of the Law, while the observance of all that is concealed in the inner purity of the body has to do with the Way.  

As halakhah is necessary for the Jewish way of life, so is Law for the Sufi Way, says Sharafuddin. According to him, the first task of the disciple is to follow the path of the Law. When he shows himself faithful in carrying out the conditions of the Law to its minutest prescriptions, and with utter fidelity, and also has spiritual resolve, then by virtue of his observance of the Law, and as a fruit of his high aspirations, the Way presents itself to him. This is the Way of the heart. Without the Law, no Way (i.e. Sufi Way) and Truth (divine Truth) will be revealed, says Sharafuddin in the following verse:

Some there are who think that, without the Law or the Way,
The whole path to Truth will be revealed to them.
But, except through the Law, one cannot join the Way;
Nor can truth be attained apart from the Way.
All three are intimately bound to each other:
No one can separate any from the others.  

As per Kashrut or Jewish dietary laws, the kosher animals, i.e. mammals and birds, to be eaten must be slaughtered in accordance with shechitah or ritual slaughtering (Deuteronomy 12:21). The Torah (Leviticus 7:26-27;17:10-14) prohibits consumption of

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74 Ibid., p. 102.
75 Ibid., p. 224.
blood, for Judaism believes that the life of the animal is contained in the blood. Thus, it is necessary to remove all blood from the flesh of kosher animals. Similarly Sharafuddin says: “It has been related by certain sheikhs, and it is also the injunction of the Law, that if there is blood from east or west, then a believer would not taste of it. He would eat only what was lawful.”

*Halakhic* literature speaks about demons and in the age-old Jewish tradition, in Eastern Europe, dreams were regarded as a means to communicate with spiritual entities and with powers in the upper worlds, as well as with the dead. We can see such *halakhic* elements in Sharafuddin’s literature as well:

It is related that the Commander of the Faithful, Ali, was one day passing along a road. The edge of one of his sandals landed on an ant, injuring it. The distress of that ant had an effect on the heart of Ali. He saw the ant writhing on the ground. Ali sat down in front of it, his heart filled with grief. A fit of trembling seized his limbs. He suddenly felt very weak. Somehow or other that wounded ant managed to retreat to its nest. Ali returned home with a grief-stricken heart. When night came, he saw Muhammad in a dream, crying out to him and saying, “O Ali, why do you not pay attention to what you are doing? Today the seven heavens were taken aback at your cruelty. That ant upon whom you trod was one of the righteous ones of the Lord. It experienced various kinds of joy in itself. From the very day it had been created the recitation of the rosary and praise of the Lord had never been omitted from its life, even for the twinkling of an eye, except at that moment when you placed your foot on it!” Ali related: “My heart was overcome by fear and trembling before the pride of the world! I said: ‘O Prophet, what

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76 Ibid., p. 269.
should I do? How should I go about this matter?” He replied: “O Ali, remain where you are! Calm down, for that very ant besought the Lord to pardon your fault, saying: ‘O God, You have placed great emphasis on a person’s intention in his actions, and Ali did not intend to hurt me as he strode along. Grant him peace!’ The Prophet continued: “The ant interceded for you because you are an intrepid member of Our Court. You are tied to the saddle straps of its innate courtesy and thus were forgiven. O Ali, if the ant had not interceded on your behalf, then your self-respect, as far as this court is concerned, would have been lost. Do you know what this means? You can waive your own rights, but not those of your friends! Be on the alert, for there is no particle in creation upon which the pain of this saying has not alighted:

Everything you see, whether black or white,
Is busily at work in this great workshop.
Just look at these particles, all astir,
Praising Him by proclaiming His unity!^^

Due to the great importance given to halakhah, Judaism was known as the ‘Religion of Law.’ Sharafuddin gives similar importance to law, for, he says:

The person who is both adorned with and tested by the commands of the Law, and who has given over the reins of his being into the hands of the Law, so that he turns in whatever direction the Law dictates to him, is the one who has brought his inclinations and desires under control.^^

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77 Ibid., pp. 261-62.
78 Ibid., p. 405.
7.4. External and Internal Purity

Judaism observes strict purity norms: “For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.” (Mark 7:3-4) This purity has syncretically entered the Islamic world. For, the Qur’an says: “Islam is not the sort of religion that displays the beauty of its visage before every defiled and unwashed fellow, for none but the purified may touch.” (Qur’an surah Al-Waqi’ah 56:79) Further, purity in Sufism plays an important role which Sharafuddin expresses thus:

These two works are the foundation of this Way... The first task is to keep your external members clean of the stain of sin. The second is to keep your heart unsullied by the stain of blameworthy qualities. When you have acquired this external and internal purity, the secrets of the angelic realm will be revealed to you, like a refreshing draught. Just as Abraham saw angels in heaven and on earth, so will you have drunk the sherbet and donned the robe of, “God is good and accepts only the good.” 79

According to Sharafuddin, purity is of two kinds - external and internal. He says that just as prayer without purity of body cannot be correct, so too genuine mystical knowledge of the Lord without purity of heart is impossible. Just as clean water is required for purity of the body, so purity of heart is indispensible for true insight into the

Divine Unity.” “God loves those who repent. He loves the pure of heart.” (Qur’an surah Al-Baqarah 2:222):

Knowing the divine Unity is not for dust and water;
It requires something more: a clean heart and a pure soul!^80

Sharafuddin confirms his strand on ‘purity’ by quoting Khwaja Bayazid:
“Whenever any thought of the world enters my heart, I cleanse myself, and whenever thought about the world to come enters my heart, I take a bath.”^81 Cleansing because the world is polluted and any thought about it is polluting. In the life to come there is carnal desire, and one must get relief from that ceremonial pollution.

7.5. Predestination vs divine fore-knowledge

Belief in predestination is one of the articles of Islamic faith. The Qur’an says:
“He guides whom He will and leads astray whom He will.” (Qur’an surah Fatir 35:8)
“Some are hindered from attaining any knowledge of the Almighty. God sealed their hearts.” (Qur’an surah Al-Baqarah 2:7) “The words of God cannot be changed.” (Qur’an surah Yunus 10:64) “Nothing befalls us except that which God has decreed for us.” (Qur’an surah At-Taubah 9:51). “And whosoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his breast to Islam; and whosoever He wills to send astray, He makes his breast closed and constricted, as if he is climbing up to the sky. Thus Allah puts the wrath on those who believe not.” (Qur’an surah Al-An’am 6:125) “The one who, from the beginning is fortunate has been blessed from his mother’s womb. Such a person is given the key to bliss, whereas the one who, from the beginning is unfortunate, has been born accursed... This is the decree of the great, wise God.” (Qur’an surah Fussilat 41:12).

^81 Ibid., p. 118.
Islam believes that everything is preordained in the mothers' womb itself. In letters 76 and 77 of The Hundred Letters, Sharafuddin deals with predestination:

“If you have looked at yourself or at someone else, then it is said, ‘If you have made anyone an associate, all your works will be burnt up.’ And if you want to have a little profit in your heart, it is said: ‘Undoubtedly at every moment a protector has been assigned to you.’ If you desire any rank in your heart, it is said, ‘He knows the hidden secrets of the heart.’ If he flees and hides somewhere, it is said: ‘There is no place he can escape to.’ If he still flees, calamity befalls him, ‘All have to return in His direction.’ If he abandons everything and sits helplessly, he hears, ‘I will show those who have striven for My sake My own Way.’ If he tries to exert himself, he hears: ‘He distributes His mercy to whomsoever He chooses.’ If anyone despairs, it is said, ‘Don’t despair of God’s mercy.’ If, on becoming filled with hope, you grow fearless, it is said, ‘Are those people protected from God’s ordering?’ And if he cries out, it is said, ‘It can’t be asked why He did such and such!’

Syncretically assimilating the story of the First Fall of Adam from the Torah into his literary ambit, Sharafuddin develops it further, giving it the colour and flavor of Islamic predestination:

It is related that Moses said: “O Adam, a cloth filled with delicacies was presented to you. Why did you stretch out your hand to the wheat?” Adam replied: “You must have read in the Torah that before I was created, this had already been written about me. How can you blame me?” Moses replied: “Then

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why did you explain, ‘My lord, I am guilty of oppression?’” “My enemy had routed me,” he explained, “and had proofs; my only approach to the threshold was to confess, ‘My Lord, I am guilty of oppression,’ for nobody can approach Him by means of arguments.” Someone said to a beloved one: “First He ordains sin for me and then sends His punishment upon me.” “Yes,” replied the other, “that’s what it’s like! One cannot even find time to draw breadth!”

Further, through an anecdote Sharafuddin proves his point: One day the messenger Adam saw the Devil and said: “O accursed one, what is this you have done to me?” He replied: “O Adam, who did to me what I did to you?” it has been well put thus:

The Eternal Fowler who placed the grain in the snare
Caught a bird, and gave its name as ‘Adam.’
All good or evil which occurs in the world
He himself does, yet pretends people have done it.\(^8^4\)

Sharafuddin quotes a Sufi: “It was the question of fate and predestination that killed us!”\(^8^5\)

If someone is raised to the heights of heaven, it happens apart from any action or work; and if anyone is dragged down to the depths of hell, it happens apart from any offence or sin. Muhammad, the Apostle of God, was lifted to the heights of heaven quite apart from any action or work of devotion on his part, even before he came into existence. Abu Jahl\(^8^6\) was banished to the depths of hell quite apart from any offence or crime on his part, even before he came into existence. Umar

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\(^8^6\) Abu Jahl was a Meccan leader opposed to Mohammed. He was killed in the battle of Badr in 624.
was accepted by God while in an idol-temple, while Abi ibn Sulul, a hypocrite living in a mosque, was rejected.  

Explaining the above passage Sharafuddin says that when a scribe writes ‘b’ on his paper, it cannot become a ‘q’ or an ‘f.’ If the creation of an Abu Jahl has been decreed, he cannot become an Abu Yazid.

Situations can never prove fruitful for a person of ill-fortune:

It is not possible to display states to one and all.
If the circling heavens have sown sorrow for us,
In no state will happiness be reached.

Sharafuddin narrates a tale from Ibrahim Adham:

Someone said to Khwaja Ibrahim Adham: “I want to hear something from you about knowledge of the path.” He replied: “My son, for a long time I have been lamenting over my own condition.” He was asked the reason for this. He answered: “Because when the angel who fashioned me in my mother’s womb completed his task he enquired of God if he should write a happy or wretched end for me. I don’t know what reply he received. When the Angel of Death inquired of God whether he should snatch away my soul to felicity or wretchedness, I don’t know what the answer was. On the Day of Resurrection, when the angel

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88 Bayazid Bistami, the famous Sufi.
90 Ibrahim Ibn Adham (d. 790 or so) was reputed to have been a prince of Balkh who renounced his royal inheritance and became an eminent Sufi. He became the subject of many pious tales.
will ask God whether he will lead me off to paradise or to hell, I don’t know what
the answer will be." \(^9\)

Sharafuddin confirms predestination theory by narrating yet another Sufi tale:

A certain people was in search of Him day and night. The reply they received was
this: “Your seeking has been rejected; the road has been closed!” Another group
turned their face away from the path and walked heedlessly, according to their
own desires. A voice came from the Unseen: “God invites them to the abode of
peace!” (Qur’an surah Yunus 10:25) \(^9\)

Sharafuddin’s idea of predestination is clearly spelt out in the following verse:

At times You lend forth a friend from an idol-temple:
At times You turn a stranger into a friend.
At times from a house producing veritable jewels
You produce an Abu Talib, given over to stones. \(^9\)

Judaism doesn’t believe in predestination. But Psalm 139 “God’s Omnipresence
and Omniscience” has overtones which suggest divine fore-knowledge rather than
predestination:

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.
Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising:
thou understandest my thought afar off.
Thou compassest my path and my lying down.

\(^9\) Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), In Quest of God: Maneri’s Second Collection of 150 Letters, Gujarat Sahitya
\(^9\) Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), In Quest of God: Maneri’s Second Collection of 150 Letters, Gujarat Sahitya
Prakash, Anand, 2004, p. 161. One ‘friend ’ alluded to is Abraham, and the distinguished ‘house’ is that of
Mohammed, whose uncle was Abu Talib. He was the guardian, but he did not become a Muslim.
and art acquainted with all my ways.
For there is not a word in my tongue.

*but,* lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.
Thou hast beset me behind and before,
and laid thine hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high, I cannot attain unto it.
Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there:
if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
If I take the wings of the morning,
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
even there shall thy hand lead me.
and thy right hand shall hold me.
Is I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me:
even the night shall be light about me.
Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee:
but the night shineth as the day:
the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.
For thou hast possessed my reins:
thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb.
I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:
marvelous are they works:

and that my soul knoweth right well.

My substance was not hid from thee
when I was made in secret.

and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect:

and in thy book all my members were written.

which in continuance were fashioned.

when as yet there was none of them.

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!

How great is the sum of them!

If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:

when I awake, I am still with thee.

Sharafuddin quotes the story of Joseph, the Jewish biblical character, viewing it in the light of predestination:

Consider the story of the messenger Joseph. While still a mere lad and sinless he was thrown into a well by his brothers. The old father of the messenger was sorely distressed at this separation, nor merited by any offence. He was then lifted out of the well and sold into slavery. Then Zulaikha sent him on his way. He was then taken away and ended up as a servant of the king, while his brothers, after that sin of theirs, ended up in the exalted position of having the crown of prophethood placed on their heads. How can this be fully comprehended?... O brother,
whenever a scribe writes the letter qaf on a piece of paper it doesn’t turn out as kaf. Similarly, when he writes kaf it certainly doesn’t become qaf.\(^{94}\)

Sharafuddin explains predestination through an anecdote related to Solomon - the son of King David, the famous Jewish king. This anecdote too isn’t in the Jewish Nebiim (Jewish Prophetic Literature) but an extended development by Sharafuddin to suit his mystical literary purpose:

Once the angel of death had been sent to the court of Solomon. He sat close by a man and stared fixedly at him. The man grew frightened. When the angel disappeared, the man begged Solomon that he would command the wind to carry him off to the west. Solomon bade the wind do so. Then the angel of death reappeared in the court. Solomon asked him why he had gazed so pointedly at the poor man. “I was commanded to take his life in an hour, in the west,” replied the angel. “I saw him here and was astonished. How could this be? The command had been to take him in the west, but only an hour was left to him, so I came and gazed at him in order that he might take fright and request you to have the wind bear him off.” That action, therefore, was not without purpose.\(^{95}\)

Through another Sufi anecdote on Balaam - a Jewish biblical character (Numbers 22-24) - which too isn’t in Jewish literature but an extended development by Sharafuddin - he confirms his strand on predestination. He says that Balaam, son of Beor was seated on his prayer mat for four hundred years, yet he was finally commanded to be removed from the Royal Presence. He had been rejected. Sharafuddin says that it is God who gives grace to whom He wills. For, God has required that there will be a group that goes to hell.

\(^{94}\)Ibid., p. 167.
He restrains them from doing good deeds and puts into their heart the idea that works are not necessary, and that bliss and misery have been ordained from the beginning. Misery exists because it was thus construed at the very beginning.

From the flock the wolf takes the sheep he wants;
The wilderness puts each shepherd to the test. Sharafuddin doesn’t fully approve of the Islamic predestination theory, wherein man is just a pawn! However, he accepts Jewish theory of divine fore-knowledge acknowledging God’s surpassing greatness. which to him, is of supreme importance. He sums up: “The one who does all this is merciful and compassionate!” He further says that in some mysterious way man’s free-will is both affirmed as existing and yet subsumed by the divine will. Mystery, not contradiction, forms the heart of his teaching. All the more, being a Muslim he also subsists the Islamic predestination theory, for he says, “Look, the verdict has already been written down and the unseen Judge has signed it!” He quotes Prophet Mohammed’s advice to the companions:

“...If eternal bliss has been allotted to you, then good works also have been decreed!” The meaning of this statement is that fortune and misfortune are related to devotion and sin, just as good health and death are related to eating well and starving. All those who were ordained, from the very beginning, to die of hunger simply do not find enough food to eat, whereas those destined for plenty become

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96 The inherent tension between Sharafuddin’s exposition of Asharite theological views on predestination and his own experience of God as the Merciful and Compassionate One, echoed repeatedly in his citation of the Quranic verse: “Don’t despair of God’s mercy” (Qur’an surah Az-Zumar 39:53)


landlords and traders. Those destined to die in the west will find the way to the east closed to them. They will not be able to proceed in any other direction.\textsuperscript{100}

7.6. Transmigration of souls or Metempsychosis in Sharafuddin’s Literature

As we have seen “Book of Brightness”, a major twelfth century Kabbalah text, for the first time introduced metempsychosis into Judaism, i.e. the passing of souls into successive bodily forms, or the belief that the souls of the deceased return to this world reincarnating in different forms - in human body, in animals, or in inanimate objects (cf. Transmigration of souls or Metempsychosis, p. 123). Further, \textit{dybbuk}, i.e. connection between two worlds - present and hereafter - magical trait was emerged in Hasidism (cf. Transmigration or Reincarnation and Exorcism in Hasidism or Hasidic Judaism, p. 141), wherein the evil spirit of a deceased person is believed to have taken possession of another human body and communicate through it.

As in Judaism, metempsychosis is not only alien, but also antithetical to Islam. All the more, as the Jewish mystical schools Kabbalah and Hasidism have assimilated it, so has it sycnretically made inroads into Sufism, wherefrom into Sharafuddin. In \textit{The Hundred Letters} he narrates the conversations with the dead:

It is also related that a group of the sons of Israel was passing by a cemetery. They prayed to God Almighty that He might revive one of the dead so that they might question him. Lo, one dead man rose up from his grave and, between his eyes, was the mark of his repeated prostrations. He said, “O men, what do you want of me? It is fifty years now since I tasted death, but its bitterness has not yet departed from my heart!” Imam Auza’i has related this: “I was told that a dead man is afflicted by death till the moment he is raised from the grave”... It is also related

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., pp. 75-76.
that when the soul of the prophet Moses reached the Divine Presence, God asked:

"Moses, how did you find death?" He asked this question, even though He is fully aware of what it is like. Moses replied: "I found my soul was like a sparrow, and in such a state as though it had been fried in a pan but did not receive the relief of death, nor was it released so that it might fly away." 101

Further, through anecdotes Sharafuddin communicates that a mystic is bestowed with special grace by which he can see the invisible lower soul taking different forms - human and animal:

It is related that Sheikh Abu Ali Siyah said: "I once saw my lower soul in the form of a pig. Someone snatched a hair from it and gave it to me. I bound it to a tree and resolved to destroy it. 'O Abu Ali,' it called out to me, 'do not kill me, for I am a soldier of God. You cannot destroy me.'" Khwaja Muhammad Nuri said: "One day I saw my lower soul in the form of a baby fox that came out of my mouth. I understood that this was my lower soul. I flung it beneath my feet and, the more I stomped on it, the bigger and stronger it grew. I said: 'All things are destroyed by wounds and affliction, yet you thrive on them.' It replied: 'this is because I am made differently. What is affliction for another is comfort for me!'"

Sheikh Abu Abbas said: "One day I entered my house and saw a yellow dog. When I tried to chase it out, it ran under my skirt and disappeared." Sheikh Abul Qasim Gurgani said: "I saw it in the form of a serpent." Another dervish said: "I saw my lower soul in the form of a mouse. I asked: 'Who are you?' It replied: 'I am the destruction of the heedless and the salvation of the friends. If I were not with the latter - realize that my existence is a trial for them - they would grow

101 Ibid., pp. 409-10.
proud of their own purity and boast of their deeds when they see the extent of their sanctity, comprehension of secrets, and stability in devotion! Pride and spirit of self-sufficiency would begin to appear in them. When, however, they see me at either side, then they are washed clean of all such temptations!”

Sharafuddin quotes a verse which clearly states the impact of reincarnation on Sufism:

The treasure is in the hold, the ship is the talisman,
Finally, the talisman of the body will be destroyed.
You will find the treasure when the talisman has passed away:
You will come to life when your body is no more.
After that, your life will have a different talisman,
When your life as ceased, you will acquire another body.
Sew up your lips! Do not inquire about footstool and throne!
Even if you want to ask but a little about them - do not!
No one knows completely even a particle of creation:
A little you ask, a little you say; then your life is over!  

Mount Sinai plays a significant role in the Jewish religious cum literary tradition. For, on that mountain God made a covenant with the Israelites (or Jews) and gave Ten Commandments to Moses. Being mystical, Sharafuddin speaks metaphorically of Mount Sinai and Moses - a direct spell of the syncretic Jewish mystical literature on Sharafuddin: Do you think there is only one Mount Sinai in the world? Or only one

102 Ibid., p. 332.
103 Ibid., p. 331.
Moses? Your body is Mount Sinai. Your heart is Moses! The strength of both lies in this:
"Surely I am God!"104

8. Syncretic Christian Elements in Sharafuddin’s Literature

As we have seen, Sufism grew out of Christian monastic mysticism (cf. Christian Influence on Sufi Literature, p. 230), which has cast immense impact on its literature, and Sharafuddin is no exception. There are myriad conceptual ideas inherent in Sharafuddin’s literature incorporated from Christian religious-cum-mystical treasures.

8.1. Qur’anic Exegesis

As the word Qur’an means ‘recite’, it was understood to be recited and so wasn’t open for exegesis. Biblical exegesis is a Christian methodology to interpret the Bible, which is quite a late entry into Islam. While discussing with his teacher Abu Tau’ama on ‘whether we can see God in this life’, Sharafuddin recalls:

I had heard so in Bengal, from Amir Fazil Balkhi. The Balkhis are quite capable exegetes and traditionalists, and they handle Quranic exegesis with particular skill. Once Amir Fazil Balkhi was explaining some verses of the Quran when he came to the verse dealing with the vision of God. This very point - whether we can see God or not - arose. He said, “No, for the reason that the world is the abode of transitoriness, whereas vision leads to immortality and any passing away becomes impossible, for ‘Everything in this world is transitory.’” Hence, there is no vision here, and that concludes the matter.105

Moreover, 'passing away' (fana') found in the above excerpt is a Christian concept by origin and nature (cf. 'Passing away' [Fana'] and 'Survival' [Baqa'], p. 243), which has entered Sharafuddin via Sufi literature.

8.2. Theophany (Tajally) in Sharafuddin's Literature

Theophany is the divine voice representing God's manifestation - a part of the apocalyptic genre of literature with its roots in the Judeo-Christian Bible - which has come into Sharafuddin through Sufi literature (cf. Theophany (Tajally) in Sufi Literature, p. 241). Sharafuddin deployed this literary genre in his writings which is clearly spelt out in the following literary piece:

"Abu Ali Siyah said: 'One day, according to the sacred tradition, I was shaving my pubic hair.' I said to myself: 'O Ali, this is the member which is the root of all lust, and has thrown you into so many calamities. Get rid of it, so that you might acquire release from its wickedness!' I heard a voice which said: 'O Ali, you are encroaching on My domain. One member is not of greater dignity than another in My estimation. If you yourself get rid of it, I can place in every hair of your body what I have placed in only one member.'"106

Not only the theophanic genre, but also the above idea - 'one member is not of greater dignity than another' - is the biblical adaptation from the First Letter of St Paul to Corinthians 12:12-26 "Unity and diversity in one body":

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one

106 Ibid., p. 217.
member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of
the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I
am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole
body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing,
where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of
them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member,
where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one
body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the
head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the
body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body
which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our
unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need.
But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks
it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have
the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer
with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

The above idea is further elaborated in Sharafuddin’s following passage:

“The form and mould which you see with limbs and joints contains no dangers. It
is a mount which bears the burdens of the commands of religion... it should not
be troubled at all. If, however, it decides to wander off the road of religion, then
rain the whip of self-struggle upon it, so that it might return to the road. The limit
of the form is this: if someone pricks himself in one of his bodily members with
the point of a needle and says, ‘I am punishing my lower self;’ it would be a sin in
the eyes of God Almighty. This fault is a result of great ignorance but, in his foolishness, the ascetic thinks it is a wonderful work. One should be careful not to go beyond the limits prescribed by sound knowledge, for your mount is precious.\footnote{Ibid.}

The mortification of flesh in the above passage - ‘punishing one’s lower self by pricking oneself in one of his bodily members with the point of a needle’ - is an adaptation from the Christian practice of monastic ‘discipline’ like using foot-chains pricking the flesh, wearing metal waist-belt, self-flagellation, sleeping on bed of nails, eating ash-mixed food, etc. (cf. Christian Influence on Sufi Literature, p. 230). Though Sharafuddin opposes ‘discipline’ or mortification of the flesh, the passage indicates that such a practice was prevalent among ascetics.

Coming to theophany, Sharafuddin says that an earnest effort to master one’s carnal soul is a necessary precondition for divine manifestations. According to him, self-struggle is not an end in itself, but it opens the way to divine illuminations. Sufis who sought God through ascetical practices were granted divine manifestations. One cannot be filled with God as long as he is filled with self. Sharafuddin’s “The Perfect Formula” says that ‘to have union with God one has to pass beyond the confines of his human nature.’ For, God has to be disclosed to the inner vision, which is beyond the physical vision, and indeed, beyond his natural intellectual vision as well. Of course, this is the Christian mystical theology with Platonic overtones, which Sharafuddin has assimilated into his mystical literature, and it gets confirmed when he quotes: When Khwaja Bayazid inquired, in intimate converse with God, “My God, what is the way to thee?” a voice

\footnote{Ibid.}
from heaven gave this reply: “Pass by your selfish soul and come!” Further, Sharafuddin quotes Abu Bakr Furak, who, when decided to go all by himself and give himself up wholly to devotion in some mountainous region, heard a voice: “O Abu Bakr, since you have been enlightened by God Almighty about so many matters of advantage to people, why have you abandoned God’s slaves?” He returned and once again began to reside among people. 109 In *The Hundred Letters*, the second letter written on “Repentance” Sharafuddin says:

He then heard a voice within him say, “You submitted yourself to Me and I forgave you your sins. Again you were unfaithful and spurned Me. Now I have given you time to repent. If you wish to return, I shall receive you in peace.” 110

Sharafuddin gives an anecdote which confirms his belief in the divine voice or theophany:

Someone was in a wilderness, perishing from thirst and saying: “There are so many oceans of water, and here am I perishing with thirst!” A voice from the Unknown was heard to say: “I have thrown so many prophets and saints into a destructive wilderness and, at My own good pleasure, have destroyed them, showing My power by having some crows pick their eyes out of their sockets! If anyone wishes to raise his voice to object, then I shall place this seal of punishment on his tongue: ‘He cannot be questioned about what He does’ (Qur’an

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110 Ibid., p. 17.
surah Al-Anbiya’ 21:23). “All crows belong to Me! All righteous men are Mine too! Who can interfere with Us?”

All the above theophanies include one-way communication - from the divine to the human. But Sharafuddin’s following anecdotes have a two-way communication, which is a ‘conversation’ between the divine and the human:

A man asked God for a son. A hermaphrodite was born to him. He said: “O God, I asked You for a son, but You have given me a hermaphrodite.” He heard a voice: “I know how to give, but you do not know how to ask!”...Once Khwaja Junaid had a fever. He prayed: “O God, restore me to health!” A voice was heard: “Why do you impose yourself between you and Me? Do you think I do not know what should be done on your behalf? This worry is for others, not for you!”

The theophanic conversation is apparent in Sharafuddin’s narration of Shibli’s experience:

The voice of God came: “What is it that you desire? And who is your beloved?”

A cry arose: “You are our Beloved!” There was a voice from heaven that said, “Undoubtedly it is you who are My loved ones and My friends!”

Usually, in Christianity and also in Sharafuddin, theophany is between the two worlds - celestial and terrestrial. However, at times it takes place within the celestial world itself, i.e. between God, angels and so on, which is clearly brought out in the following creation account:

There was an uproar in the kingdom when the turn of the richly endowed Adam came. The angels said: “What has happened, that so many thousands of years of

111 Ibid., p. 230.
112 Ibid., pp. 328-29.
113 Ibid., p. 132.
our praising and glorifying God have been thrown to the wind, whereas this creature of clay has been exalted and raised above us?" A voice said: "Do not look at his form of clay! Look rather at the sacred trust given to him! 'He loves them, and they love Him'" (Quran surah Al-Ma'idah 5:54). The fire of love has been enkindled within their hearts and a voice came, saying, "Might and victory belong to God!" Thereupon all hearts were consumed by fire; everyone melted in the intensity of love. What is this? Just as He is not restricted, neither is His work!\(^{114}\)

Further, Sharafuddin’s following passage vividly brings out theophany in the celestial world between the spiritual entities:

When the Devil fell, Gabriel and Michael wept for some time. A voice came: "What is the matter with you that you are weeping so profusely? He himself knows what is happening." They said: "O Lord, we cannot be saved from Your deception." A reply came: "You should both be wise! Don’t feel safe from My deception!" Behold the One who has no need!\(^ {115}\)

Still, here is an extra-Qur’anic literary piece by Sharafuddin having triangular theophany - God, Archangel Gabriel and the human devotee:

One auspicious evening an order reached the Archangel Gabriel, "Go down to the world tonight and have a look around!" He went and found everyone sound asleep, except for an old man who was an idol worshiper. He was sitting in front of an idol, lost in worship, with his head bowed low. With great devotion he was soliciting the idol for things he needed. Gabriel wanted the divine command to

\(^{114}\) Ibid., p. 182.
destroy this man and thus wipe his defiling presence from the face of the earth. “O Gabriel,” said a heavenly voice, “even if he does not recognize Me as his Lord, still I consider him one of my slaves!” On another auspicious evening an address came to Gabriel. “Go tonight also and see who is asleep and who is awake.” Gabriel went and saw, standing on one leg, in the niche of a mosque, and plying the Lord with a hundred petitions, the same old man, “Do you recognize him?” asked the voice. “He is the one who was lost in prayer before the idol. Today, a stranger has become a friend, and one ignorant of Me has become filled with knowledge of Me.”

Thus, as in Christianity, Sharafuddin too deploys various theophanic literary genres to communicate divine manifestations cum illuminations to the humans, which, the critics perceive to be a means to impose human precepts with divine sanctions - a syncretic mystical literary phenomenon.

8.3. ‘Passing away’ (Fana’) and ‘Survival’ (Baqa’)

In Sufism *fana’* is ‘passing away’ or ‘dissolution’ or ‘annihilation’ of the human attributes (*sifat*), which dwell in the Ego, so that one is alive only in God. The essence of *fana’* is that the Sufi possesses nothing, nor is himself possessed by anything. ‘Die to self and rise in Christ’ is the popular Christian saying wherein one must die to one’s natural self, thus rise in the Spirit. The concepts of *fana’* and *baqa’* have syncretically come into Sharafuddin from Christianity via Sufi literature, which is evident when he says:

The Prophet has said: “I recognized my Lord by means of my Lord.” Jesus the Prophet also said: “A man cannot be reckoned among the host of angels in heaven

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and on earth, that is, those who have attained divine illumination, unless he be born again!\(^{117}\)

\`Being born again\' is nothing but dying to one's self (\textit{fana'}). thus live or have \`survival\' (\textit{baqa'}) in the Spirit. Sharafuddin's above passage syncretically reflects the biblical episode of Jesus and Nicodemus:

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily. I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:3-6)

Sharafuddin says that those who \`pass away\' (\textit{fana'}) from their natural self and \`survive\' (\textit{baqa'}) in the Spirit are saints who are recognized only by God: "The saints dwell under My domes. Except for Me, no one can recognize them."

Those who travel along this Way live by the life of Another;
The birds flying in His air come from the nest of Another.
Do not look at them with your earthly eye, since they
Belong neither to this world nor the next but Another.\(^{118}\)

\(^{117}\) Ibid., p. 31.
\(^{118}\) Ibid.
Having influenced by Greek philosophy Christian theology said, ‘die to self and rise in Christ.’ Accordingly Sharafuddin said, ‘to reach the ultimate destiny one has to destroy one’s ‘self’:

Long ago it was said: “This Way is such that you cannot reach your destination unless you destroy yourself.” The resting place, as far as the faith is concerned, is the destruction of one’s animal soul. First destroy yourself, then set out along this road! Otherwise, take your troubles and get out of the way of those who are heading toward God, that the manly might enter.\(^{119}\)

In the following verse Sharafuddin calls the mystics on the Way to abandon their self, i.e. destroy one’s self:

- Abandon yourself; then set out along the Way of faith!
- This infidel soul is an idol; fling it on the ground!
- Set out on the road, if you are a man of the Way!
- Having set out, sacrifice yourself on His Way!
- If you are told, “Risk your head along this Way of Mine!”
- Then rejoice, and fling the sash off your turbaned head.\(^{120}\)

Sharafuddin says that the Sufi who dies to self (\(fana’\)) and obtains a new form of existence (\(baqa’\)) is absorbed in and affirmed by God Himself:

At every moment that a Sufi dies, only to obtain a new form of existence, coming further under the control of desire of self-effacement and absorption in God. From that effacement one goes for a different type of stroll in the Divine World, under the influence of a strong yearning. “God effaces or establishes whatever He

\(^{119}\) Ibid., p. 369.
\(^{120}\) Ibid.
pleases” (Qur’an surah Ar-Ra’d 13:39). At every step absorption and affirmation are obtained, so that the Sufi celebrates two feasts there: one that of absorption, and the other a feast of affirmation. At this stage, it is fitting that he should be called “the Spirit of God” or “the Word of God”; such a title will become like a robe that fits him perfectly.\(^{121}\)

Sharafuddin’s following couplet expresses that through the destruction of ‘self’ one can achieve absorption and affirmation:

In one breathe the Sufis celebrate two feasts,

While spiders tear flies to pieces!\(^{122}\)

Sharafuddin confirms \textit{fana’} and \textit{haqa’} by quoting Abraham, who is the father of faith for all the three Semitic religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - which are also called as Abrahamic religions: “This is what Abraham, the Friend of God, meant when he said: Look at me! I cannot take any rest except with You; nor do I see anything but You; nor do I hope in anyone except You; nor do I fear anyone except You!”\(^{123}\) Further, Sharafuddin quotes Prophet Mohammed thus:

The Messenger said: “There is no rest for the believer, except in the vision of God. Deprived of this he will die!” The condition imposed on the traveler is that he should not rest content till he attains the One Known. Nor should he rest content in such knowledge! Though he might know much, he should seek after more. Having drunk deeply of the wine of knowledge from the cup of love, he still wants more: His drinking merely whets his thirst.

If I saw You a thousand times a day,

\(^{121}\) Ibid., p. 67.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., p. 66.

\(^{123}\) Ibid., p. 86.
I would still want yet another glimpse!\textsuperscript{124}

Actually, the Judeo-Christian Bible doesn’t have the above words of Abraham at all. For, the Qur’an has incorporated a plethora of passages from the Judeo-Christian Bible, however, with some manipulations here and there to suit the purpose – old wine in new wineskins. I am of the opinion that this is Sharafuddin’s mystical reading of Abraham. The words are rather attributed to St Augustine (354-430 A.D.), who had said in his \textit{Confessions} (Lib 1.1-2.2.5.5: CSEL 33, 1-5): “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Thus, it is the syncretic assimilation by Sharafuddin from St Augustine into his mystical literature. For he says, “Anyone who loves Me cannot be at peace with any other!”\textsuperscript{125} Also “Rest is forbidden for the hearts of God’s friends.”\textsuperscript{126} The following verse brings it out succinctly:

Everyone who seeks the realm of solitude,
And he who desires the abode of Unity,
Should not find repose within himself,
Nor should he acquire embellishment without!
If revelation, for you, becomes confined to the body,
Then make of such revelation a shoe, and beat yourself on the head!
A cringing dog goes in search of bones.
While the tiger cub seeks living prey!\textsuperscript{127}

Further, Sharafuddin’s couplet also expresses the same idea beautifully:

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., p. 180.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 189.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., p. 196.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid., pp. 171-72.
Until the Friend displayed His beauty.

My poor heart found not a moment’s peace!¹²⁸

‘Passing away’ (fana‘) and ‘survival’ (baqa‘) for Sharafuddin is not in body but in Spirit. That is, when one ‘passes away’ to one’s self, he ‘survives’ (baqa‘) to his spiritual self, which, for Sharafuddin is the true self. He confirms it by quoting the Qur’an: Concerning the friends of God, it has been said, “Those who are killed along the Way to God - do not number them among the dead, for they live through their Lord!” (surah Al ‘Imran 3:169). Sharafuddin says that the sons of the world to come have all been killed - they remain bodily in this world, though their hearts are in the next. This is a mystical concept adapted from Christoplatonism (cf. Christoplatonism, p. 151), which is clearly spelt out in Sharafuddin’s following excerpt as well:

Anybody who has come to terms with himself and accepted his self is dead, even though he appears to be alive. Whoever lives in God, however, even though he appears to be dead, is really alive. Death is not the death of the body! Just as there is an apparent death, there is also a real one. Men are sunk in the sea of human nature. The prophets come along and, through their assistance, men are extricated from their plight. They then become submerged in the ocean of Unity, till not a trace from even one of them is left behind!¹²⁹

Existence, for Sharafuddin, is nowhere but in God alone which he expresses in this couplet:

Since, apart from Him, no one exists in either world.
Who, apart from Him, can be the object of love and desire.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 163.
¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 353.
¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 86.
The change caused by \textit{fana}’ and \textit{baqa}’ is of the qualities and not of the essence, says Sharafuddin in the following passage:

It is the nonexistence of qualities rather than essence, for it is not the essence that changes but the qualities. It is not the creature that changes but its disposition! If the sun shines on water, it makes it warm. It is a quality of the water that has been altered, not its very substance. The substance of the sun produces a change in the qualities of the water but not in its essence! In this there is no coincidence of opposites. God Himself has said about his enemies: “They are dead, not alive, nor do they know when they will be raised up.” (Qur’an surah An-Nahl 16:21)\textsuperscript{131}

The ‘essence’ and ‘qualities’ in the above passage are the Greco-Christian elements reflecting in Sharafuddin’s literature. Thus ‘passing away’ (\textit{fana}’) from the ‘self’ one has ‘survival’ (\textit{haqa}’) in God - a Christian mystical concept sycnretically made inroads into Sahrafuuddin’s mystical literature.

\textbf{8.4. Dual Bodies - physical and spiritual}

The Qur’an and the Islamic philosophy never speak of physical and spiritual substances, but body and soul. However Sharafuddin says, “Understand the truth and know for certain that man is composed of two different substances, one heavenly and one earthly. Just as this earthly body is susceptible to disease, so too is the heavenly one.”\textsuperscript{132}

It is a syncretic assimilation from the Bible wherein St Paul says, “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (1 Corinthians 15:44).

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., pp. 353-54.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p. 78.
8.5. Philosophical interpretation of Idolatry

Idolatry is the worship of idols. In Islam, idolatry is *shirk* or sin, i.e. the deification or worship of anyone or anything other than God, hence, it is strictly prohibited. For, it goes against the Islamic tenet of *Tawheed* (monotheism) - the first and the foremost pillar of the Islamic credo. Sharafuddin said that anything should be considered as an idol, whether it be profitable or harmful, if fear or hope is associated with it. even though, in and of itself, it is not an idol:

The Sufis have this to say about idols. The idolatry of trying the sacred thread or prostrating oneself before some idol is not an issue here, but that of coveting something other than God. It could also refer to fearing something other than God, or relying on something other than God.133

Sharafuddin’s above philosophical interpretation of idolatry syncretically flows from the Bible:

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

(Philippians 3:18-19)

8.6. Predominance of spiritual wealth over material

Speaking on ‘the reality of faith’ Haris had claimed by declaring that he had ceased to derive profit or loss as from any source other than God. Acknowledging Haris, Sharafuddin quotes him: As far as we are concerned, all gold, silver, and jewels are

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133 Ibid., p. 85.
equivalent to pieces of broken earthenware…” The Prophet said to him: “Stand firm in what you have found!”  In the following verse Sharafuddin sums up Haris:

As long as people remain in the world of goods,
They are enveloped in darkness, and dream.
Abandoning arrangements is the commencement of Unity:
By ceasing to make plans, one attains genuine solitude!  

Here, both Haris and Sharafuddin syncretically reflect the Pauline words in the Bible:

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. (Philippians 3:7-8)

The Pauline syncretic influence seems to be also on the poet whom Sharafuddin quotes in his *The Hundred Letters*:

Whatever we have written is fit to be wiped away;
Whatever we have raised on high is fit only to be thrown down.
Everything we have thought has proved to be useless;
What a pity we have passed our lives in such foolishness!  

Further, speaking of the spiritual over the material Sharafuddin says:

You and I are caught up with, “What shall we eat?” and “What shall we wear?”
At any rate, “God has created some people for clothes, some for drink, and some for food…” Manly people follow one path, while hermaphrodites follow

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134 Ibid., p. 171.
135 Ibid.
136 Ibid., pp. 172-73.
another... Giving oneself to idleness and frivolity, and to eating and drinking just like animals, does not befit an intelligent and perceptive person.Obviously, the above words of Sharafuddin resemble the Biblical words of Jesus:

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (Mathew 6:25)

Sharafuddin is convinced of the predominance of the spiritual wealth over the material. For, the former is eternal whereas the latter is transient. We can see the evolution of this thought in Sharafuddin’s following poem:

Men in search of pearls return to the ocean:
Real men are wholly devoted to what lies above.
Filled with desire, they sail off in boats:
The ocean depths is where they search for pearls

The above poem contains biblical concepts, such as “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Mathew 6:20), and “set your minds on things above” (Colossians 3:2a). As Christianity firmly holds that spiritual wealth is sublimely superior to the material, so does Sharafuddin and his mystical thought - a syncretic mystical literary convention.

8.7. Sin, Repentance and Forgiveness

All the three Abrahamic religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - believe that sin is disobedience to God. In The Hundred Letters. Sharafuddin speaks about sin: “O

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138 Ibid., p. 6.
brother, the slave of sin faces a veritable calamity.” These words syncretically reflect Jesus’ saying in the Bible, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin.” (John 8:34)

Sharafuddin shows the gravity of sin and its effects through an anecdote on David — a Judeo-Christian biblical figure (I Samuel 16-30) who has been syncretically integrated into the Qur’an:

Have you not heard the story of David? When he committed a fault, for forty days, night and day, his head was bowed in prostration. The result was that the abundance of tears that he shed caused so much grass to sprout that it concealed him and he was lost to view. Still, no news of divine forgiveness reached him. In his pain, he afflicted himself so that all the grass withered from his sighing. He placed both hands over his eyes and went on weeping until both palms became covered with blood. He raised his hands to heaven and said: “O God, even if You do not pardon me, at least show compassion for my tears!” “O David,” came the reply, “do you remember your tears, but forget your fault?” You must know that because the faults of the great are more serious, they will be dealt with more severely, as the poet has attested:

Those killed by the Beloved’s bloodthirsty lips
Remain till Resurrection Day with bloodstained shrouds!\(^1\)

The Bible says on repentance: “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7) Sharafuddin speaks on similar lines: Alas! Thus it is that “all

\(^{140}\) Ibid., p. 88.
the sons of Adam are sinful, but the best of sinners are those who repent."¹⁴¹ For Sharafuddin, a repentant sinner is the holiest in the sight of God.

Khwaja Fuzail Ilyaz was asked, on the evening of the vigil at Mt. Arafat, how he saw the states of men. He replied: “They would all be forgiven if I were not in their midst. In other words, I am the worst of all men. If they are not forgiven, it is because of my lack of generosity.” It is also related that a revelation descended upon Moses saying: “Seek out from among your people the holiest of all the sons of Israel!” He chose a certain man, who was adorned with austerities and devotion. The command came: “Tell him that he is to go in search of the worst of all the sons of Israel!” The man asked for three days’ grace. On the fourth day he bound a rope around his neck, came to Moses, and said: “I have brought before you the worst of the sons of Israel.” Moses said: “You are the most devoted ascetic from among them all. How can you of all the people say such a thing?” He replied: “Because I am certain about my own sins, but in doubt about those of others. And anyone who is certain about his own sins is certainly worse than anyone whose sins are doubtful.” A pronouncement appeared: “O Moses, this man is really the best of all the sons of Israel, not so much because of his great devotion, but because he considers himself to be the worst of all creatures…” Khwaja Sari Saqati said: “I don’t wish to die in a place where the people know me, out of fear that the earth might not receive my body, and that I might thus become infamous.” The reason for this doubt about himself was that he

considered himself to be the worst of men, otherwise he would not have thought
of himself that way. The secret of this has been put thus:
Out of the pain of faith, all those long on the Way
Have dyed their beards with the blood of their hearts!
Because of this difficulty, all men of real faith
Have livers that are parched, and hearts that have been roasted.\footnote{Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), \textit{Sharafuddin Maneri: The Hundred Letters}, Paulist Press, New York, 1980, pp. 416-17.}
It is human to sin. However, being embodied souls it is spiritually necessary that
one does not languish in sin but rises to forgiveness through repentance:
If you are a sinner, the door of repentance lies open:
Repent, for the door will never be shut!
If you approach this door but once, in righteousness,
A hundred victories will come rushing forward together!\footnote{Ibid., p. 412.}
Considering oneself to be the worst of all men, worse so, even creatures, is the
remorseful declaration of a repentant sinner, which Sharafuddin’s following verse
succinctly expresses:
There is none in the city worse than I,
No mother ever bore a son more lowly than I.
I am caught within the circle of creaturely claims,
Yet there is another place outside this circle, closer to Him!
A Magian priest speaks more truthfully to his people than I,
And a dog is more faithful to its fellows than I.
Thanksgiving is proper, for where God’s glory shines,
The most forlorn of men has been renewed with hope!\textsuperscript{144}

Sharafuddin’s above lines sycnretically resemble the biblical words St Paul who said: “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.” (Timothy 1:15)

Sharafuddin and the Sufis say that no sound is closer to the Lord than that of a person wailing over his sinfulness! Christianity says that human person is sinful by nature. However, God’s mercy is far abounding. Although one is firmly rooted in the sins and offences one has committed, a penitent doesn’t look at them but at the mercy of God and enriched by Him. loyalty and reverence can be expected:

Look at your own mercy, not at my sins!

I am filled with sins, from head to toe nail!\textsuperscript{145}

The very same idea is reflected in Sharafuddin’s following couplet as well:

A sin resulting in repentance is far better

Than that worship which gives rise to pride!\textsuperscript{146}

Sharafuddin says that the Apostle (i.e. Prophet Mohammed) used to seek forgiveness seventy times each day. When this verse was revealed, “Seek forgiveness for your sin and for the believers” (Qur’an surah Muhammad 47:19), he increased it from seventy to a hundred times. One of the sheikhs had told him: “By the mercy of God I repented seventy times and each time I fell again, but after I begged pardon for the seventy-first time, I fell no more.”\textsuperscript{147} Repentance leading to forgiveness is evident in Sharafuddin’s following couplet:

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\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., p. 133.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., p. 162.
Come back at last, for I have opened the door:

I stand ready to forgive you the moment you repent!148

In the above passage, ‘seventy’ is a Judeo-Christian biblical number which theologically means ‘innumerable times.’ However, Sharafuddin seems to have taken it literally, for, he says ‘seventy-first time’, which is a literal extension of the biblical seventy.

According to Sharafuddin, it is the nature of a mortal with flesh and blood to sin. However, a sinner must not rot in sin, but rise to seek forgiveness:

The Lord of the Law issued this decree: “If anyone is guilty of many sins he should earnestly seek forgiveness. This is because the Holy One who sent me with the truth forgives sins in the very same way that a fire consumes wood.” He also said: “Whoever seeks forgiveness will not persevere in sin, even though he sins seventy times in a day.” Dear friend, remaining unsullied by sin from the first moment of their creation to the last pertains to angels, and remaining contaminated by sin from the first moment of their creation to the last pertains to devils. Falling into sin, however, and rising out of sin, pertains to Adam and his progeny. When man sinned, he fell, and when he repented, he emerged from sin.

When this happened he received this robe: “The sinner who repents is like a person who hasn’t sinned.”149

True forgiveness results in *metanoia* (i.e. change of heart), says Sharafuddin, wherein the sinner would be changed into a sparkling gem and his defects into assets:

It is proper for You to forgive and bestow favors.

Falling down and trembling belong to me!

Show my lost heart the way!

Make me sparkle like a gem in the sight of men!

When You accepted me, my defects were changed to assets.

But when You abandoned me, my virtues became vices.

Bind me to Yourself! Remove me from dreams!

Make me athirst for You! Do not give me water.\(^{150}\)

According to the *Commentary of Imam Zahid*, says Sharafuddin, two graces were bestowed upon the community, in which, one was taken away while the other remains. Here, the former is Mohammed, the Apostle of God, and the latter is forgiveness.

Sinners sought Your comprehensive forgiveness:

This is why I took hold of sinners’ square.

When I saw Your work of veiling sins,

With my own hands I tore away my own veil.

Since the colour of the blanket I received was black.

O Gracious One, make it as white as my hair.\(^{151}\)


Speaking on making truce Sharafuddin says, “As far as possible, make your peace with anyone who has a legitimate grudge against you.”¹⁵² This is a syncretic borrowing from the Bible: “Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him” (Mathew 5:25). Further, Sharafuddin quotes the Prophet: “Associate with one who shuns you. Forgive the one who oppresses you. Give to the one who gives you nothing.”¹⁵³ This too syncretically resembles the biblical words of Jesus and St Paul successively:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you... (Mathew 5:38-44) Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not... (Romans 12:14)

Feeling remorse for one’s sins, followed by repentance and forgiveness is a common mystical practice, which Sharafuddin speaks by quoting Rabia’s oft used words, “It is for my dereliction in calling upon the name of God that I am obliged to seek forgiveness!” Sharafuddin enumerates these words into a poem:

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 239.
Since the Lord has promised forgiveness,
Why should I experience fear on account of sins?
I do not lack hope in Your presence.
Even though my sins be many.
Since it is Your forgiveness and mercy
Which now and in the world to come are my refuge!\textsuperscript{154}

The proverb goes: “To err is human; to forgive is divine.” Sharafuddin confirms it saying ‘to forgive one must put on God-self and view with His eyes’:

Nobility of mind obliges a person to forgive! “Asking pardon, however tentatively, is the price of sin, no matter how great it may be.” Shah bin Suja said: “Whoever looks at people with his own eyes will experience an increase of enmity, while whoever looks at people with God’s eyes, no matter what state they be in, will find them worthy of forgiveness.”\textsuperscript{155}

Sharafuddin weaves his thoughts on forgiveness in a verse:

If I bring a whole world of devotion as a present,
You remain independent, even of independence.
If all my possessions were a world full of sin,
You are content with that, O King.
Even if my unbelief amounts to no more than my sin.
For Your forgiveness, all I need to do is beg pardon.
Show me the Way: put my record right:

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., p. 141.
And wash both worlds from the slate of my soul\textsuperscript{156}

Sharafuddin says that the generosity of the Bountiful One does not bypass the master or slave, rich or poor. He is like the sun that rises from its resting place. Even if worldly people gird up their loins in search of this sun, they will not be able to catch hold of even a single particle of light. The sun, however, in its own generosity, bestows its warming rays on the huts of beggars and the grief-stricken corners of the poor, as well as on the palaces of kings and the mansions of nobles. These words of Sharaduffin are syncretically adapted from the biblical words of Jesus:

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (Mathew 5:45)

Repentance and forgiveness for sins isn’t much stressed in Islam. Whereas, it is given great importance in Christianity and more so in Christian mysticism, and reconciliation is one of the seven sacraments in Christianity. It is probable that this has syncretically entered into Sufism and wherefrom into Sharafuddin’s mystical literature.

\textbf{8.8. Clarity of Purpose and Purity of Intention}

According to Sharafuddin, the powerful deeds and actions of a disciple draw their strength from the purity of intention with which they are performed. In other words, what we profess in words should be directed entirely towards God without any admixture of self-interest, then all our actions bear us closer to the brink of union. On the other hand, actions or deeds bereft of a pure intention are utterly useless. In fact, they are dead.

\textsuperscript{156}Ibid., p. 249.
Intention is related to deeds and actions as the soul is related to the body, or light to the eye. He asks: “Can you imagine a body without a soul! or an eye without light?” The truth of one’s intention is evident from its sincerity, like rays from the sun or flames from the fire. There is no escaping the importance attributed to being able to discern the real intention of one’s heart, for each person will be judged by his purity of intention:

When the dust settles you will quickly discover
Whether you are astride a horse or an ass!\textsuperscript{157}

The couplet says that it is only on the Day of Resurrection, when the veil is lifted, that a person’s real worth will become known. Sharafuddin confirms his strand through the Qur’anic words: “The gardens of paradise are for those who have faith and do good works.” (surah \textit{Al-kahf} 18:107). Further, he says:

“The one desirous of union with God performs good actions, and does not associate anything with God.” Thus pious deeds, together with the absence of associating anything with God, constitute the condition for union... It is impossible to attain one’s goal without action.\textsuperscript{158}

Undoubtedly, the above idea is directly borrowed from the Bible wherein St James says:

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. But


wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham
our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?
Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made
perfect? Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.
For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.
(The Epistle of St James 2:14-17, 20-22, 24, 26)

Accordingly Sharafuddin says, “God’s curse be upon such a faith! The external,
bereft of the internal, is hypocrisy; while the internal, if it lacks external expression is
mere wishful thinking! The outer is joined to the inner at its very roots and cannot be
separated by anyone.”159 Until a person becomes pure both inwardly and outwardly, he
cannot gain intimate knowledge of the secrets of the Qur’an. “None will see Him except
the pure.”160 Sharafuddin expresses it in a poem:

How long will you worship God only with your tongue?
That amounts to worshiping the air!
Until you become a Muslim inwardly,
How can you be a Muslim outwardly?161

Through the above poem Sharafuddin explains that the lame-ass of conventional
faith and empty utterances that we possess cannot come along the Way, nor can it bear
the burden or cut through the engulfing wilderness; nor can it taste the divine sweetness.
He says that it would be like a mosquito trying to carry the load of an elephant! He quotes
a poet thus:

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160 Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), In Quest of God: Maneri’s Second Collection of 150 Letters, Gujarat Sahitya
Not everyone knows how to deal with wealth;
Not every ass can carry the Messiah’s weight!\textsuperscript{162}

Here the ‘ass’ and the ‘the Messiah’ is a syncretic reference to ‘Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem’: “Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” (Matthew 21:5)

Sharafuddin attributes this ‘clarity of purpose and purity of intention’ to the mystics: “These are the audacious ones, whose feet are planted on earth, but whose gaze is beyond the next world.”\textsuperscript{163} The above words resemble the biblical words of St Paul: “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Colossians 3:2)

As we have seen, there is a plethora of syncretic resemblance between Sharafuddin’s mystical literature with that of Christianity, which is prevalent due to the internal borrowing - a syncretic mystical literary character.

8.9. Trust in the Divine Providence

Sharafuddin speaks of people, who have had genuine, indubitable experience of the divine and His manifestation, who in turn are looked after perfectly by the Lord Himself. Here, any inner anxiety springing from different ways and means is destroyed. Whoever finds oneself in this state would be relying wholly upon the Lord. Sharafuddin quotes:

Khwaja Bayazid Bistami was told: “We do not see you engaged in any preoccupation. Where does your sustenance come from?” He said: “My Lord

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
provides dogs and pigs with their daily needs, so why will He not feed Abu Yazid as well?"\(^{164}\)

The above passage bears some syncretic resemblances to the Bible wherein Jesus says:

Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:25-33)

Sharafuddin quotes yet another example of a mystic who had deep trust in the divine providence:

One of the wise said: "A truly poor man is the one who does not even depend on the Lord!" This means that he has so much righteousness and trust that he knows that God will give him his daily needs even if he does not ask for it.

The gifts God provides for your needs will not be lost.

Do God’s work! Do not worry about daily needs!^{165}

Of course, Sharafuddin’s idea of the divine providence stems from the Bible. Moreover, a deeper study would reveal that even the experiences of the mystics would bear resemblance to that of the Christian mystics, especially the Desert Fathers (Patristics), wherefrom Sufism derived its initial resources.

8.10. The Way

The Way of the Sufi!? A plethora of questions were posed regarding what, where and how of it. Sharafuddin replied quoting the Qur’an: “And in yourselves. Can you not see?” (surah Adh-Dhariyat 51:21)

Channel your energies into discovering how you can remove this infidel soul from obstructing your Path. The consensus of opinion among those well versed in the Path is that the Way to God does not lie in heaven or on earth; nor is it found in the east or the west. It is not in the divine throne or footstool, nor in the heavenly tablet or pen. No, the way to the Glorious, Exalted God is found within you.^{166}

Again in another place he repeats - a confirmation of the first one:

Whatever exists does not do so outside of you. Whatever you seek must be sought within yourself. This is confirmed in the Qur’an: “And in yourselves. Do you not see?” (Qur’an surah Adh-Dhariyat 51:21) Pay attention to those who say that the

^{165} Ibid., pp. 284-85.
Path to God is not in heaven or on earth, nor in the east or the west: it is within you.

Be careful! At first Adam hastened towards whatever exists:

Until he found the way to himself, he did not find the Way.  

How to find the Way? One can decipher it from Sharafuddin’s following verse:

O you who are always in the world,

How does this wandering benefit you? Tell me!

What you are seeking - as a sign of Him - is you:

He is wholly within you, yet you seek Him elsewhere. 

Sharafuddin explains the Way, which has become a different name to different people:

And that Way which is within you, by means of which you emerge from the veil and reach God, is called by philosophers a rational soul. Jurisconsults call it a spirit, while Sufis call it a spirit, a selfish soul, or a heart. It is called by different names, but the meaning is the same. It is the reality of human nature, which is a manifestation and a mirror of the secret of the reality of the Godhead.

Furthermore, Sharafuddin’s mystical concept that ‘the Way to God is the heart’ has a progression wherein he calls the heart ‘the house of God’:

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167 Ibid., p. 246.
168 Ibid.
169 The text has spirit (ruh), soul (nafs), and heart (qalb). In this context it does not seem as though nafs has the normal, pejorative connotation highlighted by the adjective, ‘selfish’, which, for the sake of consistency, is added here.
It has been said: “The heart is the house of God.” In other words, the Way to the Glorious and Exalted God is not in heaven, or on the earth, nor is it in the west or the east: the Way to God is within you, in what people call the ‘heart’.\textsuperscript{171}

The progression of the mystical concept grows further and more condensed, wherein Sharafuddin calls the heart the sanctum sanctorum or the throne of God:

You must have heard, “The heart of a believer is the throne of God.” Since the heart of a believer is the throne of the Lord. “The Merciful is established on the throne” (Quran surah \textit{Ta-Ha} 20:5) has been granted to him and this wealth has been bestowed upon him.\textsuperscript{172}

The above mystical concepts are syncretically adapted from the Judeo-Christian Bible which is evident in the following:

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. (Deuteronomy 30:11-14)

It is clear in the above passage that the commandment of God is to be sought neither up in heaven nor beyond the farthest seas, but within one’s heart. Furthermore, in the New Testament Jesus says:

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., p. 250.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid., p. 268.
And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:20-21)

No doubt, Sharafuddin’s mystical concept centering around the ‘heart’ syncretically bears biblical overtones in its origin. However, the progression of it - calling the ‘heart’ ‘the house of God’ and then ‘the throne of God’ - is Sharafuddin’s extended development of the borrowed concept.

8.11. Sufferings for Purification

There is no Way bereft of trials and troubles:

There is no comet without a tail.\footnote{Ibid., p. 83.}

The Qur’an says: “Whoever purifies himself, purifies himself for the good of his own soul. (surah \textit{Fatir} 35:18) and “whoever does any good work, it is to his own gain.” (surah \textit{Fussilat} 41:46) Sharafuddin is certain that a Sufi has problems galore, but it is a sign of God’s love. For him, love for God, coupled with laborious trials and tribulations, indicates God’s desire of personal purification. This idea is syncretically taken from the Christian Bible cum from the Christian mystics, wherein the image of pruning a vine in order to produce better fruit is familiar:

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. (John 15:1-3)
Sharafuddin quotes Shibli: “A person who is preoccupied with this world and the next has not been sufficiently purified to be able to enter Our assembly!” He confirms it by quoting a poet:

O son, justice would mean that you bear yourself
Beyond the boundaries of whatever created:
Then it might be that, aided by your Lord,
You would be borne to the Seat of Righteousness itself?

For Sharafuddin sufferings are an inherent part of human life, even for a good man, who becomes more purified, especially through unmerited sufferings.

The Prophet has said: “When God Almighty befriends someone, He rains calamities upon him, and when someone displays diligence in his love for Him, He puts him to test.” The Prophet, when asked what this testing might be, replied: “He does not spare a man’s property, wife, or children.” A sign of God’s love for His servant is that He makes him shy away from anything other than God. The Prophet Jesus was asked: “Why do you not buy an ass for your journeys?” He replied: “I am more precious to God Almighty than to vex my soul over an ass!” …The tradition attests: “When God Almighty loves someone in a special way, He rains calamities upon his head. If the person bears this patiently, then God grants him the grace of ‘selection.’ If he pleases God, then he is raised to purity… A religious scholar has said: “When you yourself observe that you love and see Him, and note that He has ordered calamities for you, then know that He desires your purification.” …A disciple said to his spiritual guide: “He gave me an

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175 Ibid., pp. 211-12.
indication of His love.” “Son,” he replied, “for you the Friend is to be found in calamities, and yet you prefer love to the Beloved!” The disciple denied this charge. “Do not desire friendship,” replied the guide, “for He does not confer His friendship on a servant until such time as He also ordains calamities for him!” The very process of purification is a form of mutual friendship, as has been said:

Night and day I am engaged in Your work.

No matter what You do, I remain a wrinkle on your beauty!  

The running theme in the above passage, ‘sufferings for purification’ syncretically reflects Job, a Judeo-Christian biblical character (cf. The Book of Job), whom Satan tried and tested in innumerable ways, and of course, with divine consent in order to make him more purified. The following poem of Sharafuddin also brings out the said theme clearly:

Here am I accepting grief suffered for Your sake as happiness.

Crying out as I endure oppression for Your sake.

Despite all this, were I to become dust on Your path,

I would still not be worthy of being touched by Your feet.

Sharafuddin contraposes the worldly power, glory and honour with the heavenly, drawing a comparison between the kings of the world with the Glorious King:

Kings of this world, when they want to honor their servants, confer a turban and a robe of honor upon them, as well as territories. When a God honors anyone, He begins by removing his turban and robe of honor! Then he makes him hungry and

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176 Ibid., pp. 186-87.
177 Ibid., p. 64.
strips him naked. This is to reveal the meaning of the tradition that “there is no return for anyone who has turned toward Him till he is slain!”

The above concept of two kings - worldly and heavenly - is prevalent in the Christian mysticism as well. Further, through an anecdote Sharafuddin narrates the mark of suffering:

A certain dervish had traversed the Way, spending his entire life in grief and wandering hither and thither. Right up till his last day he lived in this fashion. Then he died. People saw, written in his heart, these words: “Here is one slain out of love of God!”

Sharafuddin brings out the rigour of suffering in the following poem:

If you seek Me, you will have to surrender your body to sorrow;

Like lovers, you must lose your heart in the world.

Fill your heart with grief; place it before your eyes,

And then watch while you make of your very life a sacrifice!

For Judeo-Christianity, and even orthodox Islam, hell is a state of the damned for eternity, who have to suffer fiery torments forever and ever. However, Sharafuddin holds slightly a different view with regard to the purpose of hell, which for him is a place for purification for the Pure Presence:

...heaven and what is contained therein can lead to boasting, while hell and what it contains can lead to renunciation! Hell can, therefore, be a cause of blessing and purification to some. This is why they have been created, not for the sake of unhappiness or to put people at a distance. “God wishes to make things easy for
you, not difficult” (Qur’an surah Al-Baqarah 2:185)… Do you not see that gold is
thrown into the fire not to harm it but to purify it and make it perfect? In the same
sense, a sinner is taken to hell in order to be purified for the Pure Presence. 181

This is a very compassionate view of hell, which qualifies its permanence without
diminishing its horror! His following poem shows his compassionate heart for the sinner:

Do not despair, O hapless sinner,
For, when the sun’s rays come forth,
They fall not only on the king’s palace.
But also on the beggar’s nook. 182

Thus, sufferings for purification, a Judeo-Christian concept which was prevalent
in Christian mysticism has syncretically come into Sharafuddin and his mystical writings.
For, Christians saw the mystery of the cross with new light - suffering for victory. Fulton
J. Sheen said: The cross of Christ was a tragedy for the Jews, comedy for the Greek, but
remedy for those who believe.

8.12. Pietistic Literature

Pietistic literature plays a significant role in Christian mysticism. A lot of pietistic
devotions, ceremonies, rites and rituals, which were an inherent part of the mystical life,
are reflected in the literature of the time. Sharafuddin’s following passage reflects such
Christian practices:

The Kaaba made its appearance. It was the very first religious sanctuary. Before
that time, there had been no such thing. It appeared in the time of Adam. All that
the prophet Noah required of the world was a blanket. The prophet Moses himself

181 Ibid., p. 84.
182 Ibid., p. 85.
always wore the blanket that the prophet Shu‘aib had conferred on him the first
day that he entered his [Shu‘aib’s] service. And this is a very important condition
in the Way, that there should be a spiritual guide who clothes the novice with the
Sufi garb. Jesus always used to wear a woolen garment. Similarly, both Moses
and Jesus themselves built Jerusalem as a place of spiritual trust. Then, in every
country and region Sufis built meeting places for themselves, and made fixed
abodes for periods of solitude where they could practice inner converse with God.
Fellow travelers could also come there and recount the traditions of the exalted,
divine secrets. When the time for the foremost of the prophets and the King of the
saints, the blessed Muhammad arrived, he himself donned such a blanket. “It was
the practice of your father, Abraham” (Qur’an surah Al-Hajj 22:78) …from his
companions he selected a group of about seventy people who were travelers on
the Path.  

Here the citation of the biblical figures and incidents is to edify Sharafuddin’s
correspondent, and not to conform to canons of historical criticism. Nonetheless, it ought
to be noted that some stories, e.g. the connection of Shu‘aib to Moses, have a firm place
in Islamic pietistic literature long before their inclusion in The Hundred Letters. The
investiture ceremony of the novice (murid) by the Sufi master (pir) is a Christian practice
syncretically assimilated by Sufism. In Christian mysticism, when a novice is formally
inducted into the novitiate, the novice master adorns the novice with the religious habit or
cassock, unique to the mystical life. Further. Mohammed ‘from his companions selected
a group of about seventy people who were travelers on the Path’ syncretically reflects
Jesus sending the seventy in the Bible: “After this the Lord appointed seventy others and

sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go” (Luke 10:1)

8.13. The Carnal Soul

Basically, carnal soul is a Platonic concept which has come into Sharafuddin’s Sufi literature via Christianity. For, when it was incorporated into Christianity, it underwent some nuances from the original Platonic, and Sufism has adapted this nuanced concept from Christianity into its corpus. *Kitab at-Ta’arruf* (The Book on Seeking Knowledge) says that spirit, heart, the lower soul, and the world are the four things that God Almighty has mentioned by name in His own book. Speaking about the carnal soul, Sharafuddin quotes Khwaja Ibrahim Khass:

Khwaja Ibrahim Khass says: “I heard there was a monk among the Christians who, in accordance with his vocation, had passed several years in solitude. I said: ‘This is astonishing, for the vow to live the life of a hermit does not extend beyond forty years. Why did he spend seventy years as a hermit?’ I decided to visit him. When I arrived at his place, he opened a window and said: ‘O Ibrahim! I know why you have come! I am not sitting here simply to play the hermit! I have a dog maddened with many desires, which I have chained up. I am keeping guard over this dog in order to prevent its wickedness from reaching ordinary people. Indeed, I am not what you look me to be!’

Whoever succeeds in chaining this dog with heavy fetters

Has dust worth more than the blood of others.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 335.
At his death-bed “Sharafuddin told the bystanders that Satan had made a last-minute attempt to make him waver in his faith, but to no avail.”

In The Hundred Letters, letter eighty-five which speaks of “Liberation from one’s carnal soul” reflects the above passage, wherein he suggests the path of austerity to overcome the desires of the lower self. He says that the carnal soul could be brought under control by austerities, but its essence remains. The aim should be to master it, not destroy it. For, the more one tries to destroy it, the bigger and stronger it will grow. The murid must pass his time night and day in opposing the pull of his carnal soul, which originates in the senses. “The path of austerity means that a novice should busy himself in opposing the desires of his lower self, for giving in to the natural impulses of one’s bestial nature is at the root of all misfortunes.”

Your lower soul, covered with robe and turban, will say: “I am your lesser provider!” Thus your lower soul begins to act as Pharaoh’s did, but Pharaoh’s soul displayed itself as it was, whereas your lower soul tries to sell itself to you in the garb of a Muslim, and you drink the sherbet of its pride!

Sharafuddin quotes Attar’s verse thus:

The soul had loftiness, but the earth-formed body, lowliness:

There occurred a meeting of lowly dust and pure soul.

When the exalted and the lowly became friends,

Then man emerged as a secret, filled with wonder.

But nobody was acquainted with His secret;

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187 Ibid., p. 204.
Nor could a single beggar’s work be compared to His!
You are able to say only so much. No path remains but silence.
Who is there who can even dare to utter a sign?¹⁸⁸

One of the fundamental aims of mysticism, both in Christianity and Sufism, is to overcome concupiscence and inordinate desires of the carnal soul. Though the concept of the carnal soul is Platonic by origin, as it came into Christianity it has undergone a catalytic effect, wherein without the term being affected, it has developed new layers of meaning. Sufism and Sharafuddin has adapted this developed term from Christianity into their literature, and not the original Platonic per se.

Whoever has chained this dog through his bravery
Can catch a lion with his lasso in either world.¹⁸⁹

8.14. The Concepts of Heaven (Jannat), Hell (Jahannam) and Limbo (A’raf)

As we have seen, the Islamic concept of heaven and hell is from Zoroastrianism via Christianity. Speaking about heaven and hell, Sharafuddin quotes Prophet Mohammed: “Heaven is attained only after undergoing many trials and tribulations, while one arrives in hell after treading an easy path and having pandered to one’s lusts.”¹⁹⁰ This idea of heaven and hell syncretically reflects the biblical concept which goes: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Mathew 7:13-14)

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 325.
¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 142.
Further, in Christian theology ‘Limbo’ (Latin *limbus* meaning edge or boundary, referring to the edge of hell) is a speculative idea about the afterlife condition of those who die in Original Sin without being assigned to hell. The word was coined by medieval Christian theologians, the main being St Augustine (354-430 A.D.). Sharafuddin borrows this word to explain the afterlife disputations occurred in his mystical theology:

When asked, “There is a controversy about the children of the polytheists (Mushrikan). Where will they go? Some say there is a place called Limbo (*A’raf*), situated between Paradise (*Jannat*) and hell. That is there the children of the infidels, who have died before attaining puberty, must be. Sharafuddin said, “Those who opt for Limbo have a good argument, namely that faith is required for entering Paradise, but they have never possessed faith. Also, infidelity is needed for banishment to hell, but they had not acquired that either. Hence they must go to Limbo, where neither the soul of Paradise nor the torments of hell are found.”

Here it is fascinating to notice the exact parallelism between this argument for *a’raf* and that of medieval Christian theologians for Limbo. All the more, Limbo being neither in heaven nor in hell but somewhere in the middle settled both the disputations.

As Sufism has embodied Christian elements into its mystical corpus, so does Sharafuddin and his mystical literature. It is natural wisdom that nothing falls on the platter directly from heaven, but comes through different agencies - animate or inanimate. Similarly, religions assimilate from other religions, cultures, philosophies, et. al. For, it is the Way of the world.

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9. Syncretic Indian Philosophy in Sharafuddin’s Literature

O Brahmin, you have erased my Islam, so let me in!

Or is there no place for a lost one like me, even before an idol?\(^{192}\)

We have seen the influence of the Indian philosophical systems on Sufi literature (cf. Indian Influence on Sufi Literature, p. 250). Sharafuddin is no exception to this. The Indian context of Sharafuddin’s works is oblique and inferential rather than direct and anecdotal. We hear nothing about individual encounters between Sharafuddin and yogin adepts, nor attempts at conversion, nor public debates, and yet in literary allusions to the Brahmin’s thread and to idol worship Sharafuddin seems to be providing his readers with implicit guidance in their conduct vis-à-vis their fellow countrymen. In \textit{Manaqib ul-Asfiya}, the biographical work of Sharafuddin Maneri his biographer writes thus:

I have heard that, by the time he reached maturity, he was engrossed in religious studies and had acquired mastery over the religious sciences. At that time the great renown, eminence and learning of Maulana Sharafuddin (i.e. Tau’ama) had spread not only throughout the length and breadth of India, but also in Arabia and Persia. He had complete mastery over all branches of learning, including chemistry, enchantments and fortune-telling. He was one of the most outstanding religious scholars. Common people and the nobility, lords and kings, all were devoted, obedient and submissive to him. He used to show astonishing things to the people from his knowledge of fortune-telling. (\textit{Manaqib p.131})\(^{193}\)


The biographer, writing in the early decades of the fifteenth century says that Sharafuddin had acquired mastery over the religious sciences (‘ulum-i din bekamal hasil kard) by the time he reached adolescence (chun bebalaghat rasid). ‘Enchantments’, an Indo-Persian element made inroads into Sufism. ‘Fortune-telling’, an Indian element in heart and soul, though alien to Islam, had its spell on Sharafuddin Maneri, thus syncretically entered into Sufi literature. Fortune-telling is not only alien, but also looked at with contempt by orthodox Islam. Being syncretic, Sufism incorporates other religio-cultural elements into its fold, un-Islamic though.

*Ta’arruf* says on asceticism: “A holy man was asked what asceticism was. He replied: ‘When a man has no fear of the influence of the world, whether he be a believer or an infidel.’”194 Commenting on the above Sharafuddin said:

“As far as the soul is concerned, the asceticism of a believer or of an infidel is one and the same, for it is mentioned in many places that monks, through practicing asceticism, gain great luster.” (*Ma’dan* 23, p. 203) And again: Righteousness will guide you in your quest for friendship, Whether you be wearing a turban or a thread. After this, he said: ‘Results depend upon righteousness,’ (sadq). There is a story written somewhere that a holy man was once asked how it was that, when one of the infidel ascetics or devotees is burned, this must be present as a necessary condition. Also, other infidels consider their ashes as a blessed relic. They take them away to be used in time of sickness and infirmity and find them very helpful. The holy man said: ‘This is the effect of righteousness. Even if the work they do is vain, nevertheless they are righteous. Wherever this sort of good

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194 Ibid., p. 152.
effect is seen in some vain work, it can be realized what boundless effects righteousness in God’s religion must have! (Mukhkh 18, p. 37)\textsuperscript{195}

Here Sharafuddin asserts that genuine asceticism, in spite of one’s religion, will liberate the soul. What is of supreme interest for us at the moment is the assertion that this liberty can be acquired either by a believer (i.e. a Muslim) or an infidel (i.e. Hindu). The image of the sacred thread clearly indicates that Sharafuddin has Hindu ascetics in mind. For him, righteousness pertains to the heart, not religion, i.e. ‘righteousness in God’s religion’. This inclusive attitude of profound theological implications indicates the fruit of his association with Hindu ascetics, which resulted in his own conviction of the genuineness of their righteousness and love. According to Paul Jackson, “Without this personal experience, it is not possible to imagine how he could have said what he has on the topic. Even if one were to spend many long years perusing works penned in Mecca or Cairo, it is difficult to imagine any such acknowledgement of the profound love and indisputable righteousness of ‘infidel, idol-worshipping Hindus’ ever coming to light.”\textsuperscript{196}

Sharafuddin was influenced by the practices of Hindu ascetics, which the following passage enumerates:

“Qazi Ashrafuddin asked how many times the Prophet had prayed upside down. The Revered Master replied, ‘Once’.” (Khwan 3, p.7) or again, the Master’s son (i.e. Zakiuddin) - may God increase his knowledge - was going through siraj ul-‘Arifin. He came to the following words: “A man was standing upside down, with the crown of his head on the ground and his feet in the air, reciting the Quran.” The Venerable Master said: “This is called kachak, while the jogis call it kiyari.”

\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., p. 153.

Afterwards he added: “This can’t be done all of a sudden. Only very slowly and gradually does it become easy. One begins by forming the habit of reciting one verse, then two, then three, slowly increasing the number of verses recited until one can recite many at a time. (Ma’dan 12, p. 113).

Paul Jackson is of the opinion that Sharafuddin’s words arouse the suspicion that he may have tried this himself in his days of solitude. Further, there are other examples of Sharafuddin’s yogic practices. However, in the field of doctrine no such accommodation has been noticed. For, Sharafuddin staunchly adhered to orthodox Islamic doctrine.

9.1. Syncretic Advaitic Elements in Sharafuddin’s Literature

In Shankara’s Advaita Vedanta, when enlightenment dawns on the advaitin, at once he gets the jnana (knowledge) of his being, and in ecstasy exclaims: Ahm Brahmasmi, i.e. I am Brahman. According to the advaitic philosophy, it means that the divine is A-dvaita or there is ‘non-dualism’ in the divine, i.e. there is no duality between the human soul and the divine. In other words, apparently they were distinct at the level of existence, but one in essence. Hence the advaitin says: Tattvamasi, i.e. Thou art That. Sharafuddin quotes a couplet from al-Hallaj which has advaitic elements:

A lover disclosed the secret of the Absolute...

And quivered as he proclaimed: “I am the Truth.”

al-Hallaj had said “I am the Truth” - and he was executed for saying so - for, it goes against the Islamic dogma. In mystical union the mystic gets lost in the divine at the affective level wherein he becomes liminal crossing the man-made religious boundaries into the ‘religion of God’, and such experience is beyond the grasp of human language.

197 Ibid., p. 160.
Ecstatic utterances like “I am Reality” of al-Hallaj, or “Praise be to me” of Bistami occur frequently in Sharafuddin’s literature, with special emphasis placed on the former. While Sharafuddin acknowledges the personal sanctity of al-Hallaj, he sides with Junaid’s opinion of his execution, affirming that he should have kept the divine secret to himself. For, such enigmatic utterances are beyond the comprehension of an ordinary mind. All the more, Sharafuddin acknowledges the ‘secret’ and defends al-Hallaj thus:

Uttering “I am” in the state of ecstasy

Is not a fault in such a condition.

It happens when one is overwhelmed

And one’s soul witnesses naught but God.\(^{199}\)

Sharafuddin elucidates the above verse saying:

When the traveler reaches this verse, “everything is perishable except God Almighty,” and when this becomes manifest, then the second part, “One without partner” displays itself to him. Tell me, what else can come except “I am?”\(^{200}\)

Sharafuddin himself had such an ecstatic experience which is beyond human linguistic comprehension:

No matter how much you try, you will never describe that union.

It is beyond the reach of the tongue or the power of utterance.\(^{201}\)

Though beyond expression, in that ecstatic experience no other thought but of God alone comes to the mystic, and his gaze at the divine makes the mystic, a slave, free:


\(^{200}\) Ibid., p. 141.

When I fell into the abyss of Your Unity.
The thought of no other came to me.
Neither of men nor angels, in Your Unity:
I, a slave, gazed on You and became free!\footnote{Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), *The Way of the Sufi: Sharafuddin Maneri*, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 1987, p. 9.}

No doubt, Sharafuddin had *advaitic* experiences - a co-mingling of the human with the divine into One. His following couplet emits *advaitic* overtones:

Here there is no we or I or that:

He remains, He remains, He remains!\footnote{Ibid., p. 14.}

In the above couplet, Sharafuddin the mystic expresses his mystical experiences. The couplet says that when the mystic is in union with the divine, ‘there is no we or I or that’ but only ‘He remains.’ That is, the individual gets totally merged with the divine, like salt in water, after which solely the divine exists. In Indian philosophical system, it is termed as *advaitic* union. Sharafuddin’s following couplet clearly brings out such an *advaitic* union, wherein the chosen mystic - and not everyone - ‘who gets lost in God becomes God’:

Do not delude yourself, instead remember,

Not everyone who gets lost in God becomes God!\footnote{Ibid., p. 43.}

‘Humans becoming God’ is not only alien but totally opposed to Islamic dogma. No doubt, it is the Hindu *advaitic* philosophy syncretically entered Sharafuddin’s Sufi mind, wherefrom to his literature. Both the couplets are antithetic to Islamic theology, which believes human soul and the divine are two different entities, both existentially and

\footnote{Ibid., p. 43.}
essentially. However, we can see crystal clear *advaitic* philosophy syncretically making inroads into Sharafuddin’s Islamology. However, it isn’t totally *advaitic*, but an admixture of both - Islam and *advaita*. For, “it is not true that a person becomes god - for God is infinitely greater than any man - nor has the person really ceased to exist, for ceasing to exist is one thing, and becoming lost to view is quite another.” Further, as in *advaita* ‘everything is nothing’ but only ‘He’ exists, so is Sharafuddin’s mystical experience which he expresses thus:

Before your Unique Being, there is neither old nor new:

Everything is nothing, nothing at all! Yet He is what He is.

How then can we remain separate from You?

When “I” and the “You” have passed away, God alone will remain! Here, ‘everything perishes except his essence.” (Qur’an surah Al-Qasas 28:88) According to Sharafuddin, it is like when one looks into a mirror, attention is riveted on one’s own beautiful/handsome reflection, wherein the mirror doesn’t cease to exist; neither it has become beautiful, nor beauty has become a mirror. Similarly we can see God’s power in the whole creation, without any distinction. In western philosophy, this state is known as pan-entheism, whereas in the Sufi parlance it is ‘being entirely lost to oneself in contemplation of the Unique Being.’ A Sufi on attaining this state exclaims: “His very brilliance blinds me to whatever descends!”

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205 This statement, carefully elaborated in the introductory letter, recurs from time to time in subsequent letters. Coupled with the whole tone of Sharafuddin’s instruction, especially his insistence on divine grace, such a statement makes it difficult to imagine how anyone could classify Sharafuddin as a monist or pantheist in Islamic garb.


207 Ibid., p. 13.
When you lose yourself in God, you proclaim the divine Unity.

Lost the sense of “being lost” - that is complete detachment!\(^{208}\)

The above couplet says that when a mystic loses oneself in God, he’s lost the very sense of ‘being lost’ - a total detachment from one’s self; therein, he proclaims divine Unity like al-Hallaj who had said, “I am Reality” - a syncretic advaitic element. Sharafuddin confirms his strand by quoting one, whom he calls ‘a mature Sufi’:

When my soul had almost expired out of love for the Beloved,

I said, “Do not settle for union with yourself, My Guest.”

He replied, “If you want to be fit for union with Me,

Do not allow a ‘you’ in yourself! There should only remain an ‘I’!”\(^{209}\)

The poem states that the prerequisite for divine union is to lose the ‘self’ completely in the divine ‘I’ - an advaitic union. Sharafuddin quotes Bayazid’s mystical, advaitic declaration:

I flew quickly! I became a bird and ascended into the atmosphere of the Divine, until I was on an elevated, limitless plain, where I saw the stage of ‘Origins’!

When I observed that I was all that, I exclaimed, ‘O Mighty Lord God! As long as I am filled with egoism, there is no path from me to Thee! What is more, I cannot pass beyond my own self-consciousness.’\(^{210}\)

In the above mystical literary piece, by taking the form of a bird Bayazid ascended to the Divine where he saw the stage of ‘Origins.’ He says that as long as there is egoism, there is no Way to Him. To see the dawn of faith, says Sharafuddin, the mystic has to sacrifice one’s life, rather die:

\(^{208}\) Ibid., p. 14.

\(^{209}\) Ibid., p. 55.

\(^{210}\) Ibid., p. 82.
Pass beyond the soul and intellect for but a moment.
In order to heed the commandment of God but once!
Experiencing the love and rhythm of that World
Is impossible - unless you sacrifice your life!
You cannot maintain faith as an adjunct to life:
The night you die will see the dawn of real faith!
Any desire that supersedes this
Call it mere custom or habit; it is not faith!\textsuperscript{211}

Sharafuddin says, “It sometimes happens that the essence of the soul, which is the
vicar of God on earth, becomes manifest and claims, “I am God!” It isn’t divine illumination but illumination from the soul, which causes pride and self-esteem, haughtiness and preoccupation with self, decrease in quest, fear and supplication for God. Further, he quotes Jesus’ words in the Qur’an on creative power, “And if you, by My command, make birds of clay and breathe into them, they will fly away by My command” (surah \textit{Al-Ma’idah} 5:110). To this effect, Sharafuddin quotes a poem which is both pantheistic and \textit{advaitic}:

\begin{quote}
In Your presence there is no room for duality:
All the worlds are but You and Your power!
The whole created order is but a shadow in Your presence:
All things are the result of Your majestic handicraft!\textsuperscript{212}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid., p. 84.
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., p. 275.
Though un-Islamic, rather anti-Islamic, *advaitic* elements are quite strong in Sharafuddin. His *advaitic* experience of the divine flows into and spells out in his literature. It is because the mystical experience per se is a-religious. For, the divine is beyond religion (here religion refers to a socio-cultural system), and the mystic who ascends to the divine also crosses over religious boundaries, thus having a syncretic mystical experience.

**9.2. The Experience of Jivan Mukta**

In the Indian philosophical system, the term *Jivan Mukta* refers to those people, who attain salvation while living in this world itself. In his *The Hundred Letters* Sharafuddin says that there are people, who, without any discernible rhyme or reason, are granted in a moment the light of divine guidance, and the door of knowledge is opened wide for them. "He follows a light from his Lord." (Qur’an surah *Az-Zumar* 39:22) About such Sufis Sharafuddin says:

Then there occurs revelation upon revelation, vision upon vision. In a short time he sees himself in the desert of yearning, toppled upon the plains of love. From there he proceeds toward the garden of paradise and arrives at the meadow of intimacy, where he is given robes of honor and miraculous powers from the gracious and bounteous Lord. His state is now such that, although his body remains in this world, his heart has gone to the next, just as in praise of Sufis it has been said: “Their bodies are in this world, while their hearts are in the next.”

Sharafuddin narrates the mystical experience of such a *jivan mukta* type of a Sufi:

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When he is taken from this transitory abode to the presence of the everlasting Lord and sees, in the garden of paradise, his own poor, insignificant, weak soul in the midst of a great country and a mighty kingdom, he experiences a reward and blessing beyond description. What bliss! What wealth! What a blessed servant he is! What a pleasing work he has done!^''*

How long does a mystic take to arrive at this stage? Sharafuddin quotes Sufis for the answer:

A number of venerable Sufis have said: “There are two steps on the way to God, and they are quite distinct. It might take someone seventy years to traverse the difficulties of the Way. Another might spend twenty years in overcoming these difficulties. Another might take ten years to do so. Someone might pass beyond them in a year. It is also possible that someone might do so in a month, or even in a week, or in only an hour. Finally, it might happen that, by a special grace of God, all difficulties of the Way are traversed in a single moment…” “Realize that the real state of affairs is that this Way, with respect to its length or shortness, is not like an ordinary road that one can travel on foot. No, one travels this road with one’s heart, on the foundation of one’s basic religious tenets and insights. It is rooted in the light of heaven, and the glance of God falls upon the heart of a servant, enabling him to see that the work of angels, as well as the angelic state, is fixed by that glance. This light is such that a servant could seek it for a hundred years but not find it; or he could search for ten years before finding it; or for only one day, or even a mere hour, or a fleeting moment.”^''^215

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214 Ibid.
215 Ibid., pp. 166, 168.
The above *jivan mukta* type of mystical experience is never to be found anywhere in Islamic theology. There are mystical experiences wherein the mystic has a foretaste of the divine and a vision of the celestial spheres. However, they aren’t the *jivan mukta* type as narrated above. No doubt, it is due to the syncretic Hindu influence on Sharafuddin, resulting into his mystical experience wherefrom into his literature.

9.3. *Trimargas - Jnana Marga, Karma Marga and Bhakti Marga*

Hinduism prescribes three different *margas* or paths to self-realization. There is *karma-yoga* or action. In contrast to Buddhism, Jainism, and Samkhya philosophy, Krishna says that it is not the acts themselves that bind but the selfish intentions with which they are performed. He advises people to perform duties as per the dictates of the *dharma* or prescribed tasks but without any desire for the fruits of the acts. On the other hand, he does not deny the relevance of *jnana-yoga* or knowledge, in which one seeks release in a *yogic* or ascetic course of withdrawal and concentration. Then Krishna reveals himself as the supreme God and grants Arjuna a vision of himself, which is *bhakti-yoga* or devotion - a third way of release wherein the self humbly worships the loving God and hopes for an eternal vision of God. These *trimargas* are present in Sharafuddin’s mystical literature as well, however, with different degrees of importance:

Worship requires knowledge, which serves as its axis and pivot... Indeed, it is by reason of them that scriptures were revealed and messengers sent... Khwaja Hasan Basri said: “The seeking of this knowledge is valuable, for it explains worship; conversely, one should pay attention to worship, since it clarifies knowledge...” The Prophet has said: “Knowledge directs action, and action follows knowledge... God inspires the fortunate ones with knowledge, while He
deprives the unfortunate ones of it.” The misfortune of the latter seems from the fact that they had not gained knowledge, and had acted in ignorance. For such activity there will be no reward in the life to come… If a man of God worships Him with the devotion of the angels of the seven heavens and of the earth, but lacks knowledge, he will gain absolutely nothing.216

The passage says that knowledge (jnana), worship (bhakti) and action (karma) are coterminous. For he says, ‘knowledge explains worship and worship clarifies knowledge’; and, ‘knowledge directs action, and action follows knowledge.’ All three are necessary for and dependent on each other. Sharafuddin’s following poem expresses the co-dependence of knowledge and action:

Knowledge is like the male, and action, the female:

Religion and wealth come from both.

Work without knowledge brings forth nothing:

An egg without a sperm can produce no fruit.217

Knowledge is life and ignorance is death, or, the former is salvation and the latter is destruction. Sharafuddin says: “Knowledge is the origin of all felicity, while ignorance is the origin of all evils. All salvation comes from knowledge and all destruction is born of ignorance. Heavenly ranks and holy powers are acquired through knowledge.”218

Sharafuddin’s following couplet says that pre-eternity or the life in the world is not to prepare oneself for heaven, but to be firmly rooted and grounded in knowledge and action:

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216 Ibid., p. 144.
218 Ibid., p. 60.
Pre-eternity is not for the sake of heaven:
Fix the scaling ladder firmly against knowledge and action.\(^{219}\)

Further, speaking on ‘knowledge and action’ Sharafuddin pours his heart out in this poem:

If acquiring knowledge is for you a game,
Make of it an instrument and place of work.
Knowledge bears you towards the divine threshold,
Not towards your selfish soul, goods or rank.
Knowledge acquired for palace and garden
Would be like a lamp for a thief.
Much self-struggle and asceticism will not lead you
As far as a day’s companionship with this group can.
A poor ant wanted to visit the Ka’ba:
It clung to the leg of a pigeon and suddenly was there.\(^{220}\)

In the above poem, Sharafuddin says that ‘knowledge leads one to the divine threshold’ and doesn’t follow the carnal soul which is after worldly power, honour, wealth and glory. Moreover, ‘knowledge acquired with the desire to achieve paradise (in the Islamic parlance paradise is described in terms of ‘palace and garden’) is like ‘a lamp for a thief’ to sneak in. Here, a syncretic view enables us to see Sharafuddin’s \textit{trimargas} having resemblances in Indian philosophical system. However, he has enrobed them with Sufi attire, giving them fitting Islamic colour and taste - a true sycretic mystical character.

\(^{219}\) Ibid.
\(^{220}\) Ibid.
9.4. Karma in Sharafuddin’s Literature

In Indian philosophy, *karma* is the cycle of death and rebirth resulted by the actions (*karma*) committed in the previous life. A being is reborn into different forms - human or animal - depending on one’s previous *karma*, until the attainment *moksa* or liberation. The doctrine is present in the Kabbalah and in Hasidism as well. (cf. Kabbalah Syncretic Roots of the Transmigration of souls, p. 125; Transmigration or Reincarnation and Exorcism in Hasidism, p. 141). The concept is not only alien but also opposed to Islam’s dogmatic theology. All the more, it is inherent in Sharafuddin’s mystical literature - possibly, due to his knowledge of Jewish mysticism or an impact of his association with the Hindu ascetics. For, asceticism in Hinduism is to liberate one’s soul from the cycle of *karma*. Sharafuddin says:

There are, in man, animal-like qualities that correspond to the various beasts of prey, wild animals, and brute beasts. Whatever quality becomes predominant in this life will be the one in accordance with which the order will be given tomorrow that he be raised in that form, rather than in his present human form. For example, the person who is overcome by rage in this life will be raised on the Day of Resurrection in the form of a dog. The man who succumbs to lustful desires will be raised as a pig. Whoever is overcome by pride will be raised as a leopard. If anyone indulges in sly behavior now, he will be raised as a fox, and so on for other similar qualities... Azar\(^{221}\) had changed in form from a man to a hyena, for this was in keeping with his disposition while on earth. Abraham was told: “What relationship do you have with this hyena? How can you have any

\(^{221}\) Azar was the father of Abraham.
affinity with him?" By contrast, the dog of the Companions of the Cave, on account of its good qualities, had its form changed and was brought forward as a man for, although it had the form of a dog, it had the qualities of a man; while Azar had the appearance of a man, but the qualities of a hyena. In the same way, O brother, there are many today with the appearance of men whom you will see tomorrow raised up in the form of beasts of prey and wild animals, while at the same time, many beasts of prey and wild animals of today will be brought forward as men of the Day of Resurrection.

The dog of the Companions of the Cave, in but a few days.
Followed the footsteps of good men, and became a man!

Obviously, Sharafuddin’s above passage is writ large with karmic elements, wherein he says that a being will be reborn as per the dominant qualities inherent in one’s present life, such as, rage-dog, lust-pig, pride-leopard, sly-fox, etc. He confirms it further with a few additions:

The animal soul of man is very cunning and treacherous! If he is on the lookout for dispensations from the Law and interpretations favorable to himself, this means that he is still acting according to his own desires and inclinations and, to the extent, is still held captive by them! If he is a slave to anger, he is a dog in the form of a man. If he is a slave to his appetite, he is a wild beast. If he is the

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222 The story of the young men who, together with their dog, fell asleep in a cave and didn’t stir for hundreds of years, is narrated in surah 18 in the Qur’an.
224 Ibid., p. 320.
captive of lust, he is a pig. If he is a slave to convention in dress and is preoccupied with his personal adornment, he is a woman dressed up as a man.\textsuperscript{225}

In his \textit{In Quest of God} idolizing the Day of Resurrection, Sharafuddin says that the Judgement will be imparted based on one's inherent qualities - human or animal - and not on outward appearances, and accordingly he will be raised:

There are many today who have the form of men but tomorrow you will see them raised up in the form of lions and beasts of prey. On the other hand, many that you see today in the form of lions and other wild beasts will be led forward tomorrow in human form.\textsuperscript{226}

Acknowledging the \textit{karma} theory, Sharafuddin quotes a poem which clearly expresses the \textit{karmic} elements inherent in Sufi literature:

\begin{quote}
The treasure is in the hold, the ship is the talisman; 
Finally, the talisman of the body will be destroyed. 
You will find the treasure when the talisman has passed away: 
You will come to life when your body is no more. 
After that, your life will have a different talisman, 
When your life has ceased, you will acquire another body. 
Sew up your lips! Do not inquire about footstool and throne! 
Even if you want to ask but a little about them - do not! 
No one knows completely even a particle of creation:
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{225} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 405.
\end{itemize}
A little you ask, a little you say; then your life is over!\footnote{Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), \textit{Sharafuddin Maneri: The Hundred Letters}, Paulist Press, New York, 1980, p. 331.}

The whole poem, and especially the line, “When your life has ceased, you will acquire another body” strongly indicates the \textit{karmic} elements. This throws light how \textit{karma} spread its syncretic roots in Sharafuddin’s mystical literature.

The application of \textit{karma} is different to different philosophical systems - \textit{Advaita}, \textit{Dvaita}, \textit{Visistadvaita}, Jainism, Buddhism, etc. Let us have as glance at Sharafuddin’s following passage wherein the application of \textit{karma} is extended beyond the human and the animal form:

Holy men have said that the mountain of Uhud - concerning which the Apostle had said, “The mountain of Uhud loves me and I am fond of it” - will shed its rocky skirt tomorrow and will stand in human form in the ranks of the righteous, for the quality of righteousness predominates in it. Inevitably it will be endowed with its form.\footnote{Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), \textit{In Quest of God: Maneri’s Second Collection of 150 Letters}, Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand, 2004, p. 63.}

Unlike the earlier Hindu application of the \textit{karma} theory - rebirth as human or animal - the above passage extends it to inanimate object - the mountain of Uhud. It is because of the application of the Jain \textit{karma} theory, according to which, the cycle of death and rebirth resulted by the actions (\textit{karma}) committed in the previous life causes a being to be reborn as human or animal or even inanimate beings - depending on one’s previous \textit{karma}, until the attainment of \textit{nirvana} or liberation. For, Jainism believes that every object - animate or inanimate - contains souls, however, in varying degrees. Hence, Sharafuddin seems to be influenced not only by Hindu but also Jain asceticism and their
respective philosophies. Khusrau’s couplet beautifully summarizes the influence of Indian philosophy on Sufi literature:

People say: “Idol-worshipper, go and don a sacred-thread!”

Which vein in Khusrau’s body is not a sacred thread?

10. A Bird’s Eye View of Sharafuddin’s Syncretic Mystical Literature

As each Sufi sect is unique, so does its literature. And so is Sharafuddin’s literature with its own sui generis. For, he has assimilated from multifarious other literary sources, such as Arabic, Persian, Urdu, English, besides literary traditions from Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Indian and other religio-philosophical systems. Let us see the uniqueness in his literature.

10.1. Sharafuddin’s Legends

There are legends associated with both Sharafuddin’s birth and early childhood. This is to be expected, for popular imagination to be fertile. Thus for example, Khwaja Khizr, Islam’s most revered legendary figure, is seen rocking the babe’s cradle. Sheikh Sharafuddin Panipati insisted Sharafuddin Maneri to meet Khwaja Najibuddin Firdausi. Here is the meeting:

Khwaja Najibuddin honoured him with discipleship. He brought out the certificate of authorization which he had written twelve years before his coming and had kept safely for him. He honoured him with it. Sheikh Sharafuddin said: “I have not yet performed any service for you, nor have I learnt from you how to travel along the Way. How can I do what you are authorizing me to?” Sheikh Najibuddin said: “I wrote this certificate at the command of the Prophet. He will

229 Ibid., p. 213.
attend to your training. You will also need some from spiritual guides, but don’t worry about this work.” After giving him some training in the Path, he bade him goodbye, saying: “If you hear anything along the way, don’t turn back.” After travelling one or two stages, he heard that Khwaja Najibuddin Firdausi has passed from the temporal abode to the everlasting threshold ... He did not return. (Munaqib, p. 132).

The above story of certification of authorization is legendary. The certificate was written twelve years before the actual honouring, and that too at the command of the Prophet, who had lived seven centuries before Najibuddin Firdausi. Further, as Sharafuddin set out from Rajgir to Maner, he arrived in Bihia, wherein he heard the call of a peacock and was overcome by ecstasy. He secluded himself in the jungle of Bihia being intimate with God. People who hadn’t the faintest notion of this intimacy attempted to reveal the secrets of this period of intimate seclusion with stories of the following caliber:

I have heard that once Qazi Zahid, a learned man and traveler along the way, who had a firm belief in the Master of the World, said: “Master, I have heard that you didn’t eat anything for thirty years, and that your natural functions ceased. How could this be explained?” Sharafuddin replied: “I had not eaten a cooked meal for thirty years. As the need arose, I used to eat something from the jungle. After my natural functions ceased for some years, I had a nocturnal emission. It was extremely cold weather. I went to the water-side. The thought came to me that I would perform my ablutions with sand and then perform my prayers. Afterwards I thought: ‘My carnal soul is seeking refuge in the Law!’ Immediately I rushed into

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231 Ibid., p. 65.
the water and fell unconscious. When the sun rose, I came to my senses. The
result was that I missed my morning prayer that day.” (Manaqib, p. 136)

In the above narration, not eating a cooked food for thirty years and eating
something from the jungle is quite tolerable. But the ceasing of the natural functions for
some years seems to be far from truth. Further, the dream was a conventional narrative
frame that was widely used in the Middle Ages and is still employed on occasion. The
narrator falls asleep and while sleeping dreams a dream that is the actual story told in the
dream frame. In the Middle Ages the device was used for allegory. Among the major
dream allegories are: The Romance of the Rose, Dante’s Divina Commedia, Chaucer’s
The Book of the Duchess, The Hose of Fame, The Pearl, and The Vision of Piers
Plowman. The dream allegory forms the narrative frame for Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s
Progress, Keats’s The Fall of Hyperion, and (by adaptation of something like science
fiction) Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward. Let us have a glance at some of the
’dream legends.’

“I read in The Discourses of Sheikh Nizamuddin that he had said: ‘I find one
thing quite difficult to discover, namely, whether the vision of God occurs before
entry into paradise. In other words, does it occur in the grave or not? That
evening, I saw Maulana Weis in a dream. I asked him if the vision of God was
granted after death but before entering paradise, or not. He started questioning
me, asking me ‘when’ and ‘for whom’. I wasn’t satisfied by that dream. Next time
I saw my adopted sister, Gulchin, whom I also questioned. She replied, ‘Yes, it
does occur, and I have acquired it once or twice.’ Afterwards the Sheikh

232 Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), The Way of the Sufi: Sharafuddin Maneri, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 1987,
p. 71.
233 Maulana Weis was an early fourteenth-century scholar in Delhi.
exclaimed, ‘Praise be to God! Weis hasn’t seen God, but Gulchin has!’" The venerable Master said: Sheikh Nizamuddin’s position was above that of having recourse to dreams in order to seek answers to his intellectual difficulties. That would be to put one’s conscious, waking state on the same level as that of dreaming, whereas the former is superior to the latter. This is according to the divine pleasure.” (Ma’dan 51, pp. 404-5)\textsuperscript{234}

In The Hundred Letters, Sharafuddin narrates a story on Mohammed - an extra-Qura’nic source:

We have heard in a story that when a pulpit was erected, the tree against which Muhammad used to lean while preaching began to cry out due to the pain of its separation from the Prophet. A command came: ‘Take this tree to one side, for the weeping of the grief-stricken and exiles has great power in this Way.’\textsuperscript{235}

Sharafuddin’s recurrent reference to “the dog of the Companions of the Cave” harks back to Qur’an 18:18, where mention is made of “their dog [which] stretched out his paws at the entrance.” Many names and legends have been linked to this dog in the magical and mystical literature of Islam. The most popular name is Qitmir, the most widespread legend, that he became a man as reward for his fidelity.\textsuperscript{236} Further, Sharafuddin narrates stories on Sheikh Luqman Sarkhasi and Khwaja Zu’l Nun Misri, which, by any human reason, don’t fall short of a legend:

\textsuperscript{236} See also W. Thackston’s translation of Ansari’s Munajat in The Classics of Western Spirituality Series, Paulist Press, New York, 1978, note 11, p. 223.
It is related about Sheikh Luqman Sarkhasi that once, while listening to music, one of the dervishes began to fly like a bird and alighted on a tree. He said: “O Luqman, come here so that we may fly off together!” “O man of peace,” replied Luqman, “How can our hearts be contained by any world, for when we take to flight, we head beyond both worlds!” Any mean denier will not be able to hear this Tradition. Or if he does hear it, he will not believe it... Khwaja Zu’l Nun Misri said: “I saw a man flying through the air. I asked him how he had acquired that stage. He told me he had trampled desire underfoot and thus could fly through the air.”

Sharafuddin narrates the stories on Solomon, David and Moses - all three are the Judeo-Christian biblical figures:

When he heard the cry of an ant, Solomon ordered the wind to bring his throne and place it there and, for forty days, sat down beside the ant in order to hear divine secrets from it, for God has hidden, within His creatures, many secrets of which nobody has any knowledge... It is related that David was in the sanctuary. An ant passed in front of him. He lifted his hand with the intention of throwing the ant away from the place of prostration. “O David,” the ant protested, “what wantonness is this that you intend to inflict upon me? It is scarcely your task to lay hands upon me in God’s own house!” David was grief-stricken and said: “O God, how should I deal with Your creatures?” A voice was heard: “Make it your habit to act out of fear of God so that none has to suffer on your account! Do not locate the true source of creatures in their bodies! Look rather at the mystery of

their creation! If We were to order an ant to come out of its black robe, so many indications of the divine Unity would radiate from its breast that the monotheists of the whole world would be put to shame. The secret of this is indicated in the saying of the Apostle, who used to pray: "show me Your creatures as they really are!" Moses once enjoyed such a warmth of consolation one night while immersed in prayer that the effect endured till the following day. The thought occurred to him that no other creature could have been vouchsafed an experience similar to what he had enjoyed the previous night. In a moment Gabriel arrived and said: "O Moses, there is a person in this forest who is able to cure whatever ails the hearts of the righteous!" When Moses arrived at the spot, he saw a frog. It was croaking away in the water. On seeing Moses, it said, "O Moses, I have been waiting for you for a long time, in order to uproot the shoot of pride of your heart! You should on no account claim anything unique yourself, for every gift that was bestowed upon you last night from the divine Presence was first of all granted to me, and only afterwards to you! Be careful not to make such a claim for yourself in the future!" When Moses saw the loving concern of the frog, he understood that it was an agent of God. He flung his turban on the ground and exclaimed: "O agent of God, grant me a share in the fellowship of your largeheartedness, and present the story of my pain and grief to God!" 238

Though all the three human characters in the above stories - Solomon, David and Moses - are from the Judeo-Christian biblical tradition, the Bible doesn’t mention the above stories at all. No doubt, it is a later Sufi development around these characters in order to make them legendary figures. Further, the ‘Assumption of Mary’ is a Christian

238 Ibid., p. 369-70.
dogma which has sycretically entered into Sharafuddin’s mystical literature. However, Sharafuddin extends it farther:

A discussion arose about those who were already in heaven. Who were they? The Venerable Master said: There are three people bodily in heaven at the moment, two men and one woman. The first is the prophet Idris (Enoch); the second is the Beloved Carpenter (Jesus); but there is some disagreement as to who the woman is. Some say that it is Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh. Others have said that it is the Chaste Mary (mother of Jesus), but it is more correct to say that it is Asiya.” After that he said, in great astonishment: “Glory be to God! To think that today, Pharaoh’s wife is bodily in heaven! What intellect or knowledge could reach this stage! So many thousands of prophets and saints have been reduced to dust while Pharaoh’s wife has attained the distinction of being bodily in heaven.” The Helpless One asked whether Asiya has any son or not. The Venerable Master replied: “No, Pharaoh did not even have intercourse with her. God Most High preserved her in her virginal chastity. Whenever Pharaoh came for intercourse with her and thus fulfil his desire for her, God used to create a fairy that looked like her. Pharaoh used to think that he had achieved his purpose concerning her. In this way, God preserved her chastity.”

God creating a fairy in order to preserve the virginal chastity of Asiya is nothing less than a legend created around her. Sharafuddin’s In Quest of God narrates yet another story:

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239 Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), Khwan-i Pur Nimat: A Table Laden with Good Things, Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, Delhi, 2009, pp. 4-5. Anecdotes are used to illustrate some spiritual teaching. Their value depends on how effectively they communicate the teaching of the Master, not on their historicity.
A dervish, in intimate converse with God, prayed thus: “O God, be pleased with my love. If this does not please You, be pleased with my dog-like devotion!” The following morning he was walking along the road. A dog, in a trance, addressed him: “O dervish, you have ranked yourself pretty high by wanting to be one of us! What impertinence, since not a single hair of ours has ever been raised in opposition to Him.” The dervish threw dust on his head.

As in Sufism, so in Sharafuddin, legends are created in order to make the natural supernatural, and the secular, spiritual. Though far from truth, legends try to communicate a hidden message, which requires a mystical, extra-sensory faculty.

10.2. Sharafuddin’s Love Poetry

Mystical love-verse is intimate to the heart of a Sufi, who envisions God as the Lover and the Sufi as His beloved. Sharafuddin is a seasoned hand in this divine-human-love, in whom we see a blend, an amalgam of love and faith. With great intensity he says: “Everything about them, visible and hidden, entirely and in the very totality of their spiritual powers, becomes so absorbed in the Friend that nothing remains in them except Him.” In his verse, Sharafuddin speaks of a feeling of bliss which arises like a flame from within, reassuring the Sufi that the source of his experience is the divine, not any other. Bliss is diffused throughout a person’s entire being, which cannot be compartmentalized and confined to the intellect. Love for Sharafuddin, originates in the Friend and proceeds to the beloved. Sharafuddin’s teaching and experience is “When God takes possession of a person’s heart, thoughts of wife, children, this world or the

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next no longer find a lodging-place there. Although his being is still in the world, his
heart is with God. It is God’s love, not any human activity that produces the peace,
serenity and happiness of the genuine Sufi.”^242

According to Sharafuddin, growth in love is a deeper dimension to mystical
knowledge, for, mystical knowledge is the seed of love. Love of God sprouts from the
seed of knowledge. He says: “Everyone who would penetrate further into the world of
mystical knowledge will be more inflamed by the fire of love and will receive great
delight and preeminence from the face of the Beloved and the sight of the Desired One.
He is the Beloved of souls and the Desired of hearts! The souls of the lovers are melting
in the fire of longing.”^243 A further penetration into mystical knowledge produces these
effects of love. The mystic has become a lover, totally inflamed and melting in the fire of
longing, a longing for a union so intimate as to enable him to melt into God himself! He
quotes the Qur’anic verse: “He loved them, and they loved Him.” (surah Al-Maidah 5:54)
It is by producing the fruits of love, not by laying claim to love, that a person is known as
a lover. According to Sharafuddin, a person’s love for God should be such that he never rests
except in his Beloved, even if he is conversing with others. This is a syncretic reflection of the
mystical thought of St Augustine, who said, “You have made us, O’ Lord, for Yourself, and our
heart is restless, until it rests in You” (Confessions, Lib 1.1-2.2.5.5: CSEL 33. 1-5).
Sharafuddin has a poem to this effect:

The hearts of all are stirred
In expectation of seeing Your face!
Our bodies, out of fear of separation,

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^242 Ibid., p. 227.
^243 Ibid.
Cry out in the midst of pleasure and comfort.
Without Your beauty, flowers of desire
Turn to thorns in my hope-enkindled eyes!^\textsuperscript{244}

Envisioning a life with the Beloved for eternity Sharafuddin prompts people not
to dread death, for, after death, it is all ‘life filled with LIFE!’ Sharafuddin’s letter on
“Genealogy” notes the words coming straight from the heart of the Beloved, expressing
one’s love for creatures:

My love for Laila makes me love the countryside of Nejd:
Apart from my love for her, I would have no interest in it!
One reaches the stage of loving one’s enemies!
Because they are closely united to God!
The reproaches of men are welcome because of my love for You!
For those who rebuke me also recall Your love to mind.\textsuperscript{245}

Sharafuddin says that when God’s servants submit to the Prophet and, moving
ahead, find that they get lost in the resplendent qualities of His beauty and His majesty,
then they reach the stage described in the tradition: “When I make him my friend, I
become his ears, eyes, hands, and tongue.”\textsuperscript{246} The following poem is delicate as an
allusion, both literary and theological, wherein Sharafuddin wants to suggest that God
Himself is the only true “idol”, i.e. He is no idol at all but the Beloved.

May it never happen, O dearest “idol” of mine,

That love of You should depart my heart, or thought of You, my mind!

\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., p. 233.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., pp. 229-30.
Even if you seek my death there will remain
That taste for You in my rotting bones.

God forbid that my heart should ever become separated from You,
Or that it should grow intimate with anyone other than You.
Diverted from love of You, whom would it love?
If it were to quit your lane, where would it go?247

Basically, a mystic is a lover of God, and so, Sharafuddin sees God: “He is
merciful and compassionate toward ordinary slaves; but with lovers He is a King who
accomplishes whatever He wants!”248 One beloved of God has said that before the Rock
of Jerusalem or the Ka’aba came into existence, the direction for the prayer of lovers was
the One without beginning!

The prayer of lovers is not a matter of inclinations and prostrations;
The very same pain afflicts Muslim, Christian, and Jew.

When the only direction for prayer is the beauty of the Beloved,
Love comes and abolishes all other loci of prayer.249

Further, Sharafuddin draws a comparison between the lover and the drunkard who
frequents taverns - both are intoxicated, one with love and the other with wine: An
imbiber of wine came to the door of the tavern and asked for a little wine. He was told
that the tavern was out of wine. “Take my hand and place it upon the mouth of the

247 Ibid., p.50.
248 Ibid., p. 126.
249 Ibid.
vessel”, he replied, “so that I might smell its aroma. This will make me as intoxicated as others become after drinking a hundred glasses of wine!”

It was love for You that made me a frequenter of taverns!

Otherwise, I would be confident and secure in my possessions!

So intoxicated am I with the heady wine of His love that,

If I take one more gulp of it, I shall expire straightaway!

The lover in love reaches such a state that he is totally obedient to the one he loves - a slavish obedience - says Sharafuddin’s following couplet:

When your love proves to be true, then you will obey it,

For the one who loves is obedient to the One Whom he loves!

Sharafuddin quotes Khwaja Bayazid Bistami, who, explaining the meaning of “The love of anything renders a man both blind and dumb!” says:

“It is no matter for surprise that I love You, for there is no shortage of lovers of One so beautiful and perfect in every way! The astonishing thing is that You love me, full of helplessness and defects from head to toe, a mere child of dust! Hence you should know how it is that the tree of love could sprout from your dust, and that the cup-bearer of the delight of this wine could be so generous with His gift of ‘He loves them and they love Him!’” (Qur’an surah Al-Ma’ idah 5:54)

The above words sycnretically resemble the biblical words of St Paul: “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to

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250 Ibid., p. 181.
251 Ibid., pp. 181-82.
252 Ibid., p. 286.
253 Ibid., p. 191.
die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ
died for us.” (Romans 5:6-8) Sharafuddin’s following poem strongly captures the above
idea:

Who am I along Your Way that in my abode
Flowers should sprout in my soil from Your glance?
And beyond even this, I have received, from Your bounty,
The abandonment of Your love upon my heart!\(^{254}\)

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” says the Bible (Mathew 6:21). For a lover, his sole possession - more than his life - is his love, says Sharafuddin
in the following couplet:

Even if I were to have nothing in this world or the next,
By having You, I do have everything! There is no need for anything else!\(^{255}\)

Sharafuddin’s following poem speaks about the status of the lover:

There is no other way for a lover but to become nothing.
That his very existence might come from the divine court.
Can you not see that, in the profession of faith,
The “not” precedes the affirmation “but God!”\(^{256}\)

In the above poem, the lover in love is reduced to ‘nothing’ - ‘the state of
nothingness’ in Greek philosophy or Sunyata in Eastern philosophy. Then he
symbiotically connects that lover to the Islamic credo, “There is no god but God.” i.e.
Nothing exists but God. Further, what is God’s response to such a lover? Sharafuddin
quotes Prophet Mohammed:

\(^{254}\)Ibid., p. 191.
\(^{255}\)Ibid., p. 189.
\(^{256}\)Ibid., p. 305.
“God will not punish lovers, no matter what they do.” They will not be caught for anything they do, for a lover is without a heart, and also without choice. What he sees comes into existence without his intending it, and proceeds without choosing.

“Love is a divine madness.”

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare says: “The lunatic, the lover and the poet are of imagination all compact: One sees more devils than vast hell can hold. That is, the madman: the lover, all as frantic, sees Helen’s beauty in a brow of Egypt: The poet’s eye, in fine frenzy rolling, doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.” The poet-lover Sharafuddin beautifully spells out the love of a mad lover in this following verse:

The work of a lover involves compulsion:
It results from an abundance of friendship.
Undoubtedly, even if a madman is at fault.
Whatever he says flows from freedom.
Whatever is done by one who is mad
Is swiftly pardoned, for he is mad.

There can be no blame for a lover:
Not for him to burn on Judgement Day!
If you become mature in the station of love,
You will be free of everlasting punishment.

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258 Ibid.
Christianity, in particular Christian mysticism holds that one must love God, not out of fear of hell, nor reward for heaven, but for God's own sake. 'Love God for God's own sake' is the basic premise in Christian spiritual theology. Rabi'a assimilated this concept into Sufism and has expressed her 'love for God for His own sake' in couplets (cf. Syncretic Evolution of Sufism, p. 197) Sharafuddin too is under the shadow of this Christian influence, for, he says: "Whatever you do should be done first and foremost for His sake, not out of the hope of heaven, nor the fear of hell!" His couplet succinctly expresses this idea:

They are neither disturbed by hell nor excited by paradise-
Such is the nature of the people belonging to this group

He confirms the above idea through an anecdote on Jesus, which is a creation by Sharafuddin himself. For, it is nowhere to be found in the Bible:

It is related that Jesus, during his journeys, arrived among a certain people. He inquired of some of them about the purpose of the worship they were engaged in. They replied: "We are afraid of hell and hope to go to paradise." He replied: "You are afraid of a creature and also place your hope in a creature." He reached another people. He again inquired about the purpose of their worship. They replied: "To love and glorify God." He said to them: "You really are God's friends! It behoves me to stay with you."

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Sharafuddin explains the above anecdote in his own words: "Whoever worships God because he desires heaven is a slave of his own desire. Whoever worships Him out of a fear of hell is a slave of hell, for anyone who is afraid of anything is a slave of that thing. By the same token, whoever puts his hope in anything is a slave of that thing. Your true reality is within your breast. A man is where his heart is!" For Sharafuddin, the real desire is for God Himself. Moreover, he is convinced that anybody who seeks the Lord of both worlds himself gains honour in both. The following couplet brings out the pith and substance of his thought:

I experience neither aversion to hell nor desire for heaven:
Remove the veil from Your countenance, for it is You I long to see!262

Such a deep desire for God Himself is found in many mystics, especially Rabia of Basra. It is a true love for God, not out of fear of hell, or hope for reward in paradise, but for God’s own sake, which Sharafuddin expresses in this poem:

As long as heaven and hell clutter your mind,
How can your soul become aware of this secret?
When you have been liberated from both these places,
Will this wealth burst forth like down from the shades of evening?263

A lover must have single-minded devotion who doesn’t see anybody or anything else but only his beloved. To prove this, Sharafuddin narrates a story by Ismi:

“I saw a really beautiful girl, and lost my heart to her. I said to her: ‘My whole being is completely taken up with you.’ She said: ‘If this is true, I too will lavish

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myself entirely upon you. Yet I must tell you that I have a sister. Once you see her face you will completely forget me.’ I said. ‘Where is she?’ ‘Right behind you!’ I turned and looked behind me. She sprang up and hit me on the back, saying: ‘O deceiver, if your being had been completely engrossed in mine, how could you possibly look at another?’” 264

De facto, Sharafuddin’s love verse is spiritually enriching and intellectually amusing. He is romantic in his love, but a spiritual romance. Love for him is for God’s own sake and nothing else.

10.3. Parables in Sharafuddin’s Literature

A parable is a story told to illustrate a moral of spiritual truth. Sharafuddin deploys this literary genre in his writings. He describes sexual appetite and anger through a parable of horse and dog. He says that a horse should be broken in and a dog should be kept under the hunter’s control, lest it pounce upon him! Without a horse, a hunter cannot hunt, yet if the horse is not broken in, it will throw its rider! Without these two, one cannot go hunting for eternal bliss, however, both have to be brought to heel. Else, they can break the man down. The whole purpose of austerities is to break the dominance of these two qualities and place them firmly under control.

Sharafuddin says that faith limited to mere knowledge and words is skin-deep. It must go deeper and should reach the kernel, i.e. faith must be the centre of one’s being. And so he says:

Anyone who lapses into his own knowledge and is content to remain there should realize that he has consigned himself to the veil of words, which is like someone who has an almond and looks only at its skin, not comprehending that its kernel is

264 Ibid., pp. 279-80.
hidden from his sight. The life is not in the skin, but in the kernel. The skin hides
the meaning, lest it become apparent to the uninitiated.265

Sharafuddin calls the mystic to place oneself on the divine anvil, who will melt
and mould him into His own image, till he reflects the divine Himself:

A church is able to be turned into a mosque, while a rubbish heap can become the
site of a royal palace. The raw material for all this is like pieces of iron covered
with rust: They can be made into mirrors in which objects can be reflected, but
only after a craftsman has placed the whole in a furnace, purified it of its
imperfections, and hammered it out on a hard anvil. The polisher is then ordered
to rub off any surface rust. The first thing to be seen in it would be the beauty of
the polisher! In a similar manner, the constituent elements of human nature should
be thrown into the furnace of austerity and be hammered out on the anvil of
struggle with self. The whole should be then entrusted to Love, the Polisher, who
will rub off the rust of human qualities. Immediately the reflection of the World
of Meaning will appear in it, and it will become a fitting place for the King to
gaze upon His own beauty, as someone has said:

We are simply mirrors while He is the one possessing beauty:

It is only for the sake of His seeing that we seek Him.266

Sharafuddin’s parables reflect the divine in them. The genre itself is a synecretic
adaptation from Greek rhetoric, especially the Bible, where it’s extensively used.

265 Ibid., p. 158.
266 Ibid., pp. 158-59.
10.4. Sharafuddin’s Apocalyptic (Revelation) Literature

According to Sharafuddin, *manifestation* is ‘to come from behind a curtain.’ Revelation for him is the acceptance of divine utterances infused into the hearts of prophets by the divine. The Qur’an says, “I lifted the veil from your sight” (surah *Qaf* 50:22) in order that you might perceive what had been concealed until then. This Qur’anic explanation of ‘revelation’ is same as the biblical one. In this light Sharafuddin explains revelation thus:

Beauty pertains to different worlds, such as this one and the one to come - whether it be eighteen thousand worlds, according to one Tradition, or eighty thousand, according to another. All are present in man’s constitution. With reference to each world, man has been given the special vision that will enable him to observe that world and the revelation occurring in it. All eighty thousand worlds can be summed up in two worlds. They comprise darkness and light, earth and heaven, the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual, this world and the next. To summarize requires one sentence, but to explain, many words are necessary... then from behind each veil that is lifted - all eighty thousand of them - there is granted him a special vision... The very first special vision is that of the intellect. To the extent that the veil is lifted, a person understands the meaning of anything intelligible that has been revealed to him, and he becomes familiar with the secrets of the particular revealed world. This is called the “revelation of the intelligible world.”

267 The central image exposited here, common to all Sufi speculative literature, is that of a veiled beauty tossing her veil back over her head and thus allowing people to catch a glimpse of her lovely countenance. 268 Paul Jackson SJ (trans.), *Sharafuddin Maneri: The Hundred Letters*, Paulist Press, New York, 1980, pp. 58-59.
Revelation, says Sharafuddin, is granted only to sincere Sufis or mystics, whereas the renowned philosophers are given only the knowledge of the intelligible world. Once passed beyond the revelation of the intelligible world, the Sufi is manifested revelation of the heart, called the revelation of perception, followed by the revelation of secrets, which is expressed thus:

Grief for You have plundered my heart.
And for You my heart has forsaken all.
The secret unknown even to holy people.
Your love whispered in the ear of my heart.269

According to Sharafuddin, these are spiritual revelations, i.e. manifestation of the things of the Spirit. At this stage, heaven and hell appear, and angels converse with the mystic. Finally, when the soul is completely purified of all bodily defilements, the Infinite discloses Himself, wherein the Sufi gets the vision of the past, the present and the future and he gets transported into eternity. Here Shararafuddin quotes Harisa’s mystical expression: “When I look toward the blessed, I see them advancing; but when I look toward the damned, I see them dying.”270 Further, he quotes Prophet Mohammed: “Just as I can see from in front, so too can I see from behind.”271 Finally, in the following lines Sharafuddin sums up his mystical revelatory experience:

When I alight at the head of the street of Your love.
The secret of both worlds becomes completely manifest in my heart.

Having been welcomed at that threshold, my heart

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269 Ibid., p. 59.
270 Ibid., p. 59.
271 Ibid.
Obtains the desideratum of all the worlds.\textsuperscript{272}

Sharafuddin believes that revelations and miracles occur at this stage, wherein the Sufi can read others' minds, be aware of things happening at a distance, walk on water or fire, fly in the air, etc. He confirms his strand quoting an anecdote from Prophet Mohammed:

Once Prophet Mohammed asked Ibn Saiyad, "What do you see?" Ibn Saiyad said, "I see the divine throne on water." The Prophet said, "That is the throne of Satan. Beware! Similar things will also accompany the Antichrist." There is a tradition that says, "The Antichrist will have the power to raise men from the dead."\textsuperscript{273}

In the above passage, 'Antichrist' is the final opponent of Christ and thus of God, which occurs in the Bible (1 John 2:18-29; 4:1-6; 2 John 1:7-11) is one of the many proofs of the Christian syncretic elements in Sharafuddin's literature. Further, speaking of the revelation of David, a biblical character (1 Samuel 16-30) who is also a prophet in Islam, Sharafuddin narrates the story of a bird that was placed in a narrow cage whose heart was as joyous as if it were in paradise. He says that the souls are also in the cage of the body, and every evening they put their heads through the window and sigh, thinking, "When can I fly off?" Sharafuddin connects this story to David. A revelation came to the Prophet David: "O David, be like the wary bird! Do not be trustful or contented! Everything goes somewhere apart!"\textsuperscript{274} Here Sharafuddin quotes a verse:

\begin{quote}
For that one hidden behind Your veil
There exists a height still loftier than this cell:
The height of which I aspire is very high.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{272} Ibid., pp. 60-61.
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid., p. 60.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid., p. 77.
But perchance I will exceed even my own ambition!\textsuperscript{275}

Sharfuddin gives yet another revelation. A revelation came to the Prophet David: "O David, I remember those who remember Me! My paradise is for those who obey Me. I visit those who long for Me and My special favor is for those who love Me."\textsuperscript{276}

Not everyone has a gullet like a falcon’s

Nor is every belly capable of bearing the secret!\textsuperscript{277}

Revelation in Christianity is the result of divine grace which cannot be earned but divinely gifted. However holy or ascetical one may be, he cannot attain it through one’s own efforts but a divine favour. This has syncretically stirred the spirits of Sharafuddin, thus reflecting in his literature, which is evident from the following passage:

A devoted person was engaged in devotion toward God in a forest for an extended period. He saw a bird that had made a nest. It had a very pleasant voice. He thought that he would make his cell under that tree so that he might be cheered by its singing. He put his plan into execution. In the meantime, a revelation came to the Prophet: "Tell that dervish: You have affection for a particular creature. Hence I shall cast you down from the rank you have acquired, and by no means will you be able to reach it again, no matter how much you try!"\textsuperscript{278}

Further, speaking on revelation as divine gift unknown to the human heart Sharafuddin says:

\textsuperscript{275} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{276} Ibid., p. 263.
\textsuperscript{277} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid., p. 189.
Is it possible that your discerning glance has not fallen upon this page: “I have prepared for my devout seekers what the eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of men?”

The above words are taken from the Bible. St Paul addressing the Corinthians says:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

While not ruling out the possibility of simultaneity, nevertheless it seems most likely that this, like a number of other sayings, has a Christian origin. Once it entered into the body of Islamic literature, however, its origin was quickly forgotten and it became part and parcel of the Islamic heritage, as we find it here, and is thought of and treated as such. It is an example of the symbiosis that is constantly taking place in all religious groups which are alive and responding to fresh stimuli. Hence, Sharafuddin’s revelatory (apocalyptic) literature is a Christian biblical literary genre, which (as in Christianity) is syncretically assimilated into his literature in order to communicate divine manifestations.

10.5. Sharafuddin on Music (Sama’)

Probably no issue more sharply divided Sufis and orthodox scholars in fourteenth-century India than that of the legality of assembling to listen to the singing of verses, often employing the very terms and imagery of profane love songs. Sharafuddin’s attitude to sama’ could be deduced from the discourses of Husain Mu’izz Balkhi.

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A companion asked him (Husain): How did the Revered Sheikh (Sharafuddin) - may God preserve his secrets - conduct musical assemblies? Was there first Quranic recital and would the session commence after that?” He - may God preserve him - replied: “Yes, there was a Quranic reciter with a good voice present. He would begin by singing ten verses of the Quran, during which many tears would roll down the cheeks of the Revered Sheikh. After that, a singer would take up a couplet or a ghazal. When he saw the Revered Sheikh was overcome by ecstasy, he would set that particular couplet to music. When he came to his senses, he would exclaim, ‘God forgive me! God forgive me!’ Sometimes he renewed his ablutions... The Revered Sheikh said: ‘I am giving you a message in the language of song. It will convey something to you.’ He then recited this quatrain:

A group of self-indulgent people listens to singing:

I intend to say a word or two in the language of song.

Let them trample underfoot whatever is foreign to song!

The songs are your own, and you are in their grip.280

Sharafuddin recommended the controversial sessions where people would gather together to listen to Persian verses sung by professional singers. He himself must have attended them while in Delhi, and such sessions became a regular feature of his own hospice in Bihar. Letter 93 in The Hundred Letters titled “Listening to Music” is devoted to this practice, wherein in the opening paragraph he makes two affirmations through apposite imagery. He says that hearts and minds are filled with precious meaning.

Listening to songs brings these secrets of the heart out into the open, just as striking brings for the fire which was previously hidden in the stone and iron. For, listening releases the fire within their breasts which would have otherwise remained hidden. If it were not for the practice of listening to songs, all of these would remain hidden. In fact, Sharafuddin presupposes that there is much within a person’s heart - love of God and a yearning to see Him. Listening to songs stimulates and strengthens love and yearning by bringing them out into the open. In an autobiographical note he says that a person’s whole essence is transformed by music. We get a glimpse of how his mind and heart were affected by studying a verse he quotes and then explains:

I said, “I shall count the ring of tresses upon her head
And thus remove all ignorance about her.”
She laughed at me and, twisting sharply her billow of tresses
Reduced to confusion all my careful calculations!
“This should be taken to mean that, if anybody wishes, by means of his own powers, to understand even the tip of the hair of the wonders of the divinity, he will fall into such confusion that all his counting will be incorrect, and all his intellectual efforts utterly confounded.”
There is one couplet which, together with its explanation, touches intimately the central contention of this work:
If you measure out two thousand cups of wine,
How can you relish it, unless you first taste it?
"It is understood to mean that religious matters cannot be correctly appreciated by hearing and by knowledge alone, but only by tasting them. If you speak a great deal about love, ardent desire, austerity, fear of God and so on and even compose books about them, there will be no profit at all until you yourself are changed by the particular virtue you extol."^281

Uns narrates a genuine ecstatic state which occurred to Prophet Mohammed while listening to songs:

I was near the Apostle when the great Gabriel appeared to him. He said: ‘O Apostle of God, here is some good news for you! The dervishes of your community will enter paradise five hundred years before the rich.’ The Apostle was filled with joy upon hearing this news and said, Is there anyone present who can recite a poem for the occasion? A man said, ‘Yes, I can, O apostle!’ He replied, ‘Then recite!’ This was the poem that all heard:

The serpent of love has stung my heart:

There is no physician, and none to administer a charm,

Except that Beloved with whom I am enthralled.

With Him is the charm and the antidote as well!^282

In *The Hundred Letters*, Sharafuddin opposes both those who would ban all songs, and those who advocate a freedom which bordered on license. He says:

Listening to songs can be divided into three categories: lawful, forbidden and permissible... Listening to music is desirable for those devoted to God, permissible for those who vacillate, and improper for people given over to

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^281 Ibid., pp. 194-95.
sensuality and pleasure! ... The Messenger of God listened to the recitals of verse, while the companions composed verse and also listened to recitals. In this whole matter a number of people are at fault. Some condemn the listening to all verse as forbidden by the Law - yet spend their days and nights backbiting their fellow Muslims! Another group proclaims that it is lawful for anybody to listen to any music that strikes his fancy, and act accordingly. They spend their whole time listening to frivolous songs and arguing with one another about them.  

Though Persian was the formal language at the assemblies, Hindavi was the spoken language of the hoi polloi. But Sharafuddin discouraged people singing in Hindavi:

Hindavi compositions are very forthright and frank in expression. In purely Persian verses, there is a judicious blend of allusion and what can be fittingly expressed, whereas Hindavi employs very frank expressions. There is no limit to what it explicitly reveals. It is very disturbing. It is extremely difficult for young men to bear such things. Without any delay, they would be upset. This is why there are difficulties involved in allowing young men to listen to such things. The members of this group, however, experience only one grief and pain. They consider all such things to be somewhat ridiculous. (Mukhkh 53, p. 154)

Though Sharafuddin neither wrote in Hindavi, nor did he actively encourage others to do so, he did communicate with ordinary people in Hindavi, and his approval helped create the needed atmosphere wherein Mulla Daud wrote Chandain (781/1379), a long poem with a beautiful love story of the Ahir tribe in Persian script, in the Hindavi of

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283 Ibid., pp. 387-88.
his area, known as 'Awadhi.' In the fourteenth century, there was no language called 'Hindavi.' Wherever this appears in the Persian sources it applies to the local language, as opposed to Persian. The Hindavi of Bihar township was the form of Magahi current at that time.

Though music is looked at with contempt in Islam, for Sufism it is a means to ecstatic experiences. As William Congreve in his *The Mourning Bride* (1697) says, "Music has charms to soothe the savage breast, to soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak", so does Sharafuddin make use of music to reach the divine ecstatically by fighting the carnal soul.

### 10.6. Sharafuddin on Dance of the Whirling Dervishes (*Sama*’ or *Sema’*)

The dance of the whirling dervishes is yet another Sufi practice, which expresses the mystic’s love of God, purifies his soul, and thus a way of finding God. It reveals the mystic’s heart and soul, rather than merely generating emotions, which are in direct communion with the divine. Sharafuddin confirms his views on *sama’* by narrating incidents from the life of Prophet Mohammed and his words of wisdom:

The Prophet and also the companions were so enraptured that the Prophet’s cloak slipped off his shoulders. When this condition subsided, Mu’awiyya ibn Abu Sufyan exclaimed: “What a good game you are playing, O Apostle!” “Get far away, O Mu’awiyya!” retorted and Apostle. “No one who fails to rejoice when he hears the description of the Friend can possibly be favored!” The Prophet’s cloak was divided into four hundred pieces and distributed among those present. It is also related that the Prophet was once seized with such emotion and clapped his hands so vigorously on account of what he heard that drops of blood appeared on
his fingers. He is also reported to have said: “Whenever a dervish claps his hands while listening to music, he expels any sensuality within him; whenever he stamps his foot upon the ground, he ejects any lust inside him; and whenever he shouts out in praise of God, he drives away any desires remaining within him.” It is permissible to shout out in a musical gathering whenever one is inwardly overcome by ecstatic union, for one cannot help oneself in such a state. It is related that Moses was once saying something to the Israelites. Someone shouted out. Moses scolded him. When he was next in prayer, God said to him: “He was shouting out on account of his love for Me. You should not try to stop him or anybody else who weeps, cries out, or is comforted by being close to Me!”

Further, Sharafuddin quotes Ghazzali who cited three reasons for dancing:

“The command about dancing refers to what moves a person to dance. If something praiseworthy stimulates a person to dance, and the dancing helps him grow, and strengthens him, then the dancing is also praiseworthy. If something despicable stimulates him to dance, then the dance also is despicable. But if it is something permissible that inspires him, then the dance also is permissible.” He also declared: “It became customary for a group of the companions to dance for joy when anything wonderful happened.” There are, moreover, some good people who dance with a swaying motion even though they have not been overcome by the ecstasy of union; they simply move around in imitation of the dervishes.

After quoting Prophet Mohammed and Ghazzali, Sharafuddin expresses his mind:

286 Ibid., p. 388.
It is said that listening can be likened to the sun, which shines on all things, but the measure of its effect on each creature depends on its quality and what is imbibed. One is burnt up, another is made to shine. One is helped to flourish, while another melts away. If anyone were to ask how it could happen that someone who has no knowledge or awareness of himself nevertheless manages to dance according to the beat of the singer and recognizes the voice and melody of the singer, the answer would be that when a man is no longer shackled by the strength of his animal soul and has no attachment to his own opinions and ideas, his heart becomes both more illuminated and strengthened. And when this weakening of the animal soul takes place, and the heart is illuminated, inevitably he will understand the beat of the music and the meaning of the singers.  

Yet, Sharafuddin wasn’t in favour of dance. For he said: ‘What is all this wild activity and throwing of clothes in a bundle? What are you doing, stamping your feet?’ 

...The Venerable Sheik was not pleased with their behaviour during the musical session (Yakhfa 40, fols 61 a.b). Once in Sonargaon, when Maulana Zainuddin rendered a recital upon Maulana Taqiuddin Mahsavi, he became transported and flung off his outer garment, turban and shoes. The verses chosen were sung in a simple tune, but when the Master fell into an ecstasy, the singer would take up the particular couplet that had affected him and display his musical virtuosity by singing it to some novel tune - may be in the Persian. Sharafuddin said: ‘You know, of course, that some of the companions were unhappy to see the Apostle dancing. The reason is that they detested such behavior.

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287 Ibid., p. 391.
The culture of the Arabs is one thing, but that of the Persians is quite another! Sharafuddin was rather strict in what he permitted during his musical sessions. He allowed the clapping of hands in order to keep in time, but there is no evidence which would indicate that he allowed any musical instruments to be played. He disapproved of dancing and the flinging off of one’s turban and so on. Here, apparently the reproach was that the dancing was not really inspired, for, it did not result from a genuine and uncontrollable divine seizure, and so he says: “Some good people, who dance with a swaying motion, do so without having been overcome by the ecstasy of union, they simply move around in imitation of the dervishes.”

Sharafuddin’s personal opinion was that it is not good to make a habit of dancing. On the other hand, whoever yearns to see the Lord, finds that listening to songs is a stimulant which excited one’s holy desire, and serves to further strengthen one’s love and ardent yearning, by bringing it out into the open, he may do so. Moreover, it was Sharafuddin’s desire to present Islam as attractively as possible to the people of Bihar. At the popular level, singing formed the very core and marrow of their gathering together to sing the praises of their particular deity. To attempt to impose a blanket ban on such a form of communal worship would be very foolish in Sharafuddin’s eyes. And so he said:

It would be an ill-conceived move to interfere in the traditional ways in which a people are accustomed to doing things. The injunction of the law is, “Deal with the people according to their particular behaviour and disposition,” for people will

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be happy with what agrees with their behaviour, but will be scared away by anything which goes against it.\textsuperscript{291}

Here we can decipher how Sharafuddin allows ‘singing’ - a local tradition - to continue, though against his traditional thinking. It is a religious-cum-cultural practice syncretically transported from one religious tradition into another. On the other hand, he is against ‘dancing’ - a Persian mystical tradition, not Indian.

10.7. Local Traditions in Sharafuddin

Tradition forms the habit, and the habit gets integrated into the system. We can witness this happening in Sharafuddin:

Previously I had shown my disapproval, asking what basis there was for the practice. Afterwards a tradition concerning it was found. For example, it is common for women not to burn garlic or onion peelings in the house. Previously this seemed strange to me. What was the reason for their not doing so? At last, among the things from which poverty arises, I noticed that burning garlic and onion peelings induces poverty. I also used to hear that one should not sit in the doorway. This too seemed strange to me. Where did it come from? Finally I noticed it too among the list of things that result in poverty. I also used to hear that people should not sweep their houses at night. This also cropped up in a list of things that result in poverty.\textsuperscript{292}

It is interesting to notice how Sharafuddin has been forced to adapt himself to the prevalence of practices he himself could not observe - ‘Previously I had shown disapproval’ - ending up by ‘noticing’ that these forbidden practices were supposed to

\textsuperscript{291}ibid., p. 132.
result in poverty. These very same practices are still observed in a number of Muslim households in Bihar. What about marriage in the next world? Sharafuddin says:

When Qazi Khan enquired what would happen in the next world to girls who died young (i.e. before marriage), Sharafuddin said, “The instruction concerning them is that, in the next world, God Almighty will give them to whosoever He wants. Some women have died without getting married, just as have some men. God Almighty will choose which of them will be for whom.” When asked about the mother of a man’s child, Sharafuddin replied, “In the next world, if the mother is a slave-girl, whatever command pertains to slave-girls will apply to her children.” When enquired if there was any difference between youths and sons, Sharafuddin replied, “Yes, there is. Sons are those whom God Almighty has created also in heaven for the sake of serving the believers; whereas youths are the sons of the infidels who have died before reaching adolescence. According to one saying, they will be bequeathed to the believers as their servants.”

Here the assumption is that the hierarchical structure of fourteenth-century Indian society would be mirrored by that in heaven indicates its taken-for-grantedness in medieval India. Thus, it is proven beyond doubt the innumerable trans-religious and trans-cultural elements, making inroads into Sharafuddin’s mystical literature, resulting into a literary mélange, an amalgam - a syncretic mystical characteristic trait.

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293 Ibid., p. 115.