Sufism and Shari'ah

A Study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi's Effort to Reform Sufism

Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari

The Islamic Foundation
A. S. NOORDEEN

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SUFISM AND SHARĪ'AH is a study of the religious thought of an outstanding Sufi and a great renovator of Islam, Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624). But more than that it is an investigation into the relation of Sufism with Prophetic Islam, not only in the light of the ideas of Shaykh Sirhindī, but also of many great leaders of Sufism and founders of Sufi orders. It distinguishes between the Sufism which has a place in Islam, and that which does not. The view of Sufism which has been elaborated in the book is sure to call for a revision of the image of Sufism which has emerged from the study of the subject over more than a century.

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Preface

This book is a study of the ideas of the great seventeenth-century Indian saint and religious reformer, Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī. The Shaykh ranks among the renovators (*mujaddidīn*) of Islam for the great service he has rendered. The Muslim community of the subcontinent in his time was passing through a very critical period of its history. Akbar, the Mughal ruler of Delhi, had initiated policies which were seriously affecting Islamic life. His belief was that the religion of the Prophet had run its course and should be replaced by a new religion; in fact, he launched an eclectic religion of his own making. The Sufis, on the other hand, were spreading under the cover of Sufism different beliefs and practices among the masses who had already contracted various forms of *shirk* under the influence of the polytheistic culture of India. The 'ulamā' (religious scholars) who were supposed to be the guardians of religion were instead using their expertise to justify un-Islamic practices. Shaykh Aḥmad made a Herculean effort to fight these evils. With the help of his disciples whom he posted at key places in India, he tried to spread the ideas of Islam and reform the lives of the people. He also tried to restore Islamic laws and institutions, and raise the status of Muslims in India.

A much more important service was that which Shaykh Aḥmad rendered at the level of ideas. A section of scholars at the royal court were challenging the fundamentals of Islam. They denied the necessity of prophecy, doubted the utility of the Sharī'ah, and advocated the self-sufficiency of reason. Shaykh Sirhindī preached and wrote against these ideas. In his letters, which he sent to many outstanding figures in different walks of life, he demonstrated the limitation of reason in matters of faith, defended the laws of the Sharī'ah, and established the necessity of prophecy.

The challenge which many preachers of Sufism posed to Islam was even more serious. They had developed a wrong view of Sufism, and of its relation with the Sharī'ah. They believed that the Sharī'ah was an empty form devoid of reality which they thought lay in their *ṭarīqah* (Sufi path). They did not shy away from exalting their *kashf* (intuition) over the *waḥy* (revelation) of the Prophet, nor did they recoil from saying that the real *tawḥīd* (doctrine of the unity of God) was in Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* (the Unity of Being). Influenced by that philosophy some even dismissed the distinction between Islam and *kufr* (infidelity) as of little significance. Shaykh Aḥmad subjected these views to searching criticism. He said that the Sharī'ah was not simply a system of exoteric rules; it also stated the ultimate truth and defined the reality of religious life. He declared that those Sufis who seek reality outside the Sharī'ah run after a mirage. He criticised the doctrine of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* and showed that it was incompatible both with the Sharī'ah and the experience of difference which the Sufi ultimately realises. He also expounded a philosophy which corresponded to that experience.

This led Shaykh Aḥmad to discuss the nature of Sufism, the different levels of mystical experience, the status and characteristics of the unitive experience, the value of mystic revelations and illuminations, the end of the Sufi *ṭarīqah*, and the efficacy of *kashf* as a means of knowledge. He discussed these issues with an openness unprecedented in the history of Sufism, and did not shy away from censuring the ideas of outstanding masters of Sufism if he found them objectionable.

These works are the most solid contribution of Shaykh Aḥmad to Islamic thought. They must be treated as the best part of his efforts to renovate Islam. For various reasons, unfortunately, this work has not received the attention which it deserves. We have tried in this book to focus on it, and highlight its importance.

The image of Sufism which Shaykh Sirhindī presents is significantly different in many respects from the image which scholars of Sufism during the last one hundred and fifty years have put forward. If what Sirhindī says is true, and I have

tried to show that it is true in the light of the best tradition of Sufism, the prevalent image has to be seriously modified, and at places drastically revised.

Apart from this serious academic interest, the book has a great practical relevance. During the last fifty years the Muslim world has witnessed great efforts to revive Islam. In general the workers of revivalism are divided into two camps: One puts Sufism at the heart of Islam and bothers little about the question as to what Sufism is consistent with Islam and what is not. The other opposes Sufism and considers it as anti-Islam or, at least, un-Islamic. They do not want to discuss whether Sufism can have a place in Islam. Refusal to discuss such questions by the protagonists of both the views of Islamic revival, has kept them apart from each other, created a lot of misgivings between them, and has hampered the cause which both hold so dear. This book which discusses the ideas of a most outstanding Sufi and an equally great *mujaddid* of Islam will, I hope, throw light on many issues which have divided the servants of Islam, and remove the barriers that have kept them from coming closer to each other.

Discussion of these questions forms one part of the book; the other part contains the translation of some selected letters of Shaykh Aḥmad. I hope that the translation will bring the reader directly in contact with the Shaykh, and give him an opportunity to judge the issues for himself.

Part of this work was done in India at the University of Visva-Bharati, part in Sudan at the Omdurman Islamic University, and part in Saudi Arabia at the University of Petroleum and Minerals. I am thankful for all the assistance which I have received from these universities and their libraries without which it would not have been possible to complete this work.

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M. Abdul Haq Ansari

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

The Life and Mission of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī

Shaykh Aḥmad was born at Sirhind, now in the state of Punjab north-west of Delhi, on Friday the 4th Shawwāl 971 A.H./26th May 1564 A.D., in a family with a long scholarly tradition which traced its descent from the Caliph 'Umar Farūq. He received his early education from his father, Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Aḥad (927/1521–1007/1598) and memorised the Qur'ān. He was then sent to Sialkot, at present in Pakistan. Here he learned logic, philosophy and theology from Mullā Kamāl Kāshmīrī[1] (d. 1017/1608–9), a renowned scholar of rational disciplines; studied ḥadīth with Shaykh Ya'qūb Ṣarfī (d. 1003/1594), the author of a commentary on the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī and a Sufi of the Kubrawīyah order; and read some advanced texts of *tafsīr* and ḥadīth with Qāḍī Bahlūl Badakhshānī. Sirhindī completed this education at the age of seventeen and returned home.

Three years later he left for Agra, the capital of the great Mughal Emperor, Akbar (963/1556–1014/1605), and established contacts with the scholars of the court, such as the poet laureate, Faydī (954/1547–1004/1595), and his younger brother, Abū 'l-Faḍl (958/1551–1011/1602), a distinguished writer and an informal secretary of the Emperor. It is said that he helped the former at times in writing his commentary on the Qur'ān, *Sawāṭi' 'l-Ilhām*, which has the unique distinction of being free from letters containing diacritics. With the latter, however, he found it difficult to carry on. For though Abū 'l-Faḍl believed in God, he denied the necessity of prophecy, repudiated the Sharī'ah, condemned worship as hypocrisy, regarded every religion as equally bad,

and pinned faith in reason.[2] Abū 'l-Faḍl was not the only one to have these ideas; the royal court had many others[3] like him. Sirhindī referred to this situation when he wrote: 'The people of our times question the very idea of prophecy, deny the possibility of establishing the claim of a particular prophet, and refuse to follow the prophetic Sharī'ah. This trend is spreading in the people, and some who have established themselves in power are persecuting the 'ulamā' and torturing them in various ways which I would not like to mention, simply because they follow the laws of the prophets and believe in them.'[4]

In a discussion with Abū 'l-Faḍl, Sirhindī contested his ideas and argued the case for prophecy; the former lost his temper and abused the great scholars of Islam. Sirhindī was very shocked and broke with him.[5] When his father was informed of Sirhindī's disillusionment he came to Agra and took him home. On the way he married him to the daughter of Shaykh Sultan, a member of the nobility at Thaneshwar, at the latter's request.[6] Back home Sirhindī took up the study of Sufi texts like the *Ta'arruf* of al-Kalābādhī (d. 390/1000), the *'Awārif* of al-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), and the *Fuṣūṣ* of Ibn 'l-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) under the guidance of his father.[7]

At an early age Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Aḥad had sought to be initiated into Sufism by the great Chishtī saint, Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Quddūs of Gangoh (d. 991/1583), famous for his ecstasies and his faith in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*. But the Shaykh advised him first to study the Sharī'ah and the ḥadīth. Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Aḥad returned, took up study, visited various scholars and travelled to a number of places. When he came back, the master had died, and his son Shaykh Rukn 'l-Dīn who was also highly ecstatic and a firm believer in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, guided him in Qādirī and Chishtī *ṭarīqahs* and awarded him *khirqah*.[8] Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Aḥad, too, believed in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, but, as Sirhindī says, was not a blind follower of the doctrine. Some of its concepts, he interpreted in his own way.[9] Sirhindī refers in one of his tracts to a book of his father: *Kanz 'l-Ḥaqā'iq*,[10] and his biographer, Muḥammad Hāshim Kishamī, mentions another work, *Asrār 'l-Tashahhud*.[11]

Sirhindī studied Sufi texts with his father and practised *sulūk* (traversing the Sufi way) under his direction. In his *Mabda' wa Ma'ād* he speaks of his debt to his father: 'I acquired the *nisbat fardīyah*[12] from my father who had acquired it from a revered Sufi, intensely ecstatic and famous for his miracles . . . I also developed a taste for supererogatory works (*nawāfil*) particularly *nafl* prayers from my father who got it from his teacher, a Chishtī saint.'[13]

After the death of Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Aḥad in 1007/1597–8 Sirhindī started for Ḥajj. On the way, at Delhi, he was introduced to Khwājah 'Abd 'l-Bāqī (971/1563–1012/1603), the first Naqshbandī saint to come to India. Naqshbandīs were noted for comparatively stricter adherence to the Sharī'ah in their *sulūk* and were popular in the lands from where the Mughal rulers had come. Khwājah 'Abd 'l-Bāqī, commonly known as Bāqī Billāh, had come to Delhi only a few months previously, but even in this short period he had become very popular. He persuaded Sirhindī to spend some time with him. Within a few days Sirhindī was so impressed that he offered himself for *bay'at*, and in the short period of two and a half months attained the Naqshbandī *nisbat*, and then the real self-annihilation (*fanā'-i-ḥaqīqī*) or absolute union (*jam' 'l-jam'*).[14] He continued his *sulūk* till he reached the stage of post-union separation (*farq ba'd 'l-jam'*), which the Khwājah called 'the end of human endeavour' and 'the stage of perfection (*maqām-i-takmīl*)'.[15] The Khwājah was very impressed by the wonderful progress of his disciple; in a letter to a friend he wrote:

> A man from Sirhind named Shaykh Aḥmad has recently come. He is very learned and has great spiritual powers. He has lived with me for some days; on the basis of what I have seen of him in this period, I hope that he will be in future a lamp which will illuminate the world.[16]

After the first meeting Sirhindī returned home, pursued his *sayr* and *sulūk* as the Khwājah had suggested, and kept him informed of the visions and experiences he had. He visited the Khwājah again and spent some time with him. When he intended to return, the Khwājah asked him to teach the *ṭarīqah*, and placed some disciples in his charge. Sirhindī

was hesitant to take up the responsibility, but the Khwājah testified to his suitability for the task.[17] Sirhindī bowed to his judgement and started the work. A little before the death of the master in 1012/1603 he visited him again. On this occasion the Khwājah honoured his disciple by walking some distance to welcome him, and when Sirhindī left he entrusted his sons to him for spiritual guidance.[18]

Sirhindī has described his mystical development at times briefly and at times in detail. The following is a short account of his first experience:

> I believed in the *tawḥīd wujūdī* (i.e. *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*) from the time I was a boy. My father apparently believed in the doctrine, and used to carry on spiritual exercises on *wujūdī* lines. But in spite of that he was able to maintain in his innermost self (*al-akhfā*) the state of indeterminateness (*martabah bi kayf*). As the saying goes, the son of a jurist is half jurist. I knew the doctrine very well, appreciated and enjoyed it. Later on, when God brought me to Shaykh Bāqī Billāh, and he taught me the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* and attended closely to my development, the Unity of Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) was revealed to me in a short period in virtue of following the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*. I was completely absorbed in that experience, and the ideas associated with it began to pour in on me. There was hardly a truth that was not revealed to me. I was informed of the profoundest ideas of Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy and was blessed with the experience of Divine self-illumination (*tajallī dhātī*) which the author of the *Fuṣūṣ* had said to be the culmination of spiritual ascent, and beyond which there was nothing, according to him, except pure non-being. I also came to know in detail the truths of that *tajallī* which the Shaykh had claimed to be a privilege of the 'Seal of Saints'. I was so much engrossed in that *tawḥīd* and intoxicated with it that in one of my letters to the Khwājah I wrote the following two couplets which were the product of sheer intoxication (*sukr*).
>
> This Sharī'ah is, alas, the way of the blind.
> Our way is the way of infidels and fire-worshippers.
> Infidelity and faith are the lock and the face of that beauty.
>
> In our way infidelity and faith are one.

This condition extended to months and years.[19]

Sirhindī describes the next stages of his mystical development as follows:

> After a period I had a new vision of things which dominated my consciousness. But I hesitated at first to revise my attitude towards *tawḥīd* (*wujūdī*) in deference to, rather than in disregard for that doctrine. I remained in a state of indecision for a long time. At last, I was induced to renounce that doctrine. I was shown that *tawḥīd* (*wujūdī*) was a lower stage, and was asked to move to the stage of *ẓillīyat* (i.e. the vision that things are the shadows of God and different from Him). But I did not like to move from that stage since many Sufis were stationed there. But I had no choice. I was brought to the stage of *ẓillīyat*, where I realised that I and the world were shadows.
>
> I wished I had not moved again from that stage of *ẓillīyat* because it had an affinity with *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* which was still a symbol of perfection for me. But it happened that God by a pure act of grace and love carried me beyond that stage and brought me to the stage of *'abdīyat* (i.e. the vision that man is nothing more than a servant of God, that things are merely His creation and that He is absolutely other and different from the world). At that time I realised the greatness of that stage and scanned its lofty heights. I regretted my earlier experiences, turned to God and begged for His mercy. Had I not been guided in this manner and shown the greatness of one stage after the other, I would have remained at the stage of *tawḥīd* (*wujūdī*) because in my view there was no stage higher than that. God alone establishes the truth and shows the way.[20]

I have quoted these rather long passages in order to introduce the reader to Sirhindī's own account of his mystical development. This will remove, I hope, the doubts which some writers[21] of our times have raised about his experiences since he does not fit their view of Sufism.

Sirhindī has characterised the three stages of his experience in metaphysical terms: the Unity of Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī/ waḥdat 'l-wujūd*); shadowism (*ẓillīyat*) and creaturehood or servanthood (*'abdīyat*). Put in purely mystical language they represent the stage of union (*jam'*) or rather non-difference

(*jam' 'l-jam'*), separation after union (*farq ba'd 'l-jam'*), and absolute difference. The first two stages are common and widely attested by Sufis, but the last is somewhat uncommon, though by no means rare.

Sirhindī mentions these stages time and again[22] for two reasons: He wants first to bring home to the mystics of his day, most of whom were moving at the first stage or stationed at the second, that there is a higher stage of mystic experience at which one stops seeing that man is one with God or that the world and God are One Being, and realises instead that God is completely different and absolutely other, that the world has nothing in common with God, and that man is simply a creature and a servant. Secondly, he wants to underline that the truth of God's absolute transcendence is not for him a matter of faith which a common believer has, nor an intellectual conclusion at which a theologian arrives, but a fact of his own experience to which he was brought against his wish and expectation.

After the death of Khwājah 'Abd 'l-Bāqī, Sirhindī settled down at Sirhind, and devoted himself for the rest of his life single-mindedly to some great works. He seldom left Sirhind, except a few times for Delhi and Agra, and then, too, for the cause he struggled for.

The first task to which Sirhindī addressed himself was to preach and popularise the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*. People came to him from different parts of India, north and south, east and west, seeking spiritual guidance. He instructed them and supervised their progress, and when they had attained a level of perfection, sent them back to their native places to preach the *ṭarīqah* there. Those who were more gifted he sent to important cities of India such as Lahore, Delhi, Agra, Saharanpur, Badayun, Jawnpur, Allahabad, Mankapur, Patna, Mangalkot (Bengal), Burhanpur (Deccan)[23] etc, and asked them to spread the views and the practices of the order (*silsilah*). How popular the *silsilah* became can be ascertained by a remark of Jahāngīr, (1014/1606–1037/1627), son and successor of Akbar which he wrote sixteen years after Sirhindī had started his work: 'The disciples of the Shaykh have spread all over the cities and the towns of India.'[24]

The *silsilah* was not confined to India. It spread to

Afghanistan and Turkistan, the lands of the first Naqshbandī saints, and to Tabristan and Iran. Sirhindī sent his deputies (*khulafā'*) to Shadman (Isphahan), Husayn Abdal (Kabul), Kisham (Badakhshan), Berk (near Qandahar) and Taliqan. He kept himself constantly in touch with his deputies from whom he heard about the problems they faced and the questions which people asked them about the *ṭarīqah*, to which he replied with advice and instructions. In these letters[25] Sirhindī mentions the distinctive features of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*, in particular its strict adherence to the Sunnah. It avoids, he says, musical sessions (*samā'*), dervish dances (*raqṣ*) and *dhikr* with loud voice; it eschews austere practices and severe exercises, and observes moderation in food, drink, sleep and dress. It disparages ecstasy (*wajd*), visions (*mushāhadāt*) and illuminations (*tajallīyāt*)' censures boastful claims and ecstatic statements (*shaṭḥāt*); and subjects mystical revelations (*makshūfāt*) to the doctrines of the *Shar'*. It holds that the goal of *taṣawwuf* is neither union with God, nor participation in His attributes, but simply to obey the Sharī'ah and to be a faithful servant of God. There is no stage higher than the stage of servanthood (*'abdīyat*).

The propagation of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* and the purification of souls, however important that may be, was only a part of the task which Sirhindī had set himself. 'I have not been created', he said, 'for the spiritual direction of the people and their self-perfection. The purpose of my creation is different, and I have a different mission.'[26] He considered himself to be more than a walī, a renovator (*mujaddid*) of religion, who had been commissioned to revive Islam at the turn of its second millennium.[27] Although he did not elaborate, there is no doubt that he had a very clear conception of his mission and what it required in his day. Judging from the work he did, we can safely say that his mission was to criticise unbelief, heresy and false doctrines, and reaffirm faith in prophecy, revelation and the religion of the Prophet; to condemn evil, disobedience and innovation, and revive virtue, piety and adherence to the Sunnah; to oppose anti-Islamic forces and powers and restore Islamic institutions and laws. Sirhindī used all his powers of mind and heart to achieve these ends. He wrote books and tracts[28] wherein

he attacked the erroneous ideas and practices of every section of society – masses, scholars, Sufis and statesmen – explained what is true faith and right piety and defended them on the grounds of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, reason and sane Sufi practices. He wrote letters to important personalities in every walk of life, in colleges (*madrasahs*), cloisters (*khānqāhs*), army and government, urging them to reform the views and practices of the people under their influence and to realise the great responsibility which God has placed on their shoulders in this regard. He sent to them his emissaries, and travelled to see them personally when he considered it helpful. He used the network of his disciples, spread throughout the whole of India and outside India, to urge people to give up false beliefs and evil innovations, to follow the Sharī'ah and adhere to the Sunnah of the Prophet. He had several copies of his letters (the medium for the propagation of his ideas) made and distributed among the people. In the following pages I will review briefly the work that Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī did.

A section of the society, small in number yet quite influential, was that of the scholars at the royal court. I have already mentioned Abū 'l-Faḍl; besides him there was his father, Mullā Mubārak Nāgawrī (d. 1001/1593) who initiated Akbar into heterodoxy,[29] Fatḥ Allāh Shīrāzī (d. 997/1588) who headed a committee to examine the rationality of the Sharī'ah,[30] Sharīf Āmulī whom Akbar deputed later in Bengal to preach his new religion,[31] just to mention a few. These people had learned Greek philosophy and acquainted themselves to some extent with Indian thought mostly by their contact with Hindu pundits at the court. They objected to the belief in prophecy and revelation, and denied the need for a Divine Sharī'ah. To counteract this trend Sirhindī wrote his first book, *Defence of Prophecy* (*Ithbāt 'l-Nubūwah*), when he was at Agra. After a brief mention of the situation at the court, from which I have already quoted, Sirhindī enters into a detailed discussion of the nature, function and necessity of prophecy, and the method to establish the claim of a particular prophet. He upholds the possibility of a super-rational way to knowledge by referring to the phenomena of dream and mystic *kashf*,[32] and underlines the

need for prophetic revelation by showing that human reason is incapable of establishing truths beyond the world of perception, and that mystic *kashf*, which is another alternative, is not infallible, especially in view of the fact that such revelations vary from one mystic to another.[33] The only reliable source is the prophetic *waḥy*. So far as the establishment of a particular claim to prophecy is concerned, Sirhindī bases his argument on the life, message and work of the prophet in addition to the miracles that he performs. In the case of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, his argument centres on the Qur'ān, his exemplary life, the perfection of his Sharī'ah and its impact on society. The *Defence of Prophecy* is a concise, cogent and forceful work on the subject. In this and other theological discussions scattered over many of his letters Sirhindī draws upon the whole theological tradition of Islam, above all the Māturidī theology (*kalām*) prevailing in Central Asia. But one also comes across many fresh insights and new arguments particularly in discussions on the essence and attributes of God, freedom of will, and responsibility for belief in God before revelation, not to mention his theosophical doctrine of *waḥdat 'l-shuhūd*, to which I have devoted a separate section.

Along with prophecy the honour of the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) of the Prophet was also under attack. A campaign of vilification was launched by Shī'ahs throughout the country with renewed vigour, following the revival of similar activity in Iran, against the first three caliphs for depriving 'Alī, as they said, of the right to succeed the Prophet, and against 'Ā'ishah, Ṭalḥah, Zubayr and Mu'āwiyah who opposed and fought 'Alī afterwards. Those who supported these Companions were also cursed; this amounted to the condemnation of the entire community of Companions except a few members of 'Alī's house and his supporters. The campaign at the Agra court was carried out by Shī'ah scholars headed by Qāḍī Nūrullāh Shūshtarī;[34] in the south it was led by the successors of Burhān Niẓām Shāh (1508–53) who had recently employed hundreds of people in order to abuse the Companions and kill those who resisted them;[35] in the north Kashmir was another centre for this campaign. The scholars at Agra published a book refuting the criticism

levelled against them by the Sunnī scholars of Central Asia (*Māwarā 'l-Nahr*), and vindicating their own position. This book was projected as a great achievement and was used to strengthen the campaign.

Sirhindī reviewed this work in his book, *Radd-i-Rawāfiḍ* and substantiated the Sunnī position. In it and other letters[36] dealing with the subject Sirhindī tries to show that the Shī'ah practice of condemning and vilifying the Companions of the Prophet is mistaken, degrading and disastrous. First, it is not true that the Prophet nominated 'Alī to succeed him, and the so-called aḥādīth telling of his nomination are forged. Second, it is against the known practice of the first three caliphs to violate the Prophet's decree, as it is against the dignity of 'Alī to subject himself to their authority and falsify thereby his claim, if the Prophet had nominated him. Third, if the Shī'ah position is accepted and the Companions are condemned, it would seriously affect the credibility of the Qur'ān which they had collected, and undermine the authenticity of the whole corpus of ḥadīth which they had transmitted; it would further discredit the work of the Prophet if he had spent his whole life instructing men who *en masse* violated the will of their leader when he closed his eyes. In the case of the Companions who opposed 'Alī later on, Sirhindī states clearly that in their feuds the truth was with 'Alī, and his opponents were in the wrong, but their opposition was due to an error in judgement, as many scholars have pointed out, regarding the right course of action, rather than caused by personal motives.[37] Hence they deserve not to be condemned, but to be excused. If anybody thinks that this explanation clears Ṭalḥah, Zubayr and 'Ā'ishah, but not Mu'āwiyah[38] whom Sirhindī would not except, even then the practice of vilification against him after his death is degrading,[39] particularly when he had rendered a number of valuable services to Islam.

Sirhindī's *Radd-i-Rawāfiḍ* was well received; an indication of its popularity is that almost a century later, a scholar of Walī Allāh's calibre chose to write a commentary[40] on it and popularise its ideas.

The life of the Muslim masses was ridden with *shirk* and *bid'at* (unauthorised innovation), due, first, to their contact

with the polytheistic religions and cultures of India. Ignorant of their faith, Muslims participated in the religious rites of the non-Muslims;[41] and prayed to their idols and gods for various purposes; women, in particular, sought their protection against diseases such as smallpox.[42] They joined Hindu festivals such as *rākhī* and *dipāvalī*; and celebrated the latter by lighting lamps, cooking rice and sending it as a present in coloured pots to relatives and friends as the Hindus used to do on that occasion.[43] The influence of Indian culture had spread to other classes too; a poet of great talents at the court of Khān-i-Khānān in Deccan, for instance, had adopted *kufrī*[44] (the lover of *kufr*) as his poetic name (*takhalluṣ*).

The other cause of the religious degeneration of the Muslim masses was the influence of ignorant and misguided Sufis. At their bidding they made votive offerings (*nadhr*) to saints (*mashā'ikh*) and offered sacrifices on their graves. Women usually fasted in the name of Sufi teachers, even their wives, and observed various rituals in this connection. For instance, they would not break their fast except with the food they collected by begging, even though they did not need it.[45] Both men and women made special efforts to celebrate the tenth day of Muharram, the fifteenth night of Sha'bān, the twenty-seventh day of Rajab, and the first Friday night of the same month, which they called *Laylat 'l-Raghā'ib,* and offered prayer (*ṣalāt*) in assembly, considering it to be a highly meritorious act.[46]

Most Sufis held musical sessions (*samā'*), indulged in spiritual dances (*raqṣ*) and celebrated the birth of the Prophet;[47] even the sons of Sirhindī's preceptor did not mind attending the music and songs on Thursday nights.[48] They cared more for *dhikr* and contemplation (*fikr*) than *farḍ* and *sunnah*, indulged in spiritual exercises such as *arba'īnat* (a special course of forty days of supererogatory acts), and neglected prayers in assembly (*ba jamā'at*) even the weekly prayers on Fridays.[49] The novices had developed strange ideas about their masters: they believed that they had power to deprive them of their spiritual attainments[50] if they became angry, and to secure God's pardon for their misdeeds if they were pleased.[51]

Those who subscribed to *wahdat 'l-wujūd* cared little for

the Sharī'ah. They believed that the goal of the Sharī'ah was to attain knowledge; hence if anyone realised the truth of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, he did not have to perform the duties of the *Shar'*.[52] Some of them disparaged *ṣalāt* because it differentiated between God and the servant;[53] others equated resurrection with the Sufi experience of *fanā'*, and denied judgement and punishment.[54] Some even loved to gaze at beautiful faces and hear sweet voices, because they were the manifestation of the Eternal Beauty.[55]

Sirhindī referred to these ideas and practices in his letters and denounced them as *shirk*, *kufr* and *bid'at*. He urged Sufi teachers and *mashā'ikh* to discard these evil practices and reform their lives. To a Sufi teacher at Thaneshwar, for instance, he wrote:

> To delay the *'ishā'* prayer till the second half of the night in order to make the *ṣalāt-i-tahajjud* easy is highly objectionable; it has been condemned as *makrūh taḥrīmī* by the Ḥanafī *fuqahā'* . . . This practice must be stopped and the earlier prayers must be repeated . . . You should never recommend the water that you have used in ablution (*wuḍū'*) to the people for drinking; because the water spilt in ablution is dirty according to Abū Ḥanīfah. The *fuqahā'* have forbidden its use . . . I have come to know from a reliable source that the disciples of your deputies (*khulafā'*) prostrate before them, and are not satisfied with simply bowing their heads. This is reprehensible, and should be strongly condemned and forbidden.[56]

Sirhindī did not distinguish between good and bad innovation: he denounced every innovation (*bid'at*), provided it belonged to the field of religion. In a letter to a disciple he explained his views as follows:

> You have asked how it is that I forbid *dhikr* with loud voice and condemn it as *bid'at*, but do not condemn many other things which had not existed at the time of the Prophet such as the shirt open in front (*libās farjī*) and pyjamas. Please note that the acts of the Prophet were of two kinds: those that were performed as *'ibādah*, an act of worship, and those that were done as *'urf* and *'ādah*, habits and customs. The acts which were done as *'ibādah*, we consider deviations from them to be evil innovations, and condemn them strongly, for

> they are innovations in religion (*dīn*) and must be rejected. But the acts which were done as part of habit and custom, we do not regard deviations from them as innovation, and do not proscribe them. For they do not belong to religion (*dīn*); their existence or disappearance depends upon the custom of society rather than religion.[57]

If we review the practices which Sirhindī has condemned as *bid'ah* we find that they introduce things into religion (*dīn*) which have no textual support, which change the relative priorities among the rules of the Sharī'ah, which increase the importance of a thing beyond what the *Shar'* has itself provided, and which specify time, place and ways for doing things which have been commended by the *Shar'* but without those specifications. Every *bid'at*, Sirhindī says, changes the recommended course of doing things, and replaces the Sunnah.[58]

Sirhindī laments that the 'ulamā' of the time who are the guardians of religion and whose duty is to save the masses from *shirk* and *bid'at* are themselves involved in those practices. 'The world is drowned', he says, 'in the sea of *bid'at* and delights in its black acts; the 'ulamā' of our time have become the preachers of *bid'at* and destroyers of the Sunnah. No one has the courage to speak against *bid'at* and revive the Sunnah. Most of the 'ulamā' lead people to *bid'at*, and prove that they are commended and desirable'.[59]

The 'ulamā' did not stop at *bid'at*, they moved to change the very face of religion. One 'ālim, for instance, who was the highest authority on religion in the country issued a *fatwā* saying that the Ḥajj was no longer incumbent[60] as the journey to Makkah was unsafe. Other 'ulamā' at Lahore ruled that charging interest[61] was legal; still others came out with the verdict that prostration before the king for honour was quite proper.[62] One crown of the gnostics' (*tāj 'l-'ārifīn*), using his insight into *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, supported this verdict on the ground that 'the king was one with God, nothing less'.[63] The cousin of another gnostic ruled that shaving one's beard was perfectly in order because the inhabitants of Paradise were said to be beardless youths.[64]

Sirhindī deplores these acts as sheer distortion of religion and condemns their perpetrators. He calls them the robbers

of religion (*luṣūṣ-i-dīn*).[65] His wrath is particularly directed against the 'ulamā' of the court who shared the responsibility[66] with heretics like Mullā Mubārak and Abū 'l-Faḍl for leading Akbar away. Superficial and incompetent, they could not defend Islam against the free-thinkers; self-seeking and narrow minded, they discredited religion by fighting between themselves and condemning each other as *fāsiq* and *kāfir*; and corrupt and mean, they degraded themselves by using their authority to amass wealth.[67]

Sirhindī appealed to the God-fearing 'ulamā' of the country to realise their responsibility in the situation, and to condemn the evils which had infected the life of the masses and damaged the image of Islam. He warned that any complacency in the matter would be disastrous. To an 'ālim at Lahore, for instance, where some scholars had legalised interest on the plea of need (*iḥtiyāj*), he wrote a long letter wherein he refuted their arguments at length, and urged him to realise his duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil (*amr bi 'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'ani'l-munkar*).[68] In another letter which he wrote to Mullā Aḥmad Barkī (d. 1026/1617), his deputy at Berk, he urged: 'Try to spread the knowledge of the Sharī'ah and the rules of *fiqh* at places where ignorance prevails and *bid'at* rules, and do it with the same concern and love which, by the grace of God, you have for your friends . . . Prepare yourself for the task and discharge the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil which you have towards the people there, and do it only for the pleasure of God.'[69]

In 987/1579 some scholars of the royal court prepared a testimony[70] (*maḥḍar*), got it signed by others and presented it to Akbar. They testified that Akbar was 'the most just, most knowledgeable and most God-fearing', that as such he ranked above the *mujtahids*, and that he had the authority to rule in matters in which they differed. Armed with this testimony, Akbar within the next two decades did three things which had far-reaching consequences for Islam and Muslims in the subcontinent. He launched a new Divine Religion (*Dīn-i-Ilāhī*), drafted by Mullā Mubārak[71] and his son Abū 'l-Faḍl. He and his loyal scholars entertained the idea that since Islam had completed a thousand years of its life (the natural life-span of a religion) it ought to be replaced

by a new religion. This Divine Religion was so formulated that it incorporated creeds, rites and practices from every religion – Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Christianity – except Islam. Its details[72] are very interesting, but I shall not discuss them here. For except its original authors and a few more disciples, in all eighteen, no one took the religion seriously, and there are indications[73] that the head-priest, the Emperor himself, ceased to be serious about it afterwards. It is also worth noting that Sirhindī who counteracted Akbar's other measures, took no notice of his new religion. As a religion it proved a total failure; however, it succeeded in highlighting the religious degeneration and scepticism of the age.

Second, and more important, Akbar gathered at his court men who criticised, flouted and ridiculed Islamic beliefs, practices and personalities. Originally, he started seeking for truth in different religions, but the ambitions of some self-seeking scholars and the rivalries of narrow-minded 'ulamā' turned the quest into a campaign against Islam. Faith in God was retained, but everything else was rejected: creation of the world, existence of the angels, resurrection of the body, revelation and prophecy. Eternity of the world and transmigration of the soul were instead affirmed. The life of the Prophet was criticised; his name was expunged from individual names; *ṣalāt* and other rites were flayed, and injunctions concerning lawful (*ḥalāl*) and unlawful (*ḥarām*) were ridiculed.[74] Things did not end here: those who refused to comply and dared to object were humiliated, imprisoned and sometimes exterminated.[75]

Third, and most important, Akbar acted to change the laws and institutions of the country based on the Sharī'ah. He abolished *zakāt* and *jizyah*; withdrew the prohibition of drinking and gambling; forbade marriages between cousins allowed in the Sharī'ah; proscribed more than one marriage, but, ironically enough, removed censure on prostitution; banned slaughter of the cow; prohibited killing of animals on many days of the year; dropped the name of the Prophet and his Companions from Friday sermons; discontinued the Hijrī calendar; introduced new coins marking the new millennium; discouraged the study of Arabic and Islamic

disciplines; stopped or reduced government aid to Arabic schools; and did not seek to fill the Islamic posts which fell vacant.[76]

The effect of these measures was that Islam ceased even to be a religion among other religions: it was constricted and castigated. The revival of Hinduism in northern India by the followers of Chaytanya made the condition worse. At several places the lives of Muslims were threatened, mosques were demolished, and the observance of Islamic rites obstructed. Sirhindī laments the situation in several letters: 'In the earlier generation non-Muslims freely performed their religious rites in Muslim towns, but Muslims could not practise Islam; if they dared, they were put to death.'[77] 'The non-Muslims of India are not afraid to demolish mosques and erect temples in their place. For instance, in Kurukshetra there was a mosque and the tomb of a saint. They have been demolished and in these places a very big temple has been erected. Moreover, non-Muslims openly carry out their rituals, but Muslims are powerless to fulfil the Islamic injunctions. During Ekadashi, Hindus fast and strive hard to see that in Muslim quarters no Muslim cooks or sells food on these days. On the other hand, during Ramaḍān they openly prepare and sell food, but owing to the weakness of Islam, nobody can interfere. Alas the ruler of the country is one of us, but we are in such a miserable state.'[78]

Towards the end of Akbar's reign a struggle for succession between his sons ensued. Salīm secured the support of some influential officials of the court who resented Akbar's religious policies. He promised[79] to defend the Sharī'ah, and ascended the throne under the name of Jahāngīr when his father died in 1014/1605.

Sirhindī was delighted to hear about Jahāngīr's accession. But he was not sure if Jahāngīr had the will to carry out the promise, or knew how to do so. He therefore made it a point that Jahāngīr's commitment to the Sharī'ah was strengthened and that he received proper advice on the matter. He was also apprehensive of opposing elements that had by no means disappeared. With this reading of the situation he wrote to officials close to Jahāngīr to tell them of the plight of Islam and Muslims in the country and impress upon them the need

to act promptly. To the Ṣadr-i-Jahān (d. 1027/1618) who had tutored Jahāngīr before and enjoyed his confidence as the highest religious authority, he wrote: 'Now that things have changed and the hostility of the people has subsided, it is the duty of the leaders of Islam, the Ṣadr-i-Islām and the 'ulamā' of Islam that they work for the implementation of the Sharī'ah. The institutions of Islam which have been demolished must be quickly restored; delay is not at all good, it makes us very uneasy . . . If the king is not enthusiastic to implement the rules of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and if his confidants also excuse themselves, and like to pass their days in peace, life will become difficult and miserable for Muslims who have no means.'[80] To Khān-i-Jahān (d. 1040/1630) another official of the court, he wrote: 'Since the king listens to your words and gives them weight, it would be really great if you could explain to him briefly or in detail, as you like, the beliefs of the *Ahl-i-Sunnat wa Jamā'at*. Please inform him of the doctrines of the People of Truth (*Ahl 'l-Ḥaqq*) and look for every opportunity to talk about Islam and the Muslims, defend the tenets of Islam and condemn infidelity and heresy.'[81] When Jahāngīr desired to have four 'ulamā' to advise him, he wrote to Shaykh Farīd, who played a leading role in securing the throne for Jahāngīr, to pursuade him to have only one God-fearing and competent 'ālim, lest rivalries between the 'ulamā' disgust him as they had disgusted his father earlier.[82]

Sirhindī also urged the high officials in the provinces to do what they could in their own spheres. He wrote letters to Shaykh Murtaḍā, the governor of Gujrat, Qulīch Khān, the devout viceroy of Lahore, Lālā Beg, the governor of Bihar, 'Abd 'l-Raḥīm Khān-i-Khānān, the commander-in-chief of Deccan, and many other important dignitaries. He called upon them to spread the teachings of Islam, to defend the faith, to abolish un-Islamic laws, to restore Islamic institutions, and to suppress anti-Islamic forces. He told them of the great reward that awaited them in the Hereafter even for any small thing they could do, because they would be doing the work of the prophets.[83]

Six years after his accession Jahāngīr married Nūr Jahān, who because of her beauty, culture and great talents estab-

lished unlimited ascendancy over her husband, and by getting her brother appointed as premier and her father an important member of the court, secured full control of the government. With her ascendancy the Shī'ah elements at the court started working against the Sunnīs. As Sirhindī exercised considerable influence on the Sunnī section, they turned against him. They impressed upon Jahāngīr that because of his great following throughout India, his contact with officers at the court and in the provinces, Sirhindī posed a threat to the kingdom.[84] On the other hand, the Sufis whose ideas and practices Sirhindī had condemned and whose *mashā'ikh* he had criticised, were not happy with him. When some of his over-enthusiastic disciples began extolling his mystical attainments and publicised his visionary experiences, they came out to denounce him openly.[85] A letter that Sirhindī had written sixteen years previously wherein he had mentioned that in a vision he went beyond the stage of Abū Bakr, aroused strong condemnation from various quarters. Some even called him an infidel (*kāfir*) who deserved to be killed.[86].

In 1028/1619 Jahāngīr called upon Sirhindī to explain the charges levelled against him. In his *Memoirs* where he records the episode, he says that he was not satisfied with Sirhindī's answer, and to chastise him and to pacify public sentiments he ordered his imprisonment.[87] Other sources say that Jahāngīr was satisfied with Sirhindī's answer, but since he did not prostrate in honour when he entered the court, Jahāngīr sent him to jail.[88]

Sirhindī bore the sufferings of his imprisonment with patience; he neither regretted his action nor made any effort to secure release. Believing that he would not have been imprisoned had God not allowed it, he took it as a way of the Lord to bring him closer to Himself.[89] He continued his work in prison with the same vigour as he had done outside. Impressed by his life and preaching, hundreds of non-Muslim convicts repented of their past deeds and embraced Islam.[90]

A year later, Jahāngīr set Sirhindī free, called him to the court, honoured him with a robe, returned his property and offered him a thousand rupees. He gave him the option to go home or stay with him in the camp.[91] Sirhindī chose the

camp, for it provided him with the unique opportunity to preach to the king and people around him. In various sessions which he had with Jahāngīr, he read out the Qur'ān to him, explained its message, discussed the principles of faith, and elaborated the rules of the Sharī'ah.[92] This seems to have had its effect. A year later when Jahāngīr conquered the fort of Kangra he showed unusual enthusiasm to enforce some Islamic laws in that quarter. The same year, he forbade the practice of marrying Muslim girls to non-Muslims in Kashmir. He reintroduced the Hijrī calendar, engraved an Islamic emblem on coins, rebuilt the mosques that had been demolished, and encouraged Arabic and Islamic learning.[93]

Sirhindī spent three years at the camp, accompanied the king on several campaigns and visited many places. When his health started to fail he returned to Sirhind, where he reduced his commitments and devoted himself to *dhikr* and prayer. On 28th Safar 1034/10th December 1624 he met his Lord.

The work which I have discussed above is only a part of what Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī did, and is by no means the best. Far more important in many respects is his work concerning *taṣawwuf* and its relation with the Prophetic Islam. For the first time in the history of Sufism, a mystic of his calibre came to discuss mystic experience, elucidate the nature and characteristics of its different stages, and assess their value and significance. Again for the first time, a Sufi of his eminence clearly distinguished between the Prophetic way and the saintly way to God and judged the latter in the light of the former. With an unusual boldness, Sirhindī reviewed the whole history of Sufism, explained what ideas and practices are within the bounds of the Sharī'ah and what must be condemned as aberration. Nothing deterred him from censuring any personality, however great, if he or she said or did anything that went against the Sharī'ah. He particularly subjected the philosophy of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* to searching criticism, and censured its consequences to Islamic beliefs, values and practices. Last but not least, he expounded a theosophy in place of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* that agreed with the highest mystic experience of difference (*farq*), on the one hand, and the Islamic Sharī'ah on the other.

This work,[94] which Shaykh Aḥmad himself regards as his best contribution to the revival of Islam, has been little studied and far less appreciated. It is to this part of his work which we now turn.

CHAPTER TWO

Sufism

Definition

We begin the study of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī's effort to reform Sufism by explaining what Sufism is. The earliest Sufis when confronted with this question would not usually define Sufism. They would instead mention a particular aspect of Sufism which they wanted to stress. One thing which emerges from these didactic statements is that Sufism is primarily concerned with the internal state of the soul, rather than external behaviour. It is concerned with virtues like patience, trust and sincerity; feelings like fear, awe and love; attitudes like humility, quietism and withdrawal; and practices like hunger, vigils, remembrance and contemplation, which promote the desired state of the soul.

To the question: 'What is *taṣawwuf*?', Abū 'l-Ḥusayn 'l-Nūrī[1] (d. 295/907), for instance, replied: '*Taṣawwuf* is neither external action (*rasm*) nor knowledge (*'ilm*), it is all virtue (*khulq*)';[2] Junayd[3] (d. 297/909) answered: '*Taṣawwuf* is that your devotion to God is not for any other purpose';[4] and Saḥl ibn 'Abdullāh 'l-Tustarī[5] (d. 283/897) responded: '*Taṣawwuf* is to eat little, to seek peace in God and to flee from people.'[6]

The same concern with the inner life is brought out by many writers of our time when they characterise Sufism as 'the code of the heart (*fiqh 'l-bāṭin*)', or 'the purification of the soul (*tazkīyat 'l-nafs*)', or 'the feeling of God's presence (*al-iḥsān*)'.[7] These descriptions are good so far as they underline the basic orientation of Sufism, and highlight the close relationship that exists between Sufism and the Sharī'ah. They do not, however, bring out those elements

of Sufism that help us to understand how the piety of a Sufi differs from the piety of an ascetic and devotee (*zāhid wa 'ābid*), or to distinguish between the way of the Sufi (*ṭarīqah-i-walāyat*) and the way of the prophet (*ṭarīqah-i-nubūwat*).[8]

Another understanding of Sufism sees it as a quest for reality, an enlightenment or a gnosis (*ma'rifah*). Elements of this view can be discovered in the words of early Sufis, but a clear formulation of it is not found before al-Ghazālī[9] (d. 505/1111). Ibn 'l-'Arabī[10] (d. 638/1240) and other philosophically-minded Sufis hold the same view; and those who regard the experience of *tawḥīd* in a quasi-theosophical sense as the ultimate state of Sufism, such as Shaykh 'Abdullāh 'l-Anṣārī[11] (d. 481/1088) subscribe partly to this view.

The gnostic view of Sufism has been very popular with modern scholars, both Western and Eastern. They render Sufism as Islamic or Muslim mysticism, and understand by that term the attempt of the people believing in Islam to know the mysteries of life and the world. Reynold Nicholson, the most outstanding of all Western scholars of Sufism, begins his discussion of Sufism by quoting the words of Ma'rūf 'l-Karkhī[12] (d. 200/815) which he translates as: 'Sufism is the apprehension of divine realities.'[13] Titus Burckhardt, another eminent scholar, goes a step further when he makes doctrine, not only apprehension, the criterion of real Sufism, the basis as well as the goal of the Sufi *ṭarīqah*.[14] To be sure, there has been a strong gnostic trend in Sufism. But to say that gnosis is the essence of Sufism, or that gnostic Sufism is the real Sufism, even its predominant form, is quite arbitrary. A proper assessment of Sufism has to pay more attention to Junayd (d. 297/909), the formulator of the Sufi *ṭarīqah*, 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī[15] (d. 561/1166), Shihāb 'l-Dīn 'l-Suhrawardī[16] (d. 632/1234), and Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband[17] (d. 791/1389), the founders of the great Sufi orders, rather than al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) and Ibn 'l-'Arabī (d. 638/1240), who though intellectually superior bore no comparison to these great masters of Sufism.

The third approach to Sufism is to define it in terms of the experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. Junayd referred to it when he said: '*Taṣawwuf* is that God makes you die to yourself

and live by Him.'[18] Al-Shiblī[19] (d. 334/946) put it in this way: '*Taṣawwuf* is to rise above the perception of the world.'[20] Abū 'Alī Jūzjānī[21] (d. early third Hijrī century) said: 'The Sufi is one who forgets himself and lives in the vision of God, is neither aware of himself nor anything else.'[22] Jāmī[23] (d. 898/1493) defined: '*Walāyat* means the effacement (*fanā'*) of man in God and his survival (*baqā'*) in Him.'[24]

This is the definition which Sirhindī adopts. He puts it very succinctly: '*Walāyat* means *fanā'* and *baqā'*.[25] In order to appreciate this definition one has to separate the experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'* from the gnosis which it is believed to produce. The essential element of Sufism, in this view, is the experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'* itself, not the knowledge associated with it, whose nature and value have been conceived very differently by different Sufis. By stressing the centrality of the experience this definition also provides a criterion to distinguish between Sufism and the ordinary piety of renunciation and devotion, as it helps us to understand, as we shall see later, the difference between the way of the saints and the way of the prophets.

Fanā' and *Baqā'*

Fanā' literally means to die and disappear, and *baqā'* means to live and survive. In the Sufi context, however, the terms are usually used with a preposition: *fanā 'an* means to abstain from something, to forget and to be unconscious of it; *baqā bi*, on the other hand, means to be occupied with something, live in or by it. There is a kind of *fanā'* and *baqā'* when one refrains from vice and practises virtues; there is another kind of *fanā'* and *baqā'* when one shrinks from violating the commands of God and obeys His will.

But the *fanā'* and *baqā'* which is essential and distinctive of Sufism is neither one nor the other: it is an affective experience. In order to have this experience the Sufi has to follow a particular procedure. In his *al-Qawl 'l-Jamīl*, the great Indian scholar and Sufi, Walī Allāh[26] (d. 1176/1762) describes the procedures which the three major Sufi orders, the Qādirīyah, the Chishtīyah and the Naqshbandīyah prescribe. They agree on basic principles, although they differ

in details. I will summarise below the procedure which is followed in the Qādirīyah order.[27]

A Sufi aspirant has first to pass a preparatory stage. He has to set his beliefs right, discard evil habits, avoid big sins (*kabā'ir*) and abstain from small ones (*ṣaghā'ir*) as much as he can. He should perform obligatory prayers and other duties (*farā'iḍ*) which the Sharī'ah has placed on him, and observe the Sunnah of the Prophet which he has recommended.

When this is completed, the aspirant can take up *dhikr* with loud voice. Let him begin by saying the name of God (*ism dhāt*) loudly, with one stroke. That is, he should say 'Allah' loudly, stretch the word as he pronounces, and do it with all the force of his heart and throat. He should then pause, regain breath and repeat 'Allah'. He has to do this for some time. Next, he should say 'Allah' with two strokes. That is, he should sit as he does in *ṣalāt*, say 'Allah' pointing first to the right knee and then to the heart. He should repeat the *dhikr* without break. When he strikes at the heart he should do it particularly with full force, so that his heart feels its effect and his mind attains concentration. He should repeat the *dhikr* with three and four strokes [Walī Allāh describes the procedure].

Next he should take up the *dhikr* of negation and affirmation, that is, should say *lā ilāha illā Allāh* [There is no god (negation) except Allah (affirmation)]. Let him sit as he does in *ṣalāt* facing the *Qiblah*, close his eyes and say *lā*, as if he takes it out from his navel and stretches it till it reaches his right shoulder. Then he should say *ilāha*, as if he takes it out from his forehead; then say *illā Allāh* with full force. When he says these words he should think that nothing in the world is worth desiring and loving, nor anything at all exists. God alone is to be sought and loved, and He alone exists.

These two *dhikrs* help to concentrate attention on God, ignite His love and make Him the sole object of one's longing. If a Sufi says them four thousand times every day and night, he is sure to feel that effect within two months. When this is achieved, the Sufi is advised to take up silent *dhikr*. He should close his eyes, shut his mouth, and say in

his heart: 'Allah is Hearing', 'Allah is Seeing', 'Allah is Knowing', raising, as if, the words from his navel to his heart, to his brain and then to the throne of God. The second time he should do it in the reverse order, beginning with the throne of God, going to the brain, to the heart and then to the navel. He should do the same with the *dhikr* of negation and affirmation. As a result of these *dhikrs* the Sufi is sure to develop intense longing and passionate love for God, achieve complete concentration, love silence, avoid intercourse with people, hate to be involved in worldly affairs and devote himself exclusively to God.

He is now ready to enter into meditation (*murāqabah*). He should meditate on, for instance, 'Allah is before me', 'Allah sees me', 'Allah is with me'. He should imagine how God is present to him, sees him, and is with him clearly and vividly, but placing Him above space, and concentrate on it till he is completely absorbed in it. He may meditate on the Qur'ānic verse, 'He is with you wherever you are'[28] or 'Whichever way you turn there is the face of Allah'[29] or 'We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. . .'[30] These meditations will produce absorption in God. However, if the Sufi meditates on 'Everything on the earth will perish, only the face of your Lord, the Glorious and the Majestic will survive',[31] he will lose every interest in the world and will be completely absorbed in God in a state of intoxication (*sukr*) and effacement (*maḥw*). The proper way to attain it is to imagine that you are dead, reduced to ashes that are blown about by the wind, that the heavens have split, and everything has disintegrated and vanished, and that only God is there. If you persist in this meditation for some time you will forget yourself and obtain complete effacement.

This is the beginning of *fanā'*. As the Sufi advances in meditation, he rises to higher stages of the experience. But even from this description, the nature of the experience is quite clear. It is obviously not a matter of *khulq*, abstaining from vice and practising virtue; nor a matter of action, avoiding disobedience to God and carrying out His will. It is essentially a matter of feeling (*ḥāl*), an affective experience. Any definition of Sufism which does not take this fact into consideration is inadequate.

Experience of Union

Fanā' and *baqā'* are the two sides of the same experience. Looking from one angle, it is a negation of the mystic: negation of his will, his attributes, his self-consciousness and his being. Looking from another angle, it is union with God and assimilation in Him: assimilation into His will, His attributes and finally His being. The former aspect, Sufis refer to by words like disappearance (*fanā'*), effacement (*maḥw*), dissolution (*iḍmiḥlāl*), and unconsciousness (*ghaybah*); the second aspect, they call meeting (*wiṣāl*), union (*jam'*), unification (*ittiḥād*), oneness (*tawḥīd*) and identity (*'aynīyah*), depending upon the degree of self-negation and union.

Two levels of union are usually distinguished: One at which the mystic experiences oneness with God, but he is also conscious of his difference from Him; this is called the stage of union (*maqām-i-jam'*). At the next stage the consciousness of difference vanishes altogether, and the mystic is conscious of One Being beyond difference and distinction. Sufis call it the stage of absolute union (*jam' 'l-jam'*, literally 'union of union'). Al-Ghazālī describes absolute union in the following words:

> When the gnostics reach the height of experience they testify without exception that they do not see anything in existence except the One Real Being (*al-Ḥaqq*). For some, this is an intellectual realisation. For others however, it becomes a matter of affective experience (*ḥāl-an wa dhawq-an*); plurality vanishes for them altogether. They are absorbed into Pure Unity (*al-fardānīyat 'l-maḥḍah*), losing their intellects completely, stunned and bewildered. They are no more conscious of anything other than God, nor even themselves. Nothing exists for them except God; as a result they exclaim in a state of intoxication (*sukr*) which removes the control of reason. One of them said: 'I am God'; another said: 'Glory to me, how great I am'; a third said: 'There is none in these clothes except God.' When this experience overwhelms the mystic it is called extinction (*fanā'*), rather extinction of extinction (*fanā' 'l-fanā'*). For he becomes unconscious of himself and unconscious of his unconsciousness (*fanā'*), because he is not aware of his self in this state, nor of his forgetfulness of himself. For if he were aware of his self-forgetfulness, he

would have been aware of himself. This state is called unification (*ittiḥād*) in the language of metaphor (*majāz*), and in the language of reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) affirmation of unity (*tawḥīd*).[32]

Experience of Difference

The belief common among people about unitive experience is that it is the final experience of the Sufi and the ultimate point of his ascent. Consequently his movement from the distinctionless unity to an awareness of distinction between God and him is regarded as a 'descent', a relapse to the original stage of difference, a sliding down the hill after reaching the top. Many factors have contributed to this belief: statements of Sufis applauding union; the characterisation of the consciousness of difference after union as a return (*rujū'*) and a descent (*nuzūl*); the metaphysical consideration of positing unity as the source of all plurality; the doctrine of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* which supports and is supported by the experience of unity; and the claim of mystics in other traditions that absolute unity is the highest truth.

The experience of distinctionless unity is, however, not the ultimate experience of the Sufi. There is beyond it a second experience of difference, a separation after union (*farq ba'd 'l-jam'*). Abū 'l-Qāsim 'l-Qushayrī[33] (d. 465/1072), the most perceptive of all the early Sufi writers says:

> After this (i.e., the experience of *jam' 'l-jam'* or absolute union) there is a glorious state (*ḥālat 'azīzah*) which the Sufis call second separation (*al-farq 'l-thānī*), that is the state when the Sufi is returned to sobriety (*al-ṣaḥw*) at the time of obligatory prayers (*farā'id*) so that he may perform his duties at their times. His return (*rujū'*) is, therefore, for God and with God, not for him and with him. He perceives in this state that God controls him completely, that He is the Originator of his essence and existence by His own power, and the Producer of his acts and states by His knowledge and will.[34]

In this important statement al-Qushayrī makes a few things quite clear. First, there is a stage beyond the stage of absolute

union which in contrast to the latter is marked by distinction and difference. Second, the post-union difference is completely different from the pre-union separation in that it is a state of living 'for God, with God', whereas the latter is a living 'for man, with man'. Hence it is not a relapse to the pre-union separation. It is in fact a movement from the state of difference-less union to a state of difference-in-union, wherein the Sufi becomes conscious of himself, but not as existing or moving by himself, but as 'exist-ed' and moved by God through His knowledge, power and will. Third, the state of difference after union is a higher state. Al-Qushayrī calls it '*ḥālat 'azīzah*', which may be rendered as a great experience or a sublime state. On either rendering it is a higher state of life. To be sure, the absolute union devoid of distinction is the logical end of the unitive process. But it does not follow thereby that it is also the most perfect experience, and the highest point of spiritual ascent.

These points which al-Qushayrī has made, can be substantiated by quoting extensively from other Sufis. I would, however, confine myself to only three: Abū Yazīd[35] (d. 261/875), Ibn 'l-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) and Walī Allāh (d. 1176/1762), of whom the first is believed to be a pantheist, the second is the founder of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, and the third is an interpreter of that doctrine.

I have discussed Abū Yazīd's experience at length elsewhere.[36] I will, therefore, quote only one of his statements:

> Union (*waṣl*) is from separation (*faṣl*), then separation comes after union. Both have a name and a referent, and the experiences to which they refer have well-known properties. When the mystic unites after his separation he is introduced to (God's) unknown eternity (*ghayb azal-i-hī*). But when he advances to perfection separation comes back, but now it is a separation which does not annul union, nor does it negate separation.[37]

This is a very important statement, particularly since it comes from a Sufi who is famous for his words of union and unity. It clearly supports all the points which al-Qushayrī has made: that there is an experience of separation after union, that

this separation is different in nature from the pre-union separation because it is a union as well as separation, and that it is a higher and more perfect experience.

Ibn 'l-'Arabī disparages the experience of absolute union as ignorance and cautions against it:

> The union (*jam'*) which negates all difference while you experience it is not to be counted upon; it is ignorance (*jahl*).[38]

This remark is in full agreement with Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophical position that the difference between man and God is as much true as their unity. Therefore, an experience which discloses unity and conceals difference is lower than the experience which brings out both the aspects of reality. In the *Futūḥāt*, after saying that the experience of *jam'* conceals the reality of man's difference from God as His servant, he observes: 'An experience which removes the thing from its true position and conceals from it its reality deserves no credit in our eyes, because it shows the thing different from what it is, and drags you down to the level of the ignorants.'[39]

Walī Allāh in the beginning of a treatise on *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* and *waḥdat 'l-shuhūd* after observing that the terms are used in two different contexts, philosophical and mystical, writes regarding the latter use:

> The meaning of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* (in the mystical context) is that the mystic is so absorbed in the contemplation of the All-Embracing Existence (*al-Wujūd 'l-Munbasiṭ*)[40] of which the world is a determination that distinctions and differences vanish which form the basis of our knowledge of good and evil, and which the *Shar'* and reason categorically affirm and fully elaborate. This is the stage where the mystics stay unless God takes them beyond. *Waḥdat 'l-shuhūd*, on the other hand, means in this context the consciousness both of oneness and difference, that is the consciousness that things are one in one sense and multiple in another. This stage is higher and more perfect than the former.[41]

We are not concerned here with Walī Allāh's rather strange way of characterising the two levels of mystic experience in terms of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* and *waḥdat 'l-shuhūd*. What we

should note is that for a Sufi like Walī Allāh who defends the basic thesis of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, the experience of absolute union in which differences and distinctions vanish is a lower experience compared to the experience which reveals both oneness and difference.

Every Sufi does not move from the stage of pure union to the stage of difference in union; some stay, as Walī Allāh observes, at the first stage. Most of the Sufis whom al-Qushayrī mentions in the *Risālah* and al-Sulamī in the *Ṭabaqāt* have passed on, Sirhindī says,[42] sooner or later to the second stage; their words which speak of pure union and give no indication of difference should not, therefore, be taken to represent their final experience. Abū Yazīd, for instance, who is famous for his words of union experienced, Sirhindī believes, the second difference towards the end of his life. He thinks that Abū Yazīd's words, 'I did not know You except after an unknowing and did not serve You except after the lapse of a period'[43] refer to it. This view of Abū Yazīd's final experience is supported by the words which I have quoted earlier regarding the experience of difference after union. They refer, to be sure, to his personal experience; Abū Yazīd is not in the habit of making academic observations.

Abū Bakr 'l-Shiblī is another case. Most of the references to his life, experiences and words preserved in early sources belong to his unitive period. He, however, moved from this to the stage of difference. An indication of it is found in the words he said at that stage about Abū Yazīd: 'Had Abū Yazīd been here, he would have entered into Islam (of *ṭarīqah*, which is another name for the separative experience) at the hand of any of our disciples.'[44]

What is true of Abū Yazīd and al-Shiblī is also true of Abū 'l-Ḥusayn 'l-Nūrī, Abū Ḥamzah[45] (d. 269/882) and others among the early Sufis. Sirhindī only excepts al-Hallāj,[46] who, in his view, remained at the stage of union and died in that state.[47]

Absolute Difference

The experience of difference in union, though higher than the experience of pure union is not however the final stage of the mystic experience. There is still a higher stage. In the previous chapter I have mentioned three stages of Sirhindī's experience: the first stage wherein he sees the world one with God, the second wherein he sees that the world is a shadow of God, different from God, yet in some sense one with Him, and the third wherein he sees God completely different from the world and absolutely other. In letter 290[48] of the first volume of his collected letters Sirhindī describes the experience in detail. Let us review it here.

The first experience that Sirhindī had was a feeling of self-negation (*bi khudī*) or forgetfulness (*ghaybah*) in which he 'saw a vast ocean and found that the forms of things appeared as shadows in that ocean'. When this feeling intensified and overwhelmed Sirhindī, his preceptor said that he had attained a kind of *fanā'*. Now he 'saw the whole world as one and found it united with the One', and thereafter went into a state of unconsciousness (*bi shu'ūrī*) in which he felt he had 'a direct experience of God', and found that 'his attributes in reality belonged to God'. This was the stage of *fanā 'l-fanā'*, the passing away of the passing away.

Next Sirhindī had a vision of God 'under the veil of light, which encompassed everything'. His preceptor confirmed that he had seen God, but asked him to negate that vision. Sirhindī continued his work; the light that he had seen, started contracting, till there remained just a point; which, too, vanished in the end. He was thrown into wonder wherein 'God was visible to him by himself and through himself'. His preceptor remarked that he had achieved the *nisbat*[49] of the Naqshbandīyah.

Sirhindī experienced next an extraordinary expansion of the heart. He writes: 'The whole world, from the Divine Throne to the centre of the earth, was no more than a small grain as compared to that expansion. After that I saw myself and every object of the world separately one with me, and I saw myself one with all of them, till I found that the whole world was hidden in one particle. After that I saw myself, rather each particle, so much expanded and enlarged that it

could contain the whole world, rather many more worlds in it. I saw myself and each particle as an expanding light entering into every particle so that all forms and shapes of the world had vanished into it. After that I found myself, rather every particle sustaining the world.' His preceptor called this stage the union of union (*jam' 'l-jam'*).

The next experience Sirhindī describes as follows: 'After that the forms and shapes of the world that I had found to be God before I now saw were imaginary, and every particle that I had found to be God without difference and distinction I now saw were illusory. I was thrown into complete wonder.' When Sirhindī reported the experience to his preceptor, he said: 'The presence (*ḥuḍūr*) of God that you have is not clear. Continue your work till the Existent is differentiable from the illusory (*mawhūm*).' Sirhindī continued till he was shown the difference between the Existent (i.e. God) and the illusion (i.e. the world). 'I realised', he says, 'that the real Being is other than the illusory (*mawhūm*); I found that the attributes of the illusory and the acts and effects that proceeded from it really proceeded from God. I realised also that those attributes and acts were absolutely illusory (*mawhūm maḥaḍ*) and there was nothing in existence except God'. When Sirhindī reported, his preceptor said: 'This is the state of difference after union (*farq ba'd 'l-jam'*)'.

This was the beginning of Sirhindī's experience of difference; as he advanced the experience deepened till it became absolute. His earliest vision in which he saw 'every particle of his being nothing but God', was replaced by a vision in which he saw 'God *with* all the particles of his being rather than it'. Next he saw God 'neither one with the world nor different from it, neither in it nor outside it'. The view which he earlier had of God's co-existence (*ma'īyah*), comprehension (*iḥāṭah*) and immanence (*siryān*) disappeared altogether. He could not, however, still conceive God without them. But later on that feeling, too, disappeared, and he saw that 'God stood with the world in a relation different from those relations. It was an incomprehensible relation. However, it, too, disappeared finally, and Sirhindī saw that 'God had no relation at all with the world, neither knowable nor unknowable'. 'I was given', he says, 'a special

knowledge according to which there existed no relation between God and the world, though I saw both of them. At this time I was informed that the object of my vision (*mashhūd*), in spite of its transcendental character, was not God. It was rather the symbolic form of God's creative relation'. This is how Sirhindī was gradually led to the experience of God's complete otherness and absolute transcendence.

This is indeed a great experience. But it is by no means unique. Sirhindī believes that other Sufis have also had it, though few have cared to describe it. If one says that it is rather presumptuous, as there are no records to support this claim, Sirhindī would say that the lack of records is no proof that the other Sufis did not have the experience. The absence of records is not at all surprising, for Sufis who reach the end of their journey do not usually speak of their experience. Abū Yazīd testifies to this view when he says: 'The man who comes to know God is stunned; he is not spared to speak.'[50] Only they talk loud who have not yet come out of the intoxication of the unitive experience.

Reports of the experience of complete difference and transcendence are, however, not rare. 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1493) has preserved a letter which the great Persian Sufi,'Alā' 'l-Dawlah Simnānī[51] (d. 736/1336) wrote to 'Abd 'l-Razzāq Kāshī[52] (d. 730/1329) in which he recounts the stages of his experience very similar to those of Sirhindī. He writes:

> In the beginning of my career I passed some days in the state which the quatrain of Kayshi describes, and very much enjoyed it. [The quatrain referred to is:
>
> > Every form that appears on the plank of existence
> > Is the form of the One who makes that form
> > When an old river produces a new wave
> > It is in fact the river, though they call it a wave.]
>
> But I left it behind. I mean to say that when I crossed the initial and the middle stages of *mukāshafah* and reached the end, I discovered the error of the earlier *mukāshafah*. I was completely convinced of the new enlightenment and entertained no doubt about it. . .

In the middle stage of the *mukāshafah* truths very similar to those which the quatrain of Kayshi mentions were revealed to me. I saw God in the form of an ocean bursting into waves, keeping some of them and destroying others. There were circles of creatures, large and small, some of them were happy: they displayed the mercy of God in varying degrees according to the expanse of their circles and their righteousness. Others were unhappy: they showed the wrath of God in varying degrees according to the narrowness of their circles and their wickedness. The ocean as sustainer was sustaining some, and as destroyer was destroying others, and as producer of waves was creating new waves.

But when I reached the final *mukāshafah*, the wind of absolute certainty (*ḥaqq 'l-yaqīn*) blew and destroyed all the ideas that blossomed forth in the initial and middle stages. . .

O dear! true faith corresponds with reality and agrees with the Sharī'ah. You have the certitude of belief (*'ilm 'l-yaqīn*) at the initial stage of the *mukāshafah*, certitude of vision (*'ayn 'l-yaqīn*) at the middle stage of the *mukāshafah*, and true certitude (*ḥaqq 'l-yaqīn*) at the final stage of the *mukāshafah*. True certitude has been called simply certitude by God: 'Serve your Lord till you get certitude',[53] and is available only at the last stage of the *mukāshafah*. Whoever reaches this stage nothing that he says differs from reality.

The author of the *Manāzil 'l-Sā'irīn*[54] believed that *tawḥīd* is the last stage of the mystic. This is not true. He stopped at the eightieth step. The hundredth step of the mystic is servanthood (*al-'ubūdīyah*); that is, the return of the servant to his original state by way of *walāyat* enjoying the revelation of God without losing one's reason. Junayd was asked: 'What is the end of this affair?'. He replied: 'Return to the beginning.'[55]

From this account it is clear that Simnānī's first experience was an experience of unity. He saw God as one ocean and the world as waves appearing and disappearing in the ocean. This is the common image in which mystics perceive unity and which they employ in order to convey that idea as the quatrain of Kayshi does. Simnānī indicates that when he had this vision he was quite sure of its truth: he had a certitude which a vision offers (*'ayn 'l-yaqīn*). But when he advanced he had a new vision which replaced his earlier vision. He now realised that man is only a servant of God,

and that servanthood, rather than the ecstatic experience of oneness with God (*tawḥīd*) is the final stage of the mystic. At this stage he got the true certitude (*ḥaqq 'l-yaqīn*) which blew away the ideas of his earlier vision.

Although Simnānī does not describe at length his last experience as Sirhindī does, the words by which he refers to it – 'servanthood' and 'return to the beginning' – make it quite clear that he means the experience of absolute difference. This is further supported by his strong rejection of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* and clear affirmation of God's absolute transcendence in his book, *al-'Urwah li Ahl 'l-Khalwah*.[56]

Few Sufis have cared to report their experience of absolute difference; accounts like that of Sirhindī and Simnānī are not easy to find. But the words which they have used to characterise their experiences, or similar phrases can be easily multiplied. Simnānī himself refers to the words of Junayd, the recognised leader of the Sufi community (*Sayyid 'l-Ṭā'ifah*). This undoubtedly the most outstanding figure among the early Sufis has been studied by a couple of scholars. I have also discussed him in a separate paper. We all[57] agree that Junayd is a firm believer in God's complete transcendence, a belief which is epitomised in his famous words: '*Tawḥīd* is the complete separation of the contingent from the Necessary.'[58]

The *sulūk* of the Sufi is a movement from difference to difference by the way of union, the reappropriation of servanthood through the Sufi way of *fanā'* and *baqā'*, that is, *walāyat*, as Simnānī says, or the return to the beginning as Junayd says. Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī reiterates in his own way this truth when he describes the beginning and the end of the Sufi in these words: 'The beginning is to discard the normal life (*al-ma'hūd*), and to follow the Divine Command (*al-mashrū'*), then to see things determined by the Eternal Will (*al-maqdūr*), and finally to return to the normal (*al-ma'hūd*) with the condition that you observe the limits (*ḥudūd*) of the Sharī'ah.'[59]

To be sure, *tawḥīd* understood in the sense of realisation of oneness with God has been regarded by many Sufis as the ultimate stage of Sufism. It is certainly the view of Shaykh Ibn 'l-'Arabī, Shaykh 'Abdullāh 'l-Anṣārī, the author of

Manāzil 'l-Sā'irīn and 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī.[60] But the other view, that *tawḥīd* is only a stage of the Sufi *sulūk* and that the final stage is servanthood (*'ubūdīyah*), and the ultimate truth is difference rather than oneness has been maintained by many more eminent Sufis like Junayd, 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī, Shihāb 'l-Dīn 'l-Suhrawardī, Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband, 'Alā' 'l-Dawlah Simnānī, and Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī.

Characteristics of the Unitive Experience

The experiences of unity and difference are correlated with different kinds of beliefs, attitudes, affective states and patterns of behaviour. Many Sufis have been aware of this fact, and at times referred to one or the other aspect of it. But a full perception of that correlation and its uninhibited discussion had to wait for Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī.

Sirhindī calls the unitive state '*kufr-i-ṭarīqah*', and the state of difference '*Islām-i-ṭarīqah*'. The reason for calling the unitive experience *kufr* of the *ṭarīqah* is that it hides (*kafara* literally means to hide) the difference between God and the world, between the Lord and the servant, between good and evil, between faith and infidelity, which the Sharī'ah of the Prophet affirms. The experience of difference, on the other hand, underlines these differences and therefore deserves the name '*Islām* of the *ṭarīqah*'. Sirhindī explains the concept of *kufr-i-ṭarīqah* in these words:

> The *kufr-i-ṭarīqah* is the state of union (*maqām-i-jam'*) in which reality is hidden, and distinctions between truth and untruth disappear. In this state the mystic beholds in the mirror of everything, good and evil, the beauty of the One he loves. He does not see, therefore, anything, good or evil, perfect or imperfect, except as a manifestation of that Unity. Hence, he loses the will to denounce (evil and untruth) which arises from the distinction between them; consequently, he is at peace with everything, all of which he finds on the right path. He draws pleasure from the verse of the Qur'ān: 'There is not a moving creature, but He holds it by its fore-lock. Verily my Lord is on a straight path.'[61] He identifies the object of manifestation with the Manifesting Being, the world

with God, and the servant with the Lord. These are the consequences of the unitive experience. It was in this state that Manṣūr said:

> I disbelieve (*kafartu*) in the religion of God,
> And I must disbelieve, even though
> Disbelief (*kufr*) may be a bugbear to the Muslims.[62]

That the experience of unity conceals the truth of difference and thus conflicts with the Sharī'ah which affirms it has been widely recognised by the Sufis. Walī Allāh's description of the unitive experience under the name of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, which I have quoted earlier, is one instance. The saying common in the Sufi literature that 'union (*al-jam'*) without separation (*tafriqah*) is blasphemy (*zandaqah*)'[63] is a recognition of the same truth. Manṣūr's couplet which Sirhindī has quoted is a further instance. For what Manṣūr means by saying that he disbelieves in the religion of God is that he does not recognise the difference which Islam upholds between God and the world. Obviously he does not mean to say that he repudiates the Sharī'ah of the Prophet. It is well known that he continued to observe the duties of the Sharī'ah till the end of his life; Sirhindī says that Manṣūr 'offered four hundred *rak'āt* of prayer every day in prison (before he was hanged) and refused to eat the food which was given to him by unjust hands'.[64]

Sirhindī lists three consequences of the unitive experience: First, to believe that whatever is in existence is good and fail to perceive any real difference between good and evil; second, to believe that every faith and religion is right, and refuse, on that account, to criticise any belief or practice; and third, to identify oneself with God and believe that all is One. That these are the consequences of the unitive experience is fully attested by everyone who has had that experience and given vent to his feelings and ideas. The most outstanding examples are Ibn 'l-Fāriḍ[65] (d. 632/1235) and Manṣūr 'l-Ḥallāj[66] (d. 309/922) in Arabic, and Jalāl 'l-Dīn Rūmī[67] (d. 672/1273) and Farīd 'l-Dīn 'Aṭṭār[68] (d. 628/1230) in Persian. They are the untiring singers of unity and identity, the intoxicated lovers of One-in-all Beauty and the supreme preachers of 'all is good'. Their songs are too well-known to

be cited here. At the sophisticated level of philosophy, the doctrines of Ibn 'l-'Arabī which deny the objectivity of evil, relativise faith, condone erroneous beliefs and excuse misdeeds, explain away punishment and make hell[69] appear as another paradise, are the fruits of the same experience.

Unitive experience does not affect only beliefs and attitudes, but also practices. Quite often Sufis feel a conflict between their experience and the injunctions of the *Shar'*. However, those whom God saves avoid their violation. Abū Bakr 'l-Shiblī, for instance, once stood for *ṣalāt*, but refrained from it, and remained in that state for a while, then did it. When he finished he said: 'Alas! if I pray, I deny; but if I do not pray, I become an infidel.'[70] What al-Shiblī means is that if he prays he affirms the difference between the Lord and the servant and thus denies unity; but on the other hand, if he does not offer prayer, he disobeys God and commits an act of infidelity. On another occasion he made the call (*adhān*) for *ṣalāt*. When he finished the two *shahādah*, (the profession of the unity of God, and the prophecy of Muḥammad) he addressed God and said: 'If You had not ordered what I have said I would not have mentioned any name along with Yours.'[71]

Al-Shiblī only voiced the contradiction between his experience and the Sharī'ah, but he neither disparaged the Sharī'ah nor violated its commands. Others have not exercised that restraint. Shaykh Muḥammad Shaṭṭārī a sixteenth-century Indian Sufi dubs the Sharī'ah as a veil: 'Knowledge', he says, 'is a great veil, I mean the knowledge to serve God (*'ubūdīyah*) is a big veil. If that veil is removed from between, *kufr* becomes one with Islam, and Islam becomes one with *kufr*, and the worship of God and obedience to His command goes away.'[72] Instances of violation of the Sharī'ah in practice by Sufis under the influence of the unitive experience are rare. Those who have actually violated the Sharī'ah and committed sins are rather imposters, who use the name of the experience to justify their evil deeds.

Shaṭḥ, or words uttered in an ecstatic state in which the Sufi boasts of superhuman power or status is the second thing which Sirhindī associates with the unitive experience. '*Shaṭḥāt* like "I am God", "Glory to me", "There is nothing

in the cloak except God", are the fruits', he says, 'of the tree of union (*jam'*) which come from an overpowering and intoxicating love of God that throws everything out of sight and leaves nothing in the vision of the mystic except his Beloved'.[73]

The first Sufi to discuss the phenomenon of *shaṭḥ* was Abū Naṣr 'l-Sarrāj (d. 378/988). He says that the Sufis indulge in *shaṭḥ* under the influence of a powerful ecstatic experience that produces intense excitement, suppresses reason and removes control over language. What they say is not without truth, but the language which they use is misleading and shocking.[74] He reviews at length the *shaṭḥāt* of Abū Yazīd, al-Shiblī, al-Nūrī and Abū Ḥamzah and bases his discussion, particularly of Abū Yazīd, on the Commentary[75] which Junayd wrote on the latter's *shaṭḥāt*. He quotes with approval Junayd's remark: 'In spite of the great experiences he had and the sublime words he spoke, Abū Yazīd does not seem to have crossed the first stage. I have not heard words that show that he reached the end and attained perfection.'[76] Since by the first stage Junayd means the unitive stage, his statement is confirmation of the fact that *shaṭḥ* is the result of the unitive experience. Al-Sarrāj reiterates the truth when he says: '*Shaṭḥ* is hardly found in the case of perfect men.'[77]

The other Sufi who took up the subject in detail was Sirhindī. In his treatment the connotation of the word is extended; *shaṭḥ* means not only the words with which the Sufi identifies himself with God or deifies himself, but also those words which suggest any kind of deviation from the Sharī'ah under the impact of the unitive experience. I will summarise below various kinds of *shaṭḥ* which Sirhindī has discussed.

The first category of *shaṭḥ* consists, of course, of words like 'I am God', 'Glory to me', 'There is none in my cloak except God', and 'I am the Preserved Tablet', in which the Sufi identifies himself with God or any of His powers. Sirhindī takes these words as a description of the experiences which their sayers had, what they saw or felt. He does not take them as a statement of reality.[78] This is the same position which Junayd takes in interpreting Abū Yazīd's *shaṭḥāt*.

The second category consists of *shaṭḥāt* which are appa-

rently false and shocking, but if one interprets them properly one will find them to be true. An instance is: 'The inclusiveness (*jam'*) of Muḥammad is more inclusive than the inclusiveness of God.' What these words mean, Sirhindī says, is that Muḥammad combines in himself both the levels of reality, the possible and the necessary, and is therefore more comprehensive than God, the Necessary Being. But there is a subtle point here, which, Sirhindī says, should not escape our notice. Muḥammad combines a symbolic presentation of the Necessary rather than His reality. Unless this qualification is made the statement would not be true. Muḥammad is but a creature, limited and finite, whereas God is limitless and infinite.[79]

The third category consists of *shaṭḥāt* which are totally false; however you interpret them you cannot make them true. This is the case with Abū Yazīd's words: 'My banner is higher than the banner of Muḥammad.' By his banner Abū Yazīd means saintship (*walāyah*) and by the banner of Muḥammad he means prophecy (*nubūwah*). What he means is that *walāyah* is superior to *nubūwah*. Some understand this statement to say that the *walāyah* of a walī is superior to the *nubūwah* of a prophet; others interpret it to mean that the *walāyah* of a prophet, not of a walī, is superior to his *nubūwah*. Sirhindī shows at length that the statement is false however we interpret it. The *nubūwah* of a prophet is superior to any *walāyah*, be it the *walāyah* of a prophet or a walī.[80]

The fourth category consists of *shaṭḥāt* which are the result of an excessive absorption of the mystic in God to the neglect of the other obligations of the *Shar'*. A case in point is the statement of Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Kharqānī[81] (d. 425/1034): 'I am still occupied with God, and I feel ashamed that I have not moved to the obedience of the Prophet.' These words, Sirhindī points out, differentiate between obedience to God and obedience to the Prophet, and presume that there are ways to obey God and to be occupied with Him which are not shown by the Prophet, or that one can obey God without obeying the Prophet. But this is wrong; the proper way to serve God is through the obedience of the Prophet.[82]

Some words are called *shaṭḥ*, but they are not *shaṭḥ*.

People call them *shaṭḥ*, for they want to protect their speaker from reproach. They do not realise that *shaṭḥ* is the result of intoxication (*sukr*) caused by an ecstatic experience. But statements made after calm deliberation that contradict the *Shar'* are not *shaṭḥ*. For example, Shaykh Kabīr Yamānī's statement: 'God does not know the hidden (*ghayb*)' is not a *shaṭḥ*. This is a deliberate statement flatly contradicting the words of the Qur'ān: 'Verily, God knows the hidden (*al-ghayb*) and the manifest (*al-shahādah*).' It must be censured and condemned. The Shaykh 'cannot exonerate himself of the offensiveness of his words by giving a different meaning to *ghayb*. If he wanted to say something different he should have chosen a different word. Nothing can justify a language which borders on infidelity'.[83]

The third thing which Sirhindī associates with the unitive experience is what is called *sukr* or *ghaybah*. The unitive experience is an ecstatic experience in which reason is completely suppressed. Although the real experience is short-lived and soon passes off, it leaves an effect on the Sufi which is very much like the intoxication (*sukr*) caused by drinking. Some Sufis recover from intoxication quickly and become sober; others take hours, days, even months to regain their normal state. The intensity of intoxication varies from Sufi to Sufi: some may not eat, drink or sleep; others may do all these things, but remain unconscious of what goes on around them. Those who are protected (*maḥfūẓ*), perform daily prayers and avoid sin. The following two instances will give an idea of the state. Al-Shiblī once came to Junayd who was sitting with his wife. Seeing al-Shiblī she was going to leave. But Junayd told her that she should stay because al-Shiblī was not conscious of his actions. Junayd then talked to al-Shiblī till the latter started weeping and returned to his senses. At that moment Junayd asked his wife to leave.[84] The other is the case of al-Nūrī. Once in a meeting Junayd reported about him that he had been standing in the mosque of al-Shunezī for many days, without eating, drinking and sleeping, saying only 'Allah, Allah', although he performed the prayers on time. Someone from the audience said: 'He is then sober (*ṣāḥī*)'. Junayd observed: 'No; ecstatic people are taken care of by God in their state of ecstasy.'[85]

It is not surprising that a Sufi under intoxication extols it over sobriety (*ṣaḥw*). Manṣūr, who in the view of Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Qādir[86] and Shaykh Sirhindī[87] did not move up from the unitive stage could not but glorify it. He entered into an argument with Junayd and was unable to agree with the latter's view that sobriety rather than intoxication was the condition of the perfect Sufis.[88] Bisṭāmīs have also been said to have extolled *sukr* over *ṣaḥw*. Their views seem to have been influenced by the reports of what Junayd calls the first period of their leader, Abū Yazīd 'l-Bisṭāmī. As Abū Yazīd came out of the unitive stage very late in his life, reports about his experience of separation and his sobriety did not circulate[89] much, consequently he continued to be identified with his earlier views.

Characteristics of the Experience of Difference

When the Sufi crosses the stage of union and enters into the stage of separation, differences reappear. He differentiates between God and the world, and between the Lord and the servant. He distinguishes between good and evil, between faith and infidelity, and between sin and obedience. He praises the one and condemns the other, warns people against wrong beliefs and evil practices, and calls them to true faith and good conduct as the prophets have defined. This is the stage of *Islām-i-ṭarīqat*. Sirhindī writes: 'The Islam of *ṭarīqah* is the experience of difference after union wherein distinctions come back and truth is separated from untruth, and good from evil.'[90]

As noted before, the experience of difference is a matter of degree. At the lowest stage, the Sufi begins to see the distinctions but is not able to clearly separate God from the world, good from evil and truth from untruth. He affirms their identity as well as difference. He believes that their difference is grounded in an essential unity, and thinks that the transcendence of God emerges out of an ultimate Unity. But when he moves ahead, the experience of difference intensifies, and as he reaches the end of the road, he sees that the truth is not that God is essentially one with the world, but that He is completely other and absolutely

different, that there is nothing in common between God and the world. God is beyond our idea of 'beyond' (*warā' 'l-warā'*).

To the extent a Sufi comes close to this goal, he is free from the intoxicating influence of his unitive experience, is sober and calm, recovers his discretion and regains control over language. He does not indulge in *shaṭḥ* and makes no claims; he is humble and submissive, lives in awe and fear, is ashamed of his earlier impudence and turns to God for forgiveness. He does not feel the conflict between his experience and the *Shar'*, says nothing that conflicts with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and is not irreverent and impolite. His practice does not differ from the Sharī'ah, and his ideals are governed by the example of the Prophet. Sirhindī notes that this is a matter of degree: unless one reaches the end and affirms God's complete transcendence one is not completely free from intoxication, and his ideas and practices are not in full agreement with the Sharī'ah.[91]

This view of the Sufi life at its perfection can be fully substantiated from Sufi literature. I have, however, space only for a few citations. '*Taṣawwuf* is like pleurisy: you talk nonsense (*hidhyān*) at first, but when you are established you become quiet' ('Abdullāh 'l-Nibājī).[92] 'When Sufis know God really they do not speak loud, and when they become silent they find peace in God' (Abū Yazīd).[93] 'They seek ecstasy so long as they are happy with it. But when they come in the presence of God ecstasy vanishes' (Junayd).[94]. 'The closer you reach God the more you fear Him' (Dhū' 'l-Nūn).[95] '*Shaṭḥ* is a lapse on the part of an advanced Sufi' (Ibn 'l-'Arabī).[96] 'When Sufis reach the end they seek only one thing: forgiveness' (Abū Yazīd).[97] 'The Sufi who reaches the end lives like the Prophet and calls people to God' (Suhrawardī).[98]

Status of the Unitive Experience

What does the unitive experience really mean? What is its nature and status? On this question the Sufis are broadly divided into three groups. One group simply recounts the experience, and says nothing as to what it means to them. They concern themselves with description, and do not

indulge in reflection. They have no doctrine about the nature of the experience and no observation on its status. The outstanding figure in this group is Abū Yazīd. He describes quite clearly various levels of his experience – *fanā'*, *baqā'* and complete immersion into pure unity. For instance, he says: 'God veiled me through me so I died, then He veiled me through Him so I lived, then He veiled me from me and from Him so I went into an "unconsciousness" (*ghaybah*)'.[99] He also tells of various characteristics of the experience which have been noted by many scholars of mysticism. He says that he is not conscious of time, of day and night; that he flies to eternity.[100] He is also not conscious of space; he feels that he is a vast ocean which has no end.[101] He ceases to be conscious of his human attributes, and says that he has no attributes.[102] He underlines the ecstatic nature of the experience when he says that God united him with Himself but inflamed[103] him, and that he lost his reason.[104] His observers say that in that state Abū Yazīd was easily provoked to wild claims and deificatory statements (*shaṭḥāt*).[105] Abū Yazīd gives all this information about his experience, but never does he say a word as to what the experience means to him, or how he takes it. Those who have called him a pantheist attribute a philosophical position to a person who contents himself to narrating his experiences and avoids taking positions.

The second group of Sufis claim that they realise in the experience their essential unity with God. In the ordinary life they forget that fact and believe that they are different from God. They recapture that truth in the unitive experience, which is not negated, they believe, by their post-union separation. That experience only brings to light the relative difference between God and man which is overshadowed in the unitive experience. What is the nature of the essential unity, how does man differ from God and how does the world of plurality proceed from unity? Not all Sufis have answered these questions, and those who have, have given different answers. Ibn 'l-'Arabī's answer is one. He says that the unity revealed in the unitive experience is the unity of Being (*wujūd*), that man and other objects of the world are particular determinations (*ta'ayyunāt*) of One Being, and

that the plurality proceeds from Unity by a process of manifestation (*tajallī*). The way Ibn 'l-'Arabī defines these key concepts and works them out in detail gives a particular shape to his philosophy. Others have conceived them differently and have come out with different philosophies. They however agree on the point that the unitive experience is a real experience.

The third group of Sufis believe that the experience of union or oneness is only a matter of vision (*shuhūdī*) not of reality (*'aynī*). The mystic perceives that he is one with God, but he is not one with God. This is the view of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī and 'Alā' 'l-Dawlah Simnānī. Shaykh Aḥmad writes:

> *Fanā'* and *baqā'* are perceptual (*shuhūdī*) not existential (*wujūdī*). Man does not become God and is not united with God. The servant is servant for ever, and the Lord is Lord eternally. They are wicked heretics who think that *fanā'* and *baqā'* are existential; that man discards his ontological limitations and unites with his Primal Source, Who is free from all limitation and determination; that he annihilates and lives in his Lord; or that like a drop of water which loses itself and mingles in the river, he casts away his individual limitations and becomes one with the Absolute. May God save us from these blasphemous ideas.[106]

What the Sufi unites with, Sirhindī further observes, is not God; it is only a shadow (*ẓill*) of God, other than God (*ghayr Allāh*) and a mere creature (*makhlūq*) of God. This is true of the forms and lights he sees, and the voices he hears. Sirhindī quotes the words of Khwājah Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband: 'Whatever is seen, heard or experienced is other than God, and must be negated by the word (*kalimah*) of negation (i.e. *lā ilāha illā Allāh*: there is no god except Allah).'[107]

The view which Sirhindī takes of the status of forms and lights which Sufis see is the view many other Sufis have also held. Al-Sarrāj, for instance, writes:

> It should be noted that every light which eyes behold is something created (*makhlūq*). There is nothing common between it and God; it is not an attribute of God at all; it is entirely a created object.[108]

For Sirhindī the knowledge which the experience of union is supposed to impart is not knowledge at all. To a disciple who had got the vision of unity in multiplicity, he sent this instruction:

> You must pass over these states and stations, and try to reach the One who produces those states, and where there is no knowledge but ignorance . . . Negate all that comes to you in vision and understanding, even if it is the vision of unity in multiplicity. For the real Unity does not appear in multiplicity; what actually appears is a reflection or an image of that Unity, not the Unity itself . . . Repeat the words: *Lā ilāha illā Allāh* . . . till nothing is left in vision or in knowledge, till you come to wonder (*ḥayrah*) and unknowing (*jahl*) and attain annihilation (*fanā'*). Unless you reach wonder and unknowing, you will not attain annihilation . . . Do not think of arrival (*waṣl*) or meeting (*ittiṣāl*); that is not yet in sight.[109]

It is not knowledge, but wonder that marks the final stage of the Sufi. He comes to know not that he knows God, but that he does not know and cannot know God. True knowledge of God, therefore, is to realise that one cannot know God. Abū Bakr 'l-Ṣiddīq put it in this way: 'Glorified is He who does not make Himself known except in our realisation that we cannot know Him.'[110] Dhū' 'l-Nūn said: 'Those who know God best wonder in Him most.'[111]

Purpose of *Fanā'* and *Baqā'*

The experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'* is not a participation in the Divine life. When the Sufi annihilates himself and unites with God, that happens at a level not different from a dream; it is not the level of reality. If in a dream you see, Sirhindī says, that you are king you do not become king. Similarly when a mystic sees that he is one with God, he is not one with God.[112] When he sees that he transcends time and space, that he moves in eternity and is infinite, that he is the hand of God, or His knowledge, or that he is God, he is, in fact, none of these things. These experiences are no more real than a dream.

This view of the experience which Sirhindī holds has been corroborated by a number of Sufis. I have already quoted the words of Khwājah Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband that 'all that is seen, heard or experienced is other than God and must be negated'. Al-Ghazālī has the same view. Commenting on the words of Abū 'l-Qāsim Gurgānī[113] (d. 465/1072) that in the ultimate stage the attributes of God become the attributes of the mystic, he rejects[114] all possible interpretations which involve the deification of the mystic in any sense. He rejects that the mystic participates in the essence (*māhīyah*) of the Divine attributes and becomes a Divine being like Him, or that the attributes of God flow into him, or that the mystic unites (*ittiḥād*) with God, or that God enters into him (*ḥulūl*). Only one interpretation which he considers to be right is that the mystic leaves behind ignoble attributes that commonly characterise humanity and acquires the noble ones that resemble the ones which behove God. This resemblance, al-Ghazālī further clarifies, is nothing more than a resemblance in name (*al-mushārakah fī 'l-ism*): the mystic never transcends human limitations and never becomes, for instance, omniscient. Al-Sarrāj,[115] al-Qushayrī[116] and Hujwīrī[117] have made the same points before.

A number of modern scholars of Sufism have said that deification is the ultimate goal of Sufism. Professor Nicholson, for instance, writes: 'He who dies to his self lives in God, and *fanā'*, the consummation of this death, marks the attainment of *baqā'*, or union with the Divine life. Deification, in short, is the Muslim mystic's *ultima Thule*.'[118] If by deification Nicholson means any of the four things which al-Ghazālī has rejected the statement is untrue. It is untrue in the view, besides al-Ghazālī, of al-Sarrāj, al-Qushayrī, Hujwīrī, 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī, Shihāb 'l-Dīn 'l-Suhrawardī, Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband and a host of other Sufis. If on the other hand, Nicholson means to say what al-Ghazālī considers the right meaning of participation in God's attributes, then it is not deification at all. The statement has been actually prompted by the *shaṭḥāt* of Sufis such as 'Glory to me', and 'I am God', and becomes plausible if we suppose that those who uttered these words did not transcend the unitive stage and actually believed in the truth of what their

words apparently convey. But the sayer of the first *shaṭḥ*, Abū Yazīd, went beyond the unitive stage, as we have noted before, affirmed the transcendence of God, and turned to Him for forgiveness.[119] The sayer of the second phrase, Manṣūr, did most probably remain at the stage of union and died at that stage. Now suppose that he actually believed in what his words say, although there are reasons to doubt it, is Nicholson, on the basis of this phrase or the words of Sufis passing through the unitive stage like Manṣūr, justified in making an unqualified statement about Sufism? Should he not consider that there is a stage, rather stages, beyond the stage of union, that a number of Sufis have really crossed the unitive stage, that *shaṭḥ* is the sign of immaturity, that the perfect Sufi is sober rather than intoxicated, and meek rather than boastful. To make deification the end of Sufism is just like judging a city on the basis of its slums.

The experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'* gives no special knowledge which is not available from the Sharī'ah of the Prophet. Shaykh Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband was asked: 'What is the purpose of *sulūk*?' He replied: 'The purpose is to know in detail what you know in brief, and to perceive in vision what you know through arguments.' Commenting on these words, Sirhindī says: 'The Shaykh did not say that the purpose is to acquire truths beyond the truths of the *Shar'*. It is, however, a fact that the mystic receives different ideas during his *sulūk*. But when he reaches the end, these superfluous ideas disappear in the air. He then perceives the same truths of the *Shar'* in detail, and comes out from the narrow enclosure of reason to the open space of *kashf*.'[120]

The object of *sulūk*, Sirhindī says, is to produce conviction (*yaqīn*) in the truths of the *Shar'*. 'One should not pursue *sulūk*', he says, 'in order to get something over and above the beliefs and practices of the *Shar'*, or anything new. The purpose should be to acquire a conviction in the objects of faith that is not shaken by the doubts of a sceptic or jolted by the remarks of an objector.'[121] Sirhindī disparages very strongly transcendental visions and auditions. 'The object of the Sufi *sulūk*', he says, 'is not to view forms and images of transcendental realities, or behold colours and lights. In fact they are nothing more than play and fun . . . Forms, these

or others, and lights, physical or spiritual, are all created by God. He transcends them all, and they are nothing but His signs and proofs.'[122]

The other object of *sulūk* is to make observance of the Sharī'ah easy. 'Regarding the practices of the Sharī'ah', Sirhindī writes, 'the object is to make compliance to its rules easy and spontaneous, to remove sluggishness and eradicate the opposition of the carnal self (*nafs*).'[123]

Sirhindī explains the relation of the Sufi *sulūk* to the Sharī'ah of the Prophet in this way: The Sharī'ah consists, he points out, of three parts: Knowledge (*'ilm*), practice (*'amal*) and *ikhlāṣ*, that is, to believe in the truths of the Sharī'ah and carry out its commands honestly and sincerely only to please God. The purpose of the Sufi exercise in *fanā'* and *baqā'* is neither to get new knowledge, nor to do some things not prescribed by the *Shar'*, but to realise *ikhlāṣ*.[124] The Sufi goes through the experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'* so that he negates himself completely and lives just for the pleasure of God. The mystic *fanā'* and *baqā'* is a means, in other words, to this goal of selfless obedience to God which Sirhindī calls *fanā'-i-ḥaqīqī*, or real *fanā'*. He writes: 'Real *fanā'* is effacing oneself in carrying out the will of God.'[125] At another place he writes: 'Real *fanā'* is to forget the not-Divine, to free oneself from the love of the world, and to clean the heart from all desires and wishes, as it is required of a servant. And real *baqā'* is to fulfil the wishes of the Lord, to make His will one's own will without losing one's self-identity.'[126]

CHAPTER THREE

Sufism and Sharī'ah

Introduction

Scholars in modern times have viewed differently the relation of Sufism with Prophetic Islam. Some think that Sufism is an exotic growth and trace its various elements to one external source or the other. For instance, they trace its ascetic and monastic practices to Christianity; its exercise in self-annihilation (*fanā'*) to Buddhism; its aspiration to know transcendental realities through purification of the soul and illumination to gnosticism; its vision of the multiplicity proceeding from an ultimate unity to neo-Platonism; and its monistic theosophy to Indian Vedanta.[1]

Others have held a completely opposite view. For them Sufism is an essentially Islamic phenomenon, an authentic expression of the Islamic spirit. They point out that the abstenance and poverty which the Sufis practise are inspired by the life of the Prophet and his Companions; that their withdrawal from society is approved by the Sharī'ah as a measure to save themselves from the contagion of corruption and degeneration in government and society; that their occupation with devotion, *dhikr* and contemplation has been applauded by the Prophet; and that their theosophical vision, even the concepts of their philosophy of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, are suggested by different Qur'ānic verses and aḥādith.[2]

Some scholars,[3] considering the complex nature of the phenomenon, have preferred to distinguish between a Sufism of poverty, renunciation and devotion, and a Sufism of love, ecstasy, *fanā'* and illumination; and attributed the former to Prophetic Islam and the latter to external influences. Others[4]

have differentiated between an orthodox Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf 'l-Sunnī*) formulated, for instance, by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), and a philosophical Sufism (*al-taṣawwuf 'l-falsafī*), developed by Sufis like Ibn 'l-'Arabī (d. 638/1240). This division implies, in a sense, the idea that the former belongs to the heart of Islam, whereas the latter is somewhat foreign. Some other scholars[5] believe that Ibn 'l-'Arabī's Sufism is the true and real Sufism; and the Sufism of 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jilānī (d. 561/1116), Shihāb 'l-Dīn 'l-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) and perhaps al-Ghazālī is a religious rather than a mystical enterprise.

Earliest Sufi writers like al-Sarrāj (d. 378/988), al-Kalābādhī (d. 390/1000), Abū Nu'aym (d. 430/1038) and al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) claimed that Sufism was the most authentic expression of the inner dimension of Islam, and the most perfect realisation of its spiritual values.[6] They showed that the Sufis had the same beliefs as formulated by the theologians,[7] that they were governed by the same rules as were elaborated by the jurists, and that their methods and experiences were in complete agreement with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.[8] They interpreted and reconciled Sufi sayings which appeared to be inconsistent, and disowned those which were discordant.[9]

Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) who appeared in the succeeding generation took a great step forward. Instead of interpreting Sufism and reconciling it with the Prophetic Islam, as his predecessors did, he interpreted the Prophetic religion itself in the light of Sufi ideas, experiences and practices, and demonstrated that Islam when properly understood was not different from Sufism as represented by its great masters. This is the task which he performed in the *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm 'l-Dīn*.[10] The result was that Islam at its best was identified with Sufism. The work of 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jilānī (d. 561/1166) and Shihāb 'l-Dīn 'l-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), confirmed and strengthened this image. They, however, disassociated themselves from the speculative aspect of al-Ghazālī's work.[11] Ibn 'l-'Arabī (d. 638/1240) followed in al-Ghazālī's footsteps, and carried further the task of interpreting Islamic beliefs and practices in the light of Sufi experience and intuition.[12]

Partly because of these works, but more because of the enviable life of devotion and piety of its leaders in a situation which increasingly made the practice of earlier piety difficult, the belief that Islam at its best was one with Sufism was gradually established. If anyone, such as Ibn Taymīyah (d. 728/1327–8), tried to distinguish the Prophetic piety from Sufi piety, and criticise the Sufi ideas and ways that were incompatible with the Prophetic religion,[13] he was treated as an outsider, and his observations were ignored. Within the fold of Sufism there was no effort to examine the ways, ideals and concepts that had developed over centuries, and see how they stood with the basic approach of the Prophet and the fundamental principles of his religion. Of course, there are instances of self-criticism on matters of detail,[14] but we are not concerned with such things here.

The Saintly Way and the Prophetic Way

Sirhindī was the first Sufi to look at the whole tradition of Sufism in the light of Prophetic Islam. He defined, on the one hand, the principles of the Prophet's religion, and stated, on the other, what was new in Sufism, and proceeded to show what part of it would fit into the Prophetic structure and serve its purpose, and what would not. He differentiated, to begin with, between the Prophet's way (*ṭarīq-i-nubūwat*) to God, and the Sufi way (*ṭarīq-i-walāyat*). Many Sufis before him had felt a conflict between the Sufi experience and Prophetic Islam, as we have noted before,[15] and some like al-Ḥallāj had expressed it very emphatically, but no one ever consciously admitted that the *ṭarīqah* which produced the mystical experience was different from the Prophetic way. Sirhindī not only admitted the difference clearly, he also proceeded to spell it out in detail.

The most fundamental difference between the two ways is the experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. That experience is essential to the Sufi way, so much so that Sirhindī says '*walāyat* means *fanā'* and *baqā'* (*walāyat 'ibārat az fanā' wa baqā' ast*)'.[16] But neither this experience nor what leads to it, such as *jadhbah* and *sulūk*[17] are part of the Prophetic way. He writes:

> The nearness to God (*qurb-i-ilāhī*) which depends upon *fanā'* and *baqā'*, *sulūk* and *jadhbah*, is the saintly piety (*qurb-i-walāyat*), and the saints (*awliyā'*) of the Ummah have been graced with it. But the nearness to God (*qurb-i-ilāhī*) which was given to the Companions of the Prophet in his company was the Prophetic piety (*qurb-i-nubūwat*) which they got through him and by following him. In this piety there is neither *fanā'* nor *baqā'*, neither *jadhbah* nor *sulūk*. And this piety is many times superior to the saintly piety. For it is the real (*aṣīl*) piety, while the other is a second rate (*ẓillī*) piety.[18]

At another place Sirhindī discusses at length the difference between the two pieties, which may be summarised as follows:

Fanā', which the saintly piety involves, means that the dualism (*ithnaynīyat*) of man and God is to be abolished. But as the prophetic piety does not involve *fanā'*, it does not require the abolition of dualism; just the opposite, it maintains and preserves dualism.[19]

Since the Sufi seeks to remove dualism, he is always in a state of intoxication. But as the prophetic piety does not obliterate dualism, it does not know intoxication: it is complete sobriety (*ṣaḥw*).[20] We will appreciate this point if we recall that the Sufi *fanā'* is an ecstatic experience, achieved through intensifying passionate love (*'ishq*) and self-negating meditation. The Sufi is in an unusual state of mind before and after the experience; he is under intoxication. The prophetic way neither involves passionate love and self-negating meditation, nor ecstatic experience of union; hence it does not involve intoxication.

The Sufi love for God is a passionate love: it seeks to dissolve oneself and merge in God; and unless that happens the Sufi cries, weeps and sighs, and indulges in things which induce self-abandonment and ecstasy, such as music and dance. The prophetic love is a completely different love; it is unaware of the cries of separation, sighs for union, raptures and abandonment that characterise the former.[21]

Since *walāyat* requires the abolition of duality between man and God, the saint tries to negate his will, his attributes, and his personality. Sirhindī cites as example the words of Abū Yazīd: 'I will not to will at all.'[22] Let me add to it the

words of Junayd: '*Taṣawwuf* is to eradicate natural dispositions, to wipe out human attributes, to uproot the urges of the self, and to promote the qualities of the spirit . . .'[23] In the prophetic way, as the goal is not to abolish duality, the traveller on this way does not have to negate his will, nor to eradicate his attributes and his self-hood. All that he has to do is to remove the evil objects of his will, and replace them by good objects. He has to do the same with his other attributes of knowledge and power. None of the attributes of man – knowledge, will and power etc – is evil in itself. On the contrary, they are good, and become evil when they are associated with evil objects. Therefore, all that is required is to replace evil objects by good ones. The prophets change the object of human attributes rather than eradicate the attributes themselves.[24]

Since the object of the Sufi *ṭarīqah*, the abolition of human attributes, is a very difficult task, the Sufi has to resort to extraordinary measures – severe penances, dangerous exercises, self-torture and mortification. Such measures are not required in the prophetic way; for it does not seek to abolish human attributes. Sirhindī cites his own experience. At first, he tried to abolish his will, but then gave up, when he realised that the purpose should be not to abolish the will, but the evil objects of the will. The prophetic way is easy, safe and sure; the Sufi way is difficult, dangerous and unsure; the former is the *rāh-i-ijtibā'* in which God leads his servant to Himself, the latter is the *rāh-i-ināhat* in which the Sufi struggles to reach God.[25]

In the *walāyat* the Sufi has to wash his hands of this world and the next, and believe that to seek the next world (*ākhirah*) is no better than to seek this world. Sirhindī refers to the words of Dāwūd 'l-Ṭā'ī[26] (d. 166/782): 'If you want safety, bid farewell to the world; but if you want honour, bid farewell to the Hereafter.' He also refers to the saying of Rābi'ah 'l-'Adawiyah[27] (d. 185/801) in which she opposes the love of Paradise to the Love of God and wishes to burn the Paradise. In the prophetic way, on the other hand, 'love of the next world has been praised, and the concern for the life hereafter is commended. Rather, the concern in this way means concern with the life hereafter, and love means love

of the next world'. The reason is that 'meeting with God is destined for the Hereafter, as the complete attainment of His pleasure (*riḍā*) will be available only there'. The travellers of the prophetic way know this truth; therefore, they do not oppose the love of Paradise to the love of God. But the travellers of the Sufi way do not realise this truth; consequently they imagine a contradiction between them.[28]

In *walāyat* the Sufi encounters appearances and illuminations (*ẓuhūrāt wa tajallīyāt*). He sees forms and figures, colours and lights, particularly at the first stages of his *sulūk* and is happy with his visions. The traveller of the prophetic path sees hardly any visions, not even in the beginning of his career; and does not need them. For, these visions are nothing but shadows of the Real, and the traveller of the prophetic way 'has no love for shadows', and 'is not the captive of illumination (*tajallī*)'.[29]

This substantial and candid distinction between the Sufi way and the prophetic way coming from an eminent Sufi like Sirhindī was bound to affect the subsequent development of Sufism. One important effect was that more and more Sufis overcame their original reluctance and recognised that the two paths were different. They also increasingly felt the need to reform Sufism and bring it closer to the Sharī'ah. I will dwell here on the former aspect only.

Walī Allāh, a century after Sirhindī, reiterated the difference between the Sufi way and the prophetic way. 'There are two ways', he said in his famous work *Ḥujjat Allāh 'l-Bālighah*, 'to attain happiness (*sa'adah*). One is the way of theistic philosophers (*al-muta'allihūn min 'l-ḥukamā'*) and God-intoxicated Sufis (*majdhūb min 'l-ṣūfīyah*); and the other is the way for which the prophets are sent'.[30] In a later work, *Hama'āt*, where he reviews the history of Sufism, he describes more clearly the difference between the saintly way and the prophetic way:

> During the time of the Prophet and his Companions, even many generations later, people were primarily concerned with the commands of the *Shar'*; other things (i.e. feelings and sentiments) were associated with the carrying out of those commands. Their *iḥsān* was prayer (*ṣalāt*), fasting, *dhikr*, reading the Qur'ān, *ḥajj*, charity and *jihād*. None of them

ever spent an hour in meditation (*tafakkur*), or thought of a pure presence of God isolated from *dhikr* and other things, or tried to attain it. The best of them got pleasure in communion (*munājāt*) with God, in *ṣalāt* and in *dhikr*; experienced an upsurge of feeling in reciting the Qur'ān; paid *zakāt* to avoid the displeasure of God, and to overcome greed and love for things other than God, and so on. None of them emitted a cry, went into ecstasy, behaved abnormally, or uttered *shaṭḥ*. No one knew the appearance (*tajallī*) of God, or His hiding (*istitār*) and things like that. They loved Paradise and feared Hell. Revelations (*kashf*) and miracles, ecstasies and trances are hardly reported of them; and if any of these things occurred to them it was accidental, never intended or deliberately cultivated. The conviction (*yaqīn*) which they had was the living consciousness of things in which they had faith. One of them said: 'The Doctor has made me sick.' It was like the vision or the insight which men ordinarily have. This was the condition of the people of this age.[31]

Shāh Walī Allāh confirms in this highly important statement most of the differences which Sirhindī has shown between the Sufi way and the Prophetic way. In the *Fuyūḍ 'l-Ḥaramayn*, which is a record of his meditations in the House of God at Makkah and the Mosque of the Prophet at Madinah, he makes this assessment of the Prophet's attitude to the Sufi way:

> Regarding the second way of attaining to God my impression is that the Prophet did not have a good opinion about it, nor did he like it. His life symbolised the first way of approaching God. God has made him the source of the good which was to flow to people from this way and the means through which they acquired that good.[32]

The distinctions which Sirhindī and Walī Allāh have made between the prophetic way and the saintly way were further elaborated by Shāh Ismā'īl[33] (d. 1246/1830) in his work *Ṣirāt-i-Musṭaqīm*. He begins with a penetrating analysis of love, and shows how this central concept means one thing in the prophetic way and another in the Sufi way. He says that the Sufi love is a passionate love (*ḥubb-i-'ishqī*). It is born of a realisation on the part of the Sufi that his spirit is a Divine

spirit (*rūḥ-i-ilāhī*), that it is imprisoned in a material body, and that he would not be happy unless he frees it from the prison and attains union with God. With this realisation the Sufi declares war against the body and tries to rescue his spirit. This generates restlessness, heat and fury in the animal soul which links the spirit with the body. So long as the struggle goes on, the Sufi knows no peace, takes no rest, is passionate and mad. He does not cool down unless he effaces himself and becomes one with God.[34]

On the other hand, the love which the Sharī'ah speaks of is a 'rational love' (*ḥubb-i-'aqlī*). It is born of a sense of gratitude to God for His bounties, and of a sense of greatness, perfection, and majesty of God, on the one hand, and of man's absolute dependence on Him and his own nothingness, on the other. These are, according to the Qur'ān, the twin sources of faith, and on this ground Shāh Ismā'īl calls the prophetic love the 'love of faith' (*ḥubb-i-īmānī*).[35]

The passionate love and the love of faith do not differ in their origin only, they also differ in the factors which strengthen them (*mu'ayyīdāt*), the feelings and attitudes which accompany them (*āthār*) and the effects and results which follow from them (*thamarāt*). Shāh Ismā'īl has discussed all these things at great length; I can only note down the main points:

Passionate love is promoted by cutting down the needs of the body – food, drink and sleep – and by speaking little and by reducing contact with people. This helps to weaken the animal soul, and as the animal soul becomes weak the love of God increases. It is further strengthened by hearing sweet voices, listening to love songs, lyrical poems and passion stories.[36]

The 'love of faith' needs none of these things, nor does it declare war against the body; it only demands moderation and restraint. In order to promote this love one 'has to obey the Sharī'ah, try hard to follow the Sunnah, hate to indulge in innovations, and honestly observe the rules of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth regarding external behaviour and internal life'.[37] This is enough to break the defiance of the soul and make it submissive. The love of faith is strengthened 'not by

killing the will but by preferring God's will over one's own will'.[38] It is further strengthened by working for His religion, defending faith, reviving the Sunnah, promoting the rule of the Sharī'ah, fighting against evil and injustice, removing poverty, sickness and misery, and by creating conditions of well-being and happiness in society.[39]

Shāh Ismā'īl observes that even the *dhikr* and *fikr* which are the main plank of the passionate love mean one thing in the Sufi context, and a different thing in the context of the 'love of faith'.[40]

Passionate love is by nature wild and unruly. 'Since it wants to rend the human veil asunder and unite with its Divine source it does not bother much about the rules of the Sharī'ah or the norms of good behaviour.'[41] It does not mind indulging in improper behaviour such as listening to instrumental music, courting love, practising *shughl barzakh*, sitting idle, saying neither *dhikr* nor doing anything else.[42] This does not mean, Shāh Ismā'īl adds, that those who follow the path of 'passionate love' do not observe the *Shar'* or behave properly. They do, and do very nicely, but they do it more out of respect for the Sharī'ah rather than out of love, and at times in spite of it.[43] The same wild tendency is visible in the love which the traveller of the Sufi path has for his preceptor; he tends to make it absolute and likes not to put any constraints on it.[44] A passionate lover seeks to live alone, occupies only with God; shuns people; has no interest in human affairs, society or government; knows no responsibilities towards family, relatives and neighbours; and hates marriage because that involves him in the cobweb of social relations.[45] He is not able to understand the interrelation between the external and the internal aspects of the Sharī'ah. He does not appreciate why the Sharī'ah emphasises the observance of its exoteric rules along with the cultivation of internal virtues. He therefore tends to neglect the external aspect of the Sharī'ah and concentrate on the internal realities.[46]

The man who pursues 'the love of faith' is concerned equally with both aspects of the Sharī'ah, external and internal. He sees the Sharī'ah as a unity, and tries to obey it in its totality.[47] He does not look for 'talking to God, seeing

His vision, experiencing *fanā'* and *baqā'*, or knowing the realities of things'.[48] His objective is one: to fulfil the will of God. He preaches Islam and strives to establish the Sharī'ah, undaunted by dangers and hardships of the way. He feels pleasure in devotion and obedience, and finds peace of heart in communion (*munājāt*). He hates sin, abhors evil, and loves to do whatever pleases God. He is not self-centred; on the contrary, he is very much concerned with the well-being of the people, and works for their piety and happiness.[49]

The end of passionate love is union with God. The traveller of this path loses his individuality and is assimilated in God, just as a piece of iron put in a fire becomes red like fire. At this stage the passionate lover would often say: 'I am God', as the piece of red iron, had it a tongue, would like to say: 'I am fire'. From a lover in this state miracles often proceed; his prayers are responded to, and his petitions for people are granted. He perceives that things depend upon God for their existence and sustenance, and realises how God comprehends everything. He sees that there is only One Being there, and believes in the unity of existence.[50]

Union, illumination or the vision of One Being are not the fruits of the love of faith. God bestows upon the lover of faith quite different honours. He raises him to the stage of *muḥaddath*, *shahīd* and *ḥawārī*; that is, He reveals in his heart the truths of religion, makes him its witness, and raises him as its preacher and defender. He bestows on him real conviction (*imān-i-ḥaqīqī*), and elevates him to the position of His own deputy (*khalīfat Allāh*), as he did with David, helps him to establish his Sharī'ah, defeat his enemies and overcome his opposition.[51]

The above discussion underlines most of the important features of the Sufi way that distinguish it from the prophetic way. It also brings out how the piety which Sufism usually promotes differs from the piety which the prophetic religion cultivates. This is one aspect of the relation between Sufism and the Sharī'ah which Sirhindī, and following him Walī Allāh and Shāh Ismā'īl have made clear. We may now turn to the other aspects.

Sharī'ah and *Ma'rifah*

Sirhindī uses the Sharī'ah in two senses. First, the usual sense of the rules and regulations of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah concerning worship and rites, morals and society, economy and government, along with the elaborations and applications of these rules by scholars which agree with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. But often he uses the term in a wider sense which along with rules and laws also includes faith and belief, values and ideals, as well as the Prophet's way to cultivate piety and achieve God's pleasure. In other words, the Sharī'ah means everything which God has prescribed (*shara'a*) directly or through the Prophet, and is identical with the Prophetic religion.[52]

Sharī'ah in this sense is not only a comprehensive system of faith and practice, it is also self-sufficient. 'It comprehends', Sirhindī writes, 'all the goods of this world and the next, leaving nothing out for which one should have to go beyond the Sharī'ah'.[53]

Let me elaborate on this statement which Sirhindī makes in all seriousness. The first part of the Sharī'ah is faith (*īmān*), which means conviction in transcendental realities – God, angels, the Hereafter, revelation, prophecy, etc., as defined by the Sharī'ah. Sirhindī clearly states that the only way to know these realities of faith is the revelation (*waḥy*) of the Prophet. Neither reason nor mystic *kashf* is capable of revealing them. Reason working by itself cannot establish these realities; its arguments are at best inconclusive and fail to produce conviction. Sirhindī writes: 'Everything that we know through the prophets regarding God's existence and attributes, prophets and revelation, the impeccability of angels, resurrection, Paradise and Hell, eternal happiness and damnation, and other similar truths which the Sharī'ah has revealed to us, are impossible to know through reason. Before hearing from the prophets, reason is incapable of establishing them by itself.'[54] His view regarding the inability of reason in matters of faith is not different from what al-Ghazālī has said in the *Munqidh* and the *Tahāfut* whose remarks he often quotes with approval.[55]

On the position of mystic *kashf*, however, Sirhindī has a

different view, which is to be seriously considered particularly by those who make knowledge of reality the ultimate goal of Sufism. First of all, he denies that *kashf* is an independent source of knowledge parallel to revelation. It can only act as an interpreter of the Prophetic revelation (*waḥy*) concerning matters of faith. 'Inspiration (*ilhām*) only brings out', he says, 'the non-apparent truths of religion; it is not to add upon its truths. As *ijtihād* reveals rules that are implied (in the Sharī'ah), similarly, *ilhām* reveals the hidden truths (of faith) which ordinary people are not able to see'.[56] Second, even in this capacity of interpreter, *kashf* is not infallible; like the *ijtihād* of a *mujtahid*, the *kashf* of a Sufi may be right or it may be wrong. Inspiration is uncertain (*ẓannī*) and the revelations of *kashf* do not generate truth.[57] Third, if the ideas of a mystic in the light of his *kashf* contradict the views of the theologians of the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah* they should be treated as the product of intoxication (*sukr*) of the Sufi and rejected as untrue. 'There are mystical ideas which conflict with the views of the *Ahl-i-Ḥaqq* (i.e. theologians of *Ahl 'l-Sunnah*) . . . in such cases the truth is with the 'ulamā' of the *Ahl-i-Ḥaqq*.'[58] At another place he writes: 'The criterion of the validity of mystical ideas (*'ulūm ladunnīyah*) is that they should agree with the clear ideas of the disciplines (*'ulūm*) of the Sharī'ah; if there is a hair's breadth of divergence, it is due to *sukr*. The truth is what the 'ulamā' of the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah* have established. All else is blasphemy (*zandaqah*), heresy (*ilḥād*), and the result of intoxication (*sukr*) and ecstasy (*ghalbat 'l-ḥāl*).'[59] In other words, the *kashf* of a Sufi is subject to the authority not only of the text of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, but also of their interpretation by theological reason.

Al-Ghazālī's views on this subject are quite different. In his opinion, the Prophetic revelation does not speak clearly about transcendental realities of faith, and uses the language of symbols and metaphors. One has to interpret this language and decipher what it really means.[60] Theological reason is not quite qualified to perform that job, and the only thing on which you can rely is the mystic *kashf*. Hence for al-Ghazālī *kashf* is the most reliable instrument of interpretation. It is not at all subject to theological reason. On the

contrary, theology has to submit to mystical revelations. In the *Iḥyā'* and other writings of the mystical period, al-Ghazālī plays down theological reason and extols *kashf*; he seems at times to elevate *kashf* to the status of a parallel source of knowledge besides revelation (*waḥy*). *Kashf* is true, he believes, provided it does not contradict a clear and unequivocal statement of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, or violate the fundamental rules of reason, or an established truth.[61]

Ibn 'l-'Arabī agrees essentially with al-Ghazālī; he would not, however, go to the extent of al-Ghazālī in disparaging reason. He would rather allow reason a greater role, even consider it another source for the knowledge of reality, of course, at a lower status to that of *kashf*.[62]

The views of the founders of the four great Sufi orders are not different from the views of Sirhindī. I have referred before[63] to the views of Khwājah Naqshband and his influence on Sirhindī. Shaykh Shihāb 'l-Dīn 'l-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234) defines in the *'Awārif 'l-Ma'ārif* the scope of the 'privileged' knowledge of the Sufis which he calls knowledge by inheritance (*'ilm 'l-warāthah*) in these words:

> It is the knowledge of the status and stations; knowledge of ideas that enter the heart; knowledge of faith and sincerity; knowledge of the soul (*al-nafs*), its nature and dispositions which is the best knowledge of the Sufis; knowledge of the different kinds of worldly life, desires, particularly the subtle ones, whether good or evil; knowledge of what is indispensable and how to make the soul content with minimum in speech and action, food and drink, clothing and sleep; knowledge of repentance, true and sincere, of sins that are subtle, and lapses that are small for the ordinary man but serious for the pious; knowledge how to force the soul to give up what is useless, and guard against things that are not needed; knowledge of contemplation (*murāqabah*) and of things which obstruct it; knowledge of self-examination and protection, trust (*tawakkul*), satisfaction (*riḍā*) . . ., renunciation (*zuhd*) . . ., seeking God (*inābah*) . . ., praying (*du'ā'*) . . ., and love . . .; knowledge of states such as awe (*haybah*), fellowship (*uns*), contraction (*qabḍ*), expansion (*basṭ*) . . .; knowledge of *fanā'* and *baqā'* and their various degrees; knowledge of disappearance (*istitār*), and appearance

(*tajallī*), union (*jam'*) and separation (*farq*) flashes (*lawāmi'*), glimmers (*ṭawāli'*) and glimpses (*bawādī*); knowledge of sobriety and intoxication, etc.[64]

It is clear from this exposition that al-Suhrawardī's *'ilm 'l-warāthah* is the knowledge of the Sufi *ṭarīqah* and *sulūk*, virtues and vices, practices and exercises, experiences and attainments, states and stations. There is no mention here of metaphysical truths. Al-Suhrawardī is in fact very sceptical regarding the efficacy of *kashf* in revealing transcendental realities. His attitude is quite clear from his discussion on the nature of spirit (*al-rūḥ*), which is the only subject that has any philosophical interest in the whole book. He opens the discussion by saying that the proper course for Sufis is to abstain from enquiring into the spirit, and quotes Junayd's words: 'God has kept the knowledge of the spirit to Himself.' Then he goes on to cite the views which different Sufis have expressed, and concludes: 'I am not sure about any of these views; I would rather prefer to be silent and abstain.'[65] It is not without significance that al-Suhrawardī, writing half a century after al-Ghazālī, should choose to call the esoteric knowledge of the Sufis *'ilm 'l-warāthah* rather than *'ilm 'l-mukāshafah* which through its use by the latter had acquired a metaphysical connotation.

The same, I believe, is the position of Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166). There is nothing in his *Ghunyat 'l-Ṭālibīn* and *Futūḥ 'l-Ghayb* which might lead us to form a different idea.

Sharī'ah and *Ḥaqīqah*

Ḥaqīqah in Sufi literature at times means the perception of reality in mystical experience; and is contrasted with the rational comprehension of reality by the philosophers, on the one hand, and the faith of the common man, on the other. This sense is usually conveyed by the term *ma'rifah*; the latter, however may also refer to concepts and doctrines about reality in the light of the Sufi experience.

More often *ḥaqīqah* refers to what, according to the Sufis, religious life really means. What, for instance, is the reality

(*ḥaqīqah*) of faith, sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) and *tawḥīd*; what is the essence of worship, prayer and *dhikr*; what do *zakāt*, charity or *jihād* in reality mean; what is true love, fear, abstenance, renunciation, thanksgiving, patience, trust and resignation (*riḍā*); what in sum is the reality of piety (*taqwā*) and *iḥsān*, or religious life at its perfection.

How does a Sufi view these realities (*ḥaqā'iq*)? Does he believe that the Sharī'ah defines them, explains clearly and definitely what they mean, and tells how to realise them truly and fully? Or does he have to resort to other means such as his mystical experience, *kashf* and vision to know these realities, and to his *ṭarīqah* and *sulūk* to acquire them? Or does he have partly to depend on the Sharī'ah and partly on his own means? In short, what is the relation between the Sharī'ah and the *ḥaqīqah*?

On this question there are different views among the Sufis. One view, which Sirhindī believes to be the right one, is that the Sharī'ah defines what religious life truly is, what are its constituents and what they really mean. Sharī'ah is not just a code of rules and regulations that govern external action. It also explains what faith, *tawḥīd*, love, trust, gratitude, patience, worship, *dhikr*, *jihād*, *taqwā* and *iḥsān* are, and shows how to realise these realities. It is concerned with outer behaviour as well as with internal states of mind and will; with faith and virtue, motive and intention, feelings and emotions. It is both form (*ṣūrah*) and reality (*ḥaqīqah*); it is a complete unity.[66] Further, it also shows how to attain the real and perfect life of piety and *iḥsān*. The Sufi *ṭarīqah* is only a means to achieve the realities of religious life as defined by the Sharī'ah. It does not claim to tell what, for instance, *tawḥīd* is, or what virtues like love, trust, resignation, etc., mean, or what *iḥsān* consists of. It is only to confirm what the Sharī'ah says, and not to tell anything new or add any new dimension. There are no realities outside the Sharī'ah and the Sufi *ṭarīqah* is only a further help to attain those realities.

The other view which many a Sufi holds, is that the Sharī'ah is essentially a code of law that seeks to regulate external behaviour. It is concerned with the outer structure of religious life, but not with the inner reality. The realities

of faith and religious life lie outside the Sharī'ah, and can be known as well as attained only through Sufi ways. In other words, the Sharī'ah is a form without reality, a bone without the marrow, chaff without the grain. Sirhindī refers to this group of Sufis in these words:

> Others are concerned with reality (*ḥaqīqah*). But their reality is not the reality of the Sharī'ah; for them the Sharī'ah is merely a form, nothing but a shell. The kernel in their view lies beyond this shell.[67]

Most of these Sufis, however, observe the laws of the Sharī'ah; they avoid what is forbidden, perform what has been enjoined, and follow what is recommended. They never think that they can at any time dispense with the Sharī'ah. Sirhindī does not, obviously, approve of their views; but he does not find fault with their practice either. On the contrary, he says: 'They are the friends (*awliyā'*) of God', and excuses their views on the ground that 'they have given up everything for the love of God'.[68]

A small group of Sufis however believe that they are obliged to follow the Sharī'ah till they achieve *ma'rifah*. When they attain *ma'rifah*, the obligations of the *Shar'* no longer apply. If they still observe the Sharī'ah, they do so not because they need it, but because they want those who have not yet realised the truth to continue to follow the Sharī'ah. The Sharī'ah, in their view, is for the common man who does not or cannot know the truth; but those who have known the truth do not need it any longer. Sirhindī condemns this view as 'sheer heresy and infidelity'. The truth is just the opposite. 'Those who are more advanced (in Sufism) need worship ten times more than the novice; for their progress depends upon devotion and their attainments are conditioned on their continued compliance to the Sharī'ah.'[69] Sirhindī is here saying what all great Sufis have always said. I will quote just one, Junayd. He was told that some gnostics of God had reached a stage where they had dispensed with right acts and devotions. Junayd reacted sharply: 'These people talk of dropping good works; it is indeed a grave sin; they are worse than thieves and adulterers. The true gnostics of God accept the commands of God and turn to Him in

submission. If I were to live for a thousand years I would not stop doing even the smallest things, unless I was prevented from doing them.'[70]

Those who believe that the Sharī'ah is only a form (*ṣūrah*), and think that the reality (*ḥaqīqah*) lies outside the Sharī'ah, do so for various reasons. Some follow the course of Sufi *ṭarīqah*, reach the stage of union and identity, but do not proceed beyond. Others start with a belief in unity and identity on philosophical grounds and subsequently realise it in their experience. Whatever way they proceed, when they reach the stage of union and identity their progress is arrested. They develop the belief that Unity of Being is the ultimate truth, and begin to see all the realities of religion in that light. They identify *tawḥīd*, for instance, with *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, and conclude that the Sharī'ah does not teach the real *tawḥīd*. Some like Tilimsānī[71] (d. 690/1291) feel no scruples to pronounce: 'The Sharī'ah is all *shirk* and the real *tawḥīd* is in our doctrine.'[72] This is an example of how and to what extent mystical experience and ideas can change the view of what the reality of faith or religious life is.

The other factor which leads some Sufis to unconsciously place the *ḥaqīqah* outside the Sharī'ah is their personal attitude. For some people a life of renunciation, devotion, *dhikr* and contemplation is a life much more authentic and real than a life in which devotion and *dhikr* are combined at a reduced level with service to man, participation in community, struggle for a just social order, *da'wah* and *jihād*. Such Sufis see very little reality (*ḥaqīqah*) in the Sharī'ah; and see more reality in absorption and *fanā'*, rapture and ecstasy.

Rules of the Sharī'ah and *Kashf*

There is general agreement among Sufis that the only way to know what things are legal or illegal, and what acts are right or wrong is the Qur'ān, the Sunnah of the Prophet, the *ijtihād* of qualified jurists (*mujtahidīn*), and their consensus (*ijmā'*). These are also the means for knowing the degrees of obligation, whether a thing is obligatory (*farḍ/wājib*) or

forbidden (*ḥarām*), commendable (*mandūb*), undesirable (*makrūh*), or permissible (*mubāḥ*). The inspiration (*ilhām*) or the *kashf* of the Sufi has no role in this regard, neither in determining the legality or otherwise of things, nor in fixing the degree of their obligation.

Shaykh Sirhindī states the common view in the clearest terms:

> It is commonly agreed that in determining the rules (*aḥkām*) of the Sharī'ah, what counts is the Qur'ān, the Sunnah of the Prophet, the *qiyās* of a qualified jurist (*mujtahid*) and the consensus of the Ummah. No other principle apart from these four is to be taken into consideration to determine the legality of rules. Inspiration (*ilhām*) does not determine whether something is right or wrong, and the *kashf* of a Sufi does not establish the degree of a rule, whether it is obligatory or desirable. The saints (*awliyā'*) have to follow, like an ordinary Muslim, the opinions of the *mujtahids*. Their revelations (*kushūf*) and inspirations (*ilhāmāt*) do not elevate their status and relieve them from following the judgements of the jurists (*fuqahā'*). Dhū' 'l-Nūn, al-Bisṭāmī, Junayd and al-Shiblī are just like ordinary men, Zayd, 'Umar, Bakr and Khālid. They have to follow the judgements of the jurists (*mujtahidīn*) in matters of *ijtihād*.[73]

Shaykh Ibn 'l-'Arabī reiterates the same view:

> The angel does not descend to the heart of anyone other than the prophet, and reveals no command of God at all. The Sharī'ah has been fixed, and what is incumbent (*farḍ*) or obligatory (*wājib*), desirable (*mandūb*), permissible (*mubāḥ*) or undesirable (*makrūh*) has been defined. No new order will be issued from God, as prophecy (*nubūwah*) and messengership (*risālah*) have come to an end. . . . We absolutely rule out the possibility that one can be given a new Sharī'ah for him to follow or preach to others . . . (If a walī gets something in a vision), he should examine it in the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. If it agrees with them he should consider it as a communication of truth and an honour, but nothing more. It does not add to (the Sharī'ah) or produce a new command. It may, however, explain a command or tell what it means. It may elevate his belief into knowledge. In case the vision does not agree with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah he should still consider it real but he must believe

that it is a test. There is no other possibility. He should not think that it is an angelic appearance (*raqīqah malakīyah*) or a Divine illumination (*majlā ilāhī*); it is only a satanic appearance (*raqīqah shayṭānīyah*).[74]

The Shaykh, however, allows this role to the Sufi *kashf*:

> (*Kashf*) may tell that a rule which has been established as a (Divine) command is true, or that it is really a command of God to a particular prophet for the people to whom he has been sent. It may also tell that a rule whose validity has been established by the scholars of tradition (*'ulamā' 'l-rusūm*) is in fact invalid. The saint may know the validity of a valid rule, and the invalidity of an invalid rule, even though it has been transmitted through weak chains (*isnad*); he may similarly know the validity of a rule which has been considered invalid, or the invalidity of a rule which has been considered valid, by the scholars of tradition.[75]

I do not believe that Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī or any other established Sufi would allow to the Sufi *kashf* this authority to pronounce upon the grounds of a rule of the Sharī'ah, and say that it is sound or unsound, particularly in opposition to the judgement of the scholars of tradition regarding those grounds.

It would be worthwhile to distinguish between a rule of the Sharī'ah and its application in a particular situation. So far as the rule is concerned, Sufis, as we have noted, do not allow any role to *kashf*. In the application of the rule, however, *kashf* may have a place. It is reported of Ḥārith 'l-Muḥāsibī[76] (165/781–243/857), for instance, that whenever he was invited to a meal which was not quite pure (*ṭāhir*), his forefinger quivered and he would abstain from eating.[77] This is a case of *kashf* helping to determine whether something falls under the category of things to be avoided on the grounds recognised in the Sharī'ah. *Kashf* helps to determine a matter of fact, rather than a matter of rule.

Kashf may also be helpful in making a decision in cases which are vague and unclear; that is, where arguments from the Sharī'ah conflict and one does not see what course one should take. In such cases the Prophet, peace be upon him,

has advised to consult one's heart;[78] *kashf* may also be helpful. But let us note that the *kashf* of one walī is an argument for him, but not for others. This is in contrast to the *ijtihād* of a jurist, which is an argument for him as well as for others.[79]

Values of the Sharī'ah and Sufism

Besides beliefs, virtues and rules, there is a fourth aspect of the Sharī'ah: its vision of the good life. What is the good life which the Sharī'ah envisages? What are its constituents? How do the goods of the body stand with the goods of the spirit? How far does the good of society constitute the good of the individual, and how does the good of this life compare with the good of the next life? Similarly, what are the principles that determine the degree of obligation, define what is obligatory, what is highly commended, and what is less commended, and what is left to our discretion? In short, what is the overall ideal of the Sharī'ah, what are its values and priorities?

To raise some specific questions: What is the ultimate goal of man: knowledge of God (*ma'rifah*), union with Him (*jam'*) or fulfilment of His will (*'ubūdīyah*)? Have the other components of the good life a value in themselves? How are they related to the ultimate good? Another question about the relation between this life and the next: In order to make the life-hereafter good, should one concentrate on some aspects of life neglecting the others, or should one work for the fulfilment of the whole life in the way the Sharī'ah wants? How does the Sharī'ah value exclusive devotion to God, *dhikr* and meditation in comparison to a life in which these things are reduced and combined with an active involvement in the overall happiness of human beings?

The Qur'ān refers along with beliefs, virtues and rules, to these matters also; tells what is the ideal life; what are its constituents; how they compare with each other; and who are the embodiments of that good life. The Sunnah of the Prophet further elaborates Islamic values and priorities. But Islamic thought has done little to carry the task further. *Fiqh*

has been more concerned with particular aspects of life, with various forms of worship, with social, political, economic activities separately, and has defined what is right or wrong, obligatory or commended in each and every field. There are various schools of *fiqh*; and in each there are hundreds of books that discuss rules down to the minutest details; there are also many books that deal with the principles of these schools. But there are not half a dozen works[80] which address some of the questions we have raised.

Philosophical works on ethics (*akhlāq*) in Arabic and Persian which should have discussed these questions, unfortunately rehearse Greek ethics, and hardly attempt to explicate the Sharī'ah. They do introduce changes and modifications into the inherited system, but that does not affect its basic character. They hardly attempt to give Islamic answers to fundamental questions of ethics in the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and explain the Islamic Sharī'ah.[81]

Sufis had, therefore, nothing to check their understanding and interpretation of Islamic values and priorities in the light of their *kashf* and experience, demands of the *ṭarīqah* or philosophical beliefs. Shaykh Ibn 'l-'Arabī, for instance, discovered in his experience that unity is the fundamental truth, and the difference between God and man is relative and secondary. He, therefore, concluded that what promotes unity is superior to what emphasises difference, and on that principle extolled fasting over *ṣalāt*. Sirhindī observes:

> Some *wujūdīs* (i.e. the believers in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*) hold that prayer (*ṣalāt*) does not avail (*dūr az kār ast*), because it is based, in their view, on the assumption of another (*ghayr*) and his otherness. They consequently extol fasting over *ṣalāt*. The author of the *Futūḥāt Makkīyah* says that in fasting, which is abstaining from eating and drinking, one participates in the holiness (*ṣamadīyat*) of God, whereas in the *ṣalāt* one comes down to the other and otherness, and distinguishes between the worshipper and the worshipped. This statement is based, as you know, on the doctrine of *tawḥīd wujūdī* which is the lot of the intoxicated people.[82]

The *ṭarīqah* of the Sufi requires him to concentrate on *dhikr* and meditation to the neglect of other means of

self-purification recommended by the Sharī'ah, and raises their value beyond all proportions. Similarly, the effort to achieve concentration, self-effacement, ecstasy and union, which require the Sufi to drastically reduce the needs of the body and contacts with people, put a premium on renunciation (*zuhd*) which the Sharī'ah would not approve,[83] and applaud withdrawal which the Sharī'ah would not allow except in unusual situations, and that, too, as a second alternative.[84]

The example of a philosophical belief affecting a Sufi judgement regarding what is the highest good of man is provided by al-Ghazālī. In his *Mīzān 'l-'Amal* where he discusses the question what is the highest good or happiness (*sa'ādah*) of man, he reproduces an argument stated by Plato in the *Republic* [85] and Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*,[86] and summarised by Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) in his *Kitāb 'l-Sa'ādah*[87] and *Tahdhīb 'l-Akhlāq*.[88] The argument says that the happiness of man lies in the perfection of reason which is distinctive of man.[89] Originally this included knowledge of realities as well as the organisation of life in the light of reason. But for some reasons knowledge of reality came to be considered as the highest happiness of man, and the life of reason and virtue was regarded as a lower happiness. The value of virtue and rational life was further diminished in some writings[90] of al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). Al-Ghazālī went further: he identified the happiness (*sa'ādah*) of man with the comprehension of the realities of things,[91] and degraded action to the status of a means[92] to the acquisition of knowledge. Nothing was good in itself except knowledge; that alone constituted the real happiness of man. Everything else: worship, morality and social life (not to speak of the goods of the body) was to have only an instrumental value. This ideal of contemplative life which he works out in the *Mīzān*, al-Ghazālī ascribes not only to philosophers but also to Sufis[93] who, for him, represent Islamic life at its best. He never thinks of examining the argument to see whether it is valid, or whether it can be corroborated from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. He mentions in passing the verse which defines the purpose of man's creation as the *'ibādah*[94] of God, and the verse which announces that man is the

vicegerent (*khalīfah*)[95] of God on the earth. But neither verse engages his attention or appears to contain an answer. Al-Ghazālī holds essentially the same view of human happiness in the *Iḥyā'*; and he bolsters it with further arguments,[96] none of which are derived from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet nor supported by *kashf*.

Sirhindī does not enter into a discussion of the values and priorities of the Sharī'ah and their relation with Sufism. In the light of the history of Islamic thought which I have briefly reviewed, this is quite understandable. Nevertheless, it would not be difficult to form an idea of his position. He does not assign any independent role to *kashf* in theological matters, nor accord to it any place in juristic issues pertaining to what is right or wrong, obligatory or desirable. Nor does he think that reason is a reliable guide in these matters. On the other hand, he has made statements that call for strict adherence to the Sharī'ah, and condemn every divergence as innovation (*bid'at*), as we have seen before.[97] Further, he states clearly that the purpose of man and the ultimate goal of his life is obedience to God's will as enshrined in the Sharī'ah and defined by it. In the light of all this we would expect him to believe that the Sharī'ah has its own system of values and priorities, which can only be revealed by contemplating over its structure, not by *kashf* or philosophical speculation.

Prophet and Prophecy

The prophet is a walī with a mission to transform society. This is the essence of the definition of a prophet that Dr. Muḥammad Iqbāl offers in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*.[98] This view of prophecy originated with the earliest Sufis. It was probably first proffered by al-Ḥakīm 'l-Tirmidhī[99] (d. 216/831) and was reiterated by al-Ghazālī,[100] Ibn 'l-'Arabī[101] and many others. It has now become a part of Islamic thought.

Sirhindī, too, starts with the same idea, and there is no indication that he ever thought of revising it, even though he disagreed with other Sufis regarding some parts of the idea. But if we pursue carefully his definition of *walāyat*,

and his distinctions between the way of the walī and the way of the prophet, we arrive at conclusions that could well have startled Sirhindī himself, and call for a revision of the view.

Before entering into the discussion, however, I would try to clarify the different senses in which Sirhindī uses the term *walāyat*. He uses it, first of all, in the sense of nearness and intimacy with God, irrespective of the nature of the nearness or the procedure employed for the purpose. Thus he uses terms like *walāyat* of the Great Angels (*Mala' A'lā*), the *walāyat* of the prophets, and the *walāyat* of the saints (*awliyā'*). He uses *walāyat*, secondly, to refer to the first phase of the Sufi's *sayr*, which consists of moving mentally towards God (*sayr ilā Allāh*) and moving in God (*sayr fī Allāh*), leading up to union with God. It is called the ascent (*'urūj*) of the Sufi as compared to the second phase of descent (*nuzūl*) in which the Sufi mentally moves away from God (*sayr 'an Allāh*) and then with God in the world (*sayr dar ashyā'*). He refers, thirdly, to one of the two moments of the life of a prophet, namely, his contact with God as distinct from his contact with people and the world, which he calls *risālat* or *nubūwat*. He means, fourthly, the Sufi way (*ṭarīq-i-walāyat*) of *sulūk* and self-perfection (*tazkīyah*) as compared to the prophetic way (*ṭarīq-i-nubūwat*); and, lastly, Sufism itself.

When Sirhindī predicates *walāyat* to a prophet, he means either the prophet's nearness (*qurb*) to God, or his contact with God as distinct from his contact with people. He does not use the term in the sense of a spiritual phase, namely, the phase of ascent, such as the one we have in the life of a Sufi. The important thing is that the prophet's contact with God and his contact with people are not two different phases of his life, one coming after the other, as in the case of the Sufi. They are rather two moments of his life. For, he does not undergo the experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'* as the Sufi does. He does not experience self-annihilation or self-dissolution, union or merger into God. He does not have the unitive experience, never feels ecstasy and intoxication, does not lose control over his reason, or indulge in *shaṭḥ*. And since he does not unite with God, he does not separate from Him either. He has no unification and no separation, no

ascent and no descent. He is never so absorbed in God as to lose sight of himself and the world; and never so occupied with the world as to forget God. He is always occupied with God, even when he appears to be immersed in the world. 'In prophecy', Sirhindī says, 'the prophet does not face the creation only, he faces God along with facing the world.'[102]

If this is the case with the prophet, and we have seen Sirhindī, Walī Allāh and Shāh Ismā'īl, all assuring us that it is so, then what is the justification for treating the prophet as a walī? Certainly he is a walī, and the greatest of all the walīs in the sense in which the Qur'ān uses the term. But in the sense of a Sufi who traverses the whole road of *sulūk* and *jadhbah*, experiences *fanā'* and *baqā'*, feels ecstasy and intoxication, unites and separates, ascends and descends, there is no justification for calling him a walī. The prophet is not a walī in the mystical sense, nor is prophecy a form of *walāyat* in that sense. The experience of prophecy is an altogether different experience, and the prophet is in a category by himself. This is the conclusion to which the observations of Sirhindī and Walī Allāh on *walāyat* and *nubūwat* lead. Unfortunately they did not pursue their line of thought sufficiently enough to come to this startling discovery.

The prophet, however, shares a lot of experiences with the walī; he sees dreams (*ru'yā*) and visions (*mushāhadāt/wāqi'āt*), receives ideas directly in the heart (*ilhām/ilqā'*), hears voices, and talks to appearances. These extraordinary forms of revelation which together are called *kashf* are common between the walī and the prophet. Two things, however, distinguish the revelation of the prophet from the revelation of the walī. One, the prophet has a particular form of revelation, namely, revelation through the angel called *waḥy* in a special sense of the term; the walī does not have it. *Waḥy* in this sense is specific to the prophet, and is the real basis of prophecy. Second, all the revelations of the prophet, whether *waḥy* in the special sense, or in the form of a dream, vision, audition and inspiration are true and certain; but the revelations of the walī are fallible and uncertain (*ẓannī*).[103] A third difference which is actually a corollary of the second, is that the revelation of the prophet

is binding on people, whereas the *kashf* of a walī is not. *Kashf* is not an independent and sufficient argument; it needs to be confirmed by the prophetic revelation. The destiny of man, his eternal happiness or damnation, depends on his acceptance of the prophetic revelation; this is not true of *kashf*.[104]

The life of the prophet has two moments: One, his contact with God, his reception of *waḥy*, his perception of Divine rule (*malakūt Allāh*), angels, Paradise and Hell; his *dhikr* and contemplation, prayer and supplication, fasting and pilgrimage; his turning to God for mercy and assistance; his love and fear, his faith and trust; his experience of God's blessings, help and honour; his thanksgiving and submission. The other is his contact with people, his recitation of *waḥy*, his preaching and mission, his instruction to his followers in self-purification and piety, his struggle against his opponents, and his effort to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

These two aspects of the Prophet's life formed one whole, one intertwined with the other. Nobody in the days of the Companions, even their successors, thought to distinguish between them, and ask the question which aspect was higher and which was lower. That question was asked when Sufism came into being: when the life of poverty and renunciation, devotion and fasting, *dhikr* and meditation, love and absorption, *fanā'* and *baqā'*, *kashf* and illumination came to be applauded as the highest and most sublime life. The first aspect of the Prophet's life was called his *walāyat*, and was extolled over the second aspect which was called *nubūwat* and *risālat*. People did not stop there: some of them even went to the extent of saying that the walī is superior to the prophet.

We have seen earlier how Sirhindī opposes the whole trend, and asserts that the *nabī* is definitely superior to the walī, even his *nubūwat* is superior to his *walāyat*. The Ummah and the Sufis in general have always held that the prophet is incomparably superior to the walī, and have strongly condemned the opposite view. But when comparing the *walāyat* of a *nabī* with his *nubūwat*, many a Sufi has extolled the former over the latter. The reason for doing this does not lie in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, which alone

should be considered in such matters, but in their own personal experiences, attitudes, and philosophical beliefs. I would avoid going into details here and limit myself to stating Sirhindī's views. He definitely believes that the *nubūwat* of the prophet is superior to his *walāyat*. His arguments[105] are as follows:

It is not true, first of all, that in *nubūwat* the prophet's attention is turned away from God and centred on the people. The prophet does not experience an opposition between 'attention to God' and 'attention to people'. That opposition, rather conflict, is part of a walī's life; he experiences it particularly in the first stage of his *sulūk*. The prophet does not follow the Sufi *ṭarīqah*; consequently he does not experience the conflict. His attention to the people does not imply distraction from God; nor does his occupation with God mean disconcern with people. Secondly, in attending to the people, the prophet in fact attends to God, because he does not attend to them of his own will. He attends because God commands him to attend. Therefore, when he attends to them he attends to God. Finally, to attend to people on the command of God in order that they believe in Him, obey Him and come close to Him, is a hundred times better than to occupy oneself with God and concentrate on Him. God has in fact reserved the next life for that occupation. This life should better be devoted to carrying out His will and bringing His children near to Him.

Sirhindī has a broad view of a prophet's mission. His task begins with the preaching of the Sharī'ah (*tarwīj-i-Sharī'ah*), which, as I have noted above, stands for both his religion and laws. Those who believe in him and accept his religion, the prophet shows them how to act upon his teachings; how to worship God and remember Him; how to avoid sin and purify oneself; how to cultivate virtue and piety; and how to feel for humanity and work for their happiness. He tells them that the purpose of man's life is to serve God, and shows them how to attain God's pleasure. He preaches religion as well as demonstrates how to practise and live it. This is what Sirhindī calls the way of the prophet (*ṭarīq nubūwat*).

With those who follow him, the prophet struggles to build

a new society and create a new world. He tries to demolish that part of the old society which conflicts with his religion, and fights the powers that oppose him till they are subdued, or wiped out, and the rule of God is established on the earth. Sirhindī does not discuss this aspect at length, but he leaves none in doubt that for him it is an integral part of the prophet's mission. He refers to it in letters which he wrote to men in power, where he underscores the role of the ruler in Islam, his responsibility to implement the laws of the Sharī'ah, to establish its institutions and to defend them against attacks from within and from without. In a letter, for instance, addressed to the governor of a province he writes: 'If along with your administrative work, you could implement the Sharī'ah, you would be doing the work of the prophets.'[106]

Companions of the Prophet

The prophets are the best of the people, Muḥammad is the best of the prophets, and his Companions are the best of mankind next only to the prophets. Of his Companions those who embraced Islam before the conquest of Makkah and adhered to it braving all opposition and bearing every hardship, are better than those who joined the fold of Islam later. Though they were not of equal standing, some were of high and some of low merit, the lowest of the Companions is superior to the greatest walī of later times. 'Even Waḥshī, the killer of Ḥamzah, who joined the fold of the Companions later, is better than Uways 'l-Qaranī, the great *tābi'ī* (belonging to the generation after the Companions) famous for his devotions.'[107]

The reason for their greatness is not their devotion or other meritorious acts; many walīs of succeeding ages have a greater record of devotion, prayers, fastings and *dhikr*. Their greatness is due primarily to two things: One is their faith, which because of their direct contact with the Prophet and his revelation was more than faith, a living experience.[108] The second reason is that they were the first to respond to the call of Islam, spent money and energy for its propagation,

bore all kinds of hardships in its way, fought its enemies, and sacrificed everything for its cause, till the word of God dominated over every other word, and His rule was established on the earth.[109]

Sirhindī makes it very clear that the greatness of the Companions does not lie in any 'new' knowledge over and above the simple faith in the Prophet's revelation. They did not have any extraordinary experience; did not know *fanā'* and *baqā'*, union or separation; did not take up severe penances or strenuous exercises; hardly received any theophanies or illuminations; and never experienced raptures or ecstasies. Nothing that distinguishes the walī was, therefore, the reason for their greatness. They purified themselves of vice, adorned themselves with virtue, cultivated righteousness and piety, and attained to the highest level of *iḥsān*[110] by following the way of the Prophet and by working for his mission.

Walī Allāh corroborates this view when he says that in the eyes of the Prophet the criterion of greatness lies in things related to the mission of a prophet such as the propagation of faith, and persuasion of the people to follow religion, rather than *jadhb* and *fanā'*.[111]

Walī and *Walāyat*

The prophet in his faith and knowledge, virtue and piety, experience and attainments, marks the ultimate perfection of man, and sets the highest example to be followed. He is the criterion on which the walī and his *walāyat* is to be judged. There are walīs who are occupied exclusively with God and are lost in Him; they attend only to the most essential duties of religion such as *ṣalāt*, and care little for themselves or for others. They are inferior to those who attend to the duties towards God as well as the duties towards men. The latter are superior,[112] because they live as the prophets live, and work as they work.

The Sufis who are absorbed in God (*majdhūb*), have travelled only half the way. They have completed their journey to God (*savr ilā Allāh*) and journey in God (*sayr fī*

Allāh), have attained union (*jam'*), and continue to live in a state of intoxication (*sukr*) which union produces. The other group has advanced beyond that stage, has moved away from God with God (*sayr 'an Allāh bi Allāh*), attained separation after union (*farq ba'd 'l-jam'*), come out from the state of intoxication, and occupied themselves with people. They are the walīs who have been returned (*marjū'*) to the world to engage themselves in the tasks which the prophets have been commanded to do. The first step on this way is to call (*da'wah*) people to God; the next is to purify them and make them true servants of God, and the last step is to establish the rule of His Sharī'ah. The walī who follows the prophet more and serves his mission better, is a great walī and a closer friend of God.

Miracles, which common people consider to be a sign of *walāyat* and a measure of the greatness of a walī, are in fact neither. 'Miracles are neither a part of *walāyat* nor its condition; they are only a condition of prophecy (*nubūwat*).' 'And', Sirhindī continues, 'the number of miracles is no indication of a walī's status; that depends entirely on the degree of his nearness to God. It is quite possible that a walī who is less close to God works more miracles than the one who is more close.'[113] The greatest of walīs are not equal to the smallest of the Companions; this is the consensus of the Ummah. But many walīs are known to have worked a hundred times more miracles than the Companions. Moreover, the best among the walīs, like Junayd, have been reported to have performed not even half a dozen miracles.[114] Further, miracles, such as revealing hidden things, or telling fortunes or future events, etc., do not even require that the doer should be a walī, not even a believer. The yogis, magicians and sorcerers work many more miracles.[115]

The greatness of a Sufi is sometimes measured by the truths he receives in *kashf* and the doctrines he works out. Sirhindī divides them into three categories. There are ideas which confirm and elaborate the truths which are stated in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, or inferred from them by theologians. Sirhindī insists that *kashf*, in order to be acceptable should conform to theological doctrines. In laying down this criterion, he does not normally make any qualifi-

cation. But if we look at his own practice, we can safely say that what he really means is that *kashf* must not contradict fundamental doctrines of theology agreed upon by the theologians of the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah*, even though it may disagree in matters of detail. A case in point is the question of attributing *wujūd* (being/existence) to objects. Theologians in general do not subscribe to the Sufi idea that God alone exists, and predicate existence to the world, though they differentiate between the existence of God and the existence of objects, and build up their doctrine of Divine transcendence on that ground. Sirhindī does not think that theologians are right on the first count; consequently he ignores their view, and adopts the Sufi view. For, it is not the real issue. The truth that has to be affirmed is the theological idea of God's transcendence which the 'ulamā' have derived from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and on which they all agree. Sirhindī tries to combine the truth of Divine transcendence with the doctrine that God alone exists in the true sense. This is what distinguishes his philosophy from the philosophy of Ibn 'l-'Arabī, as we will see.

The second category of revealed ideas (*makshūfāt*) are those which neither conform to the truths of the Qur'ān and Sunnah nor contradict them. To this category belong the ideas about the heavens and the earth, the constitution of the world and its working, angels and jinni, spirits and other similar objects on which the Qur'ān and Sunnah are either silent or say little. These ideas, Sirhindī says, may be true, and may be false, and points out various reasons why *kashf* errs. Sometimes, Satan may put a wrong idea in the mind of the Sufi; no walī is immune from Satanic insinuations (*ilqā'-i-shayṭānī*);[116] the prophets, too, are vulnerable but they are promptly warned and their misplaced wishes are immediately corrected.[117] There is no guarantee for correction in the case of a walī. Error may enter into *kashf* for another reason. The walī may combine a true *kashf* with a false idea that he had got from other sources; as a result, his whole doctrine may become false. The third cause for error is the imagination (*khayāl*) of the Sufi. He may get ideas in *kashf* which are nothing more than the creations of imagination or fancy. A fourth cause for error is inaccuracy

in the apprehension of *kashf*. A Sufi may, for instance, see an event happening in the future, but fail to perceive some conditions on whose realisation the event is contingent. This may lead to a false prediction. A fifth cause for error is incorrect interpretation of things rightly perceived. These reasons render *kashf* uncertain and unreliable. Therefore, the ideas which are advanced on the basis of *kashf*, cannot be taken to be true, even though they do not conflict with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

The third category consists of those ideas of *kashf* which conflict with the Sharī'ah. Sirhindī puts the doctrines of One Actor (*tawḥīd fi'lī*), One Subject (*tawḥīd ṣifātī*) and One Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) in this category.[118] As the first two are implied in the third, we will discuss them together in the next section. To this category belong also the words which speak of union and identity with God, such as 'I am God', 'Glory to me', 'There is none in the cloak except God'. If they are taken as statements of reality, they conflict with the Sharī'ah and are wrong. But if they are understood as expressions of feeling, which in truth they are, there is no harm. They are part of the Sufi *ṭarīqah*, and happen to every traveller of that path. They show how far the Sufi has travelled, and hold promise[119] for the future. What is wrong is that they should be taken to mark the end of the road, or the Sufi should develop on their basis the belief that he is one with God. The Sufis whom God has taken beyond that stage, have realised that their earlier belief was erroneous, and have turned to God for His forgiveness. Many Sufis are definitely known to have crossed the stage of union, and realised the truth of servanthood (*'ubūdīyah*); and many more are thought to have attained that, but we do not know them.

To the same category belong the ideas which go against the rules of the Sharī'ah. Many evil innovations in Sufi practice are due to such revelations. Their error is due to the imagination of the Sufi or his wish, or the insinuation of Satan, or any other cause listed above. Ideas of goodness and perfection that are discordant with the Sharī'ah also fall in this category. For instance, the idea that *walāyat* is superior to *nubūwat*, that the *walāyat* of a *nabī* is better than

his *nubūwat*, that the goal of man is to be one with God, that absorption is better than return, that intoxication is superior to sobriety, etc.

The ideas which elucidate the truths of the Sharī'ah, strengthen commitment to its principles, and do not conflict with any of its concepts, rules and values, are a blessing of God on the Sufi, a favour and an honour, and a sign of his nearness to God. But the ideas which are over and above (*zā'id 'alā*) the Sharī'ah, count neither for the greatness of the Sufi, nor for his position in the Hereafter. If they are true, their value will be judged, as any other good of the world, on the criterion of its utility. In case they are not true, the Sufi would be accountable for the harm that they might cause. But the ideas which conflict with the Sharī'ah will put the Sufi in a difficult situation. Those which he has vented in an ecstatic experience or under the influence of an overpowering love may be hopefully overlooked by God; similarly the ideas which are related to matters of religion and which he has expounded in good faith, but are not correct, may also be excused. He may even be rewarded to an extent,[120] as a jurist will be rewarded who tries his best, but does not arrive at the right answer. But words which are flagrant violations of the Sharī'ah, and are the result of deliberation are not excusable. Even if the Sufi means something different from what his words apparently convey, he is guilty of dishonouring the Sharī'ah.[121]

How should one react to the ideas of a Sufi which appear to conflict with the Sharī'ah, and what attitude should one have towards a Sufi who expounds those ideas? Sirhindī's answer to the first question would be like this: It is not right to believe in the idea or follow the practice of a Sufi who appears for other reasons to be a walī, if there seems to be some conflict with the Sharī'ah. If you are an ordinary man, ignorant of the Sufi way, you should avoid condemning the walī and his ideas. But if you are aware of the Sufi ways and experiences, you should interpret them in their light. If they have emerged from the experience of *fanā'* and have been said in a state of intoxication, they should be treated as *shaṭḥ* and the Sufi should be excused. One should remember that the ideas which the Sufis expound are not completely free

from intoxication (*sukr*) except when they reach the highest stage. 'Every stage below the stage of *ṣiddīqīyat* is tainted with *sukr* in one degree or the other.'[122] And a person under *sukr* is not to be condemned. To sum up: The ideas of a walī which conflict with the Sharī'ah should be recognised as such and should be rejected as wrong; the Sufi, however, should not be condemned but rather excused as he might have said them under intoxication.

This is exactly the attitude which Sirhindī adopts towards Shaykh Ibn 'l-'Arabī. He believes that the doctrine of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* which the Shaykh expounds is essentially wrong, that many of its concepts and corollaries contradict the Sharī'ah, and that its errors should be exposed and condemned. Consequently, he criticises the doctrine, exposes its errors and warns people against its dangers. On the other hand, he believes that the Shaykh expounded the doctrine in the light of his experience of oneness and identity. Though he did not stay at the stage of 'pure union' and moved ahead, he did not move sufficiently enough and affirm the complete transcendence of God and His absolute difference. This was his shortcoming. The Shaykh therefore deserves to be excused rather than condemned. So far as his *walāyat* is concerned, that depends entirely on his obedience to the Sharī'ah, and his observance of the Sunnah of the Prophet. On that ground Sirhindī regards Ibn 'l-'Arabī as a walī with whom God is well pleased. He believes that his mystical shortcoming and erroneous doctrines do not affect his *walāyat*. He thinks that this is the right attitude[123] towards the Shaykh. One should not approve of his erroneous ideas, or keep silent about them, because he is one of the *awliyā'* of God. But one should not condemn him as a heretic and an infidel either, disregarding completely his life and position, on the ground that he has expounded erroneous doctrines.

Sirhindī's Claims

Shaykh Aḥmad has made two kind of claims. One that he is not merely a Sufi shaykh directing the aspirants in spiritual

pursuits, but a renovator (*mujaddid*) of Islam.[124] His task is to clearly define what is the Prophetic Islam, to distinguish it from the ideas and practices which are clearly opposed to Islam, or which go by the name of Islam, but do not belong to it. His mission is to review these unIslamic and anti-Islamic ideas and practices and expose their errors, and to defend the true beliefs, values, practices, and institutions of Islam.

I have discussed a part of Sirhindī's work in the first chapter. The other part is concerned with problems that Sufi thought and practice have raised. This is the special field of Sirhindī's renovatory work; here he claims to have made a solid and unique contribution. This book is in a way a vindication of this claim. The first part of his work has a local relevance; it is important in the context of the Indian subcontinent. But the relevance of the second work is not limited to India; it concerns the whole Islamic world, and affects the entire religious life and thought of Islam. Sirhindī's contribution in this field should be viewed in this perspective. Seen in this context, his claim that he is the renovator of Islam at the end of its first and beginning of the second millennium, high-sounding though it is, is nevertheless substantially true.

Sirhindī's other claim is about his *walāyat*. This is what I propose to discuss here. In one of the letters[125] which Sirhindī wrote to his preceptor he described his spiritual experiences and said that he passed through the stages of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān, 'Umar 'l-Fārūq and Abū Bakr 'l-Ṣiddīq, one after the other, and came to a stage of *maḥbūbīyah*, a little below the stage of the Prophet. When the opposition against Sirhindī increased (to which I have referred before),[126] this letter was made an object of criticism and a pretext for vilification against him. He was charged with claiming superiority over the great Companions of the Prophet, including Abū Bakr 'l-Ṣiddīq. Some modern writers[127] have also joined in the same chorus.

Sirhindī denied these charges. Firstly, he points out that he described the vision in a letter which he wrote to his preceptor, and he wrote this letter because it was his preceptor's order to keep him informed of his visions and experiences. This is the standard practice of the *ṭarīqah*. He

had no other motive.[128] Secondly, the inference which is drawn from the vision is incorrect. He himself never understood the vision in that sense, nor did he entertain the belief for a single moment. On the contrary, he believed and stated in clear words more than once that the lowest of the Companions of the Prophet was greater than the greatest of the *awliyā'* of the Ummah. 'Even Waḥshī, the killer of Ḥamzah, who embraced Islam later, is better than the great *tābi'ī*, Uways 'l-Qaranī, famous for his devotions.'[129]

As for the vision, it signifies nothing more than that he participated to an extent in some of the qualities of the Companions he mentions, and shared for a while in God's blessings on them. So far as rising to their status and honour is concerned, neither he nor any walī can dream of that.[130] Those who charge Sirhindī with claiming to have attained the status and honour of the Companions on the basis of the vision, understand the vision literally with utter disregard of the nature and the meaning of the mystic vision, and do so in the face of a clear denial of that charge by Sirhindī. They insist on their understanding of the vision, and allege that Sirhindī has offered an unconvincing and lame excuse.

But it is not correct to interpret Sufi visions literally; one should try to see what their real purpose is, and what they want to convey through their symbolic language. I will here quote a few cases. When Walī Allāh visited Madinah before he embarked on his great programme of interpreting Prophetic truths in the language of his times and reviving the Prophetic life and society, he saw in a dream that the Prophet's grandsons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn presented his pen to him. Its nib was broken; they repaired it first, and then gave it to him.[131] The dream cannot be interpreted literally; the Prophet did not have a pen, he was not a writer; and if he had a pen nobody can rise up to his status so as to interpret Islam as he would do. The dream means, as Walī Allāh understood it, that he is being commissioned by the Prophet to revive his Islam: his truths, his words and his ways; and that he would have the blessings of the Prophet in doing that task. Walī Allāh's father, Shāh 'Abd 'l-Raḥīm, saw in a vision that a number of people were running in order to have a glimpse of God. He was also running along with them.

When the time of *'Aṣr* prayer came, they requested him to lead the prayer. When he had finished, he asked what were they running after? They said that they were going to see God. Shāh 'Abd 'l-Raḥīm said: 'I am the one you have been looking for.' They got up, and shook hands with him. Commenting on this vision, Walī Allāh writes: 'Visions like this sometimes convey the good news that one will influence people with power bestowed by God; sometimes they herald the experience of unity (*tawḥīd*).'[132]

There are many instances of such visions and dreams. I hope that these two will be sufficient to show that literal interpretation of visions and dreams is wrong. Sirhindī's vision does not mean what it apparently shows: it only tells that Sirhindī shares some qualities which mark the life of 'Uthmān, 'Umar and Abū Bakr, and that he would have a special favour from God that would in some sense resemble theirs. What those qualities are and what that special favour is, the vision does not indicate. But it would not be difficult to form an idea of it from the facts of his life, his works and attainment, which is consistent with his ideas and beliefs. To me this seems to be his effort to define the Prophet's way to God which these great Companions followed, to revise Sufism in that light, and serve Islam as they served it.

The Sufi way is based on *fanā'* and *baqā'* which involves ecstasy and intoxication. Even when the Sufi crosses the stage of pure union and enters the next higher stage of separation after union, he is not completely free from intoxication. Sufis who are known for sobriety (*ṣaḥw*), such as Junayd and al-Suhrawardī, have not been completely free from intoxication. Sirhindī lists some words of Junayd which were spoken in that state: 'He is the knower (*al-'ārif*) and He is the known (*al-ma'rūf*)'; 'The colour of water is the colour of the glass' and 'When the contingent is united with the Eternal, no trace of it is left.'[133] About Shaykh 'l-Suhrawardī he says: 'The author of the *'Awārif* is one of the most sober Sufis, yet his book contains a number of words pronounced in intoxication. I would not like to mention them here; I have collected some of them elsewhere.'[134]

Sirhindī does not rule out that possibility in his own case. In a letter he wrote: 'I am a direct disciple of God, and my

hand is a substitute for the hand of God. I am a disciple of Muḥammad through a number of links . . . but I am a direct disciple of God with no links in between. Hence I am a disciple of Muḥammad as well as his colleague, coming after him to the same feast. Even though I am an attendant, I have not come without an invitation. Though I am a dependant, I have a kind of independence; even though I am his follower, I share in his honour. . . . However, I share not as an equal; that is infidelity; I share as a servant shares with his master.'[135] When he was questioned about this letter and his claim of partial independence from the Prophet, he explained the point at length.[136]

The substance of his explanation is that the spiritual development of a Sufi has two aspects: One, his effort to reach God following the path of the Sharī'ah which the Prophet has defined; this is called *sulūk*. The other is God's attention to the Sufi; He pulls the Sufi to Himself; this is called *jadhb*. The point of the claim is that in his spiritual development, his own effort even though it is there, is very insignificant in comparison to the preponderant pull of God. It resembles, in a sense, prophecy which is entirely a matter of God's favour, without any effort from the Prophet. The other point which Sirhindī hints at here and has stated elsewhere[137] more clearly, is that his *walāyat* is not an ordinary kind of *walāyat*, but one which in orientation and results is very close to the *walāyat* of the Prophet. It is sober and almost completely free from *shaṭḥ*. It affirms that God is absolutely other; that man is a mere creature, having nothing in common with the Lord; and that the highest stage of man's progress is servanthood (*'ubūdīyah*) rather than union or oneness (*tawḥīd*). The truths which have been revealed to him are in full agreement with the Prophetic Sharī'ah, and his mission is to preach the Sharī'ah and restore its rule on the pattern of the Prophet.

Sirhindī realises that the words which he has used are rather boastful. He admits in all humility that they are the product of *sukr*. To his disciples who were shocked[138] by such loud claims, coming particularly from a preacher of sobriety, he said that they should never think that all that he had said or written was completely free from intoxication.

Intoxication is a part of *walāyat*; even a Sufi known for his sobriety may often succumb to it. This is not, as he puts it, 'the first bottle which has been broken'; one can find such lapses in Junayd, al-Suhrawardī, and al-Jīlānī. He goes on to advise them to put his words also on the scale of the Sharī'ah, and accept that which is true. If they find something unexpected and discordant, they should not hasten to condemn him, but try to interpret his words in a sense consistent with the Sharī'ah. But if they cannot do that they should regret it as a lapse.[139]

CHAPTER FOUR

Waḥdat 'l-Shuhūd

Tawḥīd as used in the Sufi literature means four different things. It means, first, faith and belief in the unity of God; second, discipline of the internal and external life in the light of that faith; third, experience of union and oneness with God; and fourth, a theosophy or philosophical construction of reality in the light of the mystical experience.

In the context of the Sharī'ah, *tawḥīd* means either the affirmation of God's unity or the ordering of life according to the demands of that affirmation as defined in the Sharī'ah. Since the experience of union or oneness with God is not a part of the Prophetic way, we cannot look for *tawḥīd* in the latter two senses in the Sharī'ah. There is, however, a theological elucidation of the Prophetic faith, and insofar as it is a part of the Sharī'ah, it can be compared with the theosophic view of *tawḥīd*.

The common word in later Sufi literature for *tawḥīd* in the third sense is *tawḥīd shuhūdī*, which simply means the perception (*shuhūd*) of One Being in mystical experience. It is the unitive experience at its height. For *tawḥīd* in the fourth sense, both the terms *tawḥīd wujūdī* and *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* are in common use. *Tawḥīd* without the adjective *wujūdī* has also been used in the same sense. As the most elaborate and forceful formulation of the doctrine of *tawḥīd wujūdī* or *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* came at the hands of Ibn 'l-'Arabī, the terms have been identified with his philosophy. There are, however, other formulations[1] of the doctrine.

Sirhindī explains the concepts of *tawḥīd shuhūdī* and *tawḥīd wujūdī* in these words:

> *Tawḥīd shuhūdī* is *to see* One Being; that is, in his perception the Sufi has nothing but One Being. *Tawḥīd wujūdī*, on the other hand, is *to believe* that there is only One Being there, that other things are non-existent, and that in spite of their non-existence, they are the manifestations and appearances of One Being.[2]

Tawḥīd shuhūdī is to see One Being, or to perceive nothing in existence but One Being. But the perception does not mean that other beings are not there; nor does it imply a *belief* that other things are non-existent. During the day we only see the sun, and don't see the stars. But we do not believe that the stars are not there.[3] *Tawḥīd wujūdī*, on the other hand, is not only to see One Being, but also to believe that there is only One Being there, that nothing else is in existence. It is, of course, not to deny the existence of other beings: the world is not a delusion. It only means that things do not exist there as *other* beings. They exist only as the manifestation of One Being, such that there is only One Being in existence, not many.

Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy is an elaboration of two propositions: One, that there is only One Being there, and second, that other beings are not *other* beings, but only the appearances of One Being. Many scholars have studied and elucidated Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy; I have also stated the main concepts of his philosophy at another place.[4] I, therefore, propose to sketch the basic concepts of his philosophy here so that we may compare it with the philosophy of Sirhindī and understand the criticism which the latter directs against it.

Basic Concepts of Ibn 'l-'Arabī's *Waḥdat 'l-Wujūd*

The first fundamental concept of Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy is that there is only One Being there, and nothing exists besides it. The Arabic term for Being is *wujūd*, which may also be rendered as existence. The distinction which people try to make in our times between being and existence is not made by Ibn 'l-'Arabī. To say that there is only One Being there means, according to Ibn 'l-'Arabī, that (i) all that exists

is One Being, (ii) that the One Being has no parts, and (iii) that it is neither more here nor less there. There is in existence nothing but One Being, absolutely indivisible and homogeneous.

Being, however, determines itself, and as a result of this self-determination (*ta'ayyun*) distinctions and differences emerge in Being and multiplicity proceeds from Unity. But in the process, Being neither divides nor rarifies itself. It is the same One Being which manifests in its entirety, here in one form and there in another form, without suffering division or rarification. Like an actor, it appears in different characters, under different names, performing different functions. Ibn 'l-'Arabī likens it to the appearance of the same thing now as water, now as ice, and now as steam or vapour.

Five broad stages in the process of self-determination of Being are generally listed. The Being prior to every self-determination is absolutely One (*Aḥad*); this stage of Being is designated as *Aḥadīyah*, Absolute Unity. The second stage is called *Waḥdah* or Unicity, when internal distinctions emerge in Being. This happens when Being presents to itself from itself the ideas of all the things that are to appear in the world in future. These ideal prototypes of things are called *a'yān thābitah*; for they eternally subsist in the knowledge of Being. The next stage of self-determination is called *Wāḥidīyah* or Unity when Being determines itself existentially in objects on the pattern of their ideal prototypes, the *a'yān thābitah*. Since in the process the *a'yān thābitah* do not themselves appear in the outer world leaving the knowledge or mind of Being, and remain as ever in the state of subsistence (*thubūt*), which as compared to existence is a state of relative non-being, Ibn 'l-'Arabī calls them *ma'dūm*, non-existent.

The next three stages are the particularised determinations of Being in souls called *ta'ayyun rūḥī*, spiritual determination; in symbolic forms called *ta'ayyun mithālī*, symbolic determination; and lastly in bodies called *ta'ayyun jasadī*, corporeal determination. The existential determinations are finite in contrast to the ideal determination which is infinite.

Together the five stages of determination are known as *ḥaḍrāt khams*, the five presences of Being.

Being which determines itself in various forms is the Being of God. It cannot be other than God; for there are no two beings there. It follows that the being of God is the being of the world; the difference between them is ruled out for the same reason.

Since God and the world are one Being, the relation between God and the world cannot be the relation of a cause and effect, or the relation of the Creator and created as theologians believe, or the relation of the One and its emanations as neo-Platonic philosophers imagine. For all these relations of causation, creation and emanation imply dualism in varying degrees between God and the world, and contradict the fundamental truth that Being is one. Since these terms fail to convey the truth, Ibn 'l-'Arabī employs the word *tajallī*, self-uncovering or self-revelation, to describe the relation between God and the world. He does not, however, refrain from using terms like creation (*khalq*) and Creator (*khāliq*), emanation (*fayḍān/ṣudūr*) and emanate (*ṣādir*), even causation; but he interprets them differently consistent with his basic thesis.

God is Being qualified with all the attributes and relations that emerge in Being in the process of self-determination. When Being presents to itself from itself the *a'yān* of things, it is the knowledge of God or Being qualified with knowledge. The *a'yān* which are Being in its ideal determinations constituting the ideal world, are the object of God's knowledge. Similarly, when Being determines itself in the objects of the outer world, this is creation, and Being qualified with that act is God, the Creator. The objects, on the other hand, are Being in its finite existential forms, and constitute the created world at a particular time. Hence it is the same Being which is the Knower and the known, the Creator and the created. Being as Knower and Creator is God, and Being as known and created is the world. In other words, the same Being, one, indivisible and homogeneous, when seen from one side is God and when seen from the other side is the world.

The names (*asmā'*) of God are of three kinds: One kind

of names are negative (*sulūb*) like infinite, or have a negative meaning, like eternal and everlasting; for the former means that which has no beginning, and the latter means that which has no end. The second kind of names are relational (*nisbī/iḍāfī*) like the First (*al-Awwal*) and the Last (*al-Ākhir*), the Creator (*al-Khāliq*) and the Lord (*al-Rabb*). The third kind of names are those which appear to be derived from some presumed quality (*ṣifat*) in God, such as the Knowing (*al-'Alīm*), the Powerful (*al-Qadīr*), the Seeing (*al-Baṣīr*), etc.

So far as the first and the second kind of attributes are concerned, they are specific to God, and the world is qualified with their opposite or corresponding attributes. God is infinite, and the world is finite; and God is Creator and Lord, and the world is created and under His care and rule (*marbūb*). As for the third kind of attributes, they are not derived from some qualities in God over and above His Essence (*Dhāt*) as theologians believe. They refer only to a state of His Essence, of its being in a particular relation to some object. 'God is Knowing' means that the Divine Essence is in the state of the relation of knowing with an object that is known. But the Essence of God is nothing other than Being as such (*wujūd*) and the object is nothing other than Being in its finite determination. Hence 'God is Knowing' means that God/Being is in a state in which He is conscious of His own finite manifestation. That is, the Knower and the known are one. The same is true of 'God is Powerful', or 'God is Willing (*al-Murīd*)' etc.

What does the proposition 'man knows or wills' mean? Since man is a particular finite manifestation of Being or God, he knows or wills means that God knows or wills not as the infinite He is, but as God in one of His finite manifestations. The object of man's knowledge is either God or any manifestation of God. Hence the meaning of the proposition 'man knows', in the last analysis, is the same as the proposition 'God knows'. In either case the knower is God, whether God the infinite or God in His finite manifestation; and the object known is also the same, whether God as such or God in a determinate form.

The consequence of the doctrine of One Being (*waḥdat*

'l-wujūd) as expounded by Ibn 'l-'Arabī is that the subject of every predicate is God, even if the apparent subject is something different, a human or a non-human being. God is the knower and the known, the powerful and the object of power, the willing and the willed, the mover and the moved, etc. God is also the doer of all acts, good or bad, the holder of every belief, right or wrong, and the one who undergoes every experience, pleasurable or painful. He is also the acts, ideas and experiences which are done, believed or experienced.

God is immanent as well as transcendent. He is immanent insofar as He is one with the world; and He is one with the world in being (*wujūd*) as well as all the attributes, acts and experiences of beings in the world – believing and knowing, willing and doing, enjoying and suffering – of which He is the real subject. He is transcendent insofar as He is different from the world; and He is different from the world only in the attributes which He does not share with the world such as His infinitude and eternity, creation and lordship, rule and guidance, etc.

Sirhindī's Criticism of *Waḥdat 'l-Wujūd*

Sirhindī's first observation of this doctrine of *tawḥīd wujūdī* is that it is not the *tawḥīd* of the prophets.[5] The prophets do not teach that the Being is one; they only teach that God is one. They do not say that nothing exists besides God; they only say that there is no god besides Allah. Contrary to Ibn 'l-'Arabī's *tawḥīd wujūdī*, they teach that the world exists there, that it is other than God and different from Him, that God shares nothing with the world and transcends it completely. The prophetic religion is based, Sirhindī says, on the premise of duality (*ithnaynīyat*) rather than the identity of God and the world. It separates the creation from the Creator, the servant from the Lord, and never says that the Creator is the created, or the Lord is the servant. Prophets do not deny knowledge, will, power, action and experience to man or other beings and predicate them to God alone. They do not say that there is only One Actor or One Subject or only One Being there.

Ibn 'l-'Arabī and his followers cite the Qur'ānic verse: 'You did not throw (a handful of dust) when you threw, it is God who threw',[6] and similar other verses in support of their doctrine of One Actor. But there is no argument for them in the Qur'ān. This verse, for instance, does not at all deny the action of the Prophet; it only denies that the effects on the enemy ranks following his act were really produced by it. It wants to underscore that the real cause was not the act of the Prophet but the act of God operating with the Prophet's act. We should understand the verse as we understand the ḥadīth of the Prophet: 'He has no faith who violates the trust.'[7] It is obvious that the Prophet does not mean that one who violates the trust has no faith, and is a real infidel; he only means to say that his faith is weak and ineffective. Just as the ḥadīth denies only the effectiveness of the faith, not the faith itself, similarly the verse denies the effectiveness of the Prophet's act, not the act itself.

Those who believe in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* usually try to interpret the Qur'ān and the Sunnah in the light of their doctrine. But the more thoughtful among them do not approve of this move and abstain from it. Walī Allāh (d. 1176/1762), for instance, who believes in the basic doctrines of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* in a slightly modified form, says:

> One who interprets the words of the prophets on the lines of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, does not know them, nor their ways.[8]

At another place he distinguishes between the natural language (*ṭawr 'l-fiṭrah*) of the common man, and philosophical or ontological language of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, and says that the prophets speak in the former language and never indulge in the latter.[9]

Sirhindī's second observation on Ibn 'l-'Arabī's *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* is that it conflicts with many a fundamental principle of Islam. It provides, for instance, a justification for idolatry. Since the philosophy identifies the world with God, the worship of any object is the worship of God provided it is worshipped as a manifestation of God.[10] This is what the idol worshippers normally believe. Secondly, the doctrine denies that there is anything really evil. As a manifestation

of God, the Absolute Good, everything in existence is good; it is evil only in relation to something other than itself. Even heresy and infidelity are not evil; in fact they are good in themselves, and bad or less good only in comparison to faith and Islam.[11] This is to contradict the mission of the prophets and discourage preaching and proselitisation.[12]

Waḥdat 'l-wujūd involves the belief that God is the Only Actor. Since there are not two Beings, there are not two wills. Whatever is chosen or done by anyone is in fact chosen and done by God. This belief in the One Actor (*tawḥīd fi'lī*) is a product, Sirhindī says, of intoxication. It spells determinism (*jabrīyat*)[13] and negates human responsibility. Sirhindī also charges *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* with attributing all kinds of mistaken beliefs and evil acts to God,[14] putting constraints on His freedom,[15] and asserting the eternity of some souls.[16]

Shaykh Sirhindī's third observation is that the belief in One Being is a subjective phenomenon. The proof of its subjectivity lies in the genesis of the idea. There are two ways in which the belief arises. Some Sufis begin with *a priori* belief in the idea. They understand or are asked to understand the *kalimah*: 'There is no god except Allah', to mean that 'there is no existent except Allah'. They repeat the *kalimah* and contemplate over it. As a result of a 'prolonged meditation and reflection', Sirhindī says, 'the idea dominates their mind, and after constant repetition of the *kalimah* it is established in their imagination'.[17] They come to see in vision what they had already believed on some ground.

Other Sufis acquire belief in the Unity of Being by way of love. 'They begin with *dhikr* and contemplation which is free from the idea of One Being, then reach the stage of the heart (*maqām-i-qalb*) by their own effort or by the sheer grace of God, and get completely absorbed in the love of God. If at this stage they behold the beauty of One Being, it is on account of their burning love for God which removes everything from their vision and hides. As beings other than God are removed from their vision and hidden, and as they see or experience nothing but God, they do not recognise that other things exist. This belief in One Being (*tawḥīd*) is

a matter of feeling (*ḥāl*) and is free from the influence of thought and imagination.'[18]

Whether the belief in One Being is the result of constant repetition of the *kalimah* or a profound love of God, it happens at a particular stage of the Sufi's *sulūk*. When the Sufi advances, his experience of oneness is replaced by the experience of separation, which gradually deepens, and the Sufi sees that God is not at all one with the world, but completely different and absolutely other.

Sirhindī's fourth observation on *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* is that it is a new development in the history of Sufism. No one before Ibn 'l-'Arabī talked of it. The *tawḥīd* which the Sufis during the two hundred years before him speak of is *tawḥīd shuhūdī*[19] rather than *tawḥīd wujūdī*.

This observation is on the whole correct. The forerunners of Sufism, like Ibrāhīm ibn Adham[20] (d. 160/777) and Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ[21] (d. 187/803) were ascetics and devotees (*zāhid* and *'ābid*) rather than Sufis. Sufism properly begins with men of the succeeding generation like Dhū' 'l-Nūn 'l-Miṣrī[22] (d. 246/861) and Abū Yazīd 'l-Biṣṭāmī[23] (d. 261/875) and Abū Sa'īd 'l-Kharrāz[24] (d. 277/890) who experienced *fanā'* and *baqā'*, union and separation. They talked of the *ṭarīqah* which they followed and described the experiences which they had. But they did not tell what the experience meant to them, and did not reflect on the nature of the human soul, God and the world.[25] Speculation on the soul and God, perhaps begins with Junayd (d. 297/909); the *tawḥīd* which he seems to have developed is the *tawḥīd fi'lī*, that is, the doctrine that God is the only Actor, and no one else does anything.[26] Al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) talks of different things; at times the absolute transcendence[27] of God, at times His incarnation,[28] and at times His oneness[29] with the world. Al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) asserts that being is one, but he does not subscribe to the second proposition of Ibn 'l-'Arabī's *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* that the objects of the world are the manifestations of One Being in the sense that Ibn 'l-'Arabī does.[30] 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) and Shihāb 'l-Dīn 'l-Suhrawardī (d. 632/1234), as we have noted before, have no interest[31] in speculation. Ibn 'l-Fāriḍ's *tawḥīd*, as Professor Nicholson observes, is *tawḥīd shuhūdī*[32] rather than *tawḥīd*

wujūdī. Hence, Sirhindī's observation that *waḥdat 'l-wūjūd* came into being with Ibn 'l-'Arabī is essentially true.[33]

Sirhindī's final observation on *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* is that this belief is not required for *fanā'*. *Tawḥīd shuhūdī* is sufficient for attaining *fanā'* and realising real sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) which is the purpose of Sufi *sulūk*. 'For *fanā*", Sirhindī says, 'we only need the perception of One Being (*tawḥīd shuhūdī*), so that we can forget the not-Divine (*mā siwā Allāh*)'. About *tawḥīd wujūdī* he observes: 'It is just possible that a Sufi makes his *sayr* and travels from one end to the other without getting the ideas of the Unity of Being. He might even doubt that they occur at all. To me the way in which none of these ideas happen is the shorter way to the goal than the way in which they happen. Moreover, the travellers on the former path normally reach the goal, whereas the travellers on the latter path often go astray. They satisfy themselves with a few drops and leave the river, run after union with a shadow and leave reality. I have learned this truth from my own experience.'[34]

Waḥdat 'l-Shuhūd

Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī not only differentiated the Prophetic *tawḥīd* from the *tawḥīd wujūdī* of Ibn 'l-'Arabī and showed that the latter was incompatible with the former, he also attempted to formulate a philosophy based upon the ultimate Sufi experience of Divine transcendence which would be compatible with the religion of the Prophet. This philosophy is commonly known as *waḥdat 'l-shuhūd* or *tawḥīd shuhūdī*, Unity of Being in vision; for it asserts that the Unity of Being which the Sufis perceive at the stage of union is only a matter of subjective perception (*shuhūd*). Beyond this negative connotation the term offers no positive indication of the nature of Sirhindī's philosophy. I have discussed his philosophy at length elsewhere;[35] here I propose to outline the main concepts.

The most fundamental concept of Sirhindī's philosophy is that God is completely different from the world and absolutely other. The world is in no sense one with God, certainly

not in existence (*wujūd*). God is one being, and the world is another, and the two beings have nothing in common.

Sirhindī is not unaware of the fact that Ibn 'l-'Arabī does not completely identify the world with God, that he maintains a kind of difference between them, and affirms a relative transcendence for God. But he believes that this difference is peripheral and very inadequate. In *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* the identity is fundamental; it is the same one indivisible, homogeneous being which is God as well as the world. Sirhindī denies this postulate of fundamental oneness and asserts that the world is one being and God is another being, that the existence of God is not the existence of the world.

As God is absolutely other and completely different from the world, the fundamental truth is not monism of being, but dualism. This is what follows from Sirhindī's basic thesis of difference. People have characterised his philosophy as dualism (*ithnaynīyat*),[36] and he himself does not shy away from the term. He, however, says that this dualism is not ultimate; for, although the world is not one with God (*hama 'ūst*), it proceeds from God (*hama az 'ūst*). Secondly, the existence of the world is not comparable to Divine existence: God's existence is real whereas the existence of the world is imaginary (*khayālī*) and unreal (*mawhūm*). Hence, as existing in the real sense there is only one Being there: God; the world does not exist. Sirhindī would have no objection to calling his doctrine *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, provided one understands it in his sense.

Ibn 'l-'Arabī and Sirhindī agree on the proposition that there is in reality only one Being there, namely God. Their difference begins on the question as to how the world is related to God. Ibn 'l-'Arabī believes that God's existence is identical with the existence of the world: there is One All-inclusive Existence which seen from one angle is God and seen from another angle is the world. God is both immanent and transcendent: immanent, because God's existence is the existence of the world, there is only One Being there; and transcendent, because while God is Being in its infinitude, the world is Being in its finite manifestations.

Sirhindī, on the other hand, believes that God's existence is not identical with the existence of the world. God excludes

the world, rather than includes it as Ibn 'l-'Arabī thinks. Yet the existence of the world beside God does not contradict the truth that in reality there is only One Being there, God. For the existence of the world is an imaginary existence, and the presence of an unreal image by no means threatens the unity of the Real Being.

Sirhindī explains this most crucial idea like this: The presence of the world is like the presence of an image of an object in a mirror. There is no comparison between the presence of an image and the existence of the object. The object is there at a distance before the mirror. On the other hand, the image, though it appears to be behind the mirror you do not see it there. Nor is the image in the mirror. Therefore, the image is not in the space (*khārij*) in which the object is. Many other properties associated with the object are also not found in the image. Hence, the presence of the image is not the existence of the object: the existence of the object is real existence in the real space, whereas the existence of the image is an unreal existence, only in perception (*ḥiss*) and imagination (*wahm*), located in shadow space (*khārij ẓillī*). The existence of the image, therefore, is a shadow existence (*wujūd ẓillī*), completely different and separate from the real existence (*wujūd aṣlī*) of the object.

The existence of the world is similarly a shadow existence, different and separate from the real existence of God. And as the presence of the image does not entitle us to say that there are two objects there, similarly the presence of the world does not justify the assertion that there is a duality of being, a world existing besides God.

Sirhindī explains the shadowy, non-real status of the world through his concept of non-being (*'adam*), not found in Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy. When the latter speaks of *'adam*, he means by it the non-existence in the outer world of the *a'yān thābitah*, the ideal prototypes of things, eternally subsisting in Being. In Sirhindī's philosophy, non-being (*'adam*) has a completely different connotation. It is a principle of great significance; it plays in his thought a role similar to what matter plays in neo-Platonism, or nescience (*avidyā*) in Shankar's Vedanta.

The world is a determination not of Being, as Ibn 'l-'Arabī

thinks, but of its opposite non-being with a reflection (*ẓill*) of God's being on it. The knowledge that we have in a particular object is not the determination of God's knowledge, but of its opposite ignorance with a reflection (*ẓill*) of God's knowledge on it; similarly the power of an object is not the determination of God's power, but the determination of its opposite impotency with a reflection (*ẓill*) of God's power on it; and so on with other attributes. The same is true of the essence of an object: it is a determination of non-being with a reflection (*ẓill*) of God's being on it.

The important thing that has to be noted in this regard is that the *ẓill* of a thing is not the thing itself, as Ibn 'l-'Arabī and his followers believe.[37] The *ẓill* of an object is different from the object numerically as well as qualitatively. This is very crucial.

These two fundamental departures from Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy, namely that things are essentially determinations of non-being and that the reflections of Being that sustain these non-beings are numerically and qualitatively different from Being and its attributes, make Sirhindī's philosophy altogether different. For instance, the ideas of things, the *a'yān thābitah*, in Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy are determinations of Being in knowledge. But in Sirhindī's philosophy they are the combination of particular non-beings like ignorance and impotency with the shadows of God's knowledge and power. That is why Sirhindī avoids calling them *a'yān thābitah*, and refers to them as *ḥaqā'iq mumkināt*, the essences of contingent beings. Creation according to Ibn 'l-'Arabī means the existence of Being in the outer world in determinate forms on the pattern of the *a'yān thābitah*. But in Sirhindī's view, creation is the appearance of the contingent essences with a shadow of God's existence in the shadow space (*khārij ẓillī*) of the world.

The world in Sirhindī's view is in essence non-being, non-existing and unreal. What imparts to it a shadow-existence, a semblance of reality, and elevates it from absolute nothingness and gives it a permanence and stability, is the reflection of God's existence and attributes on it. It is like an object of magic which seems to exist in the world, but in reality exists only in vision and imagination. Just as a magical

creation is unreal, but not absolutely illusory, so is the world unreal, but not a mere phantasy. The difference between a magical object and an object of the world is only that while the former is unstable and momentary, the latter, because it is the creation of God, has got a permanence and stability enough to be the basis of life in this world and the next. It is, in short, both unreal and real, a non-real reality.

The relative stability which God has bestowed on this unreal world has given it an identity of its own different from God, an identity at a level that cannot oppose God's unity. The objects of the world have a power and a movement of their own, and man has a will, a power and a personality. Sirhindī neither denies causality in nature nor freedom of will in man. He denies only their self-sufficiency and independence. The beliefs, actions and experiences of man are his own, not of God; though they are in virtue of the knowledge and power He has bestowed on him and operate within the limits He has imposed. Of these beliefs, actions and responses, some are good and right, and one will be rewarded for them; and some are wrong, and one is responsible for them, and liable for punishment.

Difference Between *Waḥdat 'l-Wujūd* and *Waḥdat 'l-Shuhūd*

The difference between Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy and that of Sirhindī is substantial and fundamental. But for some reason that difference has not been fully appreciated. Sirhindī is partly responsible for it. He chooses to spell out his philosophy in letters that he wrote to different men at different times. This medium though effective in other matters, is quite unsuitable for sustained discussion, least of all a philosophical exposition. He gives an outline of his system in one letter, develops a concept in a second, and another in a third; treats an issue partly here and partly there; and makes some important points in letters which are devoted essentially to other subjects. Hence one has to extract all the relevant passages from the three big volumes of his *Collected Letters* before one can begin to form an idea of his philosophy.

The second difficulty that one encounters is that Sirhindī's ideas keep on changing. Although he did not take much time to traverse all the stages of mystic experience, he had to wait for years and years[38] till he could work those insights into a philosophical doctrine. A third and often baffling difficulty is posed by his terminology. It was originally developed by Ibn 'l-'Arabī in order to expound his own vision. When Sirhindī used it to express a fundamentally different vision of reality, quite naturally it gave rise to confusion.

In outlining the two systems I have tried to clear up some of the confusion. I have tried to show, for instance, what Ibn 'l-'Arabī means by saying that Being (*wujūd*) is one, and what Sirhindī means by the same proposition. I have also referred to the difference in their views on the nature of the *a'yān thābitah*, or, the ideas of things before creation, and on creation itself. Another instance is the way they speak of the status of the world. Both characterise it as shadow (*ẓill*), non-existing (*ma'dūm*) and illusory (*mawhūm*). But they understand by these terms completely different things. When Ibn 'l-'Arabī calls the world *ẓill*, what he means is that it exists as a manifestation of God, and not by itself. He clearly denies that it is other than God, or that it is a lower order of reality. But when Sirhindī calls the world *ẓill*, he not only means that it depends on God for its existence, but also that it is an altogether different being, separate from God and a completely lower order of reality, almost a non-entity.

Similarly, when Ibn 'l-'Arabī says that the world is non-existing (*ma'dūm*) what he means is that the essences of the object, namely, their ideal prototypes (*a'yān thābitah*) which are the ideal determinations of Being, remain eternally in the state of subsistence (*thubūt*) in the mind of God, and have no existence in the outer world. What exists there is God Himself on the pattern of those ideal essences. On the other hand, when Sirhindī says that the world is *ma'dūm*, he means that the objects of the world in their essence are determinations of non-being with only a reflection of God's attributes, and exist in the outer world by virtue of a reflection of God's existence at a level which in comparison to God's existence is a level of non-existence.

Likewise when Ibn 'l-'Arabī says that the world is imagi-

nary (*khayālī*) and illusory (*mawhūm*), he means that the world of common belief as an entity existing in itself separately from God is nothing but a creation of imagination and an illusion. The reality is that it is one with God, in a sense distinct but essentially the same; it is God existing in His determinate forms. On the other hand, when Sirhindī says that the world is imaginary and illusory, he means that the world exists separately from God, but it exists not with a real existence like that of God, but with an unreal existence like that of an image in a mirror or an object of magic in imagination and vision. It is an appearance without a reality (*numūd-i-bi būd*), like the appearance of a circle created by a fast-moving burning point which seems to exist although it does not exist.[39]

These problems are inherent in Sirhindī's work; and make the understanding of his philosophy very difficult. But they are not formidable, and can be overcome by patiently working through his writings. But much more difficult are the problems which have been created by scholars who owe allegiance to both Ibn 'l-'Arabī and Sirhindī. They are not prepared to admit that these great masters of Sufism would differ on fundamentals; consequently they overlook and underplay their differences.

The most outstanding example of this approach is that of Walī Allāh (d. 1176/1762). He has a great admiration for Ibn 'l-'Arabī, and believes that the basic doctrines of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* are correct. Only on one point does he feel unhappy: he thinks that *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* as commonly interpreted does not do justice to God's transcendence.[40] This defect may, however, be removed, he thinks, by reinterpreting some concepts.[41] On the other hand, he has also a great respect for Sirhindī. He was trained in his *ṭarīqah*, and appreciated many of the ideas which he had explicated, as we have seen before. It is difficult for him to see that the revelations of the two great masters of Sufism should essentially differ. Moreover, if that is really the case, it would jeopardise the value of mystical *kashf* and experience. Hence they have to be essentially the same and their difference has to be peripheral.[42]

With this presumption Walī Allāh starts to reconcile[43] the

two doctrines. At the outset he disposes of Sirhindī's doctrine of non-being as nothing (*lā shay*),[44] which amounts to the rejection of one of the two fundamental concepts of Sirhindī's philosophy. His second fundamental concept is *ẓill*, or shadow; Walī Allāh dismisses it as a metaphor.[45] After rejecting these two concepts, he does not experience much difficulty in showing that the two systems are in essence the same. Minor issues such as the concept of Divine attributes on which Sirhindī differs from Ibn 'l-'Arabī, naturally pale into insignificance. As for the critical observations of Sirhindī on *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, Walī Allāh completely ignores them. He seems to be under the impression that once *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* is interpreted as he suggests, the objections will disappear. I have discussed elsewhere Walī Allāh's attempt to reinterpret[46] *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*. I do not think that it makes any significant difference.

Walī Allāh's effort to show that Sirhindī's philosophy is essentially the same as that of Ibn 'l-'Arabī, and the difference is insignificant or linguistic, was forcefully counteracted by the leaders of the mainstream of Sirhindī's followers. With the blessings of Mirzā Mazhar Jān-i-Jānān[47] (d. 1195/1780), the chief leader of the *Mujaddidīs* of his time, one of his disciples, Shāh Ghulām 'Alī Yaḥyā (d. 1190/ 1776) wrote a treatise, *Kalimat 'l-Ḥaqq*[48] or the *Word of Truth* in which he stated Sirhindī's philosophy, highlighted the points on which it differed from the philosophy of Ibn 'l-'Arabī, and disparaged Walī Allāh's effort to underplay them.

This candid repudiation of Walī Allāh's reconciliation between the two doctrines provoked, on the one hand, a furious refutation of the *Word of Truth* under the title *Destruction of Untruth* (*Damgh 'l-Bāṭil*)[49] by his son Shāh Rafī' 'l-Dīn (d. 1247/1833) and, on the other, a better appreciation of Sirhindī's doctrines and its difference from Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy, by a grandson of Walī Allāh, Shāh Ismā'īl (d. 1246/1830). The philosophy which Shāh Ismā'īl has developed in his *'Abaqāt*[50] is a more successful effort to rehabilitate Sirhindī's transcendentalism with the concepts of Ibn 'l-'Arabī.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion – Perimeters of Islamic Sufism

From the discussion of Shaykh Aḥmad's ideas in these pages, the perimeters of a Sufism, working within the bounds of the Sharī'ah and consistent with its principles and values, are hopefully clear. We would sum up the discussion and the main points below.

Sufism is an effort to reaffirm the vision of reality which the Revelation of the Prophet has defined. It is meant not to unravel the mysteries of the world and life, or attain a new enlightenment and illumination, but to seek a clear insight and strong conviction into the truths of Revelation, without attempting to change or modify them.

The vision of reality which Revelation upholds is in essentials clear and defined. Sirhindī believes that the Prophet has stated the fundamental truths very clearly, and has not left it to the reason of a philosopher or the *kashf* of a mystic to tell what these truths are, or what they really mean. I will state here some of these truths which, Sirhindī believes, constitute the Prophetic vision.

The Revelation of the Prophet holds that the objects of the world exist in themselves, that they have attributes and properties, and that they move, act and react. These attributes, movements, actions and reactions are theirs, not of God. God creates the objects and their attributes; but He is not the subject of their attributes. He creates their movement, their action and reaction; but He is not the one who moves, nor the one who acts and reacts. Revelation asserts that things are good and bad, perfect and imperfect, beautiful

and ugly according to standards applicable to them. They are subjects of these predicates, not God.

Revelation separates man as it separates the world from God. Man has an identity of his own: his ideas and beliefs, his will and action, and his feelings and experience, all are his. God creates man, and his ideas, will, action and feelings. But He is only their creator; He is not the one who believes his ideas, makes his choices, performs his actions, enjoys his pleasures or suffers his pains.

Revelation calls some beliefs of man true, and some false, some acts right and some wrong, some attributes good and some bad. It asserts that men are responsible for their beliefs, actions and attitudes; and that God will judge them, reward what is right and good, and punish what is wrong and evil. It declares that God knows in advance what man thinks, does or experiences. It nevertheless holds that the foreknowledge of God, His pre-ordination or creation do not negate the power and freedom that God has given man, nor undermine his responsibility for beliefs, actions and attitudes insofar as he is responsible. It rejects as mistaken and irresponsible the move of the people to shift their responsibility to God on these accounts.[1] Revelation does not recognise that God's control of nature and rule over history, or His decree regarding man's life and destiny, faith and infidelity, righteousness and wickedness, happiness and misery, conflict with His will to send prophets, define what is true faith and right behaviour, and command man to believe in His guidance and comply with His law. Revelation does not oppose God's incontrovertible lordship and eternal decree (*qadr*) to His guidance and command (*amr*).

Revelation likewise separates God from the world. Nothing in the world participates in God's essence, attributes, powers and authority. God exists by Himself; the world exists by Him. He is Infinite, Eternal and Everlasting; He is Omniscient, Omnipotent, Creator, Ruler and Lord. Nothing shares in any of these attributes. He is Perfect and Holy; everything else is imperfect and defective. He holds all power, confers every blessing, and merits all praise. He commands extreme reverence, perfect worship, absolute

submission and unqualified love. No one shares these excellences, powers and rights.

Revelation attributes many things to man and the world that it attributes to God, such as existence, knowledge, will, power and action. But it makes clear that they do not have them of themselves; everything is given by God, created and controlled by Him. It also makes clear that these attributes when compared with God's attributes pale into insignificance. However great they might be, they cannot elevate the status of their subjects. They are God's creation, in His full control and at His service. No one can participate in His divinity, nor share in the authority and the rights that divinity commands. And this creaturely status of theirs is permanent and inalienable: they are to remain as creature and servant for ever.

These are the clear truths (*muḥkamāt*) of Revelation and make up its vision of Divine transcendence. When Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī says that the Prophetic religion is based on the principle of dualism (*ithnaynīyat*), he means this transcendence. He is aware that Revelation also states that God is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden; that He comprehends everything; that He is with everyone and everywhere; and that He is closer to us than our jugular vein. But never does it oppose, he points out, these allegorical (*mutashābih*) truths to the clear ones (*muḥkamāt*); on the contrary, it censures any interpretation of the former that conflicts with the latter as 'perversity of the heart'.[2]

Islamic theology has upheld the primacy of Divine transcendence and interpreted allegorical truths in a way as not to contradict or compromise it. Sufism has to follow suit. It has to affirm God's transcendence as Revelation has defined. Drawing upon its experiences, visions and intuitions, it cannot oppose the *mutashābihāt* to the *muḥkamāt* of Revelation. If it does, it is anything but Islamic.

The Qur'ān certainly refers to super-rational ways of knowledge, and extra-ordinary means of Divine communication and guidance other than Revelation. But it does not specifically mention the mystic experience of union, *fanā'* and *baqā'*. The Prophet was not aware of it, he did not teach or practise it. His Companions did not know of it either.

This fact is clearly stated by Shaykh Aḥmad and Shāh Walī Allāh; and 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī tacitly endorses it.[3] Even if it is supposed that the unitive experience is included in the extra-ordinary ways of knowledge which are referred to in the Qur'ān, there is no ground to believe that it wields an authority to modify or change the truths of Revelation.

Mystic experience is not an independent source of knowing reality. It is not self-validating; its revelations have to be validated with reference to the Prophetic Revelation. The Qur'ān recognises no experience as self-authenticating besides the *waḥy* of the Prophet, and makes no mention of the unitive experience of the mystic. Moreover, the unitive experience is only the first stage of the mystical experience; there are two further stages: difference in union, and absolute difference. Therefore, the revelations of the unitive experience are at best transitional truths which are superseded later by the truths of transcendence which the Sufi ultimately realises. Finally the truths which are received at the unitive stage vary from one Sufi to another. To Junayd at that stage, the experience of union is an experience of One Will or One Actor; to al-Ghazālī and Ibn 'l-'Arabī, it is the experience of One Being. But what al-Ghazālī means by One Being is completely different from what Ibn 'l-'Arabī understands by it. Al-Ghazālī takes it to mean that God alone exists in the real sense, and the world does not exist at all in that sense. He does not identify God with the world or consider the world as a manifestation of God as Ibn 'l-'Arabī does. He rather imagines the relation between God and the world on the pattern of the soul and the body.[4] Ibn 'l-'Arabī denies every dualistic conception, be it of Junayd or al-Ghazālī, and asserts a completely non-dualistic Unity of Being, by identifying God with the world and reducing the world to a determination of God. He, however, takes determination as an inalienable part of reality, whereas other seers of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* may regard it a subjective consideration.[5]

Mystic experience has no better authority than the reason of the theologian. None is competent to provide a knowledge of reality independent of Revelation. They have a humble function to perform: to interpret and explicate Revelation.

In this capacity, mystic experience is further subject to theological reason. It cannot overrule the truths which the theologians of Islam have established by deriving them from the Revelation. Sirhindī is definitely of the view that mystic revelations have to conform to the Revelation of the Prophet as well as to the doctrine on which the theologians concur. Other Sufis have not stated this point; but it is difficult for anyone to hold a different view, if he takes into consideration all that has been noted above regarding the efficacy of mystic experience.

That the mystic experience has no authority to modify or change the Prophetic vision of reality is hardly a matter of dispute among the Sufis. But opinions have differed as to whether a particular view of reality developed in the light of the mystic experience contradicts the Prophetic vision and conflicts with its truths. Sirhindī firmly believes that Ibn 'l-'Arabī's doctrine of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* has no basis in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, that it contravenes God's transcendence, and conflicts with various truths of the vision which Revelation upholds. He maintains that the doctrine was first expounded by Ibn 'l-'Arabī, and that the Sufis before him did not believe in it. When they spoke of *tawḥīd* they spoke of their *perception* of One Being (*tawḥīd shuhūdī*); and one would not be justified in inferring from their words that they *believed* that Being is One. Many of them are known to have crossed their unitive stage, and regretted their earlier words of unity with God. Other Sufis may also have passed that stage, though we do not know that for sure.

Those who have expounded the doctrine of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* are the ones who did not rise above the unitive stage, or the ones who did rise but could not rise enough and separate God clearly from the world. Ibn 'l-'Arabī belongs to this second group. His philosophy reflects his experience because he takes identity of the world and God as the fundamental truth and treats their difference as relative. A number of Sufis have followed Ibn 'l-'Arabī and accepted his doctrine without reservation. However, some have felt that as usually elaborated the doctrine compromises[6] to some extent God's transcendence; consequently they have attempted to reinterpret some concepts to make it more consistent.

A number of Sufis who believe in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* believe only in its fundamental thesis, and do not commit themselves to many of Ibn 'l-'Arabī's ideas which conflict with the Sharī'ah. Some of them do not consider them an essential part of the doctrine, and ignore them; others interpret them; and a number of them only care for the fundamentals and avoid entering into the details. The number of Sufis who accept Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy with all the ideas he has worked out and the inferences he has drawn are far less than is generally believed.

There is besides, a large group of Sufis which includes most of the founders of the Sufi *ṭarīqahs*, such as 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī, Shihāb 'l-Dīn 'l-Suhrawardi, Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband, and many of the leading figures of these *ṭarīqahs*, who have kept away from *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* as well as any other theosophical doctrine. For them the value of mystical experience, unitive or differentiative is not cognitive, but practical. It purifies the will rather than unveils reality; it is a part of the training to discard one's own desires and wishes, and pursue the will of God, for no end other than to please Him.

Though the Sufis are divided on the issue of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, they are unanimous in condemning the doctrine of *ḥulūl* or the incarnation of God or any of His powers in the world as a whole or a part of it, whether man or any other being. They may dispute whether Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr or any other Sufi believed in the doctrine of *ḥulūl* in any form, but none of them would deny that the doctrine contradicts God's transcendence and repudiates the Islamic principle of *tawḥīd*. They would also not rule out that the mystic experience of union may at times lead a Sufi to speak in terms which suggest *ḥulūl*, and involve a belief in it.

Tawḥīd fi'lī, or the idea that there is only one Actor there, God, that no one possesses any power, and no one wills or acts, has been quite welcome to most Sufis. Many of them have a similar attitude towards what is called *tawḥīd ṣifātī*, or the idea that not only will, but also the other attributes of man refer in fact to God. More than the sole Actor performing every action which anybody does, God is the only Subject of every attribute which is predicated of any

being. To most of the Sufis, *tawḥīd fi'lī* or *tawḥīd ṣifātī* are two stages of their *sulūk*, and refer to their feeling (*hāl*) or perception (*shuhūd*). But the Sufis who believe in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, take them more than as an experience; they believe in its reality. Sirhindī does not object if one takes them as experience, but he censures belief in it. His remark about *tawḥīd fi'lī* as a belief is that it is the gateway to blasphemy (*zandaqah*).[7] Both the *tawḥīds* as beliefs are part of the doctrine of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, and are the main reason why Sirhindī condemns the doctrine.

Sufism is to help man realise the purpose he has been created for. Revelation says that man is the servant of God, and the purpose of his life is to serve God. Sufism is to help man realise deeply and intensely the truth that he is a servant of God, and nothing more. Sufism is also to help man be a true and perfect servant of God. This is the end and the goal of Sufism. Beyond this goal there is no goal; servanthood (*'ubūdīyah*) is the last stage of the Sufi *sulūk*.

To be one with God is certainly not the object of Sufism. The Qur'ān and the Sunnah do not command it, and the vision of God's transcendence which Revelation upholds rules it out. The experience of union which may suggest that it is the goal, is a transitional experience; the Sufi must go beyond it, and affirm the unbridgeable difference that lies between the servant and the Lord.

The experience of unity is not an appropriation of reality. It does not mean that the mystic really becomes one with God. He has nothing more than a perception that he is one with God: his experience is merely a matter of vision. No one unites with God, nor does God unite with anyone. The Sufi realises this truth when he advances beyond the unitive experience, and reaches the end of the journey; at that time he perceives that God transcends the world absolutely.

Sufis who have regarded the experience of union with God or realisation of unity as the goal of Sufism, are the ones who are detained at the unitive stage of their experience. They lose their sense of discrimination, become intoxicated, utter words like 'I am God' or 'Glory to me', and make high claims (*shaṭḥ*). However, when they come out of their intoxication, and advance to higher stages, they regret their

boastful and deificatory statements. Intoxication and *shaṭḥ* are signs of the immaturity of the Sufi, rather than his perfection.

The ideal of service to God which is the goal of Sufism involves the entire personality of man: his intellect, his will, his feelings and sentiments. It means to believe in God's Revelation, and have faith and conviction; it means to resign oneself to His decree and submit to His will, accept His *Shar'* and obey His commands. It means to worship, pray and remember; to feel lowly before God's majesty, fear His wrath, seek His pleasure, bear patiently His trials, and persevere in obedience. It means to fulfil the duties, avoid sin, refrain from what is low and trifling, and seek what is commended and noble. It means to feel for humanity and work for their well-being, to preach the word of God and show the right path, to struggle for what is true and just and fight what is false and evil. It means to work for the Sharī'ah of God, and try to establish His Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.

Different elements of this ideal of complete service are not, to be sure, of the same level. Some are higher and some are lower. Moreover, differences of individual lives, and changes in social situations affect normal priorities. But it is important that values and priorities should be decided strictly on the grounds of the Sharī'ah. The experience of the Sufi, or his *kashf*, a theory of religious realities (*haqā'iq dīnīyah*) developed on mystical grounds, the demands of the Sufi *ṭarīqah*, or personal likes and dislikes, have no role to play in determining priorities. Nor can *kashf* and vision affect the grounds for the commands of the Sharī'ah. They cannot, for instance, make up the weakness of a ḥadīth or reduce the strength of the other whose weakness or strength is known on grounds recognised in the discipline of ḥadīth. *Kashf* has absolutely no say in the legality of acts, or the degree of their obligation and value.

The same is true for philosophical reason. Questions of man's ultimate end and values are not to be decided on the basis of a philosophical theory (such as the one al-Ghazālī has developed) unless it is corroborated by the Sharī'ah.

What is true regarding fundamental questions of reality is also true regarding the issues of ultimate values.

Sufism is not an attempt to lead a kind of life different from the life of the Prophet. For a Sufi, as for an ordinary Muslim, the ideal is the Prophet's life. That is the standard of excellence and perfection. The life which diverges from that pattern has no claim for excellence; on the contrary, it is liable to be censured if the divergence crosses proper limits, and the person stands condemned if the divergence is deliberate. The ecstatic absorption in God, forgetting oneself and the world around, which Sufis experience at a particular stage of *sulūk*, is not at all an ideal. It is to be appreciated only as a step towards final sobriety and intelligent service to God. Persistence in that state is not to be applauded. The Sufi should regain self-consciousness, return to the world, and serve God honestly and selflessly, which is what his experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'* are meant for. He should engage himself in preaching and instruction, in purifying life and promoting piety, and serving the religion of God as the Prophet did. The Sufi who follows God's religion internally and externally, without any qualifications, and in complete sincerity, follows the Prophet most truly and is his real inheritor (*wārith*).

The greatness of the Sufi depends upon his faith and conviction; his *dhikr* and worship; his fear and love, patience and trust, sincerity and honesty; and his observance of the Sharī'ah, service to Islam, *jihād* and sacrifice. Miracles and wonders are neither the requirements of *walāyat*, nor the measure of his nearness to God. They add to his greatness only when he uses them in the service of Islam. Similarly, the ideas and truths that he advances on the basis of his *kashf* may add to his honour when they agree with Revelation, and promote its objectives.

No walī is independent of the Prophet, nor equal to him. His experience is subject to the Revelation of the Prophet; his *kashf* and his vision, his ideas and revelations are to be validated with reference to the Prophetic truths; he has to obey the rules of his Sharī'ah, observe the values and priorities of his religion and follow the example of his life. Whatever honour or favour he receives from God is through

His Prophet and by following him. Sufis who have claimed to be greater than the Prophet, have made that claim in a state of intoxication; their words are to be ignored, rather than quoted.

The idea that the *walāyat* of a prophet is better than his prophecy (*nubūwat*) is also incorrect. It is the result of a wrong comparison between the life of a prophet and the life of a walī. The walī first occupies himself with God, passes through *fanā'* and union, then experiences separation and *baqā'*, returns to the world and attends to people. His 'ascent' to God and his 'descent' to men are two phases of his life. The prophet neither experiences *fanā'* nor *baqā'*, neither ascent nor descent. His contact with God, reception of revelation, and his devotion to God which Sufis love to call his *walāyat*, and his contact with people, preaching and performing the duties of prophecy (*nubūwat*), are not two phases of his career, one coming after the other. They are two moments of his life, intertwined with each other. The prophet does not lose sight of the people when he is most near to God, nor does he turn away from God when he is most occupied with people. He comes nearer to God as he performs his duties of prophecy; his action as prophet is also his devotion to God.

Taṣawwuf is essentially a *ṭarīqah* to purify oneself, to attain strong conviction in the truths of the Prophet's Revelation, to obey the commands of the Sharī'ah most honestly, and to make obedience absolutely selfless, for nothing but the pleasure of God. It is a way to be the most honest and sincere servant of God. It is neither a pursuit of mystery nor an exercise in deification.

The *ṭarīqah* of the Sufi is in a sense one with the *ṭarīqah* of the Prophet, and in a sense different. It has a part in common with the Prophetic *ṭarīqah*, such as the basic forms of worship (*'ibādāt*): *ṣalāt*, fasting, reading the Qur'ān, prayer (*du'ā*) and various forms of *dhikr*, some of which are obligatory (*farḍ*) and some recommended (*sunnah*). Another part of the Sufi *ṭarīqah* is derived in principle from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, but developed and elaborated on different lines; various forms of *dhikr* and contemplation (*fikr*) which are practised by the Sufis fall into this category. A third part

is completely new, such as the experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'*, union and separation, and the methods and practices which promote these experiences. On the other hand, a part of the Prophetic *ṭarīqah* such as preaching the word of God, promoting the rule of the Sharī'ah and *jihād* which are an essential part of the Prophet's way for the purification of man, have been usually ignored or played down in Sufism. There are, however, notable exceptions to this general rule. The main prop of the Sufi *ṭarīqah* is *dhikr* and contemplation (*fikr*); and its most distinctive part is the experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'*.

It is important to be clear as to how the Sufi *ṭarīqah* is one with the Prophetic *ṭarīqah* and how it is different. This will help the Sufi keep his practices and ways that are different within proper limits; it will also urge him to engage in activities which are not usually part of the Sufi *ṭarīqah* and follow the Sunnah of the Prophet more completely.

Sirhindī notes that the belief in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* is not necessary for the attainment of *fanā'* and *baqā'*. The perception of One Being (*tawḥīd shuhūdī*) is enough. The Sufi is likely to develop a belief in One Being in the course of his *sulūk* but he can also avoid it. Nor is it unusual that he identifies the visions and voices, lights and appearances which he encounters with God. But he should remember that they are part of creation, and therefore try to rise above them, and realise that God transcends all appearances and visions.

This view of Sufism is not the view of Shaykh Aḥmad alone. Leading Sufis in every age who have inspired and elevated the lives of thousands of Muslims have in general subscribed to these ideas. Those who have said or done things that are inconsistent with this view have done so at the stage of *fanā'* and union and under the intoxicative effect of that experience, or because they have not freed themselves completely of its influence, if they have advanced further. The Sufis who have reached the end of the road and attained perfection would completely agree with this view. If one finds still some discordant notes in their thought and life, it may be because they could not be aware of their discordance. In the course of this book I have tried to substantiate this

view from the history of Sufism. Though more work will have to be done before one can claim to have established it, I hope that what has been done here is enough to make it plausible, and recommend it for serious consideration.

Sufism as defined by Sirhindī has its rightful place in Islam, and can without reservation be called Islamic Sufism. This claim can be backed by comparing the ideas of Sirhindī with those of Shaykh Ibn Taymīyah (d. 728/1328) who has examined, more than anybody else, Sufi ideas and practices in the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah as interpreted by the elders (*aslāf*) of Islam. I will state his ideas on Sufism at some length, so that the reader may ascertain the truth of the claim for himself.

Ibn Taymīyah and Sufism

The popular image of Shaykh Ibn Taymīyah, which early Western writers on Islam in modern times have considerably helped to build up, is that he criticises Sufism indiscriminately, is totally against the Sufis, and sees no place for Sufism in Islam.[8] Nothing of this, however, is correct. Ibn Taymīyah, to be sure, is a most thorough and most incisive critic of Sufism; and his criticism is not limited to a few philosophical doctrines or some popular practices, as some writers[9] have held, but covers the entire field of Sufi thought and life. But he is certainly not indiscriminate; at times, he is bitter, but on the whole sympathetic. And far from saying that Sufism has no place in Islam, he moves to define the perimeters of an Islamic Sufism.[10]

Ibn Taymīyah's general attitude to Sufism is disclosed in this passage: 'Some people accept everything of Sufism, what is right as well as what is wrong; others reject it totally, both what is wrong and what is right, as some scholars of *kalām* and *fiqh* do. The right attitude towards Sufism, or any other thing, is to accept what is in agreement with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, and reject what does not agree.'[11]

Ibn Taymīyah applies this principle of judicious criticism to Sufi ideas, practices and personalities. He divides the Sufis into three categories. In the first category of Sufis whom he

calls *mashā'ikh 'l-Islām, mashā'ikh 'l-Kitāb wa 'l-Sunnah* and *a'immat 'l-hudā*,[12] he mentions Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ (d. 187/803), Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 160/777), Shaqīq 'l-Balkhī (d. 194/810), Abū Sulaymān 'l-Dārānī (d. 215/831), Ma'rūf 'l-Karkhī (d. 200/815), Bishr 'l-Ḥāfī (d. 227/841), Sarī 'l-Saqaṭī (d. 257/871), al-Junayd b. Muḥammad (d. 297/909), Saḥl b. 'Abd Allāh 'l-Tustarī (d. 283/897) and 'Amr b. 'Uthmān 'l-Makkī (d. 291/904). Later Sufis whom he places in this category are: 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166), Shaykh Ḥammād 'l-Dabbās (d. 525/1130), and Shaykh Abū 'l-Bayān (d. 551/1156). These Sufis, Ibn Taymīyah says, were never intoxicated, did not lose their sense of discrimination, or said or did anything against the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Their lives and experiences conformed with the Sharī'ah (*mustaqīm 'l-aḥwāl*).[13]

The second category consists of those Sufis whose 'experience of *fanā'* and intoxication (*sukr*) weakened their sense of discrimination, and made them utter words that they later realised to be erroneous when they became sober'.[14] Some of them also did things[15] under intoxication of which the Sharī'ah does not approve, but sooner or later they became sober and lived well. In this category Ibn Taymīyah mentions the names of Abū Yazīd 'l-Biṣṭāmī (d. 261/875), Abū 'l-Ḥusayn 'l-Nūrī (d. 295/907) and Abū Bakr 'l-Shiblī (d. 334/946). But he neither censures their experience of *fanā'* and *sukr*, nor condemns what they said or did in that state. Instead, he offers apology for them on the ground that they were intoxicated (*sukrān*), and had lost control over reason.[16]

His criticism is directed to the third category of Sufis who have believed in ideas and expounded doctrines which contradict Islamic principles, or who have indulged in practices which are condemned by the Sharī'ah. The first Sufi in this group is al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922). Ibn Taymīyah says that al-Ḥallāj believed in the doctrine of particular incarnation (*ḥulūl khāṣṣ*) on the pattern of the Christian belief regarding Jesus. He also charges him with indulging in practices such as magic and sorcery.[17]

Next to al-Ḥallāj, the Sufis who draw strong criticism from Ibn Taymīyah are the ones who expound the doctrine of One Being (*waḥdat 'l-wujūd*), such as Ibn 'l-'Arabī (d.

638/1240), Ṣadr 'l-Dīn 'l-Qunāwī (d. 672/1273), Ibn Sab'īn (d. 668/1269) and Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291). Ibn Taymīyah discusses the basic concepts of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*[18] which they hold in common, mentions the points on which they differ, examines them on rational grounds and points out their incompatibility with Islamic principles.

Ibn 'l-'Arabī, who is the central figure in this context, Ibn Taymīyah subjects to detailed criticism. He is, however, fair to recognise that 'of all the exponents of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* he is closer to Islam, that many of his ideas are correct, that he distinguishes between the Manifest (*al-Ẓāhir*) and the objects of manifestation (*maẓāhir*), and accepts the commands and the prohibitions (of the *Shar'*) and other principles as they are. He recommends many things in *sulūk* which Sufi leaders have prescribed concerning good behaviour and devotion. This is why a number of people draw upon his writings in their *sulūk* and benefit from them, even though they do not know their real import.'[19]

Ibn Taymīyah criticises Ibn 'l-'Arabī for believing that *wujūd* (being/existence) is one, that the *wujūd* of the world is the same as the *wujūd* of God, and that the objects are God's determinations. He thinks that Ibn 'l-'Arabī cannot explain the difference between God and the world with reference to the essences of things which have no footing in existence. Though he does not say that their difference is subjective, as Tilimsānī[20] does, a lot of things, Ibn Taymīyah points out, follow from the basic principles of his *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* which are reprehensible and contradict the essentials of Islam.

For instance, the doctrine identifies the existence of everything, however sordid and filthy, with the existence of God, and ascribes all the attributes of things, good and bad, to Him. It is God who is beautiful and ugly; perfect and imperfect, righteous and wicked; it is He who believes in everything, true and false, faith and infidelity; it is He who commits right and wrong, feels pleasure and pain, is rewarded or punished, and is happy or miserable. This is not an inference, Ibn Taymīyah says, from Ibn 'l-'Arabī's doctrine, but what he has himself stated.[21]

Ibn 'l-'Arabī's doctrine contradicts the basic principles of

Islam: it justifies polytheism and idolatry, denies any real difference between *tawḥīd* and *shirk*, and dubs the prophets' call to worship one God as their trick (*makr*).[22] He subscribes to the baseless idea of 'the Seal of the Saints' (*khatm 'l-awliyā'*), claims that position for himself, asserts that his *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* is the absolute truth, and all other beliefs are partially true, and that the prophets including the Seal of the Prophets (*khātim 'l-Nabī'īn*) get truth from him,[23] although he receives the *Shar'* from the Prophet and is subject to his authority. He invokes the pre-ordination (*qadr*) of God to condone wrong beliefs and evil practices, and explains away punishment in the Hereafter.[24] Ibn Taymīyah denounces these ideas as *kufr* and *zandaqah*,[25] but he does not find fault with Ibn 'l-'Arabī's life and behaviour. Of the expounders of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, there is only one, Tilimsānī, whom he calls wicked (*fājir*)[26] for his antinomian attitudes.

Ibn Taymīyah has nothing against the Sufi experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'* as such. He notes that it happens to the travellers of the Sufi path. They become so immersed in God that they forget themselves and the world, and feel that they have lost themselves and become one with God. This is the state of self-effacement (*iṣṭilām*) and union (*jam'*).[27] Many Sufis in this state lose their sense of discrimination and pronounce: 'I am God' and 'Glory to me!' Some make loud claims: 'I would put my tents at the Jahannam' (to save men); others commit objectionable acts. Ibn Taymīyah says that such words and behaviour are not to be censured, and the Sufi should be excused on the ground that he is not in his proper senses.[28]

Ibn Taymīyah calls this experience *fanā' shuhūdī*, because it is a matter of perception (*shuhūd*) only. The Sufi *sees* that he has lost himself and become one with God. It does not mean that he *is* really one with God or that he *believes* that he is one with Him. The experience may, however, lead and has led Sufis to believe that they are one with God. The belief may take different forms: One is that God has entered into the Sufi as al-Ḥallāj believed, or that He has entered into the world. The other is that God and the world are really One Being, and there is no difference between the servant and the Lord.[29] This is the *fanā' wujūdī* of the people

who believe in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*. They develop this belief, Ibn Taymīyah says, 'due to the weakness of their heart which fails to see things as they are, and does not perceive the difference in union or multiplicity in unity'.[30]

Neither of these two *fanā's* was known to the Prophet or his Companions. Ibn Taymīyah observes: 'The Companions had a perfect faith and a strong conviction. They did not lose their reason, nor went into a swoon; they never felt intoxication, experienced effacement, or became mad with love. These things first appeared at the time of the *tābi'īn* (the following generation) among the devotees (*'ubbād*) of Basra.'[31] He further observes that 'the *fanā'* which we get in the books of sober Sufis like Shaykh 'l-Islām, 'Abdullāh 'l-Anṣārī (d. 481/1088) and the Sufis before him is the *fanā' shuhūdī*, even though some of them have entertained wrong ideas about it'.[32]

Some Sufis are, for instance, so intensely conscious of God's absolute power and His complete control over the world, or His pre-ordination of things and events (*qadr*) that they hold back from calling things good and bad as the Sharī'ah does. They are so overwhelmed by God's *qadr* that they do not see a place for His *amr* (law), or are so immersed in the vision of His lordship (*rubūbīyah*) that they do not move to fulfil the demands of His divinity (*ulūhīyah*).[33] Some do not see any room for supplication (*du'ā*),[34] or any justification for preaching and *jihād*. They believe that their task is to resign themselves to every decree of God, and accept everything good or bad. They refuse to make any effort to correct what is wrong, or fight what is evil.[35] Ibn Taymīyah discusses these mistaken ideas at length, exposes their fallacy in the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and offers a rational view of pre-ordination (*qadr*) and Divine rule. He praises Sufis like 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī who did not fall into these errors, who believed in *qadr* but also adhered to the *Shar'*, who were intensely conscious of God's rule, yet worked against that which was false and evil.[36] One of the main objects of his Commentary[37] on a part of Shaykh al-Jīlānī's *Futūḥ 'l-Ghayb* is to show how he has steered clear of the dilemma into which others have got themselves.

Some Sufis consider that *fanā' shuhūdī* is the goal of

Sufism. Even Shaykh 'Abdullāh 'l-Anṣārī, the author of *Manāzil 'l-Sā'irīn*, notwithstanding his greatness, held the same view.[38] This is, however, the goal of imperfect Sufis (*qāṣirīn*).[39] The Sufi has to go, Ibn Taymīyah says, beyond *fanā' shuhūdī*, and disentangle himself the second time (*farq thānī*),[40] reaffirm his servanthood, and carry out the will of God in such a way as if he has no will of his own. The goal of the perfect Sufi is the effacement of will, *fanā' irādī*, which he defines as a state in which 'one loses every interest in what God does not command, engages in what He orders, turns away from every other worship and worships God alone, gives up every other obedience and obeys Him only, depends on nobody except Him, loves only Him and His Prophet, fears Him alone,[41] seeks nobody's help but His, and tries to please no one but Him'.[42] This is the *fanā'* which the Qur'ān and the Sunnah teach. Ibn Taymīyah calls it *fanā' dīnī* and *fanā' shar'ī*, and says that this is the state of the prophets and their companions, and the state of the rightly-guided Sufis.[43]

Ibn Taymīyah does not deny extra-revelatory ways of Divine guidance or *kashf*. Referring to the Qur'ānic verse (42: 51), he says God talks to man in three ways: from behind a veil, through an angelic messenger, or through secret communication (*īḥā'*). The walī shares the last one;[44] the first two are for the prophet alone. But the Sufi *kashf* is not infallible and certain. Certitude belongs only to the prophetic *waḥy*. Ibn Taymīyah quotes a number of Sufis on this point. Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'l-Shādhilī (d. 656/1258), for instance, said: 'We have been assured of the truth of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah; but the truth which is revealed in *kashf* and inspiration (*ilhām*) is not guaranteed.'[45]

Ibn Taymīyah doubts the efficacy of the gnostic way in knowing reality through purification of the heart of which al-Ghazālī talks a lot. He remarks: 'A Christian monk, when he polishes his soul, sees in it the image of Trinity, and is addressed through it. Since he had the image of Trinity before, his soul when polished by devotions, sees the image in vision. On the other hand, a Muslim who loves God and the Prophet sees the Prophet in a dream as he believes him to be, and sees God in a dream as he imagines Him.'[46] But

he does not reject the gnostic method altogether. 'A section of people of *kalām* and reason', he says, 'reject many of the things that (al-Ghazālī) has said, and think that devotion and purification of the heart does not contribute to knowledge. They are certainly wrong. The truth is that piety and purification of the heart are some of the great means of acquiring knowledge.'[47] He, however, denies that it is a way by itself, a self-authenticating means of knowledge, reliable and certain. 'One has to abide', he says, 'by the Qur'ān and Sunnah, in knowledge and action; no one can possibly know what the prophet has said of transcendental realities directly by himself, independent of the agency of prophecy. And no one can dispense with what the prophet has communicated concerning matters of reality. The word of the prophet is self-authenticating, and the *kashf* or the opinion of anyone cannot rule on it.'[48]

In matters of worship and rituals (*qurb*), *kashf* has no role at all: 'The forms of *qurb* and worship (*'ibādat*) are known only through the prophets, and there is nothing *ḥarām* except what God has forbidden, and there is nothing *dīn* except what He has prescribed.'[49] *Kashf* may, however, have a say in cases where arguments from the principal sources of the Sharī'ah collide, and one is at a loss to decide as to what is the proper course. In such cases *kashf* or inspiration (*ilhām*) is a stronger reason than an unsound (*ḍa'īf*) ḥadīth or a weak analogy (*qiyās*). Ibn Taymīyah writes: 'Those who say that *ilhām* does not count at all are wrong; and those who think that it is an approved way (*shar'*) of knowing are also wrong. When the *sālik* after taking all the clear arguments of the Sharī'ah into consideration fails to come to a judgement, his inspiration may be an argument for him, provided he is pious and has right motives. At times *kashf* is a stronger argument than a far-fetched analogy, unsound ḥadīth, weak opinion, and *istiṣḥāb* on which the followers of a *fiqh* school so much rely.'[50]

The greatness of a walī lies not in *fanā' wujūdī* or *shuhūdī*; it lies in serving God. 'Man is the servant of God, and in the service of God lies his perfection and glory. The more one serves God, the more perfect one is. If he thinks that he can transcend the boundaries of servanthood, or that it

is a mark of perfection, he is most ignorant, and farthest removed from the right path.'[51]

The measure of a walī's greatness is his faith and his obedience to God. Miracles are no criterion. 'The revelation of secrets (*kashf*) or the control over events (*taṣarruf*), are not necessarily better than those acts which do not produce them. If a *kashf* and *taṣarruf* is not helpful for religion it is a worldly thing: a lot of infidels, pagans and men of the Book, (*ahl 'l-Kitāb*) perform them, whereas many Muslims don't.'[52] 'The best of the walīs of God are those who follow the Prophet most closely: that is why Abū Bakr is the greatest walī after the prophets.'[53]

Ibn Taymīyah does not oppose the *ṭarīqah* of the Sufis as such, neither their concentration on some approved ways, nor adoption of new ones, provided they do not fall into the category of unauthorised innovation (*bid'at*). He does not object, for instance, to the experience of *fanā'* and union; what he requires is that one should not make it the goal of Sufism, or entertain mistaken ideas about it. He would not object to intensification of some approved forms of *dhikr*, or reliance on some methods for purifying the soul, with the neglect of others, provided it is within the limits of the Sharī'ah.[54] A Sufi may, for instance, withdraw temporarily to a cloister (*khalwah*),[55] provided he observes the *ṣalāt* in assembly and the Friday prayer, and renders his essential obligations. Ibn Taymīyah would insist that these practices should not change or alter the values of things which the Sharī'ah normally attaches to them.[56] 'There is no way to God', he says, 'except following the Prophet externally and internally'.[57]

The way to know what the inner realities (*ḥaqā'iq*) of religion such as renunciation (*zuhd*), abstinence (*wara'*), love (*maḥabbah*), trust (*tawakkul*), resignation (*riḍā*), sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*), thankfulness (*shukr*) and patience (*ṣabr*) are, is the Qur'ān, the Sunnah of the Prophet, and the lives of the Companions. The more one moves away from this period, the more is the meaning of these realities influenced by external factors, such as philosophical ideas, Sufi practices and experiences, doubtful traditions and ascetic tendencies.[58]

I have stated Shaykh Ibn Taymīyah's views on Sufism as

faithfully as I could. I hope that this presentation will remove many wrong notions that people have regarding his attitude towards Sufism. Ibn Taymīyah does not oppose Sufism as such, nor is he a sworn enemy of the Sufis. He does condemn Sufis like al-Ḥallāj, Ibn 'l-'Arabī and Tilimsānī, but he also applauds others like Fuḍayl, Junayd and 'Abd 'l-Qādir. He does not object to the Sufi experience of *fanā'* and union (*jam'*), but he does object to making absorption in that experience (*fanā' shuhūdī*) the goal of Sufism, or talk, on that basis, of *ḥulūl* or expounding *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*. He is not against the Sufi *ṭarīqah* as such, their concentration on *dhikr* and *fikr*, or their *sayr* and *sulūk*. He is critical only of some ways of *dhikr*, such as the *dhikr* merely of the word Allāh or *Huwa* (He),[59] because the *dhikrs* which the Qur'ān and the Sunnah have taught us are meaningful sentences, not simply a name or a pronoun. This, in his view, is a *bid'at* and should be avoided. He is not even opposed to the idea of *walāyat* or walī in the particular sense in which Sufis use the terms. He would, however, oppose with all force, and very rightly, the idea that the walī can dispense with the Sharī'ah or claim any kind of independence from the prophet. Ibn Taymīyah does not reject *kashf* either: but he does not consider it to be an independent source for the knowledge of reality or value.

On reading through these pages it will be apparent how identical are the views of Shaykh Ibn Taymīyah and Shaykh Sirhindī on major issues: the goal of Sufism; the nature of mystic experience and its various levels; the relation of *kashf* with the *waḥy* of the prophet; how the walī stands with the *nabī*, or the *ṭarīqah* with the Sharī'ah, and what is the idea of true religious life (*ḥaqīqah*). Also discernible will be the identity of their views on prophecy, the mission of the prophet, and service (*'ibādat*) to God, which is the purpose of man's life on earth.

Does this mean that Shaykh Ibn Taymīyah had an influence on Shaykh Sirhindī's thought? This is a difficult question to answer. Shaykh Aḥmad readily recognised his indebtedness to his predecessors, whether they were Sufis, theologians or logicians. But he never mentions Ibn Taymīyah; most probably he was not aware of him. If this is true then the

identity of their views can only be explained in terms of their common attitude to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet: of upholding quite seriously their supremacy over all human ways of knowing things, reason or *kashf*.

I do not want to give the impression that Shaykh Aḥmad and Shaykh Ibn Taymīyah have no different opinions. They do; but if we leave out the questions of theology, with which we are not concerned here, and confine our attention to matters of Sufism, their difference is related to, I would say, small matters of detail rather than principles. For instance, Shaykh Ibn Taymīyah violently denounces al-Ḥallāj and Ibn 'l-'Arabī, whereas Shaykh Sirhindī condemns their views but abstains from denouncing them. Also, Ibn Taymīyah may have reservations about some practices in the Naqshbandī *sulūk* which are approved by Sirhindī. But these things are not of much significance.

I close this chapter by saying that Shaykh Ibn Taymīyah's ideas are a real testimony to the Islamic character of the Sufism which Shaykh Sirhindī expounded. I hope that it will not be difficult now for anyone to see that Sufism, properly conceived, has a rightful place in Islam.

Notes and References (Chapter One)

1. Mullā Kamāl had among his students the last great theologian of Islam, 'Abd 'l-Ḥakīm Siālkotī (d. 1067/1656), the writer of a super-Commentary on the *Sharḥ 'l-Maqāṣid* of Jurjānī, besides other independent treatises on theological subjects, and the *Shaykh 'l-Islām* during the reign of Shāhjahān. Siālkotī had a great appreciation for Sirhindī's work, regarded him as the Renovator of the Second Millennium (*Mujaddid Alf Thānī*) and commented on his achievements in his *Dalā'il 'l-Tajdīd*.
2. Nūr 'l-Ḥasan: Abū 'l-Faḍl, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., Vol. I, p. 117; Rizwī, S. A. A.: *Religious and Intellectual History of the Muslims in Akbar's Reign*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1975, Ch. IX: Religious and Political Thought of Abū 'l-Faḍl, pp. 339–73.
3. See *infra*, p. 18.
4. Sirhindī, *Ithbāt 'l-Nubūwah*, Arabic text with Urdu trans., Ghulām Muṣṭafā Khān, Karachi, 1383 A.H., p. 6.
5. Muḥammad Hāshim Kishamī, *Zubdat 'l-Maqāmāt*, Lucknow, Nawalkishore, 1890, p. 132. Sirhindī seems to refer to this discussion in the *Ithbāt 'l-Nubūwah*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
6. Nadwī, S. Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī, *Tārīkh Da'wat wa 'Azīmat*, Vol. IV, (which deals with the life and work of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī), Lucknow, 1980, p. 140.
7. Muḥammad Ḥāshim, *Zubdat 'l-Maqāmāt*, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
8. *Khirqah* is the gown which the Sufi teacher gives to a disciple either at the time of his initiation or at the completion of his *sulūk* when he permits him to teach the *ṭarīqah*. It is the latter which is meant here.
9. Sirhindī, Shaykh Aḥmad, *Maktūbāt*, ed. Nūr Aḥmad, Lahore, Nur Company, 1384/1964, Vol. II:44, pp. 989–90. All references to the *Maktūbāt* are of this edition, unless otherwise mentioned.
10. Sirhindī, *Risālah Taḥlīlīyah*, Arabic text with Urdu trans., Ghulām Muṣṭafā Khān, Karachi, Idārah Mujaddidīyah, 1965, p. 28; Muḥammad Hāshim Kishamī, *Zubdat 'l-Maqāmāt*, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
11. Muḥammad Hāshim Kishamī: *Zubdat 'l-Maqāmāt*, *op. cit.*, p. 117; Nadwī, S. A. Ḥasan, *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
12. *Nisbat fardīyah* refers, as Sirhindī explains here, to the inner state of the Sufi when he reaches the final point of his mystical ascent (*'urūj*).
13. Sirhindī, *Mabda wa Ma'ād*, Delhi, Muṭba' Anṣārī, n.d., p. 4.
14. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:290, p. 741; I:266, p. 584. For *Naqshbandī Nisbat* see *infra*, Ch. 2, note 49.
15. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:290, p. 744.
16. Nadwī, S. A. 'Alī, *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, pp. 150–1; Muḥammad Ḥasan, *Maqāmāt Imām Rabbānī, Mujaddid Alf Thānī*, Lucknow, Shāhī Press, 1333 A.H., p. 9.
17. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:290, p. 744. It has been reported that the Khwājah deputed Sirhindī at Lahore to preach the *ṭarīqah*. See

Nadwī, S. A. 'Alī, *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, p. 153.

18. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:266, p. 585; Nadwī, S. A. 'Alī, *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, p. 150.
19. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:31, p. 102.
20. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:160, pp. 338–9.
21. Sirhindī's claim that before reaching the final truth he passed through the unitive stage and believed in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, has been questioned by Dr. Yohanan Friedmann. He doubts that Sirhindī ever experienced union, passed through the state of intoxication, spoke of One Being and uttered ecstatic words (*shaṭḥ*) (*Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of His Thought and A Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity*, Montreal, McGill/Queen's University Press, 1971, pp. 6, 20, 24). He avoids clearly mentioning what he means. But the implication is quite clear, namely, that Sirhindī is not a genuine Sufi, because he did not obtain union or experience ecstasy and intoxication, which to many modern writers on Sufism, and he is no exception, are the marks of true Sufism. Professor Muḥammad Mujib is more candid when he remarks: 'Sheikh Aḥmad did not possess the temperament or the outlook characteristic of the mystical type . . .' (*The Indian Muslims*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1967, p. 245).

    The sole ground on which Friedmann bases his case is this: Sirhindī says that when he was passing through the stage of *tawḥīd wujūdī* he was so much enamoured by it that he expressed ideas of that *tawḥīd* in his writings. But since such ideas are not found in his extant works, the claim that he passed through the stage of *tawḥīd wujūdī* is fake.

    First of all, a cursory reading of the letter I:290 translated in this work (pp. 202–6) wherein Sirhindī describes the various stages of his mystical experience at length including that of union and oneness will be sufficient to convince that its writer is describing a real rather than a fake experience. Second, as for the writings of the period of *tawḥīd wujūdī*, Sirhindī says that 'they were scattered by friends and that it was no more possible to collect them, hence I have left them as such'. (*Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:291, p. 758.) There is no reason why Sirhindī should have made it a point to preserve them, when he no longer held those ideas. Third, some of these writings were found later by his disciples and were put in a volume called *Ma'ārif Ladunnīyah*. The learned editor of this book writes in the Preface: 'In the course of my comparison and collation it became clear to me that these ideas (*ma'ārif*) came to him (i.e. Sirhindī) in the early period of his *sulūk* in the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah*. In these *ma'ārif* he identifies the Divine Essence with existence (*wujūd*), and the essences of contingent beings with the essential modes of God differentiated in Divine knowledge, and regards them as necessary. Similarly, he considers that perfection lies in the combination of immanence with transcendence, and affirms the status of mirrorhood. These four principles are the basic concepts of the system of Shaykh Akbar (*Ma'ārif Ladunnīyah*, ed. 'Abd 'l-Majīd Salafī, Lahore, 1376

A.H., p. 2). The more relevant sections (*ma'ārif*) are 5, 8, and 10. Fourth, the first passage that we have quoted in the text (p. 14) contains a quatrain which Sirhindī says he wrote to his preceptor, Khwājah 'Abd 'l-Bāqī, when he was passing through the stage of *tawḥīd wujūdī*. This is supported by the letter which the Khwājah wrote in reply wherein he reprimanded Sirhindī on his quatrain: 'And the quatrain which you have written is foolish and nonsensical. Its writer will never be acceptable to God. You should be humble before God; He is Sublime and Self-Respecting.' (Ikram, Sh., *Rawd Kawthar*, Karachi, Taj Office, n.d., p. 153.)

By making these observations, however, I should not be taken to mean, as our writers do, that a true Sufi at some stage of his *sulūk* must believe in *tawḥīd wujūdī* or speak *shaṭḥ*. The experience of union is essential to the Sufi *ṭarīqah*; but belief in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* or uttering *shaṭḥ* are no part of Sufism.

22. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:13, I:31, I:36, I:160; I:291.
23. For details see Nadwī, S. A. A., *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, pp. 154–6.
24. Jahāngīr, *Tuzuk-i-Jahāngīrī*, ed. Sayed Aḥmad Khān, Aligarh, 1281/1864, pp. 272–3.
25. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:131, pp. 304–5; I:168, p. 352; I:221, pp. 464–5; I:313, pp. 827–8.
26. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:6, p. 872.
27. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:234, p. 495; I:261, p. 574; II:4, p. 870; III:100, p. 1506.
28. See Bibliography.
29. Aziz Aḥmad, *Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 175. On Mullā Mubārak Nāgawrī see Sir Wolseley Haig, (planned), Sir Richard Burn, (ed.), *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. IV, Cambridge, 1937, pp. 114, 106.
30. Badāyūnī, 'Abd 'l-Qādir, *Muntakhab 'l-Tawārīkh*, Calcutta, 1865, Vol. 3, pp. 130–1. On Fath Allāh Shīrazī see M. Aslam, *Sarmāyah 'Umar*, Nadwat 'l-Muṣannifīn, Lahore, 1976, pp. 9–30.
31. Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab 'l-Tawārīkh*, Vol. II, pp. 245–8.
32. Sirhindī, *Ithbāt 'l-Nubūwah*, pp. 19, 20.
33. See *infra*, p. 72 and pp. 208–10.
34. M. Aslam, *Sarmāyah 'Umar*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.
35. Nadwī, S. A. 'Alī, *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, p. 45.
36. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:120, p. 278; I:251, pp. 523–8; I:266, pp. 616–20; II:15, p. 893; II:36, pp. 931–58; II:67, pp. 1077–8; II:96, pp. 1139–50.
37. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:251, p. 523; II:96, p. 1150.
38. Sirhindī mentions that 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492) and others find fault with Amīr Mu'āwīyah (*Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:251, pp. 524–5).
39. In his treatise, *Radd-i-Rawāfiḍ*, Sirhindī mentions a number of Shī'ah sects and their beliefs. Some of these beliefs contradict the established beliefs of Islam, such as 'Alī is a god; or that the revelation was in fact sent to 'Alī, but Gabriel made a mistake and gave it to Muḥammad; or that human souls are born again and again in different bodies. Major Shī'ah sects do not hold these beliefs; only some very insignificant extremist sects do, and have been condemned

as infidels by the Ummah. Opinions have, however, differed about those Shī'ahs who abuse the Companions of the Prophet, particularly the first three righteous caliphs, and those who fought with 'Alī later. Sunnī scholars condemn these acts very strongly, but excepting a few later Ḥanafī scholars, particularly the 'ulamā' of Central Asia, the majority do not charge them with infidelity. However, most of them would not refrain from dubbing those Shī'ahs as infidels (*kāfir*) who say and believe that Abū Bakr, 'Umar or the Community of Companions were infidels. In the *Radd* Sirhindī defends the stand of the 'ulamā' of Māwarā 'l-Nahr that those Shī'ahs who charge the Companions with infidelity or abuse them strongly are infidels. In his letters, however, he condemns these acts as *fisq* and *bid'at* and refrains from calling their perpetrators infidels. [For a fuller discussion of the subject see Ibn 'Abīdīn's treatise, *Tanbīh 'l-Wulāt wa 'l-Ḥukkām 'alā aḥkām Shātim Khair 'l-Anām aw Aḥd Aṣḥabihī 'l-Kirām* in the collection of his treatises, *Rasā'il Ibn 'Ābidīn*, place and date of publication not mentioned, Vol. I, pp. 357–71. Shaykh 'l-Islām Ibn Taymīyah in his book, *Al-Ṣārim 'l-Maslūl 'alā Shātim 'l-Rasūl*, Al-Subkī in *Al-Sayf 'l-Maslūl 'alā 'Man Sabba 'l-Rasūl*, Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ in *Al-Shifā'* and many others have discussed the issue.]

40. Nu'mānī, Muḥammad Manẓūr, *Tadhkirah Imām Rabbānī*, Lucknow, Kutub Khānah Al-Furqān, 1982, p. 299.
41. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:266, p. 612.
42. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:41, p. 1297.
43. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:41, p. 1298; I:266, p. 612.
44. Nu'mānī, M. Manẓūr, *Tadhkirah Imām Rabbānī, op. cit.*, p. 123. It is strange that Shaykh Muḥammad Ikram attributes the poetic surname *kufrī* to Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī himself without giving his source (*Muslim Civilisation in India*, New York and London, Columbia University Press, 1964, p. 167). This must be treated as a mistake.
45. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. III:41, p. 1298.
46. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:288, p. 722.
47. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:261, p. 573.
48. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:266, p. 626; II:62, p. 1061.
49. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:260, p. 562. *Farḍ* means acts which are obligatory, and Sunnah means acts which were done by the Prophet and recommended by him without making them obligatory. Though general in their application the words here refer to prayers.
50. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:28, pp. 921–2.
51. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:41, p. 1306.
52. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:276, p. 673.
53. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:261, p. 573.
54. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:294, p. 776; II:58, p. 1050.
55. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:232, p. 1050; III:66, p. 1367; I:234, pp. 492–3.
56. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:29, pp. 95–6.
57. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:231, p. 481.
58. For Sirhindī's discussion on innovation (*bid'at*) see *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I, pp. 186, 231, 19. For a thorough discussion of the subject see Abū

Isḥāq 'l-Shāṭibī, *Al-I'tiṣām* (Cairo, al-Maktabah 'l-Tijārīyah 'l-Kubrā).

59. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. II:54, p. 1032.
60. Nu'mānī, M. M., *Tadhkirah Imām Rabbānī, op. cit.*, p. 87.
61. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:102, p. 256.
62. Nu'mānī, M. M., *Tadhkirah Imām Rabbānī*, p. 255; Nadwī, S. A. 'Alī, *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, pp. 112, 163.
63. Nu'mānī, M. M , *Tadhkirah Imām Rabbānī*, p. 69.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
65. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:213, p. 425; I:194, p. 389.
66. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:47, p. 163.
67. Nadwī, S. A. 'Alī, *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, pp. 88–91.
68. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:102, p. 256.
69. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:275, p. 670.
70. For the text of the *Maḥḍar* see Badāyūnī, *Muntakhab 'l-Tawārīkh*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 271–2 and for Eng. translation, M. Mujeeb, *Indian Muslims*, Allen & Unwin, 1967, pp. 242–3.
71. Aziz Aḥmad, *Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964, p. 175.
72. For details of Dīn Ilāhī see Nadwī, *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, pp. 108–25.
73. See Abū 'l-Faḍl's assessment of Akbar's religious policy, by Mushir 'l-Ḥasan, *Studies in Islam*, Delhi, Vol. X, Jan.–April 1973, p. 119; and Aziz Aḥmad, *Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
74. For details see Ikram, Sh. M., *Muslim Civilisation in India*, *op. cit.*, pp. 162–3.
75. Those who were executed for opposing Akbar's religious policy include Mullā Maḥmūd Yazdī, the Shī'ah Qādī of Jawnpur, and Mu'izz 'l-Mulk, the Chief Qādī of Bengal (Ikram, S. M., *Muslim Civilisation in India*, p. 160). Sirhindī refers to persecution and extermination in his letters, Vol. I:47, p. 162 and I:81, p. 225.
76. Aziz Aḥmad, *Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, p. 180; Ikram, S. M., *Muslim Civilisation in India*, p. 163; Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:195, p. 391.
77. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:47, p. 162; I:81, p. 225.
78. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:92, pp. 1129–30.
79. Niẓāmī, Khaliq Aḥmad, 'Naqshbandī Influence on the Mughal Rulers and Politics', *Islamic Culture*, Jan. 1965, p. 47.
80. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:195, pp. 390–1.
81. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:67, p. 1082.
82. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:53, p. 171.
83. See Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:269, pp. 48, 163, 165, 53, 195, 65; II:57; III:54.
84. Ikram, S. M., *Rawd Kawthar*, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
86. Some dubbed him as *kāfir* (Nu'mānī, M. M., *Tadhkirah Imām Rabbānī*, p. 99) and some called for his hanging (Ikram, Sh. M., *Rawd Kawthar*, p. 162).

87. Ikram, Sh. M., *Rawd Kawthar*, p. 160.
88. Badr 'l-Dīn, *Ḥaḍrāt 'l-Qudus*, pp. 116–17, cited by Nadwī, S. A. 'Alī, *Tārīkh Da'wat*, Vol. IV, pp. 162–3.
89. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. III:5, p. 1202; III:2, pp. 1193–4; III:6, p. 1203.
90. Arnold, T. W., *Preaching of Islam*, 2nd revised ed., London, Constable & Company, 1913, p. 412.
91. Ikram, Sh. M., *Rawd Kawthar*, p. 163.
92. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. III:43, pp. 1307–8; III:106, p. 1513; III:72, p. 1378.
93. Aslam, M., *Sarmāyah 'Umar*, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–31; Ikram, Sh. M., *Muslim Civilisation in India*, p. 169.
94. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. II:4, p. 870; I:261, pp. 574–5; I:234, p. 494; III:100, p. 1506.

Notes and References (Chapter Two)

1. The ancestors of Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad 'l-Nūrī's (d. 295/907–8) parents came from Khurasan; but he was born and brought up in Baghdad. A greater devotee (*'ābid*) than his more famous friend Junayd, Nūrī was extremely ecstatic, had prolonged trances, and was known for his allegorical expressions (*ishārāt*) some of which have been explained by Abū Naṣr 'l-Sarrāj (*al-Luma' fī 'l-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Dr. 'Abd 'l-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭāhā 'Abd 'l-Bāqī Surūr, (Cairo, 1960), pp. 492–4). See also Abū 'l-Qāsim 'l-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, ed. 'Abd 'l-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Muḥammad b. 'l-Sharīf (Cairo, 1972), pp. 123–4; Al-Kalabadhī, *al-Ta'arruf li madhhab ahl 'l-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Dr. 'Abd 'l-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Ṭāhā 'Abd 'l-Bāqī Surūr, (Cairo, 1960), pp. 96, 100; Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Maḥjūb*, ed. V. A. Zukovskiy, Persian translation of the Russian Introduction, by M. 'Abbāsī (Tehran, 1926), pp. 164–6; 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, with Qazwīnī's Preface (Tehran, 1336, A.H.), Vol. II, pp. 39–47.
2. 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 46.
3. Abū 'l-Qāsim 'l-Junayd b. Muḥammad (d. 297/909) of Baghdad, the most outstanding Sufi of his time, highly learned, extremely balanced and sober, he strictly observed the Sharī'ah. Sufis hail him as the Leader of the Sufi Community (*Sayyid al-Ṭā'ifah*) and trace their *ṭarīqahs* from him. Ibn Taymīyah (d. 728/1327) counts him among the *mashā'ikh 'l-Islām* and *a'immat 'l-hudā* [*Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Riyadh, Vol. X, pp. 516–17]. Dr. 'Alī Ḥassan Abdel-Kader has published his *Rasā'il* in his book, *The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd* (London, Luzac & Co., Gibb Memorial Series, 1962); the late Prof. R. C. Zaehner has a chapter on Junayd's mysticism in his *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (Schocken, New York, 1969, 1st ed. 1960), pp. 135–61; I have also studied Junayd's views on mystic experience and *tawḥīd* in my article 'The Doctrine of One Actor: Junayd's View of *Tawḥīd*', *The Muslim World*, Jan. 1983, pp. 33–56.
4. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 552.
5. Abū Muḥammad Sahl b. 'Abdullāh 'l-Tustarī (d. 283/897) is from Tustar in the Persian province of Khuzistan, where he taught Islamic sciences and instructed in Sufism before he came to Basra and settled down. He is known for his abstenence (*wara'*), renunciation (*zuhd*), fasting throughout the year and miracles. Al-Ḥallāj was among his disciples. See al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, pp. 92–5; 'Aṭṭār: *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*; Vol. I, pp. 227–41; Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Maḥjūb*, pp. 244ff and 175–6. 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-'Uns* (Lucknow, Nawalkishore, 1910), p. 69. Walter De Gruyter has studied his Commentary on the Qur'ān in *The Mystic Vision of Existence in Classical Islam* (Berlin and New York, 1980).
6. 'Aṭṭār; *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, Vol. I, p. 237.
7. See the Indian scholar and Sufi, Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī, *Tazkīyah wa Iḥsan yā Taṣawwuf wa Sulūk* (Urdu translation of his original Arabic work: *Rabbānīyah lā Rahbānīyah*) Lucknow, 1979, pp.

14–16, 24; and his colleague, | Muḥammad ' Manẓūr | Nu'mānī, *Taṣawwuf Kiyā Hay*, (Lucknow, 1978), pp. 24, 33, 65.

8. For the difference between the Sufi way and the prophetic way see *infra*: pp. 63–70.
9. Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (450/1058–505/1111), an eminent Ash'arite theologian, an outstanding Shāfi'ite *faqīh*, a profound critic of Greek philosophy, and a great defender of the Islamic faith (*Ḥujjat 'l-Islām*), was born at Tus in Iran, studied at Nishapur, taught and wrote at the Niẓamīyah College, Baghdad, and eventually turned to Sufism and interpreted Islam and Sufism so as to bring them together. He has traced his intellectual development in a book *al-Munqidh min 'l-Ḍalāl*, which has been translated by M. Watt under the title, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazālī* (London, 1951). Different parts of his *magnum opus*, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm 'l-Dīn* and some other works have been translated into English and other languages. Also a number of works, the greatest on any Islamic personality, have been written on his thought. Al-Ghazālī has expounded his views on gnosis in the *Mīzān 'l-'Amal*, ed. Sulayman Dunyā (Cairo, 1964). For a discussion see M. 'Umaruddīn: *The Ethical Philosophy of Imām Ghazzālī*, Aligarh, 1962.
10. Abū Bakr Muḥyī 'l-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī 'l-Ṭā'ī, commonly-known as Ibn 'Arabī/Ibn 'l-'Arabī (560/1165–638/1240), was born in Murcia (Spain) and died in Damascus. A mystic of vast learning, great intellect and unlimited imagination, he expounded and elaborated the philosophy of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* that has dominated the Islamic world for centuries and still exercises a considerable influence. For his biography see Sayed Husain Nasr: *Three Muslim Sages* (Harvard, Cambridge, 1964), pp. 92–102. The best work on his philosophy is Dr. A. E. Affīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dīn Ibnul 'Arabī* [Lahore, Ashraf, reprint from C.U.P., ed.].
11. Shaykh 'l-Islām Abū Ismā'īl 'Abdullāh b. Abī Manṣūr Muḥammad 'l-Anṣārī (396/1006–481/1088) was from Herat in Afghanistan. A highly learned Ḥanbalī scholar, a great mystic as well as a theorist of Sufism, a poet and the author of a biographical work on Sufis, his fame primarily rests on a small but very concise treatise on the states and stages of *sulūk*, *Manāzil 'l-Sā'irīn*, on which a number of Commentaries have been written. S. de Laugier de Beaurecueil D.P. has edited two of them, one by al-Firkāwī and the other by al-Iskandirī (Cairo: Institut Francais d'Archeologie Orientale, 1953 and 1954), and has also published *Khwāja 'Abdullāh Anṣārī, Mystique Ḥanbalite* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965) and other studies. Ibn Qayyim (691/1292–751/1350), the distinguished disciple of Ibn Taymīyah has also written a lengthy Commentary on the *Manāzil* under the title: *Madārij 'l-Sālikīn*, in three volumes (ed. M. Ḥāmid 'l-Fiqī, Cairo, 1956).
12. Abū Maḥfūẓ Ma'rūf b. Fīroz 'l-Karkhī (d. 200/815) whose Christian parents embraced Islam at the hands of 'Alī b. Mūsā 'l-Riḍā, comes from Karkh in the suburbs of Baghdad. Ibn Taymīyah places him

in the group of sober Sufis like Fuḍayl b. 'Iyāḍ, Sarī 'l-Saqaṭī and Junayd whom he calls *mashā'ikh 'l-Islām*, and *a'immat 'l-hūdā*. [*Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Riyadh, Vol. X, pp. 516–17.] See also al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, pp. 65–8, Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Maḥjūb*, pp. 141–2; 'Aṭṭār: *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, Vol. I, pp. 241–5.

13. Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966, 1st ed. 1914), p. 1. Ma'rūf 'l-Karkhī's words, whose first part Prof. Nicholson has translated, are: *'al-Taṣawwuf hūwa al-akhdh bi 'l-ḥaqā'iq wa 'l-yās mimmā fī aydī 'l-khalā'iq'*. Nicholson translates *ḥaqā'iq* as 'divine realities', which gives it a metaphysical orientation. Though I would not rule out that possibility, I would prefer to translate it as 'realities'. I would take *ḥaqā'iq* in the sense of the internal realities of religious life such as faith, trust, fear, love, patience etc. [see the section on *ḥaqīqah* below]. This would go better with the rest of al-Karkhī's sentence, and would fit the context of his age when the gnostic element in Sufism had not gained much significance.
14. Titus Burckhardt, *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine* (Eng. tr. D. M. Matheson) Lahore, Ashraf, 1968, pp. 16, 18. This sentence on page 16 is quite typical: 'Since the doctrine is both the very foundation of the way and fruit of the contemplation which is its goal, the difference between Sufism and religious mysticism can be reduced to a question of doctrine.'
15. Shaykh, Muḥyī 'l-Dīn 'Abd 'l-Qādir (471/1079–561/1165–66), the founder of the earliest and the most popular Sufi order, was born at Jilān in Iran. He came to Baghdad at the age of eighteen, devoted himself to the study of the Qur'ān, ḥadīth and *fiqh*, and completed his *sulūk* under the direction of Shaykh Ḥammād 'l-Dabbās (d. 525/1130). He started delivering sermons at the age of fifty to which thousands of people thronged. His works include *Ghunyat 'l-Ṭālibīn*, *Futūḥ 'l-Ghayb* and *al-Fatḥ 'l-Rabbānī*. Ibn Taymīyah wrote a Commentary on part of the *Futūh 'l-Ghayb*, [*Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Riyadh, Vol. X, pp. 482–9]; Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī (d. 1052/1642) translated and commented on it in Persian (Lucknow, Nawalkishor), and Prof. Walther Braune has translated and studied it: *Die Futuh 'l-Ghayb des 'Abd 'l-Qādir* (Berlin, Leipzig, Walter de Gruyter, 1933).
16. Shihāb 'l-Dīn Abī Ḥafṣ 'Umar b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh b. 'Amwayh (539/1144–632/1234), the founder of the Suhrawardī order was the chief Sufi saint (*Shaykh 'l-Shuyūkh*) at Baghdad in his time. His preceptor in *sulūk* was his uncle Abū Najīb 'l-Suhrawardī (d. 563/1168) but he also benefited from Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī's (d. 561/1166) company. His book *'Awārif 'l-Ma'arif* is the most popular exposition of the mainstream of Sufism.
17. Bahā' 'l-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad 'l-Bukhārī Naqshband's (d. 791/1389) order is the most popular order next only to the Qādirīyah. Originating in Central Asia, it spread to Bosnia in the west and Sumatra in the east. It is known for avoiding doubtful ways in *sulūk*,

e.g., *Samā'*, *dhikr bi'l-jahr*, and *khalwah*. For the evolution of the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* see Hamid Algar: 'Bibliographical Notes on the Naqshbandī *Ṭarīqah*', in *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Sciences*, ed. G. F. Hourani (Albany, State University of New York, 1975), pp. 254–9. For the life of Shaykh Bahā' 'l-Dīn see Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-'Uns* (Lucknow, 1910), pp. 345–9.

18. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 551.
19. Abū Bakr b. Jahdar 'l-Shiblī (247/861–334/946), a disciple of Junayd, was the leading Sufi of his time in Baghdad. In the early part of his career he was extremely emotional and ecstatic. His *shaṭḥāt* and deificatory words, some of which al-Sarrāj has explained (*al-Luma'*, pp. 478–91), come from this period; in practice, however, he observed the Sharī'ah except on some occasions when he was deeply intoxicated. Later on he became sober and proved to be a great Sufi shaykh. (See al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, pp. 159–60; Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Maḥjūb*, pp. 195–7; 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, Vol. II, pp. 135–54; Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, pp. 174–8. For Ibn Taymiyah's comments on him see *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Riyadh, Vol. X, pp. 382, 557.)
20. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 554.
21. Abū 'Alī Jūzjānī was a disciple of Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥakīm 'l-Tirmidhī (d. 216/831). 'Aṭṭār ascribes these words to him: 'Try to consistently observe the Sharī'ah, and do not go after miracles (*karāmah*) [*Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, II, p. 101].
22. Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, p. 4.
23. 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), a great scholar, mystic, philosopher and poet, was born at Jam in Khurasan. Besides many distinguished works in poetry, Jāmī wrote a large Commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ 'l-Ḥikam* of Ibn 'l-'Arabī and a short one, *Naqd 'l-Nuṣūṣ*, an exposition of the basic doctrines of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*; *Lawā'ih*, partly in prose and partly in verse; a work on theology, *Al-Durrat 'l-Fākhirah* [published with 'Abd 'l-Ghafūr 'l-Lārī's Commentary, ed. N. Heer and A. Musawi Behbahani, Tehran 1980]; and an introduction to the lives and teachings of almost 600 Sufis, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*. [For his poetry, see: A. J. Arberry: *Classical Persian Literature* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1958), pp. 425–50.]
24. Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, p. 4.
25. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:135, p. 308; I:97, p. 241.
26. Shāh Walī Allāh (1114/1702–1176/1762), a great renovator (*mujaddid*) of Islam in the eighteenth century, was born into a distinguished family of Delhi. An eminent scholar of ḥadīth, a great Sufi and social thinker, Walī Allāh expounded the whole system of Islam in his *Ḥujjat 'Allāh 'l-Bālighah*, and elaborated its ethics and polity in *al-Budūr 'l-Bāzighah* and *Izālat 'l-Khifā'*), and wrote on Islamic theology and philosophy. He also wrote on *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, and ḥadīth. In Sufism he tried to introduce a stronger transcendental element in the framework of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*. For Walī Allāh's life see his autobiography appended to his *Anfās 'l-'Ārifīn* (Delhi, 1897);

Muḥammad Raḥīm Bakhsh, *Ḥayāt Walī*, Lahore, 1955; G. N. Jalbānī, *Life of Shāh Walī Allāh* (Delhi, Idārah-i-Adabiyāt-i-Delhi, 1980); Rizvi, S. A. A., *Walī Allāh and His Time* (Canberra, Ma'rifat Publishing House, 1980).

27. Walī Allāh, *al-Qawl 'l-Jamīl*, (text with Urdu tr. by Khurram 'Alī, Deoband, Aziziyah), pp. 27–34.
28. Al-Qur'ān, 57:4.
29. *Ibid.*, 2:115.
30. *Ibid.*, 50:16.
31. *Ibid.*, 28:88.
32. Al-Ghazālī, *Mishkāt 'l-Anwār*, ed. A. E. 'Affīfī (Cairo, Dār 'l-Qawmīya, 1964), pp. 57–8.
33. 'Abd 'l-Karīm b. Hawāzin 'l-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), a disciple of Abū 'Alī 'l-Daqqāq (d. 405/1014) in Sufism, is famous for his *al-Risālah* which is the most authentic and comprehensive introduction to Sufi practices, experiences and concepts as developed by early Sufis. Al-Qushayrī has a Commentary on the Qur'ān *Laṭā'if 'l-Ishārāt*, and other works.
34. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, pp. 226–7.
35. Abū Yazīd b. Tayfūr b. 'Īsā 'l-Biṣṭāmī (d. 261/875), one of the founders of Sufism, hailed from Bistām, a town in the Iranian province of Khamīs. He is famous for his ecstatic experiences and *shaṭḥāt*. Al-Sahlajī, a fifth-century writer, has collected his words in a book entitled: *Al-Nūr min Kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*, which has been published by Dr. 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Badawī with some other writings under the name: *Shaṭḥāt 'l-Ṣūfīyah* [Kuwait, 1976]. R. C. Zaehner has a chapter on his experience and thought in his *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* [New York, Schocken, 1969]; I have also studied Abū Yazīd's *ṭarīqah*, experience and *shaṭḥāt* in a paper: 'Abū Yazīd 'l-Biṣṭāmī's Description of Mystical Experience', *Hamdard Islamicus* (Karachi, Vol. VI, No. 2, Summer 1983), pp. 25–55.
36. My paper on Abū Yazīd, *op. cit.*
37. Al-Sahlajī, *Al-Nūr min Kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
38. Ibn 'l-'Arabī, *Rasa'il*, Hyderabad (India), *Risālah La Ya'ūlū 'alayhī*, p. 8.
39. Ibn 'l-'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt 'l-Makkīyah* (Beirut, Dār Sadir, n.d.), Vol. II, Ch. 221, p. 516; in the *Risālah*, *La Ya'ūlū 'alayhī* (*op. cit.*, p. 14), he says: 'Every vision that does not show you multiplicity in One Being (*al-'ayn 'l-wāḥidīyah*) is not to be counted upon.'
40. Walī Allāh tries to distinguish between *al-wujūd 'l-munbasiṭ* and 'God' in order to do justice to God's transcendence [see his *Alṭāf 'l-Qudus*, Maṭba' Aḥmadī, Delhi, 1305, pp. 53–6; *Lamḥāt*, ed. Dr. Ghulām Muṣṭafā, Shāh Walī Allāh Academy, Hyderabad (Pakistan), pp. 18–25; *Hama'āt*, same ed. and publisher, 1964, pp. 69–77; and *Al-Tafhīmāt 'l-Ilāhīyah*, same ed. and publisher, 1967, Vol. II, pp. 274–5].
41. Walī Allāh, *Tafhīmāt 'l-Ilāhīyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 263.
42. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:291, p. 761.

43. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:272, p. 656.
44. Al-Sarrāj, *Al-Luma'*, *op. cit.*, p. 479.
45. Abū Ḥamzah (d. 269/882) was another ecstatic friend of Junayd. What suggests his eventual sobriety is these words of his which al-Qushayrī records: 'There is no way to God except to follow the Prophet in his states (*aḥwālihī*), acts and words.' [al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 150.]
46. Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr 'l-Ḥallāj (244/857–309/922), the 'intoxicated' Sufi *par excellence* was from a town near Shiraz. He was executed at Baghdad, one of the many charges against him being his saying: 'I am God (*Anā 'l-Ḥaqq*)'. What distinguishes him from the no less ecstatic Sufi, Abū Yazīd 'l-Bisṭāmī [see note 35] is that he, unlike the latter, expounded doctrines on the basis of his experience which openly contradicted Islamic beliefs. The most outstanding French scholar of Sufism, Louis Massignon has published al-Ḥallāj's works such as *al-Ṭawāsīn* and *Diwān*, and discussed his life and teachings in *La Passion d'al-Ḥallāj* which has been rendered in English by Prof. Herbert Mason: *The Passion of al-Ḥallāj* (Bollingen Series, Princeton University Press, 1982).
47. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. III:33, pp. 1282–3.
48. For translation of the letter see *infra*: pp. 202–6.
49. Muḥammad 'Abd 'l-Shakūr, a Sufi of the Mujaddidīyah *silsilah* (which is a branch of the Naqshbandīyah following the teachings of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī), says that the Naqshbandī *nisbat* means 'the ever alive consciousness of God's presence in which one does not lose sight of God even for a moment' [*Tadhkirah Mujaddid Alf Thānī*, ed. M. Manẓūr Aḥmad Nu'mānī (Lucknow, 1982), p. 226.
50. Al-Sahlajī, *Al-Nūr min Kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*, p. 165.
51. Abū 'l-Makārim Aḥmad b. Muḥammad 'l-Simnānī (657/1261–736/1336) came from a noble family of Bayabank in Tabriz. He joined government service at the age of fifteen, but left it later when a heavenly voice admonished him. He then went to Simnan and devoted himself to *dhikr* and *sulūk* under the guidance of Sharf 'l-Dīn Sa'dullāh Simnānī. After seventeen years he got *khirqah*, went to Baghdad and stayed in the company of 'Abd 'l-Razzāq Isfraīnī, the teacher of Sa'dullāh Simnānī, for thirty-two years. He wrote many books; the most important is *al-'Urwah li ahl 'l-khalwah* [Mss. in Bankipur Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna] in which he upholds God's absolute transcendence.
52. Kamāl 'l-Dīn 'Abd 'l-Razzāq Kāshī (d. 730/1329), a firm believer in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, is famous for his Commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ 'l-Ḥikam* of Ibn 'l-'Arabī, and his book, *Iṣṭilāḥāt 'l-Ṣūfīyah* on Sufi terms. His Commentary on the Qur'ān where he applies the principles of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* with little regard for language has been wrongly attributed to Ibn 'l-'Arabī [see Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, p. 429].
53. Al-Qur'ān, 15:99.
54. The reference is to Shaykh 'Abdullāh 'l-Anṣārī 'l-Harwī (see note 11).
55. Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, pp. 437–40.

56. Al-Simnānī, *Al-'Urwah lī Ahl 'l-Khalwah, op. cit.*, Ch. I.
57. See note 3.
58. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, pp. 24, 285; Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Maḥjūb*, p. 360.
59. 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī, *Futūḥ 'l-Ghayb* (Cairo, Halabi, 1973), Ch. 60, p. 138.
60. 'Abdullāh 'l-Anṣārī, *Manāzil 'l-Sā'irīn* with Commentary by Iskandirī,*op. cit.*, p. 227; Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, pp. 15–16.
61. Al-Qur'ān, 11:56.
62. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. II:95, p. 1137.
63. Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, p. 283; al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif 'l-Ma'ārif* (Beirut, Dār 'l-Kutub 'l-'Arabī, 1966), pp. 524–5; Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Maḥjūb*, pp. 328–9.
64. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. II:95, p. 1139.
65. Ibn 'l-Fāriḍ (586/1181–632/1235) from Cairo is the greatest mystical poet in Arabic. His masterpiece is the great *Ṭāiyah* (ode rhyming in 't') that has 760 couplets. Prof. Nicholson has rendered most of it along with other couplets from his *Diwān* into English and commented on them. [See his *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 1st ed. 1921, reprint, Delhi, 1976, pp. 162–266.] See also Dr. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī, *Ibn 'l-Fāriḍ wa 'l-Ḥubb 'l-Ilāhī* (Cairo, Dār 'l-Ma'ārif, 1971).
66. See *Le Diwān d'l-Ḥallāj*, (ed.) Louis Massignon, Paris, 1955.
67. Jalāl 'l-Dīn Rūmī (604/1207–672/1273) was born at Balkh. His father brought him to Konia in Asia Minor. A most gifted poet, and a great Sufi and the eponymous founder of the Malawi order of Dervishes, his fame rests on his immortal *Mathnawī Ma'nawī*, a superb exposition of his Sufi theosophy in verse. It has been fully translated and commented by Prof. Nicholson. His other works include *Diwān-i-Shamsh Tabriz*, a collection of lyrical poems, and *Fīhi mā fīhi*, a posthumous compilation of his discourses on religious and mystical topics. [For his poetry see A. J. Arberry: *The Classical Persian Literature*, *op. cit.*, pp. 215–41, and for his theosophical ideas, R. A. Nicholson: *Rumī: The Mystic*, London; Khalīfah 'Abdul Ḥakīm, *The Metaphysics of Rumī*, Lahore, 1978; and Afzal Iqbāl, *The Life and Thought of Rumī*, Lahore, Institute of Islamic Culture, 1978.]
68. Farīd 'l-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm 'Aṭṭār (1136–1230), one of the 'pillars' of Persian mystical poetry, is the author of more than a dozen works including some beautiful *mathnawīs*; *Asrār Nāmah* on general Sufi principles, *Ilāhī Nāmah* on mystical love, *Muṣībat Nāmah* on the ascension of the spirit, and the most celebrated allegory, *Manṭiq 'l-Ṭayr* (*Speech of the Birds*) wherein he portrays the progress of the mystic towards union with God. [Trans. in French by G. de Tassy (Paris, 1857), and in English by E. Fitzgerald (Boston, 1899).] His *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'* (2 vols.) is a highly esteemed work on the life and teaching of about a hundred eminent Sufis [See Brown, E. G., *A Literary History of Persia*, Cambridge, 1969, Vol. II, pp. 507–14; Arberry A. J., *Classical Persian Literature*, London, Allen & Unwin, reprint 1967, pp. 129–38; Sa'īd Nafīsī, *Justujū dar*

aḥwāl wa āthār-i-Farīd 'l-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, Tehran, 1942.]

69. See Affīfī, A. E., *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dīn Ibnul 'Arabī*, Lahore, Ashraf, reprint, [1st ed. C.U.P., 1938], pp. 149–70; Ibn Taymīyah: *Majmū'at 'l-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, ed. Rashīd Riḍā, Cairo [hereafter referred to as *al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*], Vol. V, pp. 42–3; *infra*, pp. 107–8, 132.
70. Al-Kalabādhī, *al-Ta'arruf, op. cit.*, p. 163.
71. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 518.
72. Nadwī, Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī, *Tārīkh Da'wat wa 'Azīmat*, Lucknow, *Majlis Taḥqīqāt wa Nashrīyāt-i-Islām*, Nadwat 'l-'Ulamā', 1980], Vol. IV, p. 35.
73. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. III:33, p. 1283.
74. Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, pp. 453–4, 422–3.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 461, 423. For his discussion of the *Shaṭḥāt* of Abū Yazīd, al-Shiblī, al-Nūrī and Abū Ḥamzah see his *al-Luma'*, pp. 459–77, 478–91, 492–4, and 495–6 respectively.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 479.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 458.
78. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:266, p. 589; I:130, p. 330.
79. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:95, p. 236.
80. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:95, p. 237.
81. Jāmī says that Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ja'far 'l-Kharqānī (d. 425/1034) 'followed the way of Abū Yazīd 'l-Biṣṭāmī in *taṣawwuf* and was immersed in love and *fanā*'.' He quotes him as saying: 'One is not a Sufi by rugged clothes, or the prayer mat, nor even by observing rules (*rasm*) and cultivating good habits (*adab*). A Sufi is one who ceases to be.' [*Nafaḥāt 'l-'Uns*, pp. 275–6.]
82. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:152, pp. 325–7.
83. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:100, pp. 251–2. Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Kabīr Yamanī lived mostly at Makkah. One day he shocked his audience with these words, and then offered this explanation: 'Everything is known to God, and nothing is unknown (*ghayb*) to Him. Since there is no *ghayb*, there can be no knowledge of *ghayb*. When the Qur'ān says that God knows the hidden (*'ālim 'l-ghayb*), it uses *ghayb* in relation to us [*Rashaḥāt* as quoted by Nūr Muḥammad in the footnote, *Maktūbāt*, p. 251].
84. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 233.
85. Al-Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, p. 131.
86. Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Qādir is reported to have said: Al-Ḥallāj stumbled because he did not get anyone who could hold him. Had I been in his time I would have held his hand.' [Qādī 'Iyāḍ, *Al-Shifā'*, with Commentary, *Nasīm 'l-Riyāḍ*, Madinah, Al-Maktūbāt 'l-Salfīyah, n.d., p. 538.]
87. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. III:33, p. 1283.
88. Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Mahjūb*, p. 235.
89. See my paper, 'Abū Yazīd 'l-Biṣṭāmī's Description of the Mystic Experience', *op. cit.*, pp. 35–6.

90. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. II:95, p. 1138.
91. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:41, p. 144.
92. Al-Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, p. 91. Abū 'Abdullāh Sa'īd b. Yazīd 'l-Nībājī, the teacher of Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad b. Abī 'Alī 'l-Ḥawārī (d. 230/844) mentioned by al-Qushayrī in his *Risālah* (p. 105), stressed good morals and manners (*adab*) in Sufism [Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, p. 92].
93. Al-Sahlajī, *Kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*, p. 131.
94. Al-Kalābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, p. 134.
95. Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif 'l-Ma'ārif*, p. 515. Dhu 'l-Nūn, Thawbān b. Ibrāhīm (d. 245/859), the famous Egyptian Sufi, was a friend and admirer of Abū Yazīd 'l-Biṣṭāmī. Prof. Nicholson is of the opinion that he has influenced the course of Sufism more than Abū Yazīd or any other Sufi of his time ['A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism', *JRAS*, 1906, pp. 203–48].
96. Ibn 'l-'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt 'l-Makkīyah*, Vol. II, p. 509.
97. Al-Sahlajī, *Kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*, p. 157.
98. Al-Suhrawardī, *'Awārif 'l-Ma'ārif*, p. 541.
99. Al-Sahlajī, *Kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*, p. 184.
100. Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, p. 464.
101. Al-Sahlajī, *Kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*, p. 128.
102. *Ibid.*, pp. 91, 143.
103. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
105. *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 159, 91, 143.
106. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. II:99, p. 1172.
107. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:87, p. 1558.
108. Al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, p. 545.
109. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:240, pp. 503–4.
110. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 585; 'Aṭṭār: *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, Vol. II:365; Ibn Taymīyah doubts the authenticity of attributing these words to Abū Bakr 'l-Ṣiddīq [see *Majmū'at 'l-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, ed. Rashīd Riḍā, Cairo, Vol. IV, pp. 54–5].
111. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, pp. 169, 23.
112. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:266, p. 589; I:130, p. 330.
113. Hujwīrī (d. 465/1072) says that he met Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Alī Gurgānī at Tus, and learned many things from his discourses. He categorises him with Abū Sa'īd Abū 'l-Khayr (d. 440/1049) and Abū 'l-'Abbās Shaqqānī who admired al-Ḥallāj [*Kashf 'l-Maḥjūb*, pp. 55, 189].
114. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqsad 'l-Asnā fī Sharh Asmā' Allāh 'l-Ḥusnā* (Cairo, Maktabat 'l-Jundī, n.d.), p.45.
115. Al-Sarrāj, *al-Lumā'*, pp. 541–2, 543, 552.
116. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, pp. 225, 229–30, 260.
117. Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Mahjūb*, pp. 315–17, 327, 334.
118. Nicholson, R. A., *Mystics of Islam*, *op. cit.*, p. 149.
119. See my paper: 'Abū Yazīd 'l-Biṣṭāmī's Description of the Mystical Experience', *op. cit.*, p. 36.
120. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:30, pp. 100–1.

121. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:266, p. 623.
122. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:266, pp. 623–4.
123. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:266, p. 624.
124. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:30, pp. 90–1; I:36, pp. 115–16.
125. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:97, p. 241.
126. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:99, pp. 1172–3.

Notes and References (Chapter Three)

1. Christian influence has been pointed out by Adalbert Merx, *Ideen und Grundlinier einer algemeinen Geschichte der Mystic* (Heidelberg, 1893), Margaret Smith, *Rābi'a, The Mystic* (Amsterdam, Philo Press, 1928). The Iranian influence has been emphasised by F. R. D. Tholuck, *Sufismus sive theologia persica pantheistics* (Berlin, 1921), and E. H. Palmer, *Oriental Mysticism* (1867, reprinted London 1969), Henri Corbin and Ḥusain Nasr.

   The Neo-Platonic influence has been brought out by R. A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam* (1914, reprint, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966); he has also pointed out the Buddhist influence. The Vedantic influence has been underlined by Alfred von Kremer, *Culturgeschichtliche Streifzüge auf dem Gebiete des Islams*, (1873), Eng. tr. Khuda Bakhsh, *Islamic Civilization*, Vol. I (Calcutta, 1929); W. Jones, *Asiatic Researches* (London, 1803); Max Horten, *Indische Stromungen*; R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (1960, New York, Schocken, 1969).
2. L. Massignon's most important work on this issue is *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musalmane* (Paris, 1928). Prof. A. Schimmel subscribes to the same view, *Mystical Dimension of Islam* (University of North Carolina, 1975). Most Muslim scholars take the same line: Dr. M. Iqbāl; *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (Lahore, Bazm-i-Iqbāl), Ḥusain Nasr in his various books, etc., Dr. Mīr Valīuddīn even derives *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* from the Qur'ān; see his *Qur'ânic Sufism* (Hyderabad, Academy of Islamic Studies, 1959).
3. Ignaz Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über des Islam* (1925) pp. 87–133; and Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, *op. cit.*, and 'A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism', *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, (1906) pp. 203–48, differentiate between the two aspects of Sufism.
4. The distinction between *al-taṣawwuf 'l-sunnī* and *al-taṣawwuf 'l-falsafī* is made by Dr. 'Abd 'l-Qādir Maḥmūd, *al-Falsafah 'l-Ṣūfīyah fi 'l-Islām* (Cairo, Dār 'l-Fikr 'l-'Arabī, 1967), Dr. Abū 'l-Wafā 'l-Ghanīmī 'l-Taftāzānī, *al-Madkhal ilā 'l-Taṣawwuf 'l-Islāmī* (Cairo, 1976), and Dr. Ibrāhīm Madkūr Buyūnī, *Fi 'l-Falsafat 'l-Islāmiyah, Manhajuhū wa Tatbīquhū* (Cairo, n.d.).
5. Titus Burckhardt: *An Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, Eng. tr. D. M. Matheson (Lahore 1959; Lahore, Ashraf, 1968), Frithjof Schuon, *The Transcendental Unity of Religions*, Eng. tr. Peter Townsend (London, Faber & Faber, 1953).
6. These two passages from Abū Naṣr 'l-Sarrāj's *al-Luma'*, *op. cit.*, are typical. 'The Sufis are God's trustees on earth, the guardians of His secrets and knowledge, and the cream of His creation. They are the chosen ones of God, noblest friends, and the most loved ones; the *muṭṭaqūn*, the *sābiqūn*, the *abrār*, the *muqurrabūn*, the *abdāl* and the *ṣiddiqūn* all come from them' [p. 19].

'The Sufis do not choose one branch of knowledge and leave the others [as people devoted to ḥadīth, *fiqh* and *zuhd* do]; nor do they limit themselves to the attainment of some states and stations (*aḥwāl wa maqāmat*) leaving out the others. They are the mines of all kinds of knowledge, the models for all noble states (*al-aḥwāl 'l-maḥmūdah*) and the embodiments of all sublime virtues (*akhlāq 'l-sharīfah*), old as well as new' [p. 40]. See also al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20–1; Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat 'l-Awliyā'* (Beirut, n.d.), Vol. I, pp. 21–8.

7. Al-Kalābādhī particularly tries to show that the beliefs which the Sufis hold are not different from the beliefs of the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah* [*Al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab ahl 'l-Taṣawwuf*, *op. cit.*, Ch. V, pp. 33–82].
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 84–6; al-Sarrāj, *al-Luma'*, pp. 105–46.
9. Al-Sarrāj has a whole section in *al-Luma'* [pp. 453–515] on the *shaṭḥāt* and the *ishārāt* of the Sufis, wherein he tries to show that although they appear to conflict with the Sharī'ah, they do not really do so. He also has another section [pp. 516–55] wherein he mentions the mistaken ideas of some Sufis.
10. To justify this remark on the *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm 'l-Dīn* I would need a whole volume. However, these few words may be offered for consideration. Al-Ghazālī attempts in the *Iḥyā'* to present the whole system of Islamic faith and beliefs, worship and rites (Vol. I); social life and economic pursuits (Vol. II); morality and purification of the soul (Vol. III); and the virtues of religion and spirit (Vol. IV). In working out his book he draws upon everything – the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, *fiqh*, the words of the elders and the sayings and practices of the Sufis. But the basic conceptual framework which underlies the whole book, shapes the discussion and determines the conclusions, is formed by his ideas on three fundamental issues: knowledge, happiness (*sa'ādah*) and reality. In the formation of these ideas, the foremost and decisive role is played by al-Ghazālī's philosophical beliefs, and his understanding of Sufism as well as his own Sufi practices. In order to appreciate this point one may refer to al-Ghazālī's autobiography: *Munqidh min 'l-Ḍalāl* [Eng. tr. M. Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazālī*, *op. cit.*], M. 'Umaruddīn: *The Ethical Philosophy of Imām Ghazzālī* (Aligarh, 1962), Dr. 'Alī 'Isā Uthmān, *Al-Insān 'ind 'l-Ghazālī*, Arabic trans. Khayri Ḥammad (Cairo, Anjalo, n.d.), M. 'Abdul Haq Ansari, 'The Doctrine of Divine Command: A Study in the Development of Ghazālī's View of Reality', *Islamic Studies*, Vol. XXI, No. 3, Autumn 1982, pp. 1–47.
11. See *infra*, pp. 73–4.
12. Ibn 'l-'Arabī has performed this function on a large scale in his lengthy work *al-Futūḥāt 'l-Makkīyah*. He interprets here the whole gamut of Islamic beliefs and practices in the light of his philosophy of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*. He also offers here another interpretation of things which is closer to the view which an ordinary Muslim or a theologian takes. That obviously does not represent his real thought, a more clear exposition of which, particularly on the most fundamental issues, is found in his *Fuṣūṣ 'l-Ḥikam* which contains the essence of his philosophy.

13. See *infra*, pp. 130–8.
14. The self-criticism of the Sufis prior to Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī has been directed mostly to two kinds of issues: One which may be called the deviations of individual Sufis, such as those which al-Sarrāj has discussed in *al-Luma'* (see note 9). Other issues concern matters of detail, such as the practice of *samā'*, *raqs*, *dhikr* with loud voice (*bi 'l-jahr*) etc.

    What Dr. 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Badawī has written in the chapter on 'Self-Criticism in *Tārikh 'l-Taṣawwuf 'l-Islāmī*' [Kuwait, 1975], pp. 83–95, only supports our contention.
15. See *ultra*, pp. 47–8.
16. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:301, p. 794.
17. The words *sulūk* and *jadhb* or *jadhbah* at times refer to the effort of the Sufi to travel the Sufi path to God, and God's pulling of the Sufi towards Himself. But what Sirhindī means by these words here is something different. By *sulūk* he means the Sufi's whole course of *dhikr* and meditation leading up to the experience of absorption and *fanā'*; on the other hand by *jadhbah* he means the emotional aspects of this pursuit – love, absorption, ecstasy and intoxication.
18. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:313, p. 826.
19. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:302, p. 796.
20. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:302, p. 796.
21. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:302, p. 796.
22. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:302, p. 796.
23. Al-Ka'lābādhī, *al-Ta'arruf*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
24. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:302, p. 797.
25. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:302, p. 798.
26. Abū Sulaymān Dāwūd b. Naṣr 'l-Tā'ī (d. 166/782), one of the earliest Sufis of Kufah, learned *fiqh* from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, and *sulūk* from Ḥabīb Ra'ī. His words which Sirhindī quotes have been mentioned by Jāmī (*Nafaḥāt 'l-'Uns*, p. 42); see also 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, Vol. I, pp. 200–4.
27. This is a very common theme in Rābi'ah 'l- 'Adawīyah's (d. 185/801) saying, the most famous woman saint of Basra. The words to which Sirhindī refers are: 'I am going to light a fire in Paradise and pour water on Hell, so that both veils may completely disappear from the pilgrims, and their purpose may be sure, and the servants of God may see Him, without any object of hope or motive of fear.' (Margaret Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam* [London, Luzac & Co. 1972, pp. 10–11]. The same author has also studied her in *Rābi'a, The Mystic, and Her Fellow Saints in Islam* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1974).
28. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:302, pp. 799–800.
29. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:302, p. 796.
30. Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat 'Allāh 'l-Bālighah* (Cairo, Dār 'l-Kutub 'l-Ḥadīthah, n.d.) Vol. I, pp. 109–10.
31. Walī Allāh, *Hama'āt*, ed. Nūrul Ḥaq 'Alawī and Ghulām Muṣṭafā (Shāh Walī Allāh Academy, Hyderabad, Pakistan, 1964), pp. 16–17.

32. Walī Allāh, *Fuyūḍ 'l-Ḥaramayn*. Arabic text with Urdu trans. (Deoband, Raḥīmīyah), p. 50; see also p. 51.
33. Shāh Muḥammad Ismā'īl (1198/1779–1246/1830), the grandson of Shāh Walī Allāh studied Islamic sciences with his two uncles, Shāh 'Abd 'l-'Azīz and Shāh Rafī' 'l-Dīn, and completed his *sulūk* under the direction of Sayyed Aḥmad of Brayli (1201/1786–1246/1831), with whom he tried to resist Sikh power in north India, restore Muslim dominance and establish an Islamic state. They did not succeed and lost their lives in the struggle. Shāh Ismā'īl and his Shaykh tried to purify Sufism and bring it closer to the Qur'ān and Sunnah. The *Ṣirāt-i-Mustaqīm* is based upon the discourses of the Shaykh and is very helpful in understanding the difference between the Sufi and the prophetic ways.
34. Shāh Ismā'īl, *Ṣirāt-i-Mustaqīm* (Meerut, Maṭba' Ḍayā'ī), p. 10.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–18.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 26–7.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 11. *Shughl barzakh* probably means meditation on the Sufi teacher (*taṣawwur shaykh*). An initiate is required in some *ṭarīqahs* first to engage in this intermediary (*barzakh*) exercise before he takes up meditation on God.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 43–5.
52. The Qur'ānic verse 45:18, uses Sharī'ah in its wider sense of the Prophet's entire religion, and verse 42:13 employs the verb *shara'a* for saying that God has prescribed the faith and the religion. Ibn Taymīyah testifies that the words *al-Shar'* and al-Sharī'ah at times mean the Qur'ān and the Sunnah [*Al-Furqān bayn Awliyā' 'l-Raḥmān wa Awliyā' 'l-Shayṭān*, Dār 'l-Fikr, Beirut, n.d., p. 145].
53. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:36, p. 115.
54. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:23, pp. 1246–7.
55. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:23, p. 1251.
56. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:55, p. 1044.
'Ilhām muẓhir kamālāt khafīyah-i-dīn ast na muthbit kamālāt-i-zā'idah dar dīn.'
57. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:55, p. 1043; I:209, p. 416; I:266, p. 607; I:112, p. 269.
58. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:112, p. 270.

59. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1:31, p. 100.
60. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm 'l-Dīn* (Cairo, Muṣṭafā 'l-Ḥalabī, 1939), Vol. I, pp. 10–11.
61. Al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh min 'l-Ḍalāl*, ed. Dr. 'Abd 'l-Halīm Maḥmūd (Cairo, Maktabat 'l-Anjalo, 1964), p. 13, and *Al-Maqsad 'l-Asna fī Sharh Asmā' Allāh 'l-Ḥusnā* (Cairo, al-Jundī), p. 151. See my paper: 'The Doctrine of Divine Command: A Study in the Development of Ghazālī's View of Reality', *Islamic Studies*, Vol XXI, No. 3, Autumn 1982, pp. 22–4.
62. Ibn 'l-'Arabī: *al-Futūḥāt 'l-Makkīyah* (Beirut, Dār Sadir, n.d.), Vol. I, Ch. 65, pp. 319–20.
63. See *ultra*, p. 58.
64. Shihāb 'l-Dīn Suhrawardī, *'Awārif 'l-Ma'arif*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 449.
66. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. 1:276, pp. 673–4.
67. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1:276, p. 674.
68. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1:276, p. 674.
69. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1:276, p. 673.
70. Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat 'l-Awliyā'* (Beirut, n.d.) Vol. X, p. 278; Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 106.
71. Sulaymān b. 'Alī 'l-Tilimsānī (d. 690/1291), a talented poet and a Sufi, firmly believed in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*. His *diwān* consists of beautiful poems in which he sings of union and unity. He also wrote a Commentary on the *Manāzil 'l-Sā'irīn* of Shaykh 'Abdullāh 'l-Anṣārī. He was charged with *zandaqah* and *ilḥād*; Jāmī, however, defends him on the ground that what he composed or said reflects his experience of union (*jam'*) rather than his faith. [Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, *op. cit.*, pp. 517–18.]
72. Ibn Taymīyah: *Majmū'at 'l-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, (Cairo, Lajnat 'l-Turāth 'l-'Arabī), Vol. I, p. 177.
73. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. II:55, p. 1041.
74. Ibn 'l-'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt 'l-Makkīyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. III:310, pp. 38–9.
75. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:156, p. 254.
76. Abū 'Abdullāh 'l-Ḥārith b. Asad 'l-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), a leading Sufi of Baghdad, is known for his writings on Sufi psychological ethics, particularly motivation. *Al-Ri'āyah li ḥuqūq Allāh* is his best work. Margaret Smith has studied his ideas in her *Al-Muḥāsibī: An Early Mystic of Baghdad* (Amsterdam, Philo Press, 1935).
77. Abū Isḥāq 'l-Shāṭibī, *al-I'tiṣām* (Cairo, al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyah al-Kubrā), Vol. II, pp. 340–55.
78. *Musnad Darimī*, Kitāb 'l-Buyū', 2; and *Musnad Imām Aḥmad*, Vol. IV, p. 228.
79. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. 1:31, p. 104.
80. Important books on the subject are: Abū Isḥāq 'l-Shāṭibī, *al-Muwāfaqāt*, ed. 'Abd 'l-Allāh Darraz (Cairo, al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyah 'l-Kubrā, n.d.), particularly Vol. II; Ibn 'Abd 'l-Salām: *Qawā'id 'l-Aḥkam fī Maṣāliḥ 'l-Anām* (Dār 'l-Jil, 1980); Walī Allāh, *Ḥujjat 'Allāh 'l-Bālighah* (Cairo), and *al-Budūr 'l-Bāzighah* (Surat,

Majlis 'Ilmī, n.d.). Al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustaṣfā* (Cairo, Ḥalabī, reprint from al-Amīrīyah, ed., 1322 A.H.) has also a few pages (Vol. I, pp. 284–314) relevant to the subject.

81. The basic writings on *Akhlāq* in Arabic are those of Miskawaih (325/936–421/1030) and al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). For a study of their ideas see my book, *The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawaih* (Aligarh Muslim University, 1963) and *The Moral Philosophy of al-Fārābī* (Aligarh, 1964). Persian works on *Akhlāq* by Naṣīr 'l-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1273), *Akhlāq Nāṣirī*, and Jalāl 'l-Dīn Dawwānī (d. 908/1502), *Akhlāq Jalālī*, are based upon Miskawaih's *Tahdhīb*. Though they have also included a part on family and government, they have hardly departed from Miskawaih's views so far as ethics is concerned.
82. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:261, p.573.
83. For the Qur'ānic view of *zuhd* and how it differs from the view which Sufis in general have of it see Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, (Riyadh, 1398), Vol. X, pp. 615–41, Vol. XI, pp. 27ff.
84. I would refer here to two aḥādīth of the Prophet: 'The Muslim who mixes with people and bears patiently the unpleasant things which come from them is better than the Muslim who keeps away, and does not have patience with people.' [al-Tabrīzī, *Mishkāt 'l-Maṣābiḥ*, ed. M. Nāṣir 'l-Dīn 'l-Albānī, Damascus, 1961, h. no. 5087]; 'The Prophet was asked as to who is a better Muslim? He replied: The believer who fights in the way of God, staking his life and money. They asked again: Then who? He replied: The believer who takes shelter in any valley to avoid disobedience to God and to spare others his evils.' [al-Tabrīzī, *Mishkāt, op. cit.*, h. no. 3796].
85. Plato, *Republic*: 352–3.
86. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, tr. W. D. Ross, 1097^{b} and 1106^{a}, pp. 15–25.
87. Miskawayh, *Kitāb 'l-Sa'adah*, (Cairo, al-Maktabah 'l-Maḥmūdīyah, 1928), pp. 33–4.
88. Miskawayh, *Tahdhīb 'l-Akhlāq*, (Cairo, al-Maktabah 'l-Ḥusaynīyah, 1329 A.H.), pp. 9–11; See M. Abdul Haq Ansari, *The Ethical Philosophy of Miskawaih* (Aligarh, 1963).
89. Al-Ghazālī, *Mizān 'l-'Amal*, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo, Dār 'l-Ma'ārif, 1964) pp. 195, 209–10.
90. Al-Fārābī: *Al-Madīnat 'l-Fāḍilah*, ed. Dr. A. N. Nādir (Beirut, 1956), p. 85; *Al-Risālah 'Fī 'l-'Aql*, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut, n.d.), pp. 31–2. See also M. Abdul Haq Ansari: *The Moral Philosophy of al-Fārābī* (Aligarh, 1965), pp. 25–7.
91. Al-Ghazālī, *Mīzān 'l-'Amal*, *op. cit.*, pp. 195–6, 207.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 219.
93. *Ibid.*, pp. 195, 221–6.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 383.
95. *Ibid.*, pp. 237, 331, 283.
96. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm 'l-Dīn*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 13; Vol. IV, p. 277.
97. See *ultra*, pp. 22–3.

98. Dr. Iqbāl defines the prophet as follows: 'A prophet may be defined as a type of mystic consciousness in which "unitary experience" tends to overflow its boundaries and seeks opportunities of redirecting or refashioning the forces of collective life' (*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore, Ashraf, reprint 1968, p. 125). After defining the prophet as a mystic, it is quite natural for Dr. Iqbāl to claim that the prophet undergoes a 'unitary experience' or has an ascent and a 'descent' or 'return' (p. 124).
99. Dr. M. Ibraheem al-Geyoushi, 'Al-Tirmidhī's Theory of Saints and Sainthood', *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. XV, 1971, pp. 18–28.
Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ḥākim 'l-Tirmidhī (d. 280/893), a disciple of Abū Turāb 'l-Nakhshabī (d. 245), and an eminent Sufi himself is famous for his theory of the 'Seal of the Saints'. Among his books are: *Khatm 'l-Walāyah*, *Kitāb 'l-Nihaj* and *Kitāb Ma'rifat 'l-Asrār*, ed. Dr. M. Ibraheem al-Geyoushi (Cairo, Dār 'l-Nahḍah, 1977). [See al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 138; Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, pp. 119–20; 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, Vol. II, pp. 77–84; Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Maḥjūb*, pp. 177–9, 265ff.]
100. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm 'l-Dīn* (Cairo, al-Ḥalabī & Sons, 1939), Vol. III, p. 24, *Al-Maḍnūn bihī 'alā ghayr ahlihī* (*Rasā'il 'l-Ghazālī*, Cairo, Jundi, p. 146).
101. Ibn 'l-'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ 'l-Ḥikam*, (ed). 'Affīfī (Cairo, 1946), pp. 62–4, 134–6.
102. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:95, p. 238.
103. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:41, pp. 144–5; I:112, p. 270.
104. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:48, p. 164; III:91, p. 1460.
105. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:95, p. 238; I:108, p. 266; II:46, p. 998; I:272, p. 649.
106. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:54, p. 1341; Vol. I:48, pp. 164–5.
107. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:66, p. 194; I:59, p. 180.
108. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:59, p. 180.
109. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:99, pp. 1159–60.
110. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:32, p. 91; I:313, p. 826.
111. Shāh Walī Allāh, *Fuyūḍ 'l-Ḥaramayn*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
112. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:22, p. 75; II:93, p. 133; I:272, pp. 649–50.
113. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:107, p. 261.
114. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:107, p. 262.
115. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:293, p. 770.
116. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:107, pp. 262–3.
117. Al-Qur'ān, 22:52.
118. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:107, p. 262–3; I:217, pp. 432–4; I:268, p. 629; I:30, p. 101.
119. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:36, p. 115.
120. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:31, p. 104; I:111, p. 270.
121. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:100, p. 251.
122. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:41, p. 144.
123. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:266, p. 594.
124. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:6, p. 874–5; I:261, pp. 574–5; II:4, p. 870.
125. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 43.

126. See *ultra*, p. 28.
127. Aziz Aḥmad, *Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, *op. cit.*, p. 103; Ikram, Sh. M., *Rawd Kawthar*, *op. cit.*, p. 164.
128. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:192, p. 384.
129. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:202, pp. 400–1; I:66, p. 194.
130. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:66, p. 194.
131. Walī Allāh, *Fuyūḍ 'l-Ḥaramayn*, pp. 21–2.
132. Walī Allāh, *Anfās 'l-'Arifīn*, (Delhi, n.d.), p. 35.
133. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. III:121, p. 1559.
134. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:121, p. 1559.
135. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:87, p. 1440.
136. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:121, pp. 1550–60.
137. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:8, pp. 35–6; I:9, pp. 38–9; I:32, p. 107; II:6, pp. 873–4.
138. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:121, pp. 1550, 1560.
139. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:121, pp. 1558–60.

Notes and References (Chapter Four)

1. Ibn 'l-'Arabī's compatriot, Ibn Sab'īn (614/1217–669/1269) has a significantly different formulation of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* (see Dr. Abū 'l-Wafā' 'l-Ghanīmī 'l-Taftāzānī, *Ibn Sab'īn wa Falsafatuhū* (Beirut, Dār 'l-Kitāb 'l-Lubnānī, 1973). The Iranian mystic 'Abd 'l-Karīm 'l-Jīlī (676/1365–811/1408) has modified Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy on some very important points (see Reynold A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, 1921, reprint Delhi 1976, pp. 77–142; Dr. Muḥammad Iqbāl, *Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, Lahore, Ashraf, n.d., pp. 116–33).
2. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:43, p. 147.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:43, p. 147.
4. The best work on Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy in English is that of Dr. A. E. 'Affīfī, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muḥyid Dīn Ibnul 'Arabī* (C.U.P., reprint Lahore, Ashraf, n.d.). 'Affīfī has also edited Ibn 'l-'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ 'l-Ḥikam* with copious notes on it [Cairo, 1946]. Titus Burckhardt's *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, *op. cit.*, is in fact an introduction to Ibn 'l-'Arabī's doctrine. Henri Corbin's *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī* (Princeton University Press, 1969) is a brilliant study of an aspect of Ibn 'l-'Arabī's thought. Dr. Toshihuko Izutsu, *A Comparative Study of the Key Philosophical Concepts of Sufism and Taoism* (2 Vols., Tokyo, 1966–67) has a statement on the main concepts of Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy based upon his *Fuṣūṣ*. I have stated his basic doctrines in a chapter in my forthcoming work, *Sufi Perspectives on Experience and Reality*.
5. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:272, p. 650.
6. Al-Qur'ān, 8:17.
7. *Musnad Aḥmad b. Hanbal*, (Beirut, Al-Maktab 'l-Islāmī, 2nd ed. 1978) Vol. III, pp. 135, 154, 310, 351.
8. Walī Allāh, *Hama'āt*, ed. Nūrul Hāq and Ghulām Muṣṭafā (Hyderabad, Pakistan, Shāh Walī Allāh Academy, 1964), p. 64.
9. Walī Allāh, *Al-Tafhīmāt 'l-Ilāhīyah* (Hyderabad, Pakistan, 1967) Vol. II, pp. 266–7.
10. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:272, pp. 650–1.
11. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:234, p. 494; Vol. II:1, p. 854.
12. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:272, pp. 651–2.
13. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:30, p. 101; I:289, pp. 734, 738.
14. *Ibid.*, Vol. II:1, p. 853.
15. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:286, pp. 697–8.
16. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:286, p. 698.
17. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:291, p. 756.
18. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:291, p. 756.
19. *Ibid.*, Vol. I:272, p. 653.
20. Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm ibn Adham b. Manṣūr (d. 160/777), a renowned ascetic and devotee came from an Arab family of Kufah belonging to the tribe of Bakr b. Wā'il. The story that he was a prince of Balkh in Central Asia, heard a heavenly voice admonishing him on his involvement in the world, left the palace and embarked upon the

path of renunciation and devotion, is one of the legends that have grown around many a Sufi. A friend of Sufyān 'l-Thawrī (d. 161/778) and Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ (d. 187/803), he is said to have participated in different *jihād* campaigns. [See for his life and views, 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Badawī, *Tārīkh 'l-Taṣawwuf 'l-Islāmī min 'l-bidāyah* (Kuwait, Wakālāt 'l-Matbū'āt, 1975), pp. 218–39.]

21. Abū Alī Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyāḍ (d. 187/803), one of the great *mashā'ikh* of Khurasan, had at an early age a profound spiritual experience, gave up brigandry, came to Kufah, and devoted himself to learning ḥadīth. A number of ḥadīth scholars including Sufyān b. 'Uyaina and Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd 'l-Qaṭṭān have narrated ḥadīth from him. Intensely pious, profoundly conscious of death, humble and sincere, Fuḍayl lived an admirable life of simplicity and devotion. He is an example of the early piety of *zuhd* and *'ibādah*, unaware of the experience of *fanā'* and *baqā'* which the later Sufis started to have. [See for his life and ideas, 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Badawī, *Tārīkh 'l-Taṣawwuf 'l-Islāmī, op. cit.*, pp. 264–80.]
22. See Ch. 2, note 95.
23. See Ch. 2, note 35.
24. Abū Sa'īd Aḥmad b. 'Īsā 'l-Kharrāz (d. 277/890), one of the leading Sufis of Baghdad, learned Sufism from Dhū' 'l-Nūn (d. 246/861) and Sarī 'l-Saqaṭi (d. 257/871). Jāmī says that he was the first Sufī to talk about *fanā'* and *baqā'*. From his book on *al-Sidq* (ed. 'Abd 'l-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, Cairo, 1975) and from his words preserved in the books of al-Sarrāj, al-Sulamī, al-Qushayrī and Hujwīrī, we however, get no idea of what he thought of the nature of the experience. Sufis of his age described their experiences, rather than reflected on them. [See al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 140; Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, pp. 75–8; Hujwīrī, *Kashf 'l-Maḥjūb*, pp. 180–2; Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilyat 'l-Awliyā'* (Beirut, n.d., Vol. X, pp. 246–9).]
25. See my paper: 'Abū Yazīd 'l-Biṣṭāmī's Description of the Mystical Experience', *op. cit.*
26. M. Abdul Haq Ansari, 'The Doctrine of One Actor: Junayd's View of Tawḥīd', *op. cit.*
27. *Akhbār 'l-Ḥallāj*, ed. L. Massignon and P. Karaus (Paris, 1936) pp. 31–2 (also quoted by al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, pp. 32–4), pp. 29–30, 210, 47, 8, 95.
28. *Le Diwān d'Al-Ḥallāj*, ed. L. Massignon (Paris, 1955), pp. 41, 82^{1-2}, 93.
29. *Akhbār 'l-Ḥallāj, op. cit.*, pp. 16, 108; *Le Diwān d'Al-Ḥallāj*, pp. 75^{1-3}, 12^{1-4}; Al-Ḥallāj, *Kitāb 'l-Ṭawāsīn*, ed. L. Massignon (Paris, 1913), p. 31.
30. M. Abdul Haq Ansari, 'The Doctrine of Divine Command: A Study in the Development of Ghazālī's view of Reality', *op. cit.*, pp. 31ff.
31. See *ultra*, pp. 73–4.
32. Nicholson, R. A., *Fi 'l-Taṣawwuf 'l-Islāmī wa Tārīkhihi*, Arabic trans. by A. E. 'Affīfī (Cairo, 1969), p. 131.
33. See also A. E. 'Affīfī's Introduction to *Fi 'l-Taṣawwuf 'l-Islāmī, op. cit.* and his own book, *Al-Taṣawwuf al-Thawran 'l-Rūḥīyah fi 'l-Islām*

(Beirut, Dār 'l-Sha'b, n.d.), p. 175.

34. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:272, p. 654; I:43, p. 147.
35. In my forthcoming book, *Perspectives on Experience and Reality*.
36. Muḥammad Faḍl-i-Haqq Khayrabādī, *Al-Rawḍ 'l-Majūd* (Delhi, n.d.) p. 4.
37. 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Lawā'iḥ* (Lucknow, Nawalkishor, 1936), p. 23.
38. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. II:5, p. 871; I:32, p. 109.
39. *Ibid.*, Vol. III:68, pp. 1371–2; III:71, p. 1375; III:109, p. 1516; III: 114, pp. 1532–3.
40. Walī Allāh, *Fuyūḍ 'l-Ḥaramayn, op. cit.*, p. 4; see also *al-Tafhīmāt 'l-Ilāhīyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 274ff.
41. See the chapter on Walī Allāh in my forthcoming book, *Perspectives on Experience and Reality*; see note 46.
42. Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmat 'l-Ilāhīyah*, Vol. II, pp. 263–4.
43. Walī Allāh takes up this task in what is commonly known as the Madinian Letter (*Maktūb Madanī*) included in *al-Tafhīmāt 'l-Ilāhīyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 261–84.
44. Walī Allāh, *al-Khayr 'l-Kathīr* (Cairo, 1394/1976), p. 23.
45. Walī Allāh, *al-Tafhīmāt 'l-Ilāhīyah*, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 264.
46. M. Abdul Haq Ansari, 'Shāh Walī Allāh Attempts to Revise *Wahdat 'l-Wujud*', *Islamic Quarterly*, London, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1984, pp. 150–65.
47. Shams 'l-Dīn Ḥabīb Allāh (1110/1699–1195/1780) commonly called Mirzā Maẓhar Jān-i-Jānān, lived and died in Delhi. The renowned Indian scholar and Sufi Shāh Walī Allāh, who was his contemporary, witnessed his high mystical attainments, great position in the Naqshbandī order and his tremendous popularity (*Kalimāt Ṭayyibāt*, Delhi, Maṭba' Mujtabā'ī, n.d., pp. 164–5).
48. The manuscript of Shāh Ghulām 'Alī Yaḥyā's *Kalimāt 'l-Ḥaqq* which I have consulted is in the *Nadwat 'l-'Ulamā'*, Lucknow Library, and is listed No. 398.
49. I have consulted the manuscript of Shāh Rafī' 'l-Dīn's *Damgh 'l-Bāṭil* which is in the Bankipur Library (India).
50. Shāh Muḥammad Ismā'īl, *'Abaqāt* (Karachi, al-Majlis 'l-'Ilmī, 1960).

Notes and References (Chapter Five)

1. The Qur'ān for instance says: 'The worshippers of false gods say: If God had so willed, we should not have worshipped aught but Him – neither we nor our fathers – nor should we have prohibited any thing that He would not approve. So did those who went before them. Is the duty of the apostles more than preaching (the message) clearly?' (16:35).
2. 'But those who in whose hearts is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meanings' (Qur'ān: 3:7).
3. See *ultra*, pp. 33, 63–4, 66–7; Jāmī: *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, p. 75.
4. See my article 'The Doctrine of Divine Command: A Study on the Development of Ghazālī's View of Reality', *Islamic Studies* (Islamabad, Vol. XXI, No. 3, Autumn 1982) particularly pp. 37–8.
5. 'Afīf 'l-Tilimsānī, for instance, seems to have held this view [Ibn Taymīyah: *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, ed. Rashīd Riḍā, Cairo, Vol. IV, p. 23].
6. See *ultra*, p. 116.
7. Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I:30, p. 101.
8. For a review of these views see George Makdisi, 'Ibn Taimīya: A Sufi of the Qādirīyah Order', *American Journal of Arabic Studies*, Vol. I, 1973, pp. 118–22.
9. George Makdisi, for instance, thinks that Ibn Taymīyah condemned 'the pantheistic Sufism of the *Ittiḥādīyah*, as represented, for instance, in the doctrines of Ibn 'l-'Arabī' or 'the philosophers and the Sufis influenced by them' (the paper, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 129). Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī shows that he criticised the wrong practices (*bid'āt*) of Sufism, such as invocation of Sufi saints, visits to their graves, etc. [*Tārīkh Da'wat wa 'Azīmat*, Vol. II, on Ibn Taymīyah, Lucknow, 2nd ed., 1971, pp. 216–36]. There is a better appreciation of Ibn Taymīyah's comprehensive review of Sufism by Abū Zuhrah: *Ibn Taymīyah, Ḥayātuhū, 'Aṣruhū, Ārā' hū wa fiqhuhū*, Dār 'l-Fikr 'l-'Arabī, Cairo, pp. 196–209, 316–39; Dr. Muṣṭafā Ḥilmī: *Ibn Taymīyah wa 'l-Taṣawwuf*, Cairo, 1982; and Thomas Michel: 'Ibn Taymīyah's *Sharḥ* on the *Futūḥ 'l-Ghayb*', *Hamdard Islamicus*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Summer 1981, Karachi, pp. 3–12.
10. For this task one does not have to be a Sufi; and most probably Ibn Taymīyah was not associated with any *silsilah*. Prof. Makdisi's evidence for his affiliation with the Qādirīyah order is not convincing. Thomas Michel seems to be right in his observations on Makdisi's view [his paper, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–4].
11. *Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām Ibn Taymīyah*, compiled by 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān 'l-Aṣīmī and his son Muḥammad, Riyadh, Vol. X, p. 82. This work will henceforth be referred to as *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*.
12. For these appellations and the names of Sufis see Rashīd Riḍā's collection of Ibn Taymīyah's writings: *Majmū'at 'l-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Cairo, Vol. I, p. 179. [This work will henceforth be referred to as *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*]; and *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*,

op. cit., Vol. X, pp. 516–17 and Vol. XI, p. 233.

13. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, pp. 516–17.
14. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, pp. 220–1.
15. Al-Shiblī, for instance, shaved his beard and tore his clothes in that state [*Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, pp. 382, 557].
16. *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, p. 168; *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, pp, 382, 557.
17. *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, pp. 81, 83; *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. XI, p. 18. Ibn Taymīyah has reviewed al-Ḥallāj's life and ideas in a separate treatise: *Risālah fī 'l-Jawāb 'an Su'āl 'an 'l-Ḥallāj hal kāna Ṣiddīqan aw Zindīqan* [Dr. M. Rashad Salīm, *Jāmi' 'l-Rasā'il*, Cairo, 1969, pp. 185–99]. Henceforth this will be referred to as *Jāmi' 'l-Rasā'il*.
18. Ibn Taymīyah has referred to the doctrines of the expounders of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* in many of his writings. In two treatises, however, he has discussed them at length. They are: *Ibṭāl waḥdat 'l-wujūd* [*Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, pp. 61–120] and *Ḥaqīqat Madhhab 'l-Ittiḥādīyīn*, [*Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. IV, pp. 1–101].
19. *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, p. 176.
20. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 23.
21. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 78.
22. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 79–90.
23. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 59–72.
24. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 42–3.
25. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. XI, p. 385; X, p. 339.
26. *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, p. 177.
27. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 83.
28. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, p. 340; *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, p. 168.
29. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, pp. 219–20, 222; *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, p. 168; Ibn Taymīyah, *Al-Risālah 'l-Tadmurīyah*, Al-Maktab 'l-Islāmī, Beirut, 1391 A.H., p. 138.
30. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, p. 338.
31. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 220.
32. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 341.
33. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, pp. 487, 497, 499; Ibn Taymīyah, *Al-Risālah al-Tadmurīyah*, *op. cit.*, pp. 130, 135.
34. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, pp. 694, 712–14.
35. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, pp., 682–5.
36. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 668.
37. The Commentary on *Futūḥ 'l-Ghayb* is included in Vol. X of the *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, pp. 455–549. The more relevant pages are 482–9.
38. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, p. 498.
39. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 220; *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, p. 166.
40. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 497.
41. Ibn Taymīyah, *Al-Risālah 'l-Tadmurīyah*, p. 137.
42. *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, p. 167.

43. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, pp. 218–19, 337–8, 488; *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. I, pp. 83, 105.
44. *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. IV, p. 64.
45. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 62–3.
46. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, p. 612.
47. Ibn Taymīyah, *Kitāb 'l-Radd 'ala 'l-Manṭiqīyīn*, ed. Sharf 'l-Dīn, Beirut, p. 511.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 511.
49. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, p. 76.
50. *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 473, *Istiṣḥāb* is a principle in Islamic jurisprudence; it means that a thing will continue to have its original value of being legal or illegal unless there is an argument from the Sharī'ah to the contrary.
51. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, pp. 544–5.
52. *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 398.
53. Ibn Taymīyah, *Kitāb 'l-Radd ala 'l-Manṭiqiyīn, op. cit.*, p. 516.
54. *Al-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il*, Vol. IV, pp. 86–7.
55. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp. 84–6, 92–3.
56. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. XI, pp. 398–400.
57. Ibn Taymīyah, *Al-Furqān bayn Awliyā' Allāh wa Awliyā' 'l-Shayṭān*, ed. M. 'Abd 'l-Wahhāb Fā'ir, Dār 'l-Fikr, p. 145.
58. Ibn Taymīyah makes these points in treatises which he wrote on *tawbah*, *shukr*, *ṣabr* and *tawakkul*, as well as in his discussions on *riḍā*, *maḥabbah*, *khawf*, *rijā'* and *du'ā'* in other discourses that are scattered throughout the two volumes of his writings on *Sulūk* and *Taṣawwuf* [*Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vols. X and XI].
59. *Fatāwā Shaykh 'l-Islām*, Vol. X, pp. 396, 558–65.

PART II

Selections From The Letters of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī

Sufism

1. Nature and Purpose of Sufism

I

Vol. I:30 (pp. 99–101)

The goal of Sufism is not to acquire an intuitive knowledge of reality, but to be a servant of God. There is no stage higher than the stage of servanthood ('abdīyat), and there is no truth beyond the Sharī'ah.

Man has been created to serve God. If love is kindled in man, whether in the beginning or during the course of his spiritual journey (*sulūk*), the purpose is to disentangle him from things other than God. Love is never an end in itself; it is only a means to realise servanthood (*'ubūdīyat*). One becomes a true servant of God when one is freed from the love and bondage of the world. Love is nothing but a means for an exclusive devotion to God. The last stage in the Sufi way (*walāyat*) is servanthood (*'abdīyat*); beyond it there is no other stage. At this stage the mystic finds no comparison between him and his Lord: he is wanting in everything, whereas his Lord is self-sufficient in essence as well as attributes. He sees nothing common between his essence and Divine Essence, between his attributes and Divine attributes, between his acts and Divine acts. He even avoids saying that the world is a shadow (*ẓill*) of God, for that implies comparison and analogy. He simply affirms that God is Creator and that he is created; beyond that he claims nothing.

Some people are led in the course of their spiritual journey to the belief in One Actor; they see no actor other than God.

But the mystics (of the Naqshbandīyah order) know that God is the Creator and not the doer of acts. The doctrine of One Actor is the root cause of blasphemy (*zandaqah*). I will explain through an example. Suppose that a juggler, sitting behind a screen, conjures up forms of some objects, and produces in them some wonderful movements. Those who have penetrating eyes know that the creator of the movements in the forms is the man behind the screen, although the movements are performed by the forms. Hence they say that it is the forms which move and not the juggler; and they are right in what they say. The assertion of One Actor is an act of intoxication (*sukr*). The truth is that there are many actors, but the creator of acts is only one. To the same category of beliefs belongs the doctrine of One Being. It is the product of intoxication and ecstasy. The criterion for the correctness of mystical ideas is that they agree with the clear truths of the *Shar'*; if they diverge a hair's breadth, they are, to be sure, a product of intoxication. The truth is what has been established by the 'ulamā' of the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah*; all else is blasphemy and heresy, and the result of intoxication and ecstasy. Perfect agreement with the *Shar'* is possible only at the stage of servanthood; in all stages before that, there is always an element of intoxication.

Somebody put a question to Shaykh Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband: 'What is the purpose of *sulūk*?' He replied: 'The purpose is to know in detail what you know in brief, and to perceive in vision what you know through arguments.' The Shaykh did not say that the purpose is to acquire truths beyond the truths of the *Shar'*. It is, however, a fact that the mystic receives different ideas during his *sulūk*. But when he reaches the end, those superfluous ideas disappear in the air. He then perceives the same truths of the *Shar'* in detail, and comes out from the narrow enclosure of reason to the open space of *kashf*. The prophet receives truths through revelations (*waḥy*), the mystic receives the same truths through inspiration (*ilhām*) directly from the same source, and the 'ulamā' of the *Shar'* get them through deduction from revelation and state them in principle. The prophet receives truths in detail, and so does the mystic. But there is a difference: the former truth depends on itself, whereas

the latter depends upon the former, and is subject to its authority.

II

Vol. I:266 (pp. 623–4)

The object of Sufi ṭarīqah is nothing but to produce conviction in the beliefs of the Sharī'ah and to facilitate the observance of its rules.

After one has acquired right beliefs and subjected oneself to the rules of the Sharī'ah, one should, if God so wills, enter the path of the Sufis. But one should not pursue it in order to get something over and above the beliefs and the practices of the *Shar'*, or acquire something new. The purpose of following the Sufi way is to gain a conviction in the objects of faith that cannot be weakened by the doubts of a sceptic or shaken by the remarks of an objector. The conviction which is founded on arguments is not firm, and one who pursues reasoning does not get certitude. 'Know that it is through the remembrance of God that one gets the peace and satisfaction of the heart.' This is the object of the Sufi *ṭarīqah* regarding belief. Regarding the practices of the *Shar'*, the object is to make their performance easy and spontaneous, to remove sluggishness, and to subdue the carnal self.

Likewise, the purpose of the Sufi *sulūk* is not to see the forms and images of transcendental realities, or behold colours and lights; they are nothing more than a play or fun. Material forms and physical lights are not less interesting if one wants to have fun; why should one leave them and run after the spiritual forms and lights, and take up austere and difficult practices for that purpose? Forms, these or others, and lights, physical or spiritual, are all created by God. He transcends them altogether; they are nothing but His signs and proofs.

What should I say about hearing songs, or performing

dances, or entering into a trance, or inducing an ecstasy! All the states and experiences which are produced by unlawful means are, in my view, a kind of temptation with which God tests men. People whom God gives latitude in this way, undergo these states, experience union, and have revelations and visions in terms of the forms of this world. The mystics of Greece and the Brahmin saints of India had all these experiences. The sign of the validity of an experience is, first, that it agrees with the doctrines of the Sharī'ah and, second, that in order to have it one does not commit anything which is forbidden (by the *Shar'*) or which is doubtful. Know that music and dance are but frivolous games.

III

Vol. I:97 (p. 241)

The experience of fanā' and baqā' is the essence of walāyat; its purpose is to produce conviction.

The object of man's creation is to worship and obey God as He has ordained; and the object of worship and obedience is to achieve conviction (*yaqīn*) which is the essence of faith. This may be the meaning of the verse: 'Worship and obey God till (*ḥattā*) you get conviction (*yaqīn*).'[1] For, *ḥattā* introduces a purpose as it introduces an end. The verse may, therefore, be taken to mean: 'Worship and obey God in order to get conviction.' In other words, the faith that one has before worship and obedience is a formal rather than a real faith which means conviction. God says: 'O you who believe! believe!'[2] That is to say: 'O you who have a formal belief try to have the real belief by worshipping God and obeying Him as He orders.'

The object of *fanā'* and *baqā'* which are the essence of *walāyat*, is to acquire this conviction, and nothing else. If one understands *fanā'* in God and *baqā'* by God in any other sense which suggests the fusion (of man) into God, it is a blasphemous distortion of faith. Many things come from the

mouth of a Sufi in the state of intoxication, which it is his duty to eventually overcome, turn to God and ask for His forgiveness. Ibrāhīm ibn Shaybān,[3] one of the great Sufis mentioned in the *Ṭabaqāt* says: 'The real *fanā'* and *baqā'* consist in sincerely believing in the unity of God (*ikhlāṣ 'l-waḥdānīyah*) and honestly living as His bondservant (*ṣiḥḥat 'l-'ubūdīyah*). Anything over and above it, is sheer error and infidelity.'[4] By God, what he says is true; his words witness to his rectitude. *Fanā'* in God means effacing oneself in carrying out the will of God. You may understand *sayr ilā Allāh* or 'meditation leading to God' and *sayr fī Allāh* or 'meditation on God' on the same lines.

IV

Vol. I:207 (p. 407)

Visions and auditions are not the end of Sufism; they are mere shadows, and God transcends them absolutely.

What should I say of the frivolous ideas of the Sufis, and what should I speak of their experiences. In the Hereafter, their experiences and findings shall not be worth half a penny unless they are weighed in the balance of the *Shar'*, and their revelations and inspirations will not be worth half a grain unless they are tested on the criterion of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. The purpose of pursuing the path of Sufism is to strengthen conviction in the objects of faith as stated by the *Shar'*, which is what faith really means, as well as to acquire the ability to perform with ease the duties of the *Shar'* as described in *fiqh*. There is no purpose beyond them. For the vision of God is promised in the next life and cannot be had in this life; the revelations and visions in which the Sufis revel give them nothing but the pleasure of a shadow and the joy of a semblance. God transcends them absolutely (*warā' 'l-warā*). I am in an impasse here: if I tell the truth about visions and revelations as it is, I fear that it may discourage the travellers of this path and affect their pursuit;

but if, on the other hand, I do not tell the truth, I fear that I shall be guilty of selling the untruth as truth in spite of knowing the truth.

[Note: See also letters, Vol. I:210, pp. 420–1; I:217, p.435.]

V

Vol. I:22 (pp. 71–6)

Walīs are of two kinds: those who remain absorbed in God, and those who are returned to the world. The latter are superior to the former.

Glory be to him who has combined light with darkness and joined the trans-phenomenal which is above space with the phenomenal which is in space; and glory be to him who has created in light such a strong love for darkness that it seeks to unite with darkness in order that it may through the union increase in its brilliance and grow in its radiance. It is just as when you want to polish a mirror in order to make it brighter, you coat it with dust so that it may shine more brightly by contrast with the blackness of the dust, and increase in its brilliance by contrast with the dirtiness of the clay.

When the light is infatuated by the beauty of its phenomenal love and overpowered by its union with the material body, it forgets the vision it had of the Transcendent, and forgets itself and its own existential qualities (*tawābi' wujūdihī*). When this happens it goes down along with its love to the level of 'the People of the Left Hand' (*Aṣḥāb 'l-Mash'amah*) and is deprived of the honour of 'the People of the Right Hand' (*Aṣḥāb 'l-Maymanah*). If it continues in that suffocating union and does not come out into the open air of freedom it is completely doomed. For it fails to achieve the goal for which it has been created, or develop the powers which it has been given. In short, it is lost and finished.

But if, on the other hand, it is saved by God's grace and

redeemed by His mercy, it may rise up, remember what it has forgotten, and return to God saying:

> To you is my Ḥajj and my 'Umrah, O my love!
> Not to bricks and stones which others visit.

So if it is absorbed in contemplating God on proper lines, and concentrates on Him in the best possible way, darkness surrenders to it, and is submerged in its illuminations. When this absorption increases to an extent that it forgets the material adjunct altogether, and forgets itself and its existential accompaniments (*tawābi' wujūdihī*) completely, it vanishes in the vision of the light of lights and reaches its goal only with a veil in between. At this moment it achieves self-annihilation (*fanā'*) both physical (*jasadī*) and psychic (*rūḥī*). If after this self-annihilation it subsists in that vision it completes its annihilation and subsistence (*baqā'*). It is at this moment that it can rightly claim *walāyat*.

After reaching this point it may remain completely absorbed in the object of its vision and forget itself in it for ever. Or it may return to the world and take up calling people to God, the Great and the Glorious, in such a way that it lives with its inner self united with God and the outer being turned to the world. At this stage light is liberated from darkness embedded in it, in order that it may devote itself to God; by virtue of this liberation it is entitled to join the People of the Right Hand of God. To be sure, God does not have a right hand or a left hand; but we speak of His right hand, for it stands for favour, blessing and grace all combined. A ḥadīth says: 'Both His hands are right hands.'[5]

Darkness following light occupies itself in worship and obedience. I mean by the transcendental light the spirit (*al-rūḥ*), rather, the reality of the spirit; and I mean by darkness surrounded by space the soul (*al-nafs*). In the same sense I use the words: the inner self (*al-bāṭin*) and the outer self (*al-ẓāhir*).

One may ask: How is it that the saints who are absorbed in God are conscious of the world around, attend to things and have intercourse with people? What does the annihilation of the self and perpetual absorption mean? And what is the difference between the people who are perpetually

absorbed and those who are returned to the world and asked to preach?

By self-annihilation and complete absorption I mean the absorption of the spirit as well as the soul after the soul has submerged itself into the illumination of the spirit, as I have explained above. One is conscious of the world through his senses, faculties and organs which form the soul. It is the being as a whole which is absorbed and annihilated in the illumination which is experienced by the spirit; but its various faculties continue to be conscious as before without any wrong happening to them.

The saint who is returned to the world, his soul after having resigned itself, comes out from the illumination and takes up preaching. He develops a feeling for the world, and because of that feeling his preaching is rewarded with success. As to the claim that the soul is a unity of which the senses and other faculties form parts, that may be understood in this way. The soul is related to the conical heart, which is in turn related to the spirit through the Comprehensive Reality of the Heart; all messages from the spirit first reach it (i.e., this Reality) and then through it all the faculties and organs separately. Hence it has in a sense a presence in the soul. This is the difference between the two groups.

Let it be known that the first group of saints are people of intoxication, and the second are people of sobriety. The first have their own honour, but the second are superior to them. The state of intoxication behoves the saints, and the state of sobriety behoves the prophets. May God give us the honour of the saints and favour us with the emulation of the prophets!

2. Mystic Experience

I

Vol. II:99 (p. 1172)

The Sufi experience of fanā' and baqā' is only a matter of experience, it has no existential significance.

Fanā', passing away from self, and *baqā'*, abiding in God, are experiential (*shuhūdī*) not existential (*wujūdī*). M does not become God and is not united with Him. The servant is servant for ever, and the Lord is Lord eternally. They are wicked heretics who think that *fanā'* and *baqā'* are existential; that man discards his ontological limitations and unites with his Primal Source, who is free from all limitations and determinations; that he annihilates himself and abides in his Lord; and that like a drop of water which loses itself and mingles in the river, he casts away his individuating limitations and becomes one with the Absolute. May God save us from their blasphemous ideas!

Real *fanā'* is to forget the not-Divine, to free oneself from the love of the world, and to purify the heart from all desires and wishes, as it is required of a servant. And real *baqā'* is to fulfil the wishes of the Lord, to make His will one's own will without losing one's self-identity.

II

Vol. I:295 (pp. 776–7)

The disappearance of individual identity in fanā' is visual rather than existential.

In the writings of some Sufis one comes across words like *maḥw*, effacement, and *iḍmiḥlāl*, dissolution. What they really mean by these words is visual effacement (*maḥw naẓarī*) not existential effacement (*maḥw 'aynī*). The identity

of the mystic disappears only from his vision; it is never abolished in reality. In fact, to believe in the latter is heretical and wicked. A number of amateur Sufis have interpreted these misleading words to mean existential dissolution and have been guilty of blasphemy. They have denied punishment and reward in the Hereafter. They believe that as they had once proceeded from Unity to multiplicity, they would likewise return at the end from multiplicity to Unity. Some of these misguided people have upheld this dissolution as the 'Great Resurrection' and denied real Resurrection and Judgement, Bridge and Balance. They have gone astray and have led a lot of people astray.

I saw one of them citing in support of his view the following couplet of 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī:[6]

> Jāmī! our origin as well as our end is Unity and nothing else,
> We live amidst a multiplicity which is false and unreal.

He does not know that what Jāmī really means by return to Unity is a return in vision and experience only. The Sufi does not see anyone other than God, and all multiplicity vanishes from his vision. Jāmī never means the existential return. These people are just blind, they do not see that, no matter how perfect one becomes, one cannot transcend human limitations, imperfection and insufficiency. Hence the ontological return of multiplicity to Unity makes no sense. If they think that it would happen after death, they are infidels; they deny the reality of punishment in the Hereafter, and falsify the teachings of the prophets.

III

Vol. I:266 (p. 589)

God does not unite with anything, nor does anything unite with God.

God does not unite with anything, and nothing unites with God. Some Sufi statements do suggest union, but their authors have not meant it. For instance, the statement, 'When his poverty is perfect he is God' smacks of union. But what it really means is that when the poverty of a mystic becomes perfect he realises that he is a pure non-being and that nothing exists except God. It does not mean that the mystic unites with God and becomes God, which is sheer infidelity and apostacy. God is beyond the baseless conjectures of the wicked. Our Shaykh used to say *Anā 'l-Ḥaqq*[7] does not mean that 'I am God'; it rather means that 'I do not exist, and God alone exists'.

IV

Vol. I:272 (pp. 654–6)

The belief in the Unity of Being is not required for the realisation of fanā' and baqā'. Whatever is seen, heard or felt in mystical experiences is other than God; the mystic should negate them and realise that God is beyond them.

The belief in the Unity of Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) is not required for attaining *fanā'* and *baqā'*, or achieving lower or higher *walāyat*. For *fanā'*, we need only the perception of One Being (*tawḥīd shuhūdī*) so that we can forget the not-Divine. It is quite possible for a Sufi to make his spiritual journey (*sayr*) and travel from one end to the other without getting ideas of the Unity of Being; he may even doubt if they ever occur. To me the way in which nothing of these ideas happen is the shorter way to the goal than the way in

which they happen. Also, the travellers on the former path normally reach the end, whereas the travellers on the latter path wander on the way. They satisfy themselves with a few drops and leave the river; they run after union with a shadow and lose reality. I have learned this truth from my own experience. May God show them the truth!

I have made my journey by the second route, and a lot of ideas of the Unity of Being have been revealed to me on the way. God has been particularly kind to me and pulled me to Him through the way of love (*sayr maḥbūbī*). With His help I have crossed the valleys and climbed the hills that lie in this way. It is just by sheer grace that He led me to pass over shadows and in the end reach the Real. However, when I began to guide disciples, I discovered that the other way was shorter and easier. 'All praise is for God who guided us to truth; had He not shown us the way we would never have found the truth. Surely, the prophets of our Lord have brought the truth.'[8]

[Note:] From the discussion (in the first part of this letter) it is clear that the existents are many and the world exists besides God. This fact, however, does not preclude the realisation of *fanā'* and *baqā'* or the attainment of the lower or higher *walāyat*. For *fanā'* means forgetting the not-Divine, rather than the negation of the not-Divine. What is required is that the Sufi should stop seeing the not-Divine, not that he should cease believing in the not-Divine and negate its existence.

This truth, obvious though it is, has not been known to many a renowned Sufi even; no wonder, if it has been hidden from the laity. They have confused the perception of One Being (*tawḥīd shuhūdī*) with the belief in One Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) and regarded the belief that there is only One Being there (*waḥdat 'l-wujūd*) as one of the prerequisites of the Sufi way, and have condemned those who believe in two separate existences (of God and the world) as the ones who have lost the way and are misleading others. For many of them the knowledge of God is nothing but the knowledge of the truths of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, and the perception of Unity in the mirrors of multiplicity is the final consummation. Some have even said about the Prophet that after he had completed

the mission of prophecy he was placed at the stage of seeing Unity in the mirrors of multiplicity. In support of it they cite the verse: 'Verily, we gave you the *kawthar*',[9] which they interpret to mean 'Verily, we gave (the vision of) Unity in multiplicity' (for the letter *wāw* of *waḥdat*, Unity, lies in between the letters *k* and *thr* of the word *kathīr* meaning multiplicity).

Such ideas are far below the dignity of prophecy. The prophets preach an absolutely unique God; whatever appears in the mirrors of qualified reality does not participate in His uniqueness, it is limited by qualifications and relations. May God give these people a sense of justice! They compare the achievements of the prophets with their own achievements, and think that the prophetic excellences are like their excellences. What grievous words of insolence do they utter.

> The insect which is hidden in the stone,
> Its heaven and earth are nothing but the stone.

This lowliest of the creatures who had similar ideas in the beginning of his *sulūk* is ashamed of them and turns to God for forgiveness. He rejects the possibility of perceiving God in the world on the pattern of Christian incarnation. Khwājah Naqshband[10] says: 'Whatever is seen, heard or experienced is other than God, and must be negated by the *kalimah* of negation (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*; there is no god except Allah).' Hence the vision of Unity in multiplicity should also be negated. And whatever is to be negated is other than God. The words of the Khwājah have rescued me from this perception, freed me from the bondage of visions and perceptions, and lifted me from the so-called knowledge to ignorance and from gnosis to wonder. May God reward him for what he has done to me! It is for these words of his that I love him and have joined the group of his admirers.

Saints other than him have hardly said such words, or hardly negated their perceptions and visions as the Khwājah has done. It is in this light that one should understand his words: 'Bahā' 'l-Dīn would have no knowledge (*ma'rifat*) of God, had his beginning not been the end of Abū Yazīd.'[11] In spite of his greatness Abū Yazīd did not go beyond his perceptions and visions, and did not step out of the narrow

enclosure of 'Glory be to me!' Khwājah Bahā' 'l-Dīn, on the other hand, negated all his visions and regarded them to be other than God. Abū Yazīd's 'transcendentalisation' (*tanzīh*) of God was nothing but 'immanentisation' (*tashbīh*) in the eyes of the Khwājah, and his affirmation of God's uniqueness only a comparison, and his perfection a defect. Hence his final ascent in which he did not cross the stage of immanence was the starting point for the Khwājah. For, one 'immanentises' in the beginning and 'transcendentalises' in the end.

I, however, think that Abū Yazīd was informed of his shortcoming towards the end of his life. For at the time of his death he said: 'I did not know You except after an unknowing, and did not serve You except after the lapse of a period.' He thus considered his first awareness of God a non-awareness, for it was not the awareness of God but the awareness of one of His shadows and appearances. Hence he did not have the real awareness of God; for God is beyond everything. Shadows and appearances mark the beginning of the way; they are only aids and means.

V

Vol. I:240 (pp. 503–4)

The outcome of real fanā' and baqā' is wonder (ḥayrat), not knowledge.

Praise be to Allah, and peace be on His chosen people!

I received your letter which tells of your commendable attainments; I was very much pleased to read it.

In the path of love a lot of strange experiences happen. You must pass over those experiences and stages, and try to reach the One who produces those states, and where there is no knowledge but ignorance. If after that you are given true knowledge, you would be really fortunate. Mind one thing: negate all that comes to you in vision and understanding, even if it is the vision of Unity in multiplicity. For the (real) Unity does not appear in multiplicity: what actually

appears is a reflection or an image of that Unity, not the Unity itself. So the best thing for you at this stage is to repeat the words: *lā ilāha illā Allāh* (There is no god except Allah). You should go on repeating this *kalimah* till nothing is left in vision or understanding, till you come to wonder (*ḥayrat*) and unknowing (*jahl*), and attain annihilation (*fanā'*). Unless you reach wonder and unknowing, you will not attain annihilation. What you think to be *fanā'* is actually nothingness (*'adam*); it is certainly not *fanā'*. First reach unknowing then you will realise annihilation; this is the first step on the way. Do not think of arrival (*waṣl*) or meeting (*ittiṣāl*); they are not yet in sight.

> How can you reach Su'ād!
> There are mountains in the way,
> And high peaks and deep ditches.

Your experiences are right (*durust*). But you must go beyond them. Blessed are those who follow the guidance and walk on the path of the Prophet (may God shower over him and his people His best blessings).

My second advice to you is to stick firmly to the Sharī'ah and judge your experiences on its principles. If you feel any disparity in word or deed with the Sharī'ah (and God forbid that), you should fear that it may be your undoing. This is the way of the Sufis who are rightly established. And my best wishes to you!

3. Visions and Revelations

I

Vol. I:130 (p. 330)

What appears in visions is other than God.

Ever-changing states and experiences are not to be relied upon. Don't care for what comes and goes, what is said and

heard. The goal is altogether different: it transcends whatever you hear or see, feel or experience. These things are just like sweets or cookies to please the children of *sulūk*. Go beyond them. The real thing to seek is different from these petty things which are as unreal as a dream. If in a dream you see that you are a king, you do not become a king. However, the dream offers a hope; it is a promise. In the Naqshbandī *ṭarīqah* (may God bless their leaders), visions and experiences are not to be counted. You will find this couplet in their books:

> I love the sun, I sing of the sun;
> I am not night, nor do I love night,
> So I never talk of dreams.

If one state comes and the other goes, there is nothing to be sorry for, and nothing to be happy over. Look for the One who is absolutely unique and indefinable. God bless you!

II

Vol. I:272 (pp. 657–60)

In their visions of God the Sufis do not see God Himself, they only see His appearance or shadow; and the words which they hear are not related to God as speech to its speaker, but as a creation to its Creator. Sufistic utterances which conflict with this rule should be treated as shaṭḥāt: their sayers may be hopefully forgiven, but their followers who believe in those words might be liable to God's punishment.

In my opinion the vision of God in the mirrors of contingent things which a group of Sufis consider to be perfection and which they believe combines transcendence with immanence, is not a vision of God; it is nothing except a creation of their imagination. What they see in the contingent is not the Necessary, what they get in the temporal is not the Eternal, and what appears as immanent is not the

Transcendent. These people may be excused; hopefully, they will be treated as an erring jurist (*mujtahid*), and exempted from punishment. But we do not know how God will treat their followers; I wish they were treated as the followers of an erring *mujtahid*. But if they do not get that treatment they will have a hard time. Analogy (*qiyās*) or *ijtihād* is a basic principle of the Sharī'ah, and we have been ordered to comply with it. But this is not the case with *kashf* and inspiration (*ilhām*); for we have not been ordered to comply with them. Inspiration (of a Sufi) is not binding on others; but *ijtihād* (of a *mujtahid*) is binding on the common man. Hence we are to follow the *mujtahid* scholars and have to believe in the fundamental principles of religion as they define. The words and practices of the Sufis which are opposed to the views of the *mujtahid* scholars should not be followed. But one should refrain from vilifying them; one should rather give them sympathetic consideration. Their (objectionable) words should be treated as ecstatic utterances (*shaṭḥāt*) and should be interpreted non-literally.

One is surprised to see that a number of Sufis ask people to believe in their inspirations and revelations such as *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, persuade them to follow their ideas and threaten them if they do not put faith in them. I wish they would have suggested them not to deny those ideas, and warned them against denouncing them. To have faith is one thing, and to refrain from denouncing is another. Faith in these ideas is not necessary; but one should not denounce them either. For their denunciation is very likely to lead to the condemnation of their sayers, and involve in contempt and hatred towards the friends of God. In short, one should act upon the views of the scholars ('ulamā') among the People of Truth, and keep silent in good faith over the revelations of the Sufis, neither accept them nor reject them. This is the right course, the *via media* between extremes. May God show us the right path!

More surprising is the behaviour of some claimants of *taṣawwuf*; they are not satisfied with their visions and revelations, which they consider to be a lower experience, but go further and say that it is possible to see God Himself in this life. They even claim that they see the inscrutable

Essence of the Necessary Being itself, and boast that what the Prophet experienced once on the night of his ascension they experience it every day. They liken the light which appears to them with the 'dawn of the morn' (*isfār ṣubḥ*) and believe that it is God the unqualified, and that its vision marks the end of the mystic ascent.

They also believe in talking and dialoguing with God. They say that God said this or said that; some even quote words from God that threaten their enemies or give good tidings to their friends. Some claim that they had a prolonged dialogue with God from the third-quarter of night till the morning prayer, and inquired about several things and received God's answers. Indeed they are arrogant and full of conceit; great is the insolence of their impiety.[12]

From the words of these people it appears that they identify the light with God and believe that it is the Essence of God itself, rather than its appearance or shadow. Certainly to call that light God Himself is pure lie, sheer heresy and unadulterated blasphemy. It is the utmost forbearance of God that He does not hasten to inflict on these liers terrible punishments or destroy them altogether. Glory to God who forbears from people even though He knows their insolence, and forgives them even though He has power to punish them! The people of Moses (peace be on him and our Prophet) were destroyed for only asking for a vision, and Moses himself was snubbed in the words: 'You will never see Me',[13] and repented for it. The Prophet Muḥammad who is the best and the most loved of the creation, past and future, and who has been honoured with the unique favour of physical ascension, and who has passed over the Throne and the Chair and transcended time and space, even his seeing God is a matter of dispute among scholars, in spite of the fact that there are suggestions to that effect in the Qur'ān. The majority of scholars believe that he did not see God. Imām Ghazālī[14] says: 'The correct view in this matter is that the Prophet (peace be on him) did not see his Lord the night of his ascension.' But these self-deceived people claim that they see God every day, whereas the scholars are not sure of even one vision for the Prophet. God's curse be on these block-heads!

It also appears from their statements that they believe that the words which they hear are related to God as a speech is related to its speaker. This is clear blasphemy. It is wrong to think that words would proceed from God by way of speaking which involves order and sequence; for that is the sign of contingency. The words of great Sufis have led them to error, for they have also spoken of talking with God and of dialoguing with Him. But one should note that the great Sufis have not believed that the words are to God as speech is to the speaker; they have rather believed that the words stand to God as creation stands to the Creator. There should be no difficulty in accepting this. The words of God which Moses (peace be on him) heard from the sacred tree, stood with God in the relation of the created and the Creator, rather than a speech and its speaker. Similarly, the words which Gabriel (peace be on him and on our Prophet) heard, stood with God in the creation-Creator relationship. Nevertheless, the words were the words of God, and one who denies it is an infidel and heretic. In other words, 'the speech of God' refers both to the internal speech (*kalām nafsī*) and the worded speech (*kalām lafẓī*) which God creates without there being anything in between. Hence the worded speech is also the speech of God in reality, and one who denies it is an infidel. You should grasp this point clearly, it will benefit you in different contexts. May God guide us!

4. Ecstatic Utterances (*Shaṭḥāt*)

I

Vol. II:95 (pp. 1137–9)

The experience of oneness (jam') and the experience of difference (farq), also called the kufr-i-ṭarīqat and the Islām-i-ṭarīqat and their characteristics. Ecstatic utterances (shaṭḥāt) are the product of the former.

I received your letter in which you have asked about some utterances of the Sufis. My dear! the time is not suitable for writing or responding to your questions. But since you have raised them, I am under an obligation to give an answer to your questions. I would, however, be brief.

The basic thing that you should note in this connection is that as in matters of the Sharī'ah we distinguish between Islam and *kufr*, similarly in matters of the *ṭarīqah* we distinguish between Islam and *kufr*; and as in the Sharī'ah *kufr* is defect and Islam is perfection, similarly in the *ṭarīqah*, the *kufr* of *ṭarīqah* is imperfection and the Islam of *ṭarīqah* perfection.

The *kufr* of *ṭarīqah* is the experience of oneness wherein reality is hidden and the distinction between truth and untruth disappears. In this experience the mystic beholds in the mirror of everything, good or evil, the beauty of the Unity he loves. Hence, he does not see anything good or evil, perfect or imperfect, except as a manifestation of that Unity. Hence he does not have the will to denounce (the evil and the imperfect), which arises from the distinction (between truth and untruth), consequently he is at peace with everything, all of which he finds to be on a right path. He draws pleasure from the Qur'ānic verse: 'There is not a moving creature, but He holds it by its fore-lock. Verily, my Lord is on a straight path.'[15] He even identifies the manifestation with the Manifesting One, the world with God, and the servant with the Lord. These are the consequences of the unitive experience. It is in this state that Manṣūr[16] said:

I left (*kafartu*) the religion of God,
And I must stick to that infidelity (*kufr*),
Even though it is evil
In the eyes of the Muslims.

The *kufr* of *ṭarīqah* bears a close resemblance to the *kufr* of Sharī'ah, even though the *kāfir* of Sharī'ah deserves condemnation and punishment whereas the *kāfir* of *ṭarīqah* deserves love and rewards. For this *kufr* or hiding (the reality) is due to an overwhelming love of God in which everything other than Him has been forgotten, and is, therefore, acceptable; but the *kufr* (of Sharī'ah) is due to sheer ignorance and insubordination, and must, therefore, be condemned.

The Islam of *ṭarīqah* is the experience of difference after union, wherein distinctions come back and truth is separated from untruth, and good from evil. The Islam of *ṭarīqah* has a close affinity with the Islam of Sharī'ah: when the Islam of Sharī'ah becomes perfect it becomes one with the Islam of *ṭarīqah*. Rather both Islams are the Islams of the Sharī'ah, the difference between them is the difference of the inner and the outer Sharī'ah, or of the reality of the Sharī'ah and its form. The *kufr* of *ṭarīqah* is superior to the Islam of the form of the Sharī'ah, although it is inferior and lower than the Islam of the reality of the Sharī'ah.

The Heaven is lower than the Throne,
But it is higher and superior to the earth.

The Sufis (may God bless their souls) who have uttered *shaṭḥ* or spoken words which conflict with the Sharī'ah, have done that in the state of *kufr-i-ṭarīqat*, which is the state of intoxication and non-distinction. But the Sufis who have been graced with the Islam of *ḥaqīqah* rise above such words, follow the prophets in their internal life, and emulate them in their external behaviour. One who talks *shaṭḥ* is at peace with everyone; for him everything is on a right path. He does not differentiate between God and the world, and does not believe in the duality of existence. If he has really attained the state of union and is stationed at the *kufr* of *ṭarīqah*, he forgets everything other than God. He will be

acceptable, and his words will be taken as a product of intoxication, and will be interpreted non-literally. But if he has not attained that experience, and has not reached that stage of perfection, and still speaks *shaṭḥ* and believes that everything is on the right path, and does not distinguish between truth and untruth, he is a heretic and infidel; because he wants to contradict the Sharī'ah and falsify the mission of the prophets who are the channels of God's mercy to humanity.

In short, the words which conflict (with the Sharī'ah) may be uttered by a righteous as well as a wicked man. For the former they are the elixir of life, for the latter the most deadly poison; just as the water of the Nile was sweet for the Israelites, but unpalatable blood for the Egyptians.

Here one treads on slippery ground: many Muslims who have followed the words of intoxicated people have lost the right path, and fallen into evil ways, and have ruined their religion. They do not know that ecstatic utterances are to be entertained on some conditions which are present in the ecstatics but not in others. Of these the most important condition is that the one who speaks them must have forgotten everything other than God; this is the supreme condition for acceptance. And the criterion to know the true from the false (Sufi) is to see who is steadfast in observing the Sharī'ah, and who is not. One who is true will not violate any rule of the Sharī'ah, even though he is under intoxication, and is not able to make distinctions. Manṣūr, to be sure, said: 'I am God', but every night that he passed in the prison he offered five hundred *rak'āt* of non-obligatory prayer with iron chains on his feet, and refrained from eating the food which was given by unjust hands, even though it contained nothing unlawful. But he who is wrong finds the observance of the Sharī'ah no less difficult than removing a mountain. The verse: 'What you preach to them is very hard on them'[17] depicts his condition. 'Our Lord! bestow on us mercy from Thyself, and dispose of our affair for us in the right way.'[18] And peace be on him who follows true guidance!

II

Vol. I:95 (pp. 236–8)

Sirhindī discusses five sayings of some great Sufis, and treats them as ecstatic utterances (shaṭḥāt). The first two tell an essential truth, but their language is misleading and improper; he, therefore, tries to show what is their proper and acceptable meaning. The other three are essentially wrong, and he is not able to find an interpretation which may be acceptable.

In the light of the principle that he develops in discussing the first two sayings, Sirhindī interprets a sacred Prophetic tradition (ḥadīth qudsī).

Man is a comprehensive being. That which is in all existents is present in man. This is true in reality in respect to the world of possibility, but in respect to the Necessary Being it is only formally true. 'God has created man in His form.'[19] The heart of man has the same comprehensiveness: whatever is there in the totality of man is there in his heart. That is why the heart is called the Comprehensive Reality (*Ḥaqīqat-i-Jāmi'ah*). On the basis of this comprehensiveness some Sufis have talked of the expanse of the heart and said: 'If the Throne is put along with what it contains in a corner of the Sufi's heart he would hardly feel it.' Since the heart comprehends the elements and the heavens, the Throne, the Chair and the Soul, and embraces the phenomenal as well as the transcendental, the Throne and what it contains do not count much in the heart. The heart encompasses the transcendental, whereas the Throne along with what it includes belongs, notwithstanding its vastness, to the world of space, and, no matter how vast it is, is limited and bears no comparison with the transcendental.

In the view of sober Sufis, however, these words are the outcome of intoxication and the result of non-distinction between the reality of a thing and its symbolic form (*an-mūzaj*). The Throne of Glory (*'Arsh Majīd*) is the theatre of complete manifestation (of God) and is too big to enter into the heart. What appears of the Throne in the heart is a symbolic form of the Throne, not the reality of the Throne;

and to be sure, that symbolic form does not count much in the heart which comprehends innumerable forms. The heaven, big as it is, appears along with many other things in a mirror; but this does not mean that the mirror is greater than the heaven. To be sure, the image of the heaven in the mirror is smaller than the mirror, but not the real heaven. I will explain my point by an illustration. We have in man a symbolic presence of the earth. But on this basis, we are not entitled to say that man is larger than the earth. On the contrary, the existence of man in comparison to the earth is like a tiny particle. The words under discussion are, in short, based upon a confusion of taking the symbolic form of a thing for the thing itself.

To the same category belong the words of some Sufis overpowered by ecstatic experiences: 'The comprehensiveness (*jam'*) of Muḥammad is more comprehensive than the comprehensiveness of God.' Since they believe that Muḥammad participates in both the levels of reality, possible and necessary, they think that Muḥammad's comprehensiveness is more inclusive than that of God. Here again they have taken the symbol for the reality. Muḥammad (peace be on him) comprehends the symbolic form rather than the reality of the Necessary. God, on the other hand, is the Necessary Being in reality. Had they differentiated between reality and the symbolic form of the Necessary Being, they would not have uttered those words. Muḥammad is but a servant, limited and finite, whereas God is limitless and infinite.

Know that intoxication is a mark of saintship (*walāyat*), and sobriety is a characteristic of prophecy (*nubūwat*), parts of which are available to the most perfect followers of the prophets as followers by virtue of their sobriety. Bisṭāmīs exalt ecstasy over sobriety; Abū Yazīd (may God bless his soul) said: 'My banner is higher than the banner of Muḥammad.' By his banner he meant the banner of *walāyat* and by the banner of Muḥammad (peace be on him) he meant the banner of *nubūwat* and exalted *walāyat* which involved ecstasy over *nubūwat* which meant sobriety.

Into the same category falls the statement of some Sufis: '*Walāyat* is superior to *nubūwat*.' They think that in *walāyat*

one faces God whereas in *nubūwat* one faces the creation, and it is clear that facing God is better than facing creation. Some people have interpreted this statement to mean that the *walāyat* of the prophet is better than his *nubūwat*. To me such statements are far from the truth. For in prophecy the prophet does not face the creation only, he faces both God and the creation. His inner being is with God and his outer being with people. The one who faces people exclusively is a statesman. The prophets are the best of God's creation, and have been honoured with the best of God's favours. *Walāyat* is only a part of *nubūwat* which is the whole; hence *nubūwat* is better than *walāyat*, be it the *walāyat* of a walī or a prophet.

Sobriety is better than ecstasy which is included in sobriety as *walāyat* is included in *nubūwat*. Sobriety, pure and simple, which is available to the common man is not for discussion here; therefore, to exalt ecstasy over this sobriety does not mean much. The sobriety which presumes ecstasy is undoubtedly better than ecstasy. The truths of the *Shar'* which issue forth from prophecy are pure sobriety and whatever is inconsistent with them is the result of ecstasy. Men of ecstasy deserve to be excused; however, the ideas which deserve to be followed are the ideas of sobriety not the ideas of ecstasy. May God confirm us in following the doctrines of the *Shar'* (peace and blessings be on their giver); may God also bless those who say '*āmīn*' on this invocation.

What has been reported in a sacred tradition (*ḥadīth qudsī*): 'My earth and My heavens do not comprehend Me; what comprehends Me is the heart of My faithful servant,'[20] refers to a comprehension of the symbolic form of the Necessary Being rather than His reality; for God is far from entering into a heart as we have explained above. It is clear that the heart's comprehension of Transcendence is in fact a comprehension of 'symbolic' transcendence rather than real Transcendence as is the case with the comprehension of the Throne and what it contains. The heart never comprehends real Transcendence.

III

Vol. I:152 (pp. 325–7)

Obedience to God lies in obedience to the Prophet. The words of Sufis that differentiate between the two obediences fall into the category of shaṭḥ and should be ignored.

God says: 'One who obeys the Prophet in fact obeys God.'[21] Thus God considers obedience to the Prophet His own obedience. Therefore, the obedience to God which is different from the obedience to the Prophet is not obedience to God. To underline this point God has used the word *qad* (which we have translated as 'in fact'), lest an ill-motivated person differentiate between the two obediences, or choose one against the other. At another place, God complains against people who differentiate between them: 'They try to differentiate between God and His prophets, and say that they would believe in some and would not believe in others, or try to find a course in between: they are infidels in the real sense.'[22]

Some Sufis in the state of intoxication and under an ecstatic experience have uttered words that differentiate between obedience to God and obedience to the Prophet, and speak of choosing the love of the one over the love of the other. For instance, it has been reported that Sultān Mahmūd Ghaznawī came once during his reign to Kharqan and put up his tents there. Then he sent his men to Shaykh Abū 'l-Ḥasan Kharqānī[23] requesting the Shaykh to visit him, and instructed that in case the Shaykh was not willing they should recite the verse of the Qur'ān: 'Obey God and obey the Prophet and the men of authority from among you.'[24] When his messengers saw that the Shaykh was not willing, they recited the said verse. Thereupon, the Shaykh said: 'I am still occupied with God's obedience, and feel ashamed that I have not moved to the obedience of the Prophet. What to say of the obedience to the ruler!' This implies that the Shaykh considered that the obedience to God was different from the obedience to the Prophet. To be sure, this is a deviation from the truth. The Sufis whose experiences are

true refrain from such words, and believe that in all matters of Sharī'ah, *ṭarīqah* and *ḥaqīqah* obedience to God lies in the obedience to His Prophet; they are convinced that all obedience to God which is other than the obedience to the Prophet, is sheer error and heresy.

It is also reported of Shaykh Abū Sa'īd Abū 'l-Khayr[25] that once he was with some people among whom there was a very respectable Sayyid from Khurasan. Suddenly an intoxicated Sufi (*majdhūb*) showed up, the Shaykh turned from the Sayyid in order to attend to him. The Sayyid did not like the behaviour; thereupon the Shaykh said: 'I honour you because of my love for the Prophet, but I honour this intoxicated Sufi because of my love for God.' This kind of distinction, too, is not entertained by the Sufis whose experiences are true. For them opposing the love of God to the love of the Prophet is a product of intoxication, and is pure error. The fact is that at the earliest stages of *walāyat* it is the love of God which dominates, but at the stage of perfection which is akin to *nubūwat*, it is the love of the Prophet which is predominant. May God establish us in obedience to the Prophet which is obedience to God Himself.

IV

Vol. I:100 (pp. 251–2)

Some words appear to be shaṭḥ and their sayer cannot be exonerated from the responsibility of dishonouring the Sharī'ah.

You have mentioned that Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Kabīr Yamanī[26] says that God does not know the hidden (*ghayb*). My dear! I simply cannot hear this: it makes the Farūqī blood in my veins boil. These words don't call for explanation[27] or interpretation, no matter whether their sayer is Shaykh Kabīr Yamanī or Shaykh Akbar Shāmī. We must have the words of Muḥammad 'Arabī (peace and blessings be on him), not the words of Muḥyī 'l-Dīn 'Arabī,[28] Ṣadr 'l-Dīn

Qunāwī[29] or 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Kāshī:[30] we need the *naṣṣ* (the text of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah), not the *Faṣṣ* (the *Fuṣūṣ 'l-Ḥikam*) of Ibn 'Arabī. Sufficient for us are the *futūḥāt madanīyah* (revelations of the Prophet); we don't have to bother with the *Futūḥāt Makkīyah* (of Ibn 'Arabī).

God Himself declares in His Holy Book that He knows the hidden (*ghayb*), and characterises Himself as the knower of the hidden. Hence, to say that God does not know the hidden is sheer blasphemy, and nothing short of falsifying God. By giving another meaning to *ghayb*, the sayer cannot exonerate himself from the offensiveness of these words. 'Grievous are the words which come out from their mouths.'[31] I do not know what led them to utter such words that flatly contradict the *Shar'*. If Manṣūr said: 'I am God' and if Bisṭāmī said: 'Glory to me', they might be excused, because they were overpowered by an ecstatic experience. But the words in question are not the result of an ecstatic experience; on the contrary, they are intellectual statements and concern understanding. They admit of no excuse, and hardly call for interpretation. If the sayer of these words wants to draw upon himself the contempt of the people, that too is evil and reprehensible. However, if at all he wants people's condemnation, there are many ways to it; why should he take a course which brings him to the brink of infidelity?

[Note: See also letters, Vol. I:23, p. 80; I:41, p. 143; I:112, p. 269; I:220, p. 440; I:268, pp. 629–31; I:293, pp. 767–8; II:80, pp. 1113–14; III:33, pp. 1282f; III:119, pp. 1547–8.]

5. *Sayr* and *Sulūk*

I

Vol. I:144 (pp. 318–19)

Meaning of sayr, and the description of its four stages: sayr ilā Allāh, sayr fī Allāh, sayr 'an Allāh bi Allāh and sayr dar ashyā'.

Sayr and *sulūk* refer to a movement (of mind) in knowledge which belongs to the category of quality; real movement is inconceivable here. *Sayr ilā Allāh* (i.e., journey to God) may be defined as a process of knowledge in which one moves from a lower to a higher knowledge, and from that to a still higher knowledge, till one reaches the knowledge of the Necessary Being. One arrives at this point when the knowledge of possible beings withers away and vanishes completely. This state is called *fanā'* or the annihilation of the self.

Sayr fī Allāh (i.e., journey in God) is the movement of knowledge in the levels of Necessity, like names, attributes, states (*shuyūn*), relations and negations, till one reaches a stage which no words can describe, no symbols can indicate, no adjectives can characterise, and no relations can relate, and which none can know and none can comprehend. This *Sayr* is called *baqā'* (survival in God).

Sayr 'an Allāh bi Allāh (i.e., journey from God with God) which is the third *sayr* is also a movement of knowledge from higher knowledge to lower knowledge, and from there to lower and still lower levels till one reaches the level of possible beings in a return journey coming down from the levels of Necessity. This is the gnostic (*al-'ārif*) who forgets God through God, who returns from God with God, who loses yet finds, who is separated yet united, and who is remote yet close.

The fourth *sayr* which is *sayr dar ashyā'* (i.e., journey in things) is knowing things, one after the other, after one has forgotten them altogether in the first *sayr*. Therefore, the fourth *sayr* is opposed to the first *sayr*, and the third to the second, as you see.

The *sayr* to God and the *sayr* in God are meant for completing *walāyat* which means *fanā'* and *baqā'*; and the third and fourth *sayrs* are meant for fulfilling the obligations of preaching which is the mission of the prophets and the messengers (peace be upon them all, particularly on the best of them). Those who aspire to follow these great personalities completely, must participate in their mission, as God has said: 'Say: This is my way; I call people to God on full knowledge, and so call those who follow me.'[32]

[Note: See also letters, Vol. I:287, pp. 702ff; II:42, pp. 965ff.]

II

Vol. I:290 (pp. 740–4)

Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī describes in detail his mystical experiences.

When I decided to pursue the Sufi way, God very kindly led me to the great walī and gnostic and one of the leading masters of the Naqshbandīyah order, Shaykh Muḥammad al-Bāqī[33] (may God bless his soul), my teacher and preceptor, and the director to a path which begins from the end (*indirāj 'l-nihāyah fi 'l-bidāyah*) and leads you through all the stages of *walāyat*. He taught me the *dhikr* of *ism dhāt* (that is, the word Allah), and directed his spiritual attention (*tawajjuh*) to me on familiar lines till I experienced great pleasure and intense longing that made me weep. After a day the feeling of self-negation (*bi khudī*) as known to these Sufis and called forgetfulness (*ghaybah*) overtook me. In that state of self-effacement I saw a vast ocean and found that the forms of things appeared as shadows in that ocean. This state was intensified till it overwhelmed me. Sometimes it continued for a quarter of a day, sometimes two quarters, sometimes the whole night. When I reported it to the Shaykh, he said: 'You have attained a kind of *fanā'*', and advised me to take care of that enlightenment (*āgāhī*).

Two days later, I attained *fanā'* in the proper sense, and reported to the Shaykh. He asked me to continue. Thereafter I attained the *fanā'* of *fanā'*. When I reported it to the Shaykh he asked: 'Do you see the whole world as one and find it united with the One?' I said: 'Yes.' Thereupon he said: 'The *fanā'* of *fanā'* in the proper sense is that in spite of seeing that union you go into a state of unconsciousness (*bi shu'ūrī*). The following night I attained the *fanā'* as described by the Shaykh. I reported it to him; I also told of my feelings subsequent to the experience of *fanā'*. I further told him that I had got a direct knowledge (*'ilm ḥuḍūrī*) of God, and that I had found that the attributes supposed to belong to me belonged to God.

After that I saw a light that comprehended everything. I thought it to be God. This light was black. I reported to the Shaykh. He said: 'You have seen God, but under the veil of light.' He further said: 'The expansion of light that you see is in the realm of knowledge, it appears due to the contact of Divine Essence with innumerable things, high and low; but it should be negated.' After that, that all-comprehending black light started contracting till there remained just a point. The Shaykh said: 'You should negate that point too, till you reach the state of wonder (*ḥayrat*).' I did as he said, and that imaginary point (*nuqṭah mawhūm*) disappeared from there and wonder set in, wherein God was visible by Himself through Himself. When I reported it to the Shaykh he said: 'This presence (*ḥuḍūr*) is the presence which the Naqshbandīyah aim at, and this is what the *nisbat* of Naqshbandīyah means. It is also called the presence (of God) without concealment (*ḥuḍūr bi ghaybat*), and herein lies the inclusion of the goal in the commencement (*indirāj 'l-nihāyah fi 'l-bidāyah*). In our order one acquires this *nisbat* as others acquire *adhkār* and *awrād* from their preceptors in other orders (*salāsil*) in order to practise them and reach the goal. On the basis of this fact, therefore, you can imagine the heights to which Sufis in this *ṭarīqah* may rise.'

This *nisbat*, which is quite rare, was given to me within two months and some days after I had taken up *dhikr* according to the Shaykh's instructions. After that *nisbat*, another *fanā'* was awarded to me which is believed to be the

real *fanā'* (*fanā' ḥaqīqī*). My heart expanded to such an extent that the whole world, from the Divine Throne to the centre of the earth, was no more than a small grain as compared to that expansion. After that I saw myself and every object of the world, rather every particle of it as God. Then I saw each particle of the world separately one with me, and I saw myself one with all of them, till I found that the whole world was hidden in one particle. After that I saw myself, rather each particle, so much expanded and enlarged that it could contain the whole world, rather many more worlds, in it. I saw myself and each particle as an expanding light entering into every particle so that all forms and shapes of the world had vanished into it. After that I found myself, rather every particle, sustaining (*muqawwim*) the world. When I reported to the Shaykh he said: 'This is the stage of true certainty (*ḥaqq 'l-yaqīn*) in *tawḥīd*, the stage of the union of the union (*jam' 'l-jam'*).'

After that the forms and shapes of the world that I found to be God at first I saw them imaginary (*mawhūm*), and every particle that I found to be God without any difference and distinction (*bi tafāwut wa bi tamyīz*) I found illusory. I was thrown into complete wonder. I remembered in that condition the words of the *Fuṣūṣ* once recited to me by my father: 'If you like, you may call it the created; or if you like, you may call it God in one sense and creation in another; or if you like, you may express your inability to differentiate between the two.' These words calmed down my uneasiness. Then I went to the Shaykh and reported my condition. He said: 'The presence (*ḥuḍūr*) of God that you have is not clear. Continue your work till the Existent (*al-Mawjūd*) is differentiated from the illusory (*al-mawhūm*).' Thereupon I recited to him the words of the *Fuṣūṣ* that speak of non-differentiation. He said: 'The Shaykh (i.e., Ibn 'Arabī) has not spoken of the perfect state, and, of course, non-differentiation has been the actual state of some Sufis.'

I continued my work as I was instructed. Within two days God showed me, by virtue of the attention of the Shaykh, the difference between Existence and illusion. Thereupon, I realised that the real Existent is different from the illusory; I found that the attributes and acts and effects that proceed

from the illusory really proceed from God. I realised also that these attributes and acts are absolutely illusory (*mawhūm maḥaḍ*) and there is nothing in existence except God. When I reported this state to the Shaykh he said: 'This is the state of difference after union (*farq ba'd 'l-jam'*), it is the final end of human endeavour. After this one may realise that for which he has been endowed with necessary abilities. The masters of Sufism have regarded it as the stage of perfection.'

Let me recount. When I was brought to the stage of sobriety after intoxication and of *baqā'* after *fanā'*, and looked at every particle of my being, I did not see anything except God and found it a mirror for beholding God. From that state I was brought again to the state of wonder. When I was returned to myself, I found God with all the particles of my being rather than in it, and the first state appeared to be lower than this state. I was again brought to wonder, but when I was restored to sobriety, I saw God in that state neither one with the world nor different from it, neither in the world nor outside it. The way I had found God's accompaniment (*ma'īyah*), comprehension (*iḥāṭah*) and immanence (*siryān*) at the first stage, now disappeared altogether. In spite of that He appeared to me with those attributes, as if I felt Him. I also saw the world at that time, but it did not stand with God in those relations. After that I was brought to wonder. When I was returned to sobriety, I came to know that God stood with the world in a relation different from those relations. That relation was unknowable, and I saw God in that incomprehensible relation. I was brought again to wonder, and experienced a kind of contraction. When I was returned to myself, I saw God without that unknowable relation: He had no relation with the world, neither knowable nor unknowable. I also saw the world at that time in that condition. I was given a special knowledge according to which there existed no relation between God and the world, although I saw both of them. At this time I was informed that the object of my vision (*mashhūd*) as described above, in spite of its transcendental character, was not God. It was rather the symbolic form of His creative

relation (*ṣūrat mithāl-i-ta'alluq takwīn ūw*) which is above all phenomenal relations, knowable or unknowable.

> How can I reach Su'ād!
> There are in the way high mountains,
> And deep ditches besides.

O dear! if I start telling in detail the experiences I have had, and the truths that have been revealed to me, the discussion will prolong. Particularly, if I discuss the ideas concerning the Unity of Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) and the shadowy character of things, men who have passed their whole lives in the valley of One Being would realise that they do not know even a drop of that limitless sea. How strange that these people do not count me among those who have experienced the Unity of Being and consider me only a theologian who denies the Unity. They believe that to insist on the truth of One Being is the highest good, and that to go beyond that stage is a decline.

> Some fools who are not aware of themselves,
> Have loved defect under the impression that it is perfection.

They argue in this matter from the words of early Sufis concerning the Unity of Being. God may show them how to do justice with these sayings. How do they know that those Sufis did not cross that stage and continued to stay there? I do not deny that one receives the ideas of One Being: that experience does occur. What I contend is that there are stages higher than that stage. If they call a man who rises above that stage the denier of Unity and choose to dub him as that, I do not want to indulge with them in discussion.

[Note: See also letters, Vol. I:13, p. 49; I:31, pp. 102–3; I:160, pp. 338–9; I:291, pp. 757–8.]

III

Vol. I:71 (pp. 200–1)

Spiritual exercises and austere practices which are not in accord with the Sharī'ah are of no avail.

To be thankful to God, which is our primary duty, it is necessary, first, to have right beliefs as defined by the People of Salvation, namely, the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah*; and, second, to follow the practical injunctions of the Sharī'ah as enunciated by the *Mujtahids* of this group; and third, to purify oneself on the principles laid down by the Sufis among them. The first two are obligatory, because they form the basis on which the structure of Islam has been raised; the third is required for perfection, since perfection in Islam depends upon it. Every action or practice which is opposed to these principles is a sin, a disobedience to God, and ungratefulness to that great Benefactor. The Brahmins of India, and the Philosophers of Greece have not lagged behind in austere practices and severe devotions. But as these devotions were not in accord with the Codes (*Sharā'i'*) of the prophets (may God shower His blessings on them in general, and on our Prophet in particular) they have not availed and will not save their practitioners in the Hereafter. Therefore, you must follow the Prophet and follow his Righteous Successors (*khulafā'-i-rāshidīn*).

6. *Kashf*

I

Vol. I:217 (pp. 432, 435)

The kashf of a Sufi is not infallible: three causes for error in kashf.

You have not written since long about your states and experiences. Anyhow, what is required is to follow the *Shar'* consistently without deviating a hair's breadth in belief or in action. The most important thing is to guard the state of the heart in relation to God. The more it is one of ignorance the happier you are, and the sooner you reach the stage of wonder (*ḥayrat*) the better. Visions of God and revelations of His names occur while you are in the way; when you reach the end, they rarely happen. At that stage, one desires nothing except ignorance (*jahālat*) and non-attainment (*'adam yāft*).

What should I write about cosmic revelations (*kushūf kawnī*)! In this field the causes for mistake are many and the possibility of error is great. The occurrence of these revelations is as good as their non-occurrence. You may ask how it is that sometimes error creeps into the revelations of the saints, and something different actually happens. A saint informs, for instance, that so and so will die after a month or return home from his journey. But when the month is over neither happens. The answer is that the revelation (*makshūf*) may depend for its occurrence upon certain conditions whose details the recipient of the revelation could not discover, yet he told about it in categorical terms. There may be another possibility: The gnostic may come to know from the Preserved Tablet (*Lawḥ Maḥfūz*) about a particular event, but that event might change, as it belongs to the category of conditional decrees (*qaḍā' mu'allaq*) of whose nature and liability to change he is unaware. In such a case, therefore, if he tells what he knows that might not happen. . .

Know that the decrees of God are of two kinds: alterable

and non-alterable. The former is subject to change and alteration, the latter is not. God says: 'My decrees do not change.'[34] This refers to the non-alterable decrees. About the alterable He says: 'He effaces what He will and confirms (what He will), and with Him is the Mother-Book (*Umm 'l-kitāb*).'[35]

Let me return to our subject. An error may sometimes occur in inspired ideas when intellectual premises which are well established to the recipient of inspiration but are in reality false, combine with the inspired ideas of the mystic such that he is not able to differentiate between them, and, consequently, takes the whole thing as inspired. Thus error creeps in, and the whole becomes wrong, because a part of it is wrong.

It may also happen that a Sufi sees in a vision, or in a dream, some transcendental truth, and takes it on its face value as it appears. He interprets it literally and commits a mistake; he does not realise that the apparent form is not meant, and that he should understand it symbolically. This is another reason for error in revealed (*kashfīyah*) ideas.

In short, what is categorically true belongs to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah that was given in the indubitable (prophetic) revelation, and was brought by the angel. The consensus (*ijmā'*) of the 'ulamā' and the *ijtihād* of the *mujtahids* is based upon them. Whatever is outside these four principles of the *Shar'* would be accepted only when it is in agreement with them; and what does not agree will not be accepted, even if it is the ideas of the Sufis and received by them as inspiration (*ilhām*) or revelation (*kushūf*). The feelings and experiences of the Sufis will not be considered in the Hereafter worth half a penny if they are not attested by the *Shar'*, and their inspirations and revelations will not weigh half an ounce if they do not agree with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

The purpose of following the Sufi way is first to strengthen the conviction in the beliefs of the Sharī'ah, which is the essence of faith, and second, to make the performance of its duties easy. Nothing else is the object of Sufism. For the vision of God is promised in the Hereafter and is impossible to have in this life. The visions and illuminations over which the Sufis are happy, offer nothing but the pleasure of a

shadow and the joy of an image or a symbol. God is far above and beyond them. I fear that if I tell the real truth about visions and illuminations it will dishearten the travellers of the Sufi path and will pour cold water on their aspirations. But, on the other hand, if I do not tell the truth when I know it, I fear that I would be guilty of confusing truth with untruth. I must say that the visions and revelations that occur in the Sufi way must be tested on the touchstone of the vision and illumination which Moses (peace be upon him and our Prophet) had on the Mount. If they do not come true they should be treated as shadows, images and fancies. And most probably they would not come true, because the shaking and breaking (of a mountain) is not going to happen, which is an indispensable condition (for a true Divine appearance) in this life, irrespective of whether it occurs to the inward or the outward eye of the seer. In either case, shaking and breaking are necessary. Only the last Prophet (peace be upon him and other prophets) is an exception; he had the vision (of God) in this life, and did not move from his place. His followers who imitate him most fully may also have the vision, but they would not have it without a veil lying in between, whether they are aware of it or not. If [Moses], the Interlocutor of God (*Kalīm Allāh*) fell unconscious in the process of the experience before he could actually have the vision, how can others endure it!

[Note: See also letters, Vol. I:107, p. 262; I:112, pp. 269–70; I:220, pp. 438–40; I:273, pp. 664–8.]

Sufism and Sharī'ah

1. The Way of the Prophet and the Way of the Saint

I

Vol. I:302 (pp. 795–801)

The way of the saint is different from the way of the prophet: the former seeks to eliminate duality, consequently it is plagued by intoxication; the latter maintains duality and is marked by sobriety. In the former, one tries to eradicate will and other human attributes; in the latter the aim is only to eliminate their evil objects. One meets theophanies in the former, which are mere shadows of the Real; there is no love for the shadows in the latter. In the former, love is passionate and intoxicating; in the latter, love is perfect obedience. One opposes the love of the Hereafter to the love of God in the former; in the latter, the love of God is the love of the Hereafter.

Know, and God may guide you, that *walāyat* is a nearness to God (*qurb ilāhī*) which has an element of shadow (*ẓilliyat*) and is not without the intervention of veils. If it is the *walāyat* of the saints (*awliyā'*) it necessarily has a stain of shadow; the *walāyat* of the prophets is certainly free from that stain, but it is not without the intervention of the veils of (Divine) Names and Attributes; and the *walāyat* of Great Angels (*Mala' A'lā*) goes beyond the veils of Names and Attributes, but it is not without the veils of states (*shuyūn*) and essential considerations (*i'tibārāt dhātīyah*). Since prophecy and messengership (*nubūwat wa risālat*) are not stained by shadow,

and transcend the veils of Names and considerations, they are superior to saintship, and their *qurb* is essential and real (*dhātī wa aṣlī*). Those who do not know the reality of prophecy and saintship see things differently and hold the opposite view.

Thus we have a *wuṣūl*, or meeting (with God) in prophecy and a *ḥuṣūl* or reaching (God) in saintship; for *ḥuṣūl* in contradistinction to *wuṣūl* is stained by shadow.

Again, *ḥuṣūl* negates the duality (of man and God), whereas *wuṣūl* maintains that duality. Hence, the negation of duality marks *walāyat*, and its affirmation characterises *nubūwat*. And since the negation of duality is part of *walāyat*, it is always plagued by intoxication (*sukr*). In *nubūwat*, on the other hand, as duality is retained, sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) forms its essential characteristic.

Again, theophanies (*tajallīyāt*) whether they occur in the guise of forms and figures or under the veils of lights and colours, happen in *walāyat*, particularly in its early stages. *Nubūwat*, on the other hand, meets the Real directly without encountering illuminations and appearances (*tajallīyāt wa ẓuhūrāt*) which are the shadows of the Real. Similarly, in traversing the stages of the prophetic path, you do not get *tajallīyāt*; but when you come to the prophetic way through the saintly way, you receive them. This happens, however, due to *walāyat* rather than due to traversing the path of *nubūwat*. In short, illuminations and appearances signify shadow, and one who has renounced the love of shadows is liberated from *tajallīyāt*. You can look for the truth of 'the eye did not swerve, nor did it go wrong'[36] here.

Son! the passion and fury of love, the painful cries of separation and the ardent sighs for union, ecstasies and raptures, dances and whirlings, all happen at the level of the shadow, and at the time of shadow-illuminations and appearances. But when you meet the Real none of these things happen. At that level love means the will to obey, as the 'ulamā' have described, and nothing else that may generate passion and longing as some Sufis imagine.

My son! listen carefully. As the object of *walāyat* is to eliminate duality, Sufis try to eradicate will. Shaykh Abū Yazīd of Bisṭām says: 'I will not to will.' In *nubūwat*, on the

other hand, as the elimination of duality is not required, the object is not to eradicate will. How should that be an object! Will is something good in itself; it turns evil when it is directed to an evil object. Hence what is required is that its object should not be evil or undesirable; it should be good and commended by God.

In *walāyat* one tries likewise to eliminate human attributes; in *nubūwat*, on the other hand, the attempt is to eliminate undesirable objects of the attributes rather than the attributes which are good in themselves. The attribute of knowledge, for instance, is an attribute of perfection; if any defect happens to it that is due to a defect of its object. Hence what is required is the elimination of the defective and evil object of knowledge, not knowledge itself. You may consider other attributes on the same lines. The person who comes to the prophetic way via the saintly way, has to negate the attributes themselves in the course of his journey. But he who comes to it directly without passing through *walāyat*, does not have to negate the attributes. He only has to negate their evil objects.

Let it be known that the *walāyat* referred to here is the *walāyat ẓillī* or shadow *walāyat*; it is also called *walāyat ṣughrā*, little *walāyat*, and *walāyat awliyā'*, the saintly *walāyat*. The *walāyat* of the prophets, on the other hand, is above shadow and is quite different. Here the object is to negate the evil objects of attributes, not the attributes themselves. Therefore, when evil objects are negated, the prophetic *walāyat* is realised. After that, whatever progress you make will be in the area of prophetic perfections.

It is clear from this statement that *nubūwat* cannot dispense with *walāyat*; *walāyat* is the preparatory stage of *nubūwat*. However, the shadow *walāyat* is not required to realise the perfections of *nubūwat*. Some people, to be sure, pass through it; but others completely bypass it. You should understand this well.

To eradicate the attributes is undoubtedly far more difficult than to eradicate their evil objects. Consequently the realisation of prophetic perfections is more easy and swift than the realisation of saintly perfections. The same ease and swiftness are found in all the acts which take you to the Real in

comparison to the acts which fall away from the Real. Don't you see that real alchemy needs simple methods and short operations. But when you are not concerned with the Real, you have to work hard and devote your whole life, yet in the end, you get nothing but disappointment. What you get after all these efforts is something which appears as the Real. It often happens that the outer polish fades away and the thing returns to its reality, and you are deceived and disillusioned. On the contrary, the one who seeks to meet the Real does simple things, walks a shorter route and is safe from deception and disillusionment.

Some Sufis who have reached some kind of shadow through severe exercises and austere practices, think that in order to arrive at the goal one has to exert oneself and do arduous work. They do not know that the other road is short and leads you to the ultimate end. It is the way of (God's) selection (*rāh-i-ijtibā*), and is a matter completely of His grace. The way which they take is the way of seeking (God) (*rāh-i-ināhat*), and depends upon one's own effort and struggle. Few reach the goal by this way, whereas a great many people have reached it by the way of *ijtibā*. The prophets have all followed the way of *ijtibā*; their Companions have also reached the goal by the same way and by following in their footsteps. The devotions of the people of *ijtibā* are in fact a thanksgiving on reaching the goal. The Prophet was asked as to why he exerted so much in devotion, when all his shortcomings, past as well as future, had been forgiven by God. He replied: 'Should I not be thankful to the Lord![37] The devotions of the people of *ināhat*, on the other hand, is for reaching the goal. What a difference between the two! The path of *ijtibā* is the path in which you are transported, and the path of *ināhat* is the path in which you walk on foot. Between transportation and walking there is a great difference: in one you are carried swiftly, and brought to the farthest end; in the other, you walk slowly and often fall on the way. Khwājah Naqshband used to say: 'We people live on God's grace.' And to be sure, if they did not have God's grace, they would not have started from where others end. 'This is God's bounty, He gives to whom He likes, and God is the Lord of great bounties.'[38]

Let me return to the real issue. Once I wrote in a letter to my preceptor (may God bless his soul) that my desires had vanished, yet the desiring soul was there. After some time I wrote again that the will had also vanished like the desires. But when God made me one of the heirs of the prophets (peace be upon them) I realised that I should try to remove the evil objects of the will rather than the will itself. For, it is not necessary that after eliminating the will you eliminate its evil objects completely. On the other hand, it often happens that by the grace of God you attain things one per cent of which you do not attain through your effort and struggle.

Son! In the way of *walāyat* one has to wash one's hands of this world as well as the next, one has to believe that the love of the other world is nothing better than the love of this world, and that the craving for the Hereafter is just as undesirable as the craving for this life. Imām Dāwūd Ṭā'ī[39] said: 'If you want safety, bid farewell to the world; but if you want honour (*karāmah*) bid farewell to the Hereafter.' Another leader from this group said that the Qur'ānic verse, 'Some of you love this world, and some of you love the other'[40] is a complaint against both the parties. In short, *fanā'* which means forgetting everything other than God, refers to this world as well as the next; and you know that *fanā'* and *baqā'* constitute *walāyat*. Hence in *walāyat* you cannot avoid forgetting the next world.

In the way of *nubūwat*, on the other hand, the love of the next world is commendable, and the concern for the life hereafter good and desirable. Rather, concern in this way means concern with the life hereafter, and love means love of the next world. People of this way occupy themselves with verses like 'They pray to their Lord in fear and in hope',[41] 'They humble themselves before their Lord and fear harsh punishment',[42] and 'Those who humble themselves before their Lord without seeing Him, and tremble in fear of His judgement. . .'[43] They weep and cry when they think of what shall happen in the next life, and they are grieved because they fear Judgement. They seek refuge in God from the punishment of the grave and from the fire of Hell. For them concern with God is concern with the Hereafter, and love

and longing for God is love and longing for the Hereafter. For, the meeting with God is destined for the Hereafter, as the complete attainment of His pleasure will be available only there. This world is hated by God and the next is loved by Him. It is insolence therefore to make that which is hated equal to that which is loved. One should, instead, avoid what God hates and seek what He loves. To avoid what He loves is sheer intoxication; it is nothing short of neglecting His invitation. The verse, 'God calls you to the House of Peace'[44] testifies to this truth. God has called to the Hereafter in most moving and forceful words. Hence to ignore the Hereafter is in effect to contradict God and reject His call.

Imām Dāwūd Ṭā'ī, notwithstanding his greatness, was deeply immersed in *walāyat*, hence he regarded the renunciation of the Hereafter as an honour. He did not realise that the Companions of the Prophet all craved for Paradise, and trembled at the thought of Hell. 'Umar was one day passing through a street on the back of a camel. He heard someone reciting the verse, 'The punishment of your Lord will certainly come; nothing will prevent it.'[45] On hearing this, he fell unconscious and dropped to the ground. When he got up he went home, but he suffered for quite some time from the pain he experienced, and people continued to visit him and wish him well.

In the course of his journey when a Sufi experiences *fanā'*, he forgets, to be sure, this world and the next, and brackets the love of the latter with the love of the former. But when he attains *baqā'* and completes his work, and participates to some extent in the perfections of *nubūwat*, he has only one concern: the Hereafter. He is all fear for Hell and all love for Paradise. The trees, rivers, maidens, and servants of Paradise are not to be compared with the objects of this world: they are as far apart as two contraries like anger and pleasure. The trees and rivers and all that is there in Paradise are the fruits of good actions. The Prophet said: 'Paradise has no trees, plant them there.' He was asked: 'How to plant trees there?' He replied: 'By saying the glory (*tasbīḥ*) of God, by telling His praises (*taḥmīd*), by hallowing His name (*tamjīd*) and by exalting His majesty (*takbīr*).'[46] That is, if you say 'Glory to God' you plant one tree in Paradise;

therefore, the tree in Paradise is the result of your *tasbīḥ*. As the excellences of glorification appear here in the form of the sounds and words of this *kalimah*, they appear there in the form of trees. And what is true of *tasbīḥ* is true of *taḥmīd* and true of others. Whatever is in Paradise is the fruit of good actions: the blessings of God that take the form of good words and right deeds, the same shall appear in the form of pleasure and joy in the Hereafter. Hence all those delights and joys shall be pleasing to God, shall be loved by Him and shall culminate in His meeting.

If poor Rābi'ah[47] had been aware of this truth, she would not have thought of burning Paradise and would not have differentiated between the love of Paradise and the love of God. The case of the pleasures and joys of this world is different; for, they cause evil, and spell doom in the Hereafter (may God save us). If they are permitted, you are to account for them; and in case God does not excuse and save you, you are doomed. But if they are not permitted, you face punishment. 'Our Lord! we have been unjust to ourselves; if You do not forgive us, and have mercy on us we shall be doomed.'[48] The joys of this world bear no comparison to the joys of that world: pleasures here are poison, but pleasures there are elixirs. To sum up: the Hereafter is loved either by the common man or by the elect of the elect (*akhaṣṣ 'l-khawāṣṣ*). The average elect (*khāṣṣ*) does not love the Hereafter: he thinks that honour lies in the contrary. They are like this, and we are what we are!

II

Vol. I:313 (pp. 826–7)

The prophetic way is free from fanā', baqā', jadhbah and sulūk which are part of the Sufi way.

You observed that one does not attain to God unless one has experienced *fanā'* and *baqā'* in God and traversed all the stages of *jadhbah* and *sulūk*. But the Companions of the

Prophet are believed to be superior to any saint of the Ummah, even if they came in contact with him for a very short period. The question is: Did they complete all the stages of *fanā'* and *baqā'*, *sayr* and *sulūk* just in one short contact? And was that one contact greater than all the *sayr* and *sulūk*?

You asked, secondly, whether the Companions attained *fanā'* and *baqā'* just as a result of the spiritual attention (*tawajjuh*) of the Prophet, or by virtue of their submission (*Islām*) to God?

Lastly, you wanted to know whether they became aware of *sulūk* and *jadhbah* by undergoing these experiences or without them; if they had these experiences what name did they give them? But if they did not have them and did not receive the spiritual attention of the Prophet, would we call them good innovations (*bid'at ḥasanah*)?

You must know that in order to understand these points you should rather see me and spend some time with me. It is not easy for you to appreciate truths which no one has so far disclosed. However, now that you have raised these questions I have no option except to discuss them. I would, however, do it briefly. Listen:

The nearness (*qurb*) to God that one attains through *fanā'*, *baqā'*, *sulūk* and *jadhbah* is the saintly nearness (*qurb-i-walāyat*). It is the *qurb* which the saints of the Ummah attain. But the *qurb* which the Companions have attained in the company of the Prophet is the Prophetic nearness (*qurb-i-nubūwat*). They receive this *qurb* through the Prophet and by following him. In this *qurb* there is neither *fanā'* nor *baqā'*, neither *sulūk* nor *jadhbah*. However, it is many times superior to the saintly *qurb*. For it is the first order (*aṣīl*) *qurb* while the other is a second order (*ẓillī*) *qurb*. The difference between them is great.

People do not generally know this truth; and in this regard the scholars are no better than the common folk.

> Had Ibn Sīnā sung like a Sufi,
> Everyone who is called *qalandar*
> Would have been a saint.

However, if one wants to achieve the Prophetic *qurb* by way

of the saintly *qurb*, he cannot avoid *fanā'*, *baqā'*, *jadhbah* and *sulūk*, because they are the basic principles of the saintly way. But if one does not take this way and follows the path of the Prophetic *qurb*, he does not need *fanā'*, *baqā'*, *jadhbah* and *sulūk*. The Companions of the Prophet have followed the way of the Prophetic *qurb* which has nothing to do with *fanā'*, *baqā'*, *jadhbah* and *sulūk*. For a detailed discussion of this point, however, you have to refer to the letter which I wrote to Mawlānā Amānullāh.[49] In my letters wherever I have written that my affair is above *sulūk* and *jadhbah*, and above illuminations (*tajallīyāt*) and appearances (*ẓūhūrāt*), I mean this *qurb*. This was revealed to me while I was in the company of my master (may God bless his soul). I wrote to him that something has been revealed to me with which meditation on the self (*sayr anfusī*) stands just as the meditation on the world (*sayr āfāqī*) stands with *sayr anfusī*. I said I had no words other than those to express that thing. Many years later, however, when that wonderful thing became perfectly clear I put it into words. 'Praise be to Allah who has guided us to this truth; never could we have found guidance, had He not guided us. Indeed it was the truth which the messengers of our Lord brought unto us.'[50]

Thus the terms *fanā'* and *baqā'*, *jadhbah* and *sulūk* are innovations (*muḥdath*), and are the creations (*mukhtara'āt*) of the saints. Mawlawī Jāmī writes in the *Nafaḥāt* that the first man who talked about *fanā'* and *baqā'* was Abū Sa'īd Kharrāz (may God bless his soul).

III

Vol. I:306 (pp. 808–9)

The fanā' of the Sufi way is different from the fanā' of the Prophetic way.

Know that the purpose of *fanā'*, which is to forget everything, is to remove the love and fascination of objects other than God. Since things, properties and actions, all

disappear from the vision and consciousness, their fascination and love also withers away. In the way of *walāyat*, to remove the love of the world it is necessary to forget the not-Divine altogether. In the way of *nubūwat*, however, to remove the love of the world, one does not have to forget the not-Divine. The prophet's love of God, Who is good and beautiful in Himself, is so strong that no room is left for the love of things, which are evil and ugly in themselves. It makes no difference, therefore, whether things are forgotten or not. Awareness of things is evil only because it leads to their love which distracts from God; so when the love disappears their awareness ceases to be evil. How can the knowledge of things be evil; they are all known to God and their knowledge is one of the noblest attributes of God.

One might say that if the knowledge of the world does not disappear, it would be impossible to be aware of God at the time when one is aware of the world. Hence one has to forget the world. I would say that the knowledge one has of the world is a kind of knowledge by learning (*'ilm ḥuṣūlī*), and the knowledge one has of God is a kind of knowledge by presence (*'ilm ḥuḍūrī*); it is, therefore, not impossible to have both at the same time. It would certainly have been impossible if both were a knowledge by learning. The reason why we have qualified our statements and said 'a kind of knowledge by learning' and 'a kind of knowledge by presence', is that there is neither a knowledge by learning nor a knowledge by presence in the real sense here. God's knowledge of things is certainly not a learned knowledge; for contingent things do not enter into the Essence or the attributes of God. The gnostic's knowledge of things, too, is not a learned knowledge, for it is a reflection of God's knowledge; nor is his knowledge of God a knowledge by presence, for God is closer to him than himself. In fact, knowledge by presence is as inferior compared to the gnostic's knowledge of God as the knowledge by learning is inferior to the knowledge by presence. This truth is difficult to comprehend by common categories of reason. You cannot know it unless you experience it. We, therefore, conclude that the knowledge of God does not conflict with the knowledge of the world. Consequently, there is no need to forget things.

In the way of *walāyat*, on the contrary, it is impossible to remove the love of things from the heart unless one forgets them completely. For in *walāyat* one is occupied with the shadow, and the love of the shadow is not so strong as to wipe out the love of things when one is conscious of them. Hence one has to forget things first, so that one can get rid of their love. This is a truth which has been given only to me; others have not spoken of it. 'Praise be to God who has revealed this truth to us; we would not have got it had He not shown it to us. Verily, the prophets of our Lord have come down with truth.'[51]

2. Sharī'ah, *Ṭarīqah* and *Ḥaqīqah*

I

Vol. I:36 (pp. 115–16)

The Sufi ṭarīqah and ḥaqīqah are subservient to the Sharī'ah: they are meant to produce sincerity (ikhlāṣ) which is one of the three parts of the Sharī'ah, the other two being faith (īmān) and action ('amal).

The Sharī'ah has three parts: knowledge, action, and sincerity of motive (*ikhlāṣ*); unless you fulfil the demands of all these parts, you do not obey the Sharī'ah. And when you obey the Sharī'ah you obtain the pleasure of God, which is the most supreme good in this world and the Hereafter. The Qur'ān says: 'The pleasure of God is the highest good.'[52] Hence, the Sharī'ah comprehends all the good of this world and the next, and nothing is left out for which one has to go beyond the Sharī'ah.

The *ṭarīqah* and the *ḥaqīqah* for which the Sufis are known, are subservient to the Sharī'ah, as they help to realise its third part, namely, sincerity. Hence they are sought in order to fulfil the Sharī'ah, not to achieve something beyond the Sharī'ah. The raptures and ecstasies which the Sufis

experience, and the ideas and truths which come to them in the course of their journey, are not the goal of Sufism. They are rather myths and fancies on which the children of Sufism are fed. One has to pass over them all and reach the stage of satisfaction (*riḍā*) which is the final goal of *sulūk* and *jadhbah*. The purpose of traversing the stages of *ṭarīqah* and *ḥaqīqah* is nothing other than the realisation of *ikhlāṣ* which involves the attainment of *riḍā*. Only one out of a thousand Sufis is graced with the three illuminations (*tajallīyāt sih gānah*) and gnostic visions, given *ikhlāṣ* and elevated to the stage of *riḍā*.

It is the fools who consider emotional experiences and ecstasies part of the goal and regard visions and illuminations as ends. They remain captive to their fancies and never know the real perfections of the Sharī'ah. 'What you are calling to is very hard on the polytheists. God chooses whom He likes, and guides to Himself whom He wills.'[53]

To be sure, the realisation of *ikhlāṣ* and *riḍā* depends upon passing through these states and experiences and realising these ideas and truths. But they are means to an end, and a way to the goal. I came to know this truth by the blessings of the Prophet and discovered that the Sharī'ah bore witness to it, after I had travelled full ten years in this way. Although from the beginning, I had no fascination for emotional experiences and ecstasies, and never sought anything other than the reality of the Sharī'ah, the truth as it is, was revealed to me only after a period of full ten years. I thank God for this favour a thousand times.

II

Vol. I:59 (p. 181)

Real sincerity (ikhlāṣ) is not possible without pursuing Sufi sayr and sulūk and attaining fanā' and baqā'.

On the whole, beliefs and practices are known from the *Shar'*, and sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*) which is the essence of belief

and practice, is to be attained only through the *sulūk* of the Sufis. Unless you perform the meditation leading to God (*sayr ilā Allāh*) and enter into the meditation in God (*sayr fī Allāh*) you are away from the reality of sincerity and unaware of the excellences of the sincere. To be sure, an ordinary Muslim acquires by his effort and struggle a kind of sincerity in some actions. But the sincerity we are talking of is sincerity in everything you say or do, and in all your movements and rests, without making any effort or struggle. This sincerity depends upon the negation of all kinds of gods, within and without, and follows upon *fanā'* and *baqā'*. By this only you attain real saintship (*walāyat khāṣṣah*).

The sincerity which is the result of effort and struggle is not a permanent thing. In order to be permanent, it has to be spontaneous and effortless. This occurs at the stage of absolute certainty. Hence whatever the saints do, they do for the sake of God, not for themselves, because their selves have been sacrificed to God. They do not have to purify their motives in order to attain that sincerity; their motives have already been purified through *fanā'* and *baqā'* in God. He who is still in love with his self, does whatever he does for his own sake whether he is aware of it or not. But when the love for the self disappears and is replaced by the love of God, whatever he does, he does for the sake of God, whether he deliberately attends to his intention (*nīyat*) or not. You need to specify your intention when you have alternatives; but when you have no alternative you do not need to specify. 'This is a favour with which God blesses whom He likes, and God is most gracious.'[54] The man whose sincerity is permanent is the *mukhlaṣ* (that is, the one who has been chosen by God and reserved for Himself), and the one whose sincerity is not permanent and who has to strive for it, he is *mukhliṣ* (that is, the sincere). What a difference between the two!

The benefit you get in matters of belief and practice by following the Sufi *ṭarīqah* is that you see in vision the same truths of theology which you know by arguments, and find that the performance of the duties of the Sharī'ah is extremely easy, and feel that the sloth which Satan causes in you has completely disappeared. This is a great thing. Let us see who gets it.

III

Vol. I:84 (p. 227)

The Sharī'ah and the ḥaqīqah are one; the former stands to the latter as a principle to its elucidation, as reason to intuition, as faith to vision, and as effortful obedience to spontaneous submission. The words and deeds of a Sufi which differ from the Sharī'ah are the product of intoxication. This happens until the Sufi reaches the final stage; at that time his revelations are in complete conformity with the Sharī'ah.

The Sharī'ah and the *ḥaqīqah* are one; neither is different from the other. Their difference is a difference of a principle and its elucidation, of reason and intuition, of faith and vision, of effortful obedience and spontaneous submission. The rules of conduct and the articles of faith that have been defined and elaborated in the light of the Sharī'ah, the same are revealed to the Sufi when he reaches the stage of absolute certainty (*ḥaqq 'l-yaqīn*); his faith is no longer a mystery, it becomes a vision, and his obedience ceases to be a struggle.

The sign that a Sufi has attained absolute certainty is that the truths which are revealed to him are in complete agreement with the truths of the Sharī'ah. If they differ even a hair's breadth it is a proof that the Sufi has not reached the ultimate truth. The words and practices of a Sufi which are at variance with the Sharī'ah are produced by intoxicative experiences (*sukr waqt*). So long as he is in the way, he is under intoxication; but when he reaches the end of the road, he becomes sober, he is the master of his time, and is in full control of his states and stations.

> The (amateur) Sufi is the child of his time;
> The perfect one (*ṣāfī*) is not subject to time or states.

Disparity with the Sharī'ah is therefore a clear proof that the Sufi has not reached the ultimate truth.

Some Sufis have said that the Sharī'ah is the outer shell of the *ḥaqīqah* and the *ḥaqīqah* is the inner essence of the Sharī'ah. Such words indicate that their speaker does not have right experiences. One may, however, interpret them

to mean that the relation between the Sharī'ah and the *ḥaqīqah* is that of a principle and its details, or of the chaff and the grain, because reason stands to intuition as skin to the kernel. The Sufis who have right experiences never make such statements and never refer to the difference except in terms of a principle and its elucidation or in terms of reason and intuition. Someone asked Khwājah Naqshband: 'What is the purpose of *sayr* and *sulūk*?' He replied: 'The purpose is that you realise in detail what you have known in essence, and see in *kashf* what you have known by reason.'

IV

Vol. I:276 (pp. 673–5)

On the question of the relation between the Sharī'ah and the ḥaqīqah there are three views:

(i) The view of the scholars of form ('ulamā' ẓāhir) who attend only to the outer form of the Sharī'ah;

(ii) the view of the captives of reality (griftārān-i-ḥaqīqat) who attend to reality, but a reality which lies beyond the Sharī'ah, and

(iii) the view of the accomplished scholars ('ulamā' rāsikhīn) who consider the Sharī'ah as a unity of form and reality, who observe its form, realise its reality and do not seek any reality outside the Sharī'ah. They are the true awliyā' of God.

The duties of the Sharī'ah are for the novice as well as for the accomplished. In this matter an ordinary Muslim and the most perfect gnostic are one. It is the amateur Sufis and unworthy heretics trying to throw away the yoke of the Sharī'ah who say that the rules of the Sharī'ah are for the laity. In their view, what is required of the Sufi is to attain gnosis (*ma'rifah*), just as what is required of the amirs and the sultans is to rule with justice. They say that the purpose of obeying the Sharī'ah is to gain knowledge; consequently,

when knowledge is gained the duties of the Sharī'ah decline. In support of this they cite the verse of the Qur'ān: 'Serve your Lord till you get *yaqīn*,'[55] taking *yaqīn* to mean God, following the interpretation of Sahl Tustarī. That is to say, the duty of serving God comes to an end when one gets to know Him. But if Sahl takes *yaqīn* in the sense of God, what he apparently means is that the feeling of obligation in serving God disappears when one comes to know Him truly; he does not mean that the service itself drops. To be sure, that would be sheer heresy and infidelity.

These people think that the worship of the gnostics is for show: that is, they worship in order that the beginners of the *ṭarīqah* and those who have not reached the goal should follow their example. For themselves, they hardly need worship. They argue from the words of a Sufi that unless the Shaykh is a hypocrite his disciples would not benefit from him. May God teach them a lesson! How ignorant they are! The truth is quite the contrary: the gnostics need worship ten times more than the novices, for their progress depends upon worship and their attainments are conditioned by their compliance to the Sharī'ah. Common people expect the fruits of worship in the Hereafter, but the gnostics expect them in this life. Hence they are in greater need of worship and obedience to the Sharī'ah.

Let it be known that the Sharī'ah is both a form and a reality, the form is the outer Sharī'ah, and the reality is the inner Sharī'ah. Therefore, the shell and the kernel are both parts of the Sharī'ah, the truths which are clearly defined (*muḥkam*) and those which are put in symbolic language (*mutashābih*) are equally its parts. The scholars of the outer Sharī'ah (*'ulamā' ẓāhir*) attend to the shell; and the scholars who are well-established (*'ulamā' rāsikhīn*) attend to the shell as well as the kernel – they are grounded in the form as well as the essence. The Sharī'ah should be considered as a person made up of a form and a reality. Some people mind only the form and deny the reality, they follow none other than *Ḥidāyah* and *Bazdawī*.[56] They are the scholars of the shell.

Others are concerned with reality; but their reality is not the reality of the Sharī'ah. For them the Sharī'ah is through

and through form, nothing but skins. The kernel in their view lies beyond these skins. Nevertheless, they do not neglect any rule of the Sharī'ah, and do not give up the form; they believe that one who neglects a rule of the Sharī'ah is wrong and mistaken. They are the friends of God, and for His love they have given up everything.

The third category of people are those who take the Sharī'ah as a unity of form and reality, and believe that it is a combination of shell and kernel. For them to observe the form of the Sharī'ah without realising its reality does not count for much; similarly, the realisation of reality without the observation of form is a defect and imperfection. They, however, believe that it is possible to observe the form without realising the reality; they even consider it a kind of Islam which will be enough to save man in the Hereafter. This is the Islam of the 'ulamā' of form and the common Muslim. But to realise reality without observing the form is not possible. They are convinced that one who thinks otherwise is definitely mistaken. In short, all the excellences of form and reality are in their view associated with the *Shar'*, and all truths are contained in theological doctrines which have been established on the principles of the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah*. Thousands of visions and revelations carry no weight for them in comparison to one theological doctrine that God is unique and indefinable. They are not prepared to buy even for half a penny any states and experiences, visions and revelations that conflict with a single principle of the Sharī'ah; they consider these revelations only a temptation by which God drags them slowly to punishment. 'They are the people whom God has really guided; therefore, follow their way.'[57] They are the truly accomplished (*rāsikhīn*) 'ulamā' to whom God has revealed the truth and then helped to realise the reality of the Sharī'ah, appreciating their respectful observance of its rules.

The case of the second group is different. To be sure, they are concerned with reality and love to realise it, and do not swerve even a hair's breadth in following the Sharī'ah. But since they think that the reality they are seeking is beyond the Sharī'ah and consider the Sharī'ah only a shell in comparison to that reality, they have descended to a shadow

reality, and lost the way that takes them to the real reality. Consequently, their *walāyat* is a shadow *walāyat* and their realisation (*qurb*) of God does not go beyond the level of attributes. The *walāyat* of the *'ulamā' rāsikhīn*, on the other hand, is really real (*aṣīl*). They have known the way to the Real Essence, passed over the lower order realities and reached the end. Consequently, their *walāyat* is the *walāyat* of the prophets. The *walāyat* of the second group, on the other hand, is a shadow of the prophetic *walāyat*.

For a long period I had the belief that the true meaning of the allegorical statements (*mutashābihāt*) of the Qur'ān is known only to God, that even the established theologians had nothing more than faith in them, that the interpretation which the learned among the Sufis had offered could not be regarded befitting those allegorical statements, and that they were real mysteries which were not amenable to interpretation. To give just one example: 'Ayn 'l-Quḍāt[58] interprets the *alif* in *Alif-Lām-Mīm* to mean *alam*, or pain which is involved in love. There are many more examples. However, when God, out of pure mercy, revealed to me the real meaning of some allegorical statements and opened a small outlet from the great river of His knowledge to the ground of this humble servant, I realised that the learned 'ulamā' were also quite competent to interpret allegorical statements. Every praise is for God who has shown us the truth; we would not have known it had He not revealed it to us. The prophets of our Lord have brought the real truth.

3. Mission of the Prophet

I

Vol. I:48 (pp. 164–5)

The mission of the prophets is to preach the Sharī'ah.

On the Day of Judgement we shall be questioned about the Sharī'ah, not *taṣawwuf*. Entrance into Paradise and

deliverance from Hell depends upon obedience to the Sharī'ah. Prophets who are the best of creation, preach the Sharī'ah, and make salvation conditional upon its observance.

The purpose of sending the prophets is to preach the Sharī'ah. Hence the greatest virtue lies in preaching the Sharī'ah and in reviving its provisions that have been neglected, particularly at a time when its rites and symbols (*sha'ā'ir*) are in ruin. At such a time to spend millions in the way of God is not equal to reviving a single rule of the Sharī'ah. For in doing it one does the work of the prophets, and participates in their mission. They are the best of creation, and the greatest honour is reserved for them; even though others can spend hundreds of millions (in God's way).

Moreover, when you practise the Sharī'ah you conquer the self, for the Sharī'ah is designed to subdue the self. In spending money, on the other hand, the self at times feels gratified. To be sure, the money which is spent on strengthening the rule of the Sharī'ah or preaching religion is a high-order virtue; to spend a penny in this cause is equal to spending millions in other ways.

You can't say how is it possible to give priority to spending on students who are in bondage over spending on Sufis who are emancipated. You do not see our point. The student who is not yet liberated is, nevertheless, the cause of the liberation of others; he preaches the Sharī'ah to benefit others even though he has not benefited himself. The Sufi who is emancipated saves only himself, but he does nothing to save others. And it is plain that one who is instrumental in saving many people is better than the one who is occupied with saving himself.

However, if a Sufi who has completed his *fanā'* and *baqā'* and *sayr 'an Allāh wa bi Allāh*, is returned to the world and is engaged in preaching to humanity, he does the work of a prophet. He is a preacher of the Sharī'ah and belongs to the 'ulamā' of the Sharī'ah. This is a favour of God which He shows to one whom He likes. He is the Most Beneficent.

II

Vol. III:54 (p. 1341)

To establish the rule of the Sharī'ah is to do the work of the prophets.

If along with the work which you are doing, you could also enforce the Sharī'ah you would be doing the work of the prophets (peace and blessings be upon them), and would be rehabilitating the desolate house of Islam and restoring its glory. We Sufis, on the other hand, if we work for years and years, even lay down our lives in this cause, shall never reach anywhere near you.

III

Vol. I:73 (pp. 205–6)

The purpose of man's life is to perform the duties of bandagī or 'ibādat which means to worship God and to obey His Sharī'ah. But as the Sharī'ah is for the good of man, not for the good of God, to obey the Sharī'ah is to fulfil one's life.

The object of man's creation, and he is the noblest of beings, is neither pleasure and fun, nor eating and sleeping. The object of his life is to perform the duties of servanthood (*waḍā'if bandagī*), to surrender and submit to the Lord, to express his lowliness and dependence, and constantly turn to God and pray in humility.

The service (*'ibādat*) which the Sharī'ah of the Prophet speaks of (as the purpose of man's creation) is for the good of man and for the fulfilment of his life. It is not at all for the good of God. Hence, one should be thankful to God and follow His Sharī'ah, obey His commands and refrain from His prohibitions. God does not need our obedience, yet He has bestowed on us a Code of Law which we absolutely need. We should therefore be grateful to Him, submit to His Law in all sincerity and fulfil its commands.

IV

Vol. II:46 (pp. 997–9)

Dhikr is of two kinds: (i) to say the names and attributes of God, and (ii) to obey His commands and fulfil His will.

Some people who have wrong ideas believe that *walāyat* is better than *nubūwat* and hold that the Sharī'ah which is the essence of essences is only a shell. These people see only the outer form of the Sharī'ah and know nothing of its reality except the outer shell. Since *nubūwat* is concerned with the world they think that it is something inferior. In their view, the prophet's concern with the world is like the concern of a common man; consequently they consider it lower and regard *walāyat* which is a concern with God, higher, and conclude that *walāyat* is superior to *nubūwat*.

They do not know that in *nubūwat*, too, one is concerned with God in the moment of ascent as is the case in *walāyat*. In fact, in *walāyat*, we have only an image of that real ascent which we have in *nubūwat*; however, we shall speak of it later. In the moment of descent the *nabī* is concerned with the world like the walī. They differ in the fact that whereas the walī turns to the world outwardly while his inner self is turned to God, the prophet turns in his descent completely to the world, outwardly as well as inwardly, and calls the world to God with all his being. His descent, therefore, is more complete and perfect than the descent of the walī; I have discussed this point in detail in other letters.

But contrary to what people think, the prophet's concern with the world is completely different from the concern of the common man. The common man attends to the world because he is caught in its love. The most chosen ones of God, however, attend to the world not because they love it, for they have renounced at the first step the love of the world, and replaced it by the love of God. They turn to the world only to guide the people of the world to their Creator, and to show them the path to the pleasure of their Lord.

Undoubtedly the concern with the world whose purpose is to free people from their bondage to the not-Divine is

better than that concern with God whose sole object is the salvation of one's own self. Suppose a person who is engaged in *dhikr*, suddenly finds a blind man standing at the rim of a well; if he takes another step he will fall into the well. What is better for this man, to continue in his *dhikr* or to save the man from falling into the well? There is no doubt that to save the blind man is better than to remember God. God does not need him or his *dhikr*, whereas the blind man needs help, and needs someone to save him, particularly the one who has been appointed as a saviour.

Saving the blind man in this situation is a form of *dhikr*, for it is obeying the command of God. When you remember God you only attend to one duty, the duty towards God; but when you try to save (people) you attend to two duties: duty towards God and duty towards man. In fact, to say *dhikr* at that time is likely to be a sin. For saying *dhikr* is not always good: at times not saying it is better than saying it; as for instance, it is better to abstain from fasting and praying on forbidden days and at undesirable times than to fast and pray.

Remember that *dhikr* means to avoid forgetting God in any way that is possible. Contrary to what people think it is not confined to repeating the formula of *nafī wa ithbāt* (i.e., *lā ilāha illā Allāh*) or repeating the *ism dhāt* (i.e., Allah). In fact every act in compliance to the commands of God, whether positive or negative, is to remember God. Even the buying and selling in which you observe the regulations of the *Shar'* is *dhikr*; similarly, the marriage and divorce which is carried out according to the laws of the Sharī'ah is *dhikr*. For one who performs these acts according to the *Shar'* is conscious of the Giver of the *Shar'* and does not forget Him.

To be sure, the *dhikr* which consists in saying the names and attributes of God is more effective and more helpful in generating the love of God, and winning His nearness; and the *dhikr* which consists in submitting to God's commands, in carrying out His orders or abstaining from His prohibitions, is less effective in producing these qualities. However, some people have acquired these qualities as a result of practising *dhikr* in the sense of obeying God's commands and avoiding His prohibitions. But such cases are few.

Khwājah Naqshband has said about Zain 'l-Dīn Tabyādī that he reached God by way of knowledge.

On the other hand, the *dhikr* which is saying the names and attributes of God, is a means (*wasīlah*) to the *dhikr* which is obeying the rules of the *Shar'* in life. For it is impossible to observe the rules of the *Shar'* in all matters unless one has a strong love for the Giver of the *Shar'*, and the strong love of God depends upon the *dhikr* of God by saying His names and attributes. Hence one has to say *dhikr* in order to do this noble *dhikr*.

V

Vol. II:25 (p. 916)

Every act that one does in compliance with the Sharī'ah is dhikr.

My dear! you have time, and you are in good health and free from worries. Engage yourself all the time in the *dhikr* of God. Remember that everything you do according to the *Shar'* is *dhikr* even if it is so ordinary an act as buying and selling. Observe, therefore, the rules of the *Shar'* in all activities so that the whole of life becomes *dhikr*. In fact *dhikr* means to avoid forgetting; so when you obey the 'dos' and 'don'ts' of the *Shar'* in all your behaviour, you do not forget the Giver of the *Shar'* and remember Him perpetually.

This perpetual remembrance (*dhikr dā'im*) is different from the perpetual awareness (*yād dāsht*) of our (Naqshbandī) masters (may God bless their souls). The latter is only a matter of the heart (*bāṭin*), whereas the former embraces the inner heart as well as the outer behaviour; hence it is difficult. May God help us to follow the way of the Prophet, and shower His blessings upon him!

VI

Vol. I:29 (pp. 94–5)

To serve God properly means to observe the priorities of the Sharī'ah between obligatory and non-obligatory acts.

The acts which bring one close to God are obligatory (*farḍ*) as well as supererogatory (*nafl*). But (in the order of merit) the latter stand no comparison to the former. To perform a *farḍ* at one time is better than performing a *nafl* act for a thousand years, even if it is done with an absolutely pure motive, no matter whether it is prayer, charity, fasting, *dhikr*, meditation (*fikr*) and the like. To engage in a non-obligatory act hallowed by the practice (*sunnat*) of the Prophet, or to observe a rule of decency or morality (*adab*) at the time of a duty (*farḍ*) is in the same category.

It has been reported that one day *Amīr 'l-Mu'minīn* 'Umar offered the morning prayer in assembly, turned to the people, and did not find a certain person. He enquired as to what would have possibly detained him from praying in assembly. They said that he was in the habit of waking up at night to offer prayers; perhaps he might have slept on after night prayers and could not wake up in time. Thereupon, 'Umar said: 'If he had slept the whole night and joined the morning prayer in assembly that would have been far better for him.'

Hence to obey an *adab* and avoid that which is undesirable (*makrūh*) in some degree, let alone that which is prohibited, is better than remembrance, contemplation and meditation. If one can do these things along with observing rules and avoiding the undesirables, that would certainly be a great achievement, otherwise it would be a great loss. To spend, for instance, a penny of *zakāt* is many times better than giving mountains of gold in supererogatory charity; similarly, to mind an *adab* of the *Shar'* in spending that penny, such as to give it to a poor relative, is better than spending it without minding that *adab*.

VII

Vol. II:55 (p. 1041)

Sufi kashf is no means to know what is right or wrong or to determine the degrees of obligation and priorities: the only source in these matters is the Qur'ān, the Sunnah of the Prophet, the Qiyās of the Mujtahids and their Ijmā'.

It is commonly agreed that in determining the legality of acts and their priorities (*aḥkām Shar'īyah*) what counts is the Qur'ān, the Sunnah of the Prophet, and the reasoning (*Qiyās*) of a qualified jurist (*mujtahid*) and lastly the consensus (*Ijmā'*) of the Ummah. No other principle apart from these four, is to be taken into consideration in order to determine the legality of rules. Inspiration (*ilhām*) does not determine the rightness or wrongness of anything, and the *kashf* of the Sufis does not establish the degree of a rule as to whether it is obligatory or commendable. Saints have to follow, like an ordinary Muslim, the opinions of the great jurists (*mujtahids*). Their revelations and inspirations do not raise their status, and relieve them from following the opinions of the *fuqahā'* (jurists). Dhū''l-Nūn[59] and Bisṭāmī,[60] Junayd[61] and Shiblī[62] are just at the level of Zayd, 'Umar, Bakr and Khālid, the common folk; they have to follow the opinion of the jurists in the matters open to legal reasoning (*ijtihād*).

4. Idea of Perfection

I

Vol. I:268 (pp. 629–32)

Prophecy (nubūwat) is incomparably superior to saintship (walāyat); the opposite view is a product of intoxication (sukr), and is wrong.

The knowledge which the prophets bequeath is of two kinds: knowledge of rules (*'ilm aḥkām*), and knowledge of mysteries (*'ilm asrār*). The 'ulamā' who are the heirs (of the prophets) are the ones who share both kinds of knowledge, not only one. To share one part of the legacy is not to inherit. The heir shares everything that is bequeathed, not only a part. One who receives a particular part, is in fact a creditor who is entitled to get that part which pays off his claim. The Prophet said: 'The 'ulamā' of my Ummah are like the prophets of the Children of Israel,'[63] The scholars to whom he refers here are the scholars-heirs (*'ulamā' warithān*) rather than the scholars-creditors who receive only a part of his legacy. The heir on account of his close relationship with the legator is like him; whereas the creditor does not stand with him in that relationship. Hence, one who is not a heir is not an 'ālim without qualification. We can, however, use the word in a qualified sense: we can say, for instance, that one whose knowledge is confined to rules, is the scholar of rules (*'ālim 'l-aḥkām*). But the scholar in the unqualified sense is he who is an heir and has a share in both kinds of knowledge.

Many people think that the knowledge of higher truths (*'ilm asrār*) means the knowledge of the doctrines of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, and the perception of unity in multiplicity, and multiplicity in unity; and that it stands for the ideas of God's all-comprehensiveness, immanence, proximity and co-existence on the pattern which the mystics still under the bondage of changeful states behold. God forbid; it is not true. These ideas and doctrines are no part of the *'ilm asrār*, they are below the dignity of prophecy. They are the results of

intoxicating experiences and the gifts of ecstasies, which are opposed to sobriety. The knowledge of the prophets (peace be on them), be it the knowledge of practical rules or the knowledge of transcendental truths, is the knowledge of perfect sobriety, unsoiled by any element of ecstasy. These ideas and doctrines, on the other hand, are the ideas of one who is at the stage of *walāyat* and is deep in ecstasies; they are the revelations of *walāyat* not the revelations of *nubūwat* (may God bless their glorious bearers).

Walāyat, to be sure, is an established thing; but its ideas are of a lower order, and in comparison to the truths of *nubūwat* are of small value.

> True, when the sun shines,
> The stars go out of sight.

I have written in my books and letters, and shown that prophecy (*nubūwat*) is like a vast river, and *walāyat*, in comparison to it, is just like a drop of water. However, nothing can help the people who out of sheer ignorance of the reality of *nubūwat*, think that *walāyat* is superior to *nubūwat* or (as interpreting the statement someone has said) that the *walāyat* of a prophet is better than his *nubūwat*. The holders of either views are unaware of the reality of *nubūwat*; they only guess what they do not know.

To the same category belongs their view that ecstasy is superior to sobriety. Had they known true sobriety they would not have thought of comparing ecstasy with it.

> The earth stands no comparison
> With the heavens.

Perhaps they have equated the sobriety of the adept with the sobriety of the laity, and exalted ecstasy over it. I wish they had equated the ecstasy of the advanced Sufis with the ecstasy of the common man and had not made such statements. It is the common verdict of the wise that sobriety is better than intoxication. This is true no matter whether you take sobriety and intoxication in the ordinary sense or in the mystical sense. To say that *walāyat* is higher than *nubūwat* or that ecstasy is superior to sobriety is like saying that

infidelity (*kufr*) is superior to Islam, or that ignorance is better than knowledge. Infidelity and ignorance are associated with *walāyat*, and Islam and knowledge are associated with *nubūwat*. Manṣūr says:

> I left (*kafartu*) the religion of God,
> And I must stick to that infidelity (*kufr*),
> Even though it is evil
> In the eyes of the Muslims.

And Muḥammad (peace be upon him and his family) seeks God's protection from infidelity (*kufr*). 'Say: everyone behaves according to his nature.'[64] As in this world of unreality Islam is better than *kufr*, similarly, in the realm of reality (*haqīqat* or mystical experience) Islam must be regarded as better than *kufr*; for unreality is a bridge to reality.

One might say that *walāyat* has two stages: one of union (*jam'*) which is characterised by *kufr*, intoxication and ignorance; and the other of separation after union (*farq ba'd 'l-jam'*) which is characterised by Islam, sobriety and knowledge. What then is the justification for saying that *kufr*, intoxication and ignorance are associated with *walāyat*? I would say that when we predicate sobriety and associate characteristics to the stage of separation after union, we do so in comparison to the stage of union which is characterised by complete intoxication and concealment (of reality), otherwise the sobriety of that stage is mixed with ecstasy, as its Islam is mixed with *kufr* and knowledge with ignorance. Had I more space I would have discussed in detail the experiences and the ideas of the stage of separation and shown how intoxication and associated qualities infect that stage also. People may regard it as loud-thinking. This will only surprise me. One should clearly note that the honour and glory which the prophets (peace be on them) have, have not been attained through the way of *walāyat*. The walī is nothing but a 'servant of the prophet (*nabī*)'. If *walāyat* had any superiority over prophecy the angels of the Transcendental Assembly (*al-Mala' 'l-A'lā*) whose *walāyat* is more perfect than all other *walāyats*, would have been superior to the prophets. Since these people believe that *walāyat* is better than prophecy,

and that the *walāyat* of the Transcendental Assembly is more perfect than the *walāyat* of the prophets, they, at least some of them, conclude that the angels of the Transcendental Assembly are superior to the prophets (peace be upon them); they deviate from the consensus of the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah*. All this is due to the fact that they are unaware of the reality of *nubūwat*. As centuries have elapsed after the Prophetic age, the merits of prophecy appear to be lower than the merits of *walāyat*. That is why I had to dilate over it to some extent in order to remove the veil from the truth. 'God, our Lord! forgive us our sins and transgressions in our duties, establish our feet firmly, and help us against those who resist Faith.'

II

Vol. II:93 (p. 1133)

The perfect saint is not one who is absorbed in God, but the one who is engaged in the world on the pattern of the prophets.

Know that the outer self which the gnostic retains is completely turned to the world. His obedience and worship are all associated with it, and his preaching and instruction are connected with this self. The inner self of the perfect gnostic is also directed to the external world, no matter whether it is occupied with the levels of possibility or the levels of Necessity. Moreover, whatever happens in the outer world is also directed to the same end: namely, the education and development (of people) and the perfection of service (to God). This life is for work, and this world is for preaching. The vision (of God) in the real sense is possible only in the next world, and the revelations of truth are available only in the Hereafter. To serve God here is better than to be absorbed in Him, and to wait for the desired (vision) in love is better than annihilating oneself in it, whether the people of ecstasy believe it or not. The gnostic who has reached the stage of perfection keeps his outer as well as inner self occupied with people till he meets death, which brings the

mission of preaching to an end. When death comes he will pass over that bridge and proceed to embrace his Love, and will enjoy His company and communion which no one will share with him.

III

Vol. I:272 (pp. 648–9)

Why return to the world is better than absorption in God.

Faith in the existence of God and His attributes as unseen realities (*īmān ba ghayb*) is the faith of the prophets and their companions (*ṣaḥābah*). It is also the faith of the saints (*awliyā'*) who are fully returned to the world, and whose relation (*nisbat*) with God is like the relation that the *ṣaḥābah* have with God. But they are few, rather very few. This is also the faith of the 'ulamā' and the faith of the common Muslim.

The faith of perception (*īmān shuhūdī*), on the other hand, is for ordinary Sufis, whether they live in seclusion or with people. The latter even though returned to the people, are not returned fully; their inner self still looks upwards. Apparently they live with people, but their heart is occupied with God. Hence their faith is always a faith of perception.

Since the prophets are turned to the world completely and are occupied body and soul with preaching and calling people to God, their faith is a faith of non-perception (*īmān-i-ghayb*). In some letters I have discussed at length the point that to go on looking upwards after one has been returned, is a sign of imperfection, and a proof that one has not yet reached the goal; on the other hand, to return to the world fully is a sign that one has reached the end. Generally, Sufis have thought that perfection lies in combining both the concerns; in their opinion the one who combines immanence with transcendence is perfect. This is their view; it is different from what I believe.

When the prophets complete the task of preaching and

achieve their mission in the world, they turn to the World Everlasting, prepare to meet the Divine Companion, turn exclusively to Him, and enjoy His nearness.

> Let the blessed ones enjoy their pleasure,
> The poor lover is happy with the pain he has.

In my view perfection means that at the time of ascent plurality vanishes altogether, even the Names and Attributes disappear, and nothing remains in perception except Absolute Unity, and God offers to the Sufi what he likes; but at the time of descent he turns to multiplicity completely, nothing interests him except the world as it happens with an ordinary Muslim, and he does nothing except obeying God's will and calling people to God. After he has completed preaching and is about to leave this world, he turns to God entirely, passes from (the faith of) non-perception to (the faith of) perception and from listening to embracing. 'This is the blessing of God which He bestows upon whom He likes; and God is the giver of great blessings.'[65]

Let no one think that the return to the world is a defect, or the absorption into God is better than attending to the world, which aims at preaching God and elevating the lives of the people. For he who returns to the world does not do so of his own will; on the contrary, he comes down to the world from above, and chooses separation over union at the command of God. Hence, the one who returns (to the world) in fact gives himself to the will of God and negates his own will; whereas the one who remains absorbed (in God) takes pleasure in union and vision and is happy in His company.

> The separation which is the will of God
> Is better than a thousand unions.
> For, in union I serve myself,
> And in separation I serve the Lord;
> I love to serve my Lord the way He wills,
> Rather than to serve myself the way I will.

The merits of return are many. The one who remains absorbed is like a drop in a river in comparison to one who returns. Return is the mark of prophecy and absorption is

the mark of saintship. What a world of difference between the two! Everyone is not capable of understanding this great truth. 'This is the bounty of God that He bestows upon whom He will, and God is the Lord of highest bounty.'[66]

IV

Vol. II:57 (pp. 1047–8)

Perfection lies in preaching the Prophet's religion, the outer as well as the inner Sharī'ah.

Every prophet is primarily a preacher, and is commissioned to preach the Sharī'ah. If his people do not believe, that does not discredit his preaching. It is very clear that nothing is equal to preaching. For the most loved ones of God are those who make people love God, and make God love them: and they are none other than preachers. Have you heard the ḥadīth which says that the ink in the pen of the scholars ('ulamā') will be weighed on the Day of Judgement against the blood of the martyrs (*shuhadā'*) and will outweigh it.

There are various levels of preaching, and the preachers are of varying grades. The 'ulamā' are occupied with preaching the outer form (of the Sharī'ah) and the Sufis are occupied with the inner. However, the one who is both ʿālim and Sufi is the most excellent, worthy of preaching the outer as well as the inner (Sharī'ah). He is the true successor of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family).

Some people think that the scholars of ḥadīth who teach the aḥādīth of the Prophet are the best of the Muslim community (Ummah). However, if they consider them the best of all the sections of the Ummah, that is doubtful; but if they consider them better than the scholars of the outer form (of the Sharī'ah), that is possible. The best of all in the Ummah are those preachers who are concerned with the whole of the Sharī'ah, the outer and the inner, and preach both; those who are concerned only with a part, cannot be regarded as the most perfect. To be sure, the outer is great,

is the condition of salvation, and has a lot of good in it; but it is not perfect unless it is combined with the inner. The outer without the inner is imperfect, and the inner without the outer unworthy. One who combines the inner with the outer is the philosopher's stone. 'Our Lord! make our light complete, and forgive us. You are master of everything; bless those who follow the Guidance.'[67]

V

Vol. II:99 (pp. 1159–60)

The Companions (Ṣaḥābah) of the Prophet are the best of the Ummah, and Abū Bakr is the best of the Companions. For greatness lies not so much in devotions and austerities as in faith and service to Islam.

A whole life of service, austerity and devotion of a non-*Ṣaḥābī* will not compare with a small action of a *Ṣaḥābī*, Companion of the Prophet, which he did, when Islam was weak and Muslims were few, in order to promote the cause of Islam and help the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Addressing the people who embraced Islam later, the Prophet once said: 'If you spend in God's way a heap of gold equal to the mountain Uḥud, it will not be equal to a *mudd* (roughly a kilo) of wheat which my comrades have spent, nor even half a *mudd*.'[68] This explains the greatness of Abū Bakr as against every other *Ṣaḥābī*. He is the first of the first Muslims who responded to the Prophet's call and believed in him, devoted their lives, spent their wealth and rendered great services to Islam. This is the reason why the Qur'ān says: 'You are not equal to those who spent money before the Conquest (of Makkah) and fought. They are far above those who spent afterwards and fought. However, God promises good reward to both.'[69]

Some people seeing the merits and honours of others have hesitated to recognise the superiority of Abū Bakr over all the Companions of the Prophet. They do not know that if

merits and devotions were the criterion of superiority, some individual followers of a prophet who had more merits and devotions would have been superior to their prophets, who did not have so much of those things. It is obvious, therefore, that the criterion of superiority is something other than meritorious acts and devotions. In my humble opinion, the criterion lies in the fact as to who is the first in defending religion, in spending money and energy in its cause, and working for its triumph. Since the prophet excels his whole community in all these matters, he is the best of them all. For similar reasons any one of the community who excels in these matters is better than the others. Those who are forerunners in religion are the teachers and guides to their followers; the latter profit from their services and their merits. In our community the greatest man after the Prophet is Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq (may God be pleased with him), for he was first in spending his money and property, the first in preaching and struggle, the first in staking his life and honour for religion, the first in fighting untruth and evil, the first in assisting the Prophet, and the first in making Islam victorious. His superiority over all others is well established.

VI

Vol. I:107 (pp. 260–3)

Miracles are neither conditions of walāyat, nor the criterion of a walī's perfection. The inspiration (ilhām) of a saint is fallible and uncertain (ẓannī).

I got your letter wherein you have put some questions. Normally a question that reflects arrogance and prejudice does not deserve an answer. But I will ignore it, and try to reply. If it does not benefit one, it may benefit another.

Your first question was: 'How come the early Sufis wrought a lot of miracles, but the Sufis of our age hardly show any?' If by this question you want to deny the merits of the present-day Sufis, because they work few miracles, as

it appears from your question, God may save us from the insinuation of Satan. Miracles are neither a part of *walāyat* nor its condition; they are only a condition of *nubūwat*. However, miracles do happen at the hands of the *awliyā'*, and this is common knowledge. There is hardly a walī who has not done a miracle. But the number of miracles is no proof of a walī's status, which depends entirely on the degree of his nearness to God. It is quite possible that a walī who is less close to God works more miracles than the one who is more close. Many miracles have been wrought by some *awliyā'* of our Ummah, a hundredth part of which has not been performed by the Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) (may God be pleased with them). But everyone knows that the greatest of the *awliyā'* is not equal to the smallest of the *Ṣaḥābah*. To look for miracles is to prove one's inability to see (the truth) and follow it faithfully. The ones who benefit from the teachings of the prophets and saints are those who have greater ability to follow (the truth) than the ability to examine it theoretically. Abū Bakr Ṣiddīq (may God be pleased with him) did not demand arguments for accepting the Prophet's claim, because he had power to follow (the truth). On the contrary, Abū Jahl lacked this power, consequently he did not testify to the Prophet's claim even though he saw many wonderful signs and mighty miracles. It is regarding these unfortunate people that God says: 'Even if they see all the signs they would not believe. They have become so obstinate that they come in order to argue with you, and say that this Qur'ān is nothing but the legends of the peoples gone by.'[70]

May I further add that not more than five or six miracles have been reported of the early masters of Sufism. Junayd is the leader of the Sufis, but we do not have any reports saying that he worked even ten miracles. Of his interlocuter, Moses, God testifies: 'Verily, we gave Moses nine clear signs.'[71] Moreover, how do you know that the Sufis of this age have not worked miracles? In fact, the *awliyā'* of God, past as well as present, perform miracles every time, whether one knows it or not. The sun is not to be blamed if one cannot see.

Your second question was: 'Can Satan introduce ideas in

the revelations and visions of a sincere Sufi aspirant, and how can one detect if that happens? But if it does not happen, how can one account for the errors which creep into ideas that are inspired?'

The answer is, and God knows best, that nobody is above the insinuation of Satan. If this can be imagined in the case of the prophets, and is in fact known to have happened, it is much more likely to happen in the case of *awliyā'*, not to speak of a novice. The prophets are, however, warned of Satanic insinuations and informed of what is true and what is not true. The Qur'ān testifies to it in these words: 'God removes what Satan puts in, and confirms His revelations.'[72] In the case of the *awliyā'*, on the other hand, warning is not necessary. The walī is subject to the authority of the Prophet; therefore, whatever conflicts with his revelations shall be rejected as erroneous. But in matters in which the Prophetic Sharī'ah is silent, and says nothing confirming or contradicting the Sufi revelation, it is very difficult to find out with certainty what is true or false. For inspiration (*ilhām*) is uncertain (*ẓannī*). However, the inability to distinguish between (true and false) does not mean a defect in the walī. For the obedience of the Prophet's Sharī'ah and the emulation of his example are sufficient for happiness in this world and the next. The things on which the Sharī'ah is silent are over and above the Sharī'ah, and we are not obliged to do or believe in these additional things.

Know that the error in inspiration is not caused only by Satanic insinuation. There are other causes also. It often happens, for instance, that the mind of the Sufi conjures up some wrong ideas which Satan has nothing to do with. For example, someone may see the Prophet in a dream and receive from him an idea, the opposite of which is established in the Sharī'ah. In this case Satan can play no trick; for the dominant opinion of the 'ulamā' is that Satan cannot take the form of the Prophet (peace be on him), though he can appear in any other form. Hence (the error is due to) the imagination which shows an unreal thing to be real.

VII

Vol. I:266 (p. 594)

Sirhindī's estimate of Ibn 'l-'Arabī.

I wonder that Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn appears in vision to be one of those with whom God is pleased, while most of his ideas which differ from the doctrines of the People of Truth appear to be wrong and mistaken. It seems that since they are due to error in *kashf*, he has been forgiven, and exempted from censure just as an error of judgement (*ijtihād*) in law is forgiven and not censured. Perhaps I am alone in holding this view regarding Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn. I consider him as one of those with whom God is well-pleased; on the other hand, I believe that all his ideas in which he opposes (the People of Truth) are wrong and harmful. There are people amongst us who censure and condemn him just as they denounce and falsify his ideas. On the other hand, there are also people within us who follow the Shaykh without reservation, who believe that all his ideas are correct, even advance arguments to prove that they are true. I have no doubt that both these groups have taken extreme positions and moved away from the middle course. The Shaykh is a saint with whom God is well-pleased; how can one therefore condemn him on account of the errors in *kashf*? On the other hand, his ideas are wrong and are opposed to the ideas of the People of Truth: how can one, therefore, follow him there and accept them? The right course is therefore the one which God has shown me just as an act of grace and mercy.

Waḥdat 'l-Shuhūd

1. Concept of *Tawḥīd*

I

Vol. I:43 (pp. 147–8)

The Perception of One Being (Tawḥīd Shuhūdī), and the Belief that there is One Being there (Tawḥīd Wujūdī).

The *tawḥīd* that these noble people come across in the course of their journey is of two kinds: *tawḥīd shuhūdī* and *tawḥīd wujūdī*. *Tawḥīd wujūdī* is to see One Being; that is, the object of the Sufi's perception is nothing except One Being. *Tawḥīd wujūdī* on the other hand, is to believe that there is only One Being there, that other things are non-existent, that in spite of their non-existence they are the manifestations and appearances of One Being. Hence *tawḥīd wujūdī* offers the certitude of belief (*'ilm 'l-yaqīn*), and *tawḥīd shuhūdī* offers the certitude of perception (*'ayn 'l-yaqīn*).

Tawḥīd shuhūdī is an essential part of the Sufi way; without it one cannot realise *fanā'*, and without it one cannot attain (*'ayn 'l-yaqīn*). For, the perception of the One, when it fully possesses the seer, makes him forget everything else. *Tawḥīd wujūdī*, on the contrary, is not an essential part of the Sufi way. For one can have firm conviction (*'ilm 'l-yaqīn*) without having that doctrine. *'Ilm 'l-yaqīn* does not mean the negation of other beings; it only means that the Sufi is not aware of other beings when he is possessed and overwhelmed by the consciousness of One Being. If a person is convinced that the sun is there, that conviction, however powerful, would not lead him to deny the existence of stars

at that time. It is, however, true that when he sees the sun he does not see the stars, and there is nothing in his perception except the sun. But all the time when he is not seeing the stars, he knows very well that the stars have not ceased to exist. On the contrary, he is certain that they exist. They are not visible to him only because their light has been drowned in the radiant light of the sun. If this person or any others deny the existence of the stars, all that time they will be denying the truth; for they know that what they are saying is against reality. Hence *tawḥīd wujūdī*, which means the negation of all beings other than One Being, glorified is He, is in fact contradicting reason and the *Shar'*. On the other hand, *tawḥīd shuhūdī* involves no such contradiction. To deny the existence of the stars when the sun is up, or to regard them as non-existent is to deny reality; but the non-perception of the stars involves no contradiction. In fact the non-perception is due to the overwhelming radiance of the sun and the weakness of the eyes of the seer. Had his eyes been salved by the light of the sun and become stronger, he would have seen the stars existing along with the sun and realised absolute certitude (*ḥaqq 'l-yaqīn*).

II

Vol. I:291 (pp. 756, 759, 761)

Three reasons for belief in waḥdat 'l-wujūd.

Some people develop a belief in One Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) as a result of prolonged meditation on the idea of Unity and reflection on the formula (*Kalimah*), *lā ilāha illā Allāh* ('There is no god except Allah') taking it in the sense that 'there is no existent (*mawjūd*) except Allah'. They acquire the belief in this kind of Unity (*tawḥīd*) when after a sustained meditation and reflection, the idea dominates their mind and after constant repetition of the formula, it is established in their imagination. Since it is produced by an effort it is contingent. The person who has this Unity is not

a man of experience (*aḥwāl*); for the men of experience are the men of the heart (*al-qalb*) and this man is not yet aware of the heart. He is only a man of knowledge; however, knowledge has its levels.

Others acquire the belief in the Oneness of Being when their heart is powerfully drawn to God and is possessed by His love. They begin with *dhikr* and contemplation which is free from the idea of One Being, then reach the stage of the heart either by their own effort or by the sheer grace of God, and become completely absorbed in the love of God. If at this stage they behold the beauty of One Being, the reason lies in the consuming love of God that removes everything else from their eyes. Since beings other than God are removed from their vision and hidden, and they see or experience nothing except God, they do not recognise their existence. This conviction in Unity (*tawḥīd*) is a matter of feeling (*ḥāl*) and is free from the influence of thought or imagination. If these people of the heart are returned to the world at that stage they will see their Love in every particle of the world and see the objects of the world as mirrors reflecting the beauty of their Love.

If by the sheer grace of God they come out from the stage of the heart and turn to God who controls the heart, the idea of One Being that appeared at that stage starts shrinking. The higher they ascend, the less interest they feel in the Unity (of Being). Some of them even begin to condemn and denounce the people of Unity (of Being) as did Rukn 'l-Dīn Abū 'l-Makārim Shaykh 'Alā 'l-Dawlah Simnānī.[73] Others just leave behind the doctrine and do not like to affirm or deny it. The writer of these lines does not like to refer to the people of this doctrine, and refrains from denouncing them. The question of denunciation would have arisen, had these people any say in having those experiences. The truth is that they had these ideas without their will, they were overpowered by their experiences. Consequently, they deserve to be excused; one who is overwhelmed should not be denounced. I, however, know that there is a truth higher than this truth, and an experience beyond this experience. Those who have remained a captive of this experience are unaware of greater truths, and ignorant of higher stages.

I have not practised Unity (of Being). But in the course of *dhikr* and contemplation (*murāqabah*), and at times apart from them, I had a singular favour of God that under the guidance of my exalted teacher, Shaykh Bāqī bi Allāh, and on account of his spiritual attention, I was brought to the stage of the heart and the door of the doctrine (of Unity) was opened to me. The mysteries of that stage were revealed to me in plenty, and the understanding of the difficult concepts of the doctrine was made easy. I was kept at this stage for a time. In the end, however, I was taken out of the stage of the heart; at that time those ideas began to fade till they vanished completely.

The purpose of describing these experiences is to underline the fact that I have written these lines in the light of my own revelations and experiences, not on the basis of thought or heresay. The ideas of Unity which the Sufis express, they do so at the stage of the heart; this is not to discredit them. I have myself written in that stage letters expounding the ideas of identity. Some friends have scattered those writings; now it is impossible to collect them, and I have left them as such. These ideas are a discredit only in the case when the Sufi is not taken out of that stage.

The third group of the Sufis of Unity are those who have completely negated and effaced themselves in the experience (of Oneness); they wish they could continue ever in the stage of self-dissolution and nothingness, and would never regain their self-identity. They believe that to retrieve individuality is infidelity. For them the ultimate truth is self-annihilation (*fanā'*) and self-negation (*naystī*). Even the experience (of Oneness) is in their view a form of captivity. Some of them say: 'I wish I had reached absolute nothingness (*'adam*), and never returned (to existence).' They are the martyrs of Love. The holy ḥadīth 'Whomsoever I kill, I am his ransom'[74] is a reference to their stage. They are always under the crushing weight of their experience, and have no moment of rest. For rest is in forgetting, and since they are in the stage of perpetual effacement there is no possibility for them of forgetting. Shaykh 'l-Islām Harwī[75] says: 'If anyone makes me forget for a moment, I hope his sins will be forgiven.' To regain humanity one needs to forget. Out of His mercy

God has kept every one of these Sufis engaged in one thing or the other, according to their taste and ability, as a diversion so that they may feel less the weight of their experience. Some are given to enjoy songs and dances, some are led to write books and expound concepts and doctrines, still some are engaged in a variety of permissible acts. 'Abdullāh Iṣṭikhrī[76] used to go out in the forest with men of hounds. When a friend asked the reason, he replied: 'I want to take rest for a while from the experience (of Oneness).' Some have occupied themselves with the ideas of One Being and the perception of Unity in multiplicity, so that they may not feel the weight of the experience and have a little rest.

To this category belong the ideas of the Unity of Being which the great leaders of the Naqshbandī order have ventilated. Their relation (*nisbat*) with God is one of taking God as absolutely transcendent; they have nothing to do with the world or seeing (God) in the world. The ideas which Khwājah 'Ubaydullāh[77] has expressed concerning the Unity of Being and the perception of Unity in multiplicity fall into this category of *tawḥīd*. His book, *Fiqrāt* which contains the doctrine of the Unity (of Being) and other ideas has no other purpose than to develop a rapport with the world. To the same purpose are the ideas which our Khwājah has put in some letters that he has written on the pattern of *Fiqrāt*. These ideas on Unity are not the product of *jadhb* or the intensity of love. The object of their experience has nothing in common with this world; what appears to them in this world is a reflection, an image and a symbol of the real object of their experience.

One of the close disciples of the Khwājah told me that the Khwājah once said: 'People think that I read the books of the Sufis of Unity in order that I may develop that relation with God. This is not true. I want nothing but to forget for a while.' This statement supports what we have said above. Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Ḥaqq[78] who is a sincere disciple of the Khwājah says that before his death the Khwājah told him: 'I know, to be sure, that Unity (of Being) is a very narrow path, and the royal road is different. Certainly, I knew it before, but I was not much convinced of it as I am now.' From this (testimony) it is clear that the final view of the

Khwājah in this regard had nothing to do with the Unity (of Being). If something of it appeared in his early career it does not harm him. In fact it has appeared in the case of a number of Sufis during the early stages of their career, but they have eventually overcome it.

2. Criticism of *Waḥdat 'l-Wujūd*

I

Vol. I:272 (pp. 650–4)

Prophets do not preach the Unity of Being (waḥdat 'l-wujūd), they preach the Unity of God (waḥdat 'l-Ma'būd); there is no support for waḥdat 'l-wujūd in the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth.

Some people who claim to combine God's transcendence with His immanence say that faith in transcendence is available to every believer, but the gnostics believe in immanence and view creation as the manifestation of the Creator, regard multiplicity as a cloak of Unity and perceive the Maker in the made. For them belief in pure transcendence is a defect, and the vision of Unity beyond multiplicity is an evil. These people regard those who concentrate on pure Unity as imperfect and think that by perceiving Unity without perceiving multiplicity one limits and conditions Unity.

The call of the prophets is to pure transcendence, and the message of the heavenly books is to believe in God's otherness. The prophets deny all false gods, human and non-human, and give a call for their rejection. They teach people the unity of the Necessary Being, that He is unique and indefinable. Has anybody heard a prophet calling for belief in immanence and saying that the creation is the manifestation of the Creator! All the prophets (peace be on them) agree on affirming the unity of the Necessary Being, and reject all lords other than Him. 'Say: O People of the

Book! come to a common term as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners to Him; that we erect not from ourselves lords and patrons other than God. If then they turn back, say ye bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's will).'[79]

These people affirm the existence of innumerable lords, and consider them the manifestations of the Lord of lords, and seek support for their view in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. They quote the following verses of the Qur'ān:

> He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden.[80]
>
> You did not throw (a handful of dust) when you did it, it is God who threw.[81]
>
> Those who plight their fidelity to you in fact plight their fidelity to God, the hand of God is over their hand.[82]

And they cite the following ḥadīth:

> O God! You are the First, there is none before You.
> You are the Last, there is none after You.[83]
> You are the Manifest, there is none above You.
> You are the Hidden, there is none beneath You.

But neither the verses nor the ḥadīth support their view. The strong words which they contain are meant to deny most emphatically the self-sufficiency of things other than God; they do not deny their existence. Examples of such an emphatic use of language are many, such as the ḥadīth: 'There is no prayer without the *Fātiḥah*,[84] or the ḥadīth: 'He has no faith who violates the trust.' There are many more words like these in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.[85] The way we understand these verses and ḥadīth is not to interpret them allegorically as they think; it is rather understanding the text as an example of perfect literature. When, for instance, one wants to emphasise the dignity of His envoy, one says: 'His hand is my hand.' It is obvious that what he intends here is not the real meaning of these words but their metaphorical sense, which is much more effective than the real meaning. Similarly when an act is done by a man which is more than what he can do with his power, and takes effect as a result of a special favour from his Lord, it is quite

befitting for the Lord to say that He has done the act, not His servant. This statement therefore is no argument for the unity of the Actor, nor for the Unity of Being. It is impossible that the act of a slave be the act of the Almighty, or his being be the Being of the Lord.

These people do not know the way of the prophets. The message of the prophets is based on the premise of duality, upon the existence of an 'other' (*ghayr*) and its otherness (*ghayrīyat*) from God. To infer oneness or identity of being from their statements will be completely unwarranted. If there is really One Being and all others are its manifest forms and the worship of other beings is the worship of the One Being as these people think, why is it that prophets so vehemently condemn the worship of other beings, threaten with eternal damnation their worshippers, and denounce them as the enemies of God? Since they have not been aware of the source of their error, and since their vision of the 'other' which is born in them of ignorance has not been wiped out, they have not been made aware that the worship of these objects is not the worship of God.

Some of them say that the prophets have hidden the truth of the Unity of Being from people because they have a limited intelligence, and have based their preaching on the assumption that there is an 'other' and that it is different (from God); they have concealed Unity and preached multiplicity. This explanation is unacceptable, as is the Shī'ah doctrine of concealing truth for self-protection (*taqīyah*). Prophets must preach the truth. If the truth is that there is only One Being and nothing else exists, why should the prophets hide it and say what is not the truth! In matters concerning particularly the essence, attributes and the acts of the Necessary Being, they are obliged more than anyone else to declare the truth, even if it is not understood by the less intelligent folk. Don't you see that there are allegorical statements in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah which are beyond the comprehension of common men, even scholars; but the prophets have not refrained from telling them, and have not been deterred by the fear that common folk might misunderstand them.

These people dub as polytheist (*mushrik*) those who

believe in the duality of Being and shun the worship of things other than God. On the other hand, they consider as unitarians (*muwaḥḥid*) people who believe in the oneness of Being even if they may worship a thousand idols, provided they regard them as the manifestation of God and consider their worship as His worship. Let one decide which of these groups is in reality polytheist and which is unitarian.

The prophets have never preached Unity of Being (*waḥdat 'l-wujūd*), and have never said that the believers in the duality of Being are polytheists. They have preached the Unity of Divinity (*waḥdat 'l-Ma'būd*) and condemned the worship of other beings as polytheism. Since the *wujūdīs* do not consider the world something other than God, they do not reject the worship of the other. But the other is other whether they recognise it or not.

Some of the later *wujūdīs* do not say that God and the world are one, and refrain from asserting their identity and condemn those who believe in it; consequently they have been disowned and condemned by Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn and his followers. In spite of this, they do not believe that the world is other than God; in their view the world is neither one nor different from God. This is far from the truth; for the two things are obviously different from one another. One who denies duality denies an obvious truth.

The theologians believe, to be sure, that the attributes of God are neither one with God nor other than God. But they mean by the 'other' something different from what the term ordinarily connotes, consequently, they do not allow separation between them. For the attributes of God are not separate from God, and a separation between the Essence and the attributes is inconceivable. Therefore, the maxim that they are neither one nor different from the Essence is true in the case of eternal attributes. This is, however, not true of the world; for this kind of relation does not exist between God and the world. (The ḥadīth of the Prophet says): 'God was there when there was nothing besides Him.'[86] Hence the negation of the otherness of the world in the common sense or in its technical sense is equally wrong. These people have not been able to reach the truth, and have conceived the world on the pattern of eternal attributes

and have applied their characteristics to the world. When they deny the identity of the world they must affirm its otherness, leave the fold of the *wujūdīs*, and uphold the multiplicity of beings. If you believe that the Being is One, you cannot escape the identity which Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn and his followers believe. And identity does not mean that the world is united (*muttaḥid*) with God; nay, it means that there is no world there, and the existent is God, as we have clarified in some of our letters.

Question: To be sure, the *wujūdī* Sufis dub the believers in two beings as idolaters (*mushrik*). But by that they mean that these people perceive two beings, and those who perceive two beings commit idolatry (*shirk*) of the Sufi *ṭarīqah*.

Answer: One can negate the perception of two beings which is the idolatry of the Sufi *ṭarīqah* by means of *tawḥīd shuhūdī* (that is, perceiving One Being). For this purpose *tawḥīd wujūdī* (that is, the belief that there is only One Being there) is not at all required. The Sufi, to be sure, need perceive nothing but the being of God and attend to Him, so that he may attain perfect *fanā'*, and the idolatry of the *ṭarīqah* is removed. When in the daytime you see the sun alone and do not see the stars, you do negate duality in perception, even though millions of stars are there in existence. The purpose is to see the sun alone, no matter if the stars exist or do not exist. In fact the perfection of *fanā'* is that things exist there, and the Sufi, out of his complete devotion to God, does not pay attention to anything; rather he does not perceive anything, and nothing attracts his attention. If the things are not there, what shall he turn his mind from (*fanā'*) and what shall he be unmindful of (*fānī*), and what shall he forget?

The Sufi who first affirmed the doctrine of One Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) is Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī. The words of earlier Sufi masters, even though they speak of One Being and union, should be taken to mean Unity (of Being) in perception (*tawḥīd shuhūdī*). They really do not see anything except God. One of them says: 'There is none in my robe except God'; another says: 'Glory to me'; and a third says: 'There is none in the house except the Owner.'

All these flowers blossom forth from the perception of One Being (*yak bīnī*). But none involves the doctrine of One Being (*waḥdat 'l-wujūd*). The one who expounded and elaborated the doctrine of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* and worked it out on systematic lines is Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn. He claims that the most profound ideas of the doctrine are his own contributions. That is why he says that the 'Seal of the Prophets' learns truths from the 'Seal of the Saints', taking himself to be the 'Seal of the saintship of Muḥammad'. His commentators defend this by saying that there is nothing wrong if a king takes something from his own treasury.

In short, in order to attain *fanā'* and *baqā'*, and achieve saintship, lower or higher, one does not have to believe in One Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*). One needs only the perception of One Being (*tawḥīd shuhūdī*). That will suffice for realising *fanā'* and for forgetting everything other than God. It is possible that a Sufi traverses the whole road from beginning to end and does not have any ideas of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*, nor even experience it. In my opinion, the path which a Sufi adopts for his *sulūk* and which does not involve any such ideas is a shorter path than the one which involves them. Moreover, of those who take the first path, a majority reach the goal; but those who take the second path, a majority fall on the way. They only get a drop out of a river, and enjoy an imaginary union with a shadow, and never reach the reality. We are telling this truth on the basis of our own experience.

II

Vol. I:286 (pp. 697–9)

Waḥdat 'l-wujūd involves a view of Divine attributes which conflicts with the theological view; it negates God's choice and puts constraint on His will; it denies the Beatific Vision in the real sense, and implies the eternity of some souls.

One must know that the final beliefs of a Sufi which he comes to have after completing all the stages of *sulūk* and reaching the highest degree of saintship (*walāyat*) are the same as the beliefs of the theologians among the People of Truth (*Ahl-i-Ḥaqq*). The theologians arrive at them through scriptural text or through reason, and the Sufis arrive at them through *kashf* or inspiration. Some Sufis, under ecstatic experiences and strong emotional states during the course of their *sulūk*, have ideas that do not agree with these beliefs; but if they pass over those states and reach the final stage, their ideas will vanish in the air. In case this does not happen, they will continue to have conflicting ideas. We hope that they will not be punished for them, and will be treated like a jurist who errs in his judgement; the jurist errs in juristic investigation (*ijtihād*) and the Sufi errs in *kashf*.

One of the Sufi doctrines that conflicts with theological beliefs is the doctrine of One Being (*waḥdat 'l-wujūd*) and its corollary that the nearness (*qurb*) of God, His fellowship (*ma'īyat*) and comprehension (*iḥāṭah*) are essential (*dhātī*) as we have said above. They also oppose the theological belief that the seven or eight attributes of God have an existence over and above the existence of the Divine Essence. The theologians of *Ahl 'l-Sunnah* believe that the attributes have an objective existence over and above the existence of the Divine Essence. The reason why Sufis oppose it is this: When they perceive the Divine Essence in the mirror of His attributes, the attributes go out of their vision, just as one does not see the mirror when one sees an image in it. They are thus led to deny the existence of the attributes. They think that if the attributes existed there, they would have been perceived, and since they are not perceived they do

not exist. On account of this experience they have denounced the doctrine of the theologians regarding the existence of the attributes; and dubbed it as infidelity and dualism. May God save us from such wrong denunciations! Had they passed that stage of perception, gone beyond seeing the attributes as veils, and stopped viewing them as mirrors, they would have perceived them different from the Essence, and would not have denied their existence, and refrained from condemning the theologians.

Another doctrine (of the *wujūdīs*) which conflicts with theological beliefs is the doctrine that imposes certain things on God even though they avoid the term imposition (*ījāb*) and ascribe a will to Him. But in fact they are the deniers of the Divine will. On this issue they differ from the people of all denominations. They say, for instance, that God has power in the sense that if He wills He does, and if He does not will He does not do. But they believe that the conditional clause in the first proposition is necessary and in the second impossible. This amounts to imposing things on God, and negating His power. It means to deprive God of power in the sense religious people generally understand the term. Power means the ability to do and not to do. But the doctrine of these people implies the necessity of doing and the impossibility of not doing. How different are the two views! The view of these people is the same as that of the philosophers. They predicate a will to God in order to distinguish themselves from the philosophers; but this will not do them any good, because in the first proposition they make it necessary, and in the second impossible. Will means to choose between two equally possible alternatives. If the alternatives are not equally possible there can be no choice. And there are no equal alternatives in this case, since one is necessary and the other is impossible.

Similarly the way they expound the concept of predestination (*qaḍā wa qadr*) implies imposing things on God. They say, for instance, that 'the Ruler is ruled and the ruled is the Ruler'. Apart from the constraint on God's will which is implied in these words, the very notion that God is subject to something and that something rules over Him, is horrible. 'What they say is really abominable and false.'[87]

Another idea of theirs is that God would not be visible (in the Hereafter) except by appearing in forms (*tajallī ṣūrī*). This is in fact a denial of His vision. For the vision that they suggest will not be a vision of God, it will rather be a vision of an image and a symbol. The believers, to be sure, will see God in a pure vision, and know Him in a unique kind of knowledge.

They also believe in the eternity of the souls of perfect men. This is against the common belief of the Muslims that the world with all its parts, and souls are as much part of the world as any other thing, is contingent.

It is incumbent on a Sufi that before he reaches the ultimate truth, he should follow the doctrines of the theologians among the People of Truth, even if they conflict with his *kashf* and inspiration. He should believe that the theologians are right and that he is wrong. For the doctrine of the theologians is based on the infallible words of the prophets who are guided by true revelation (*waḥy*), which is above doubt. Hence his *kashf* and inspiration which conflict with the doctrines that are derived from *waḥy*, are wrong. To consider one's *kashf* superior to the views of the theologians, is in fact to consider it superior to the absolute truths of revelation. This is erroneous and disastrous.

III

Vol. I:261 (p. 573)

Waḥdat 'l-wujūd affects the priorities of the Sharī'ah.

Some of these people hold that prayer (*ṣalāt*) does not avail (*dūr az kār*) since it is based, in their view, on the assumption of the 'other' (*ghayr*) and its difference (from God). They extol fasting (*ṣawm*) over *ṣalāt*. The author of *Meccan Revelations* (*Futūḥāt Makkīyah*)[88] says that by fasting (i.e., abstaining from eating and drinking) one participates in the holiness (*ṣamadīyat*) of God, whereas in the *ṣalāt* one comes down to the 'other' and otherness and distinguishes

between the worshipper and the Worshipped. This statement is based, as you know, on the doctrine of *tawḥīd wujūdī*, which is the lot of the intoxicated people.

3. Statement of *Waḥdat 'l-Shuhūd*

I

Vol. II:1 (pp. 853–60)

The doctrine of waḥdat 'l-shuhūd outlined and compared with the doctrine of waḥdat 'l-wujūd.

Being (*wujūd*) is the source of all goodness and excellence, and non-being (*'adam*) is the source of all evil, defect and degeneration. Therefore, being should be predicated of the Necessary and non-being of the possible, so that all goodness and excellence may be derived from the former and all evil and defect may be attributed to the latter. To assert being of the possible and attribute goodness and excellence to it is in fact to associate the possible with God in His property and kingdom. On the other hand, to believe that the possible is one with the Necessary or that the attributes and acts of the possible are the attributes and acts of God, is to dishonour God and to misconceive His names and attributes. How can a mean sweeper, evil to his core, think of identifying himself with the great Lord and the source of all goodness and perfection, and consider that his own evil attributes and acts are the attributes and acts of the Lord!

Theologians assert being (*wujūd*) of every possible object and regard the being of God and the being of the possible as members of the same class of being, although they maintain that the being of the Necessary is prior to and higher than that of the possible. This amounts to the association of the possible with the Necessary in all excellences that follow upon being. God is certainly far above that. A holy tradition says: 'Glory is my shirt and greatness is my trousers.'[89] Had the theologians known this fact they

would have attributed to the possible neither being nor goodness and excellence which belong to God as the only existent.

Most Sufis, particularly the later ones, consider that the possible is one with the Necessary and believe that the attributes and acts of the possible are the attributes and acts of God. One of them says:

> Everyone: friend, colleague and neighbour is He.
> The pauper in rags and the king in the robe is He.
> The mystic that lives with people and feels separation,
> Or lives in seclusion and experiences union,
> All, by God, is He.[90]

Although these mystics have avoided the sin of associating the possible with God in the matter of being and refrained from dualism, they have regarded the non-being as being and defects as perfections. For them there is nothing that is bad or evil in itself; if there is evil at all, it is so in relation to something else. Poison, for instance, is bad in relation to man whom it kills; but in relation to the animal wherein it forms, it is the most vital energy and the most effective cure. To these mystics the evidence in such matters is their *kashf* and vision; whatever idea they hold they discover it in their experience. May God, however, show us things as they really are!

I will tell you in detail what has been revealed to me. But, first, I will describe the view of Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn Ibn 'l-'Arabī who is the leader of the later Sufis. I will then tell what has been revealed to me, so that the difference between the two doctrines becomes fully clear and the possibility of mixing one with the other is completely removed.

Ibn 'l-'Arabī's Doctrine of Waḥdat 'l-Wujūd.

Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn and his followers believe that the names and the attributes of the Necessary Being are identical with His essence and identical with one another. His knowledge and power, for instance, are identical with His essence and identical with one another. There is at this level no place for plurality and multiplicity of names and predicates, and

no room for distinction and difference. The differentiation of names and attributes, modes (*shuyūn*) and considerations (*i'tibārāt*) takes place at the level of Divine knowledge, first in a generic way and then in all particulars. The generic differentiation is called the first determination, and the particularised differentiation is called the second determination. They designate the first determination as Unity (*waḥdat*) and identify it as the Idea or reality of Muḥammad, and name the second determination Oneness (*wāḥidīyat*) and believe that it consists of ideas or realities of all possible beings, which are in their view eternally subsisting entities (*a'yān thābitah*). They believe that the two determinations, *waḥdat* and *wāḥidīyat* are necessary determinations.

According to them the subsisting entities do not get the smell of external existence, and nothing exists out there other than Absolute Unity (*Aḥadīyat Mujarradah*). The multiplicity that appears in the outer world is a reflection of subsisting entities formed in the mirror of the Manifest Being (*ẓāhir-i-wujūd*) besides which nothing exists out there. Multiplicity has an imaginary existence, just as the form of a person reflected in a mirror has an imaginary existence. The reflected form does not exist except in imagination; for nothing resides in the mirror and nothing is impressed upon its surface. If there is at all an impression it is in imagination, even though it appears to exist in the mirror. But as this imaginary and illusory (multiplicity) is God's creation, it has a perfection of its own, and does not disappear with the cessation of imagination or fancy, and forms a good enough ground for eternal reward and punishment. The multiplicity that appears in the outer world is of three different orders: it is, first, a spiritual determination (*ta'ayyun rūḥī*), secondly, a symbolic determination (*ta'ayyun mithālī*), and thirdly, a corporeal determination (*ta'ayyun jasadī*) which is the object of ordinary perception. These three determinations are called external determinations and are regarded as possible determinations. There are, therefore, five determinations in all, that is, the five descents of Being, also called the Five Presences (*Ḥaḍrāt Khams*).

Since according to these people there is nothing in Divine knowledge or out there except the Necessary Being and His

names and attributes which are one with His Essence, and since the ideal forms are one with the Bearer of forms and not his adumbrations (*shabaḥ*) or symbols (*mithāl*), and since the images of the subsisting entities reflected in the Manifest Being are in their view identical with those entities and not their semblances, they have been led to assert identity and pronounce that 'All is He.'

This is in outline the doctrine of Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī regarding the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat 'l-wujūd*). It is these and allied ideas that the Shaykh thinks to be the privilege of the 'Seal of the Saints', and claims that the 'Seal of the Prophets' acquires them through the 'Seal of the Saints' – a claim in whose defence the commentators of his *Fuṣūṣ* have offered untenable suggestions. Before the Shaykh, no Sufi ever talked of these esoteric ideas and expounded the doctrine of Oneness of Being in this fashion. Of course, it is true that the earlier Sufis spoke of Unity (*tawḥīd*) and union (*ittiḥād*) in a state of intoxication and uttered words like 'I am God' or 'Glory to me', but they did not discover the basis of identity or establish the ground of Unity. The Shaykh supplied them with the ground; consequently his words came to wield an authority for all his successors. But some subtle aspects of this issue have not yet been brought to light, and some profound truths have not been disclosed. God has graced this humble being with the knowledge of these truths and called him to expound them. He alone reveals the truth and guides on the right path.

Sirhindī's Doctrine of Waḥdat 'l-Shuhūd.

In the view of the People of Truth the eight attributes of the Necessary Being exist out there and are objectively distinct from His Essence in a unique and indefinable way. They are also uniquely distinct from each other. Even the essence of God is qualified with a kind of unique distinction as He is all-Comprehending (*al-Wāsi'*) with an unknowable comprehension. The distinctions which are known to us cannot of course be predicated of the Divine Essence, because differences of parts and divisions are inconceivable at that level, and analysis and synthesis have no place there.

God does not reside in anything and nothing resides in Him. In short, the qualities and the accidents of possible beings cannot be attributed to the Holy Being; He is unlike any thing in His essence, attributes and acts.

But in spite of their unique character and unknowable all-comprehensiveness, the names and attributes of God differentiate and individuate at the level of Divine knowledge and cast their reflections. To each differentiated name and attribute there is a corresponding and opposite non-being. For instance, corresponding to the attribute of knowledge and opposing it there is a non-being which is want of knowledge (*'adam-i-'ilm*) or ignorance. Similarly, opposite to the attribute of power there is impotency (*'ijz*) which is want of power. These opposite non-beings which are individuated and differentiated in the Divine knowledge serve as mirrors for their opposite names and attributes, and function as screens for the display of the images they cast.

To me these non-beings in combination with the reflections of names and attributes are the ideas or essences of possible beings (*ḥaqīqat-i-mumkināt*), the non-being functioning as the ground or matter for those essences, and the images functioning as forms impressed upon the matter. To Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn the realities of the possible beings are Divine names and attributes themselves individuated in Divine knowledge. But to me possible realities are non-beings, which are opposed to Divine names and attributes, along with the reflection of names and attributes that are formed in the mirrors of non-beings in Divine knowledge and are combined with them.

When the Almighty wills He takes one of these composite essences (*māhiyāt mumtazijah*), and qualifies it with a shadow existence (*wujūd ẓillī*) which is a reflection (*partaw*) of His own existence, and brings it into the phenomenal world. By casting a reflection of His own existence on the composite essence God invests it with a being which produces real effects. Thus the possible being, whether in Divine knowledge or in the outer world, is, along with its attributes, a reflection of Being/Existence and the excellences contingent upon Existence. The knowledge of the possible is a reflection of God's knowledge and its shadow formed on its

opposite, ignorance; and the power of the possible is a shadow of God's power formed on its opposite, impotency. Similarly the existence of the possible is a shadow of God's existence formed in the mirror of its opposite, non-existence.

I have brought nothing from my house.
All I have is given by You,
And I also belong to You.

To me the shadow of a thing is not the thing itself, it is only a copy (*shabaḥ*) of the thing and a semblance (*mithāl*). Consequently what is predicated of the one cannot be predicated of the other. The possible is not identical with the Necessary, and there is no possibility of mutual predication. For, the reality of the possible is non-being, and the reflections of names and attributes which are formed in the non-being are only copies and images of the names and attributes, rather than identical with them. Therefore the right doctrine is not that 'All is He', (*hamah 'ūst*), but 'All is from Him' (*hamah as 'ūst*). For the possible is in essence non-being which is the source of all evil, want and depravity. Whatever good and excellence there is in the possible, existence or the attributes dependent upon existence, all are derived from God and are the reflections of His essential perfections. God is consequently the light of the heavens and the earth, and the 'other than God' is all darkness. Why not! The non-being is the darkest of all dark things. Please refer for a fuller discussion of this point to the letter[91] which I wrote to my elder son (may God bless his soul) in which I have discussed the reality of Being and the essences of possible beings.

Difference between the two Doctrines.

The entire world for Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn consists of the names and attributes of God which differentiate first in his knowledge and appear afterwards in the mirror of the Manifest Being out there. For me, on the other hand, the world consists of non-beings which receive reflections of the names and attributes of the Necessary Being in Divine knowledge, and are brought out in combination with those

reflections into the outer world with a shadow existence by the creative will of God. Therefore evil lies in the very essence and existence of the world, whereas good and excellence come from God. The Qur'ānic verse 'Whatever good that comes to you is from God and whatever evil that befalls you is from yourself,'[92] is a testimony to this truth. Glory be to God who is the inspirer of truth.

In our view the world exists out there with a shadow being, and God exists out there with a real being. He rather exists by His Essence (*dhāt*). The out-there (*khārij*) of the world, like its existence and attributes, is a shadow of the 'out-there' (*khārij*) of God. Consequently, the world cannot be identified with God, and there can be no mutual predication between them. The shadow cannot be identified with the Real. The difference between them is objective and real, like the difference between any two different objects. Sometimes the shadow of a person is identified with the person himself. But that is an instance of using language in a loose and extended sense, which is obviously out of consideration here.

One might say that there is no real difference between my view and the view of Shaykh Muḥyī 'l-Dīn and his followers, because they also believe that the world is a shadow of God. This is not correct. The Shaykh and his followers think that the shadow does not exist except in imagination; consequently they do not attribute any kind of objective existence to it. They regard the imaginary plurality of things as an adumbration of the existing unity, and believe that out there there is only One Existence. This is completely different from the view I hold. The identification of the shadow with the Real or its non-identification is a consequence of the belief whether the shadow has an objective existence (*wujūd khārijī*) or not. Since they do not assert that the shadow has an objective existence they cannot but identify it with the Real. But I believe that the shadow exists out there, hence I do not have to identify it with the Real. We both agree in denying real being to the shadow; we also agree in attributing to it a shadow existence. But whereas I assert that the shadow exists out there, they think that it exists in imagination only. For them there is nothing out

there except the Absolute Unity (*Aḥadīyat Mujarradah*). The eight attributes of God which have an objective existence according to the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah* do not exist, in their view, except in knowledge. On this issue they take one view and the theologians take the opposite view; both stand off the middle path which I have been favoured to take and which is right. If they (Ibn 'l-'Arabī and his followers) could regard the out-there of the shadow as an adumbration of the out-there of God, they would have never denied objective existence to the world, and would have never accorded it merely an imaginary and illusory status. They would not have also denied objectivity (*wujūd khārijī*) to the attributes of the Necessary Being. On the other hand, if the theologians had known the truth they would not have attributed real existence to the possible, and have only accorded it a shadow existence. In some of my letters I have written that the predication of existence to the possible is a reality not a metaphor. This does not conflict with the view which I have elaborated here; the possible does really exist out there with a shadow existence, it does not exist merely as fancy or an illusion as they (i.e., Ibn 'l-'Arabī and his followers) think.

Question: The author of the *Futūḥāt Makkīyah* regards subsisting entities (*a'yān thābitah*) as something intermediary (*barzakh*) between being and non-being. Therefore, in his view non-being also enters into the essence of the possible beings. What then is the difference between your view and his view?

Answer: What he means by an intermediary status is this: The ideal forms have two faces: one is turned to Being as they subsist in knowledge, and the other is turned to non-being as they do not exist out there. 'Subsisting entities', Ibn 'l-'Arabī says, 'never have the smell of external existence.'[93] But non-being as I have expounded it has a different connotation. A number of people attribute non-being to the possible and mean by it that the possible does not exist out there, but they do not mean what we mean by it. God transcends high above those names and attributes which having differentiated and individuated in knowledge are reflected in the mirrors of non-beings and become the

realities of the possible beings. He has therefore nothing in common at all with the world. 'Certainly Allah transcends the worlds.'[94] To assert identity or oneness of God with the world, even to suggest a likeness between them is very hurtful to me.

My Lord, they go one way,
And I go the other way.

II

Vol. I:234 (pp. 485–96)

Elaboration of some Concepts of Waḥdat 'l-Shuhūd.

The essence of God is pure Being (*wujūd*) without the addition of anything else. This Being is the source of all goodness and perfection, and the fountain-head of all beauty and excellence. It is a real individual, simple and above all composition, ideal or concrete. It is essentially inconceivable, and must be predicated of God substantively, not adjectively. In fact, Being (*wujūd*) is not a predicate of God, who is at that level above predication. The being (*wujūd*) which is universal and common to all beings is an adumbration (*ẓill*) of Being and is predicated of God and the objects of the world as a common and non-specific adjective, variable in degree, of course. By adumbration we mean the manifestation of Being in its various levels of descent. Of these adumbrations the one which is the highest and the most perfect is to be predicated of God as an adjective. In other words, at the level of reality the right characterisation would be that God is Being/Existence (*wujūd*), not that God is Existent (*mawjūd*); and at the level of adumbration the proper statement would be that God is existent (*mawjūd*), not that God is existence (*wujūd*). Philosophers and a section of Sufis believe that Being is one and the same; they do not make the above distinction nor separate the shadow from the real. Consequently, they fail to differentiate between the levels of substantive and adjectival predications and find it

very hard to justify the latter. The truth is what I have stated by the grace of God and under His inspiration.

The reality and the adumbration of Being are like the reality and the adumbration of all essential attributes. At the level of reality which is the level of non-differentiation and absolute transcendence, the attributes are predicated as substantives rather than as adjectives. One ought to say, 'God is knowledge', not 'God is knowing'. For the adjectival predication involves a kind of difference between the subject and the predicate, which is not admissible at this level. Difference arises at adumbrative levels, and there is no adumbration at this level. It (Being at this level) transcends even the level of first determination that admits of general considerations; consequently it transcends every kind of consideration. At the adumbrative levels where the Non-differentiated is differentiated, adjectival predication is justified, but not the substantival. However, the identity of the attributes (with the Essence) at that level is a corollary of the identity of Existence (with the Essence) which is the source of all that is good and perfect, beautiful and excellent. In my letters wherever I negate the oneness of being (*'aynīyat wujūd*), I negate it in the sense of adumbrative being (*wujūd ẓillī*) which is the subject of adjectival predication. However, this adumbrative being also produces objective consequences. Therefore, essences of all levels when qualified with that existence, shall externally exist at various levels of external existence. If you grasp this point well, it will help you at various places. The attributes of God have objective existence, and possible objects also exist out there.

My dear son! listen to this profound truth. At the level of the Essence, essential qualities are one with the Essence. Knowledge, for instance, is one with the Essence; so is power, will or any other quality. At that level, the whole of the Essence is knowledge, as the whole of it is power. It is not the case that a part of the Essence is knowledge and the other part is power. There is no division in the Essence. These qualities which are abstracted, so to say, from the Essence, differentiate in Divine knowledge, but the Essence persists in its original state of undifferentiated unique simplicity. After that nothing remains in the Essence which is not

differentiated and individuated. All perfections which were identical with the Essence enter into the Divine knowledge. When they are differentiated at the second level, they acquire an adumbrative existence and get the name of qualities, and exist there by the Essence which is their original reality.

To the author of the *Fuṣūṣ*[95] (may God have mercy on him) subsisting entities (*a'yān thābitah*) are the differentiated qualities themselves which have acquired an ideal being in Divine knowledge. To me the essences of the possible beings are non-beings, which are the source of evil and imperfection, along with the qualities of God reflected in them. I will explain. Listen to it carefully; God may guide you to the truth.

Know that non-being is opposite of Being and contrary to it. Hence it is the source of evil and want, rather it is itself evil and corruption, just as being, at its undifferentiated level, is goodness and perfection. As existence is not predicated of the Primordial Essence as an adjectival predicate, its opposite non-existence is also not predicated of the essences of non-being (*māhiyat 'adamīyah*) as an adjectival predicate. The essence of non-being at that level is not to be characterised as non-existing. It is pure non-existence. However, after differentiation in the Divine knowledge, negative differentiated essences are qualified by non-existence which can be predicated of them as adjectival predicates. The concept of non-being which is abstracted, so to say, from the undifferentiated essence of non-being and is a shadow of that essence can be predicated of all its particular forms as an adjectival predicate, as will be explained later. Non-being in its undifferentiated state is identical with evil and corruption, but in the knowledge of God every evil is different from every other evil, and every corruption is different from every other corruption, just as on the opposite side Being at its undifferentiated level is identical with goodness and perfection, but at the differentiated level in knowledge every perfection is different from every other perfection, and every goodness is different from every other goodness. Thus every perfection of Being is reflected in every opposite privation of non-being in the

knowledge of God, and the ideal forms of one are combined with the ideal forms of the other. These non-beings, which are evils and privations, together with these reflected attributes, differentiate in the Divine knowledge and become the essence of the possible beings. The non-beings are the matter of those essences, and the reflections of attributes are forms residing in them. Subsisting entities, therefore, are in our view combinations of non-beings with reflections of attributes of perfection. Whenever the Almighty wills He puts the colour of the shadow existence on these negative essences and their implications combined with the qualities of the shadow being reflected in those essences in Divine knowledge, getting thus the name of the essences of the possible, and brings them into existence out there and makes them effective and consequential.

One must know that the colouring of the ideal forms which are the subsisting verities of the possible beings and their essences, does not mean that the ideal forms go out of the Divine knowledge and become existent. This is impossible for it would entail ignorance on the part of God. It rather means that the possibles appear in the external world on the pattern of their ideal forms and acquire an external existence other than, and on the pattern of, their ideal subsistence. This is similar to the case of a carpenter who makes a bed on the pattern of the idea of the bed he has in mind. In the example, the mental form of the bed which is, so to say, the essence of the bed, does not go out of the mind of the carpenter What happens is that the bed comes to exist in the outer world on the model of its ideal form in the mind. Know that every non-being appears in the outer world after it has been coloured with the shadow of the perfections of Being opposed to non-being and reflected in it. But absolute Non-being is not at all affected by any of these shadows and is not coloured at all. How can it be coloured? It does not face any shadow; if at all it does, it faces the Pure Being Himself . . .

This combination of evil and good, want and perfection, which is in fact the combination of being and non-being, is not a combination of contraries, which is impossible. For there is a contradiction between pure Being and pure

non-being; but we don't have a contradiction between shadow beings and shadow non-beings. On the side of being there is a descent from the summit of Primal Being to various levels of shadow beings, and on the side of non-being there is an ascent from the abyss of pure non-being to various elevations of shadow non-beings. Their combination is like the combination of opposite elements; their mutual opposition having softened down, they have been put together in combination. Glory to God who has combined darkness with light.

One may object that my idea regarding the dyeing of pure non-being with pure being which is contrary to it involves the co-existence of contraries. I would reply that the co-existence of contraries is impossible where they refer to one and the same thing. But the sustenance of one contrary by the other or the predication of one to the other is not impossible. We do say that a being does not exist, and predicate non-existence to a being, and that is not contradictory. Therefore if non-being comes to exist and is coloured with existence why should that be held to be impossible?

Again, one may object that since non-being is a mental category opposed to external existence, it cannot be said to acquire external existence. I will say that the concept of non-being is a mental category, but if an individual non-being acquires existence there is nothing wrong in it. This reply is on the lines of the reply that philosophers have given to the objection about identifying existence with God. It has been said that existence cannot be the essence of God; for existence is a mental category devoid of external existence, and the Divine Essence exists out there, so it cannot be one with existence. In reply to this objection it has been said that it is the idea of existence which is a mental category, not the individual beings themselves, so an individual being cannot be said not to exist out there. Therefore it (i.e., non-being) may possibly exist out there.

Objection: In your view the essential qualities of God belong to the domain of shadow and are removed from the sphere of Primal Reality. This goes against the view of the People of Truth (may God bless their efforts). They never separate the attributes from the Essence, and consider them absolutely inseparable.

Answer: Our doctrine does not lead to the separation of attributes. The shadows under consideration are always with their reality. Hence there is no separation. The mystic whose attention is centred on the transcendental Essence (*aḥadīyat-i-dhāt*) and is removed from the Names and Attributes beholds the Essence only and forgets the attributes completely, although they are very much there. Hence the separation of attributes from the Holy Essence is a matter of the mystic's vision, not of reality. There is no divergence, therefore, from the view of the People of Truth[96]. . .

We have maintained that the essences of the possible beings are non-beings, that their evil qualities are the consequences of non-beings that have been brought into existence by the free-will of the Almighty, and that their good qualities are derived from the shadows of the Divine attributes reflected and brought into existence also by the free-will of the Almighty. . .

The great Shaykh Ibn 'l-'Arabī does not appreciate the privation, depravity and corruption of the phenomenal world, and imagines that the contingent essences are ideas in Divine knowledge that are reflected in the mirror of His Essence besides which nothing exists out there, and appear to have an external existence. He does not realise that the ideal forms are different from the forms of the Divine modes and qualities. He therefore believes that Being is one, that the existence of the possible is identical with the existence of the Necessary, that evil and want are relative, and that there is nothing like pure evil or pure corruption. This is why he thinks that nothing is evil in itself. Even infidelity and misbelief are for him a sort of faith and correct belief in (what people call) evil. Considered in themselves they are good and right, for their relation to their 'lords' has put them on the right path. In support of this view they argue from the Qur'ānic verse: 'There is no moving creature there which God does not hold by its forelock. Surely, my Lord is on the right path.'[97] Of course, he who believes in the Oneness of Being cannot help saying such things. . .

My dear son! pure Being is opposed to pure non-being. We have said earlier that pure Being is the Essence of the Necessary Being and that it is identical with everything good

and perfect. Though we refer here to an undifferentiated identity, strictly speaking we should not use it in this context because it has an element of shadow. Pure non-being that corresponds to pure Being is the non-being which is beyond all relations and predications and is identical with evil and corruption, although here, too, there is strictly speaking no identity because identity is after all a relation. It is well known that a thing has the most perfect manifestation in its real opposite. 'Things become clear by contrast with their opposites.' Therefore, pure Being finds its perfect manifestation in the mirror of pure non-being. . .

Question: What do you mean by the expression, 'mirror of non-being'? Non-being is an absolute non-entity. How can it be the mirror of Being?

Answer: Of course, non-being is a mere non-entity in the sense that it is not out there. But in the Divine knowledge it has a kind of identity it has rather acquired an ideal being according to those who believe in mental existence. Non-being has been said to be the mirror of Being because whatever evil or want is predicated of non-being will be negated of the mental being which is opposed to it, and every perfection which is denied to non-being, will be affirmed of Being. Non-being is therefore the condition for the manifestation of the perfections of Being. This is the meaning of the expression 'mirror of non-being'. If you understand it well, it will, I hope, benefit you a lot. May God instil the truth in your heart.

4. God

I

Vol. II:2 (pp. 860–1)

The essential attributes of God have an objective existence.

The seven or eight attributes of God that are His essential qualities have an objective existence. No one other than the

People of Truth (may God reward their efforts) has affirmed the objectivity of these qualities. Even later Sufis have denied their objective existence and regarded their being additional to the Essence merely as a matter of thought. They have said:

> The attributes are other (than the Essence) in thought.
> But they are one with God's Essence in reality.[98]

The People of Truth are right because their view is derived from the niche of the Prophet and is supported by *kashf* and insight (*firāsat*).

The opponents have advanced a strong objection against the objectivity of attributes. If the attributes have an objective existence, they must be either possible or necessary. Possibility implies existence in time, for every possible being is in their view a temporal being; and multiplicity of necessary beings violates the unity of God. Again, on the assumption of possibility, the attributes are separable from the Essence, which will imply ignorance and impotency on the part of God.

The solution of this difficulty which has been revealed to me is this: God exists by His Essence and not by an existence, be it identical with the Essence or distinct from it. The qualities of God, too, exist by His Essence and not by His existence. In fact existence has no access to that level. Shaykh 'Alā' 'l-Dawlah[99] referred to this point when he said: 'The realm of the Lord is above the realm of existence.' Consequently, the question of possibility or necessity does not arise at that level. Possibility and necessity are relations that hold between essence (*māhīyat*) and existence (*wujūd*); where there is no existence there is no question of possibility or necessity. This is a truth which lies beyond the reach of reason, and the captives of reason can never get at it. They cannot but deny it; the only exception are those whom God would like to save.

II

Vol. III:26 (pp. 1262–5)

Reason for the objectivity of attributes.

God exists by His essence which is sufficient for His existence and for the existence of attributes associated with existence, like life, knowledge, power, hearing, seeing, will, speech and creation. To have these perfections, God does not need qualities in addition to His essence, although as a matter of fact He has the additional qualities. Thus God exists by His essence and not by a life that is one of His attributes, knows by His essence and not by an attribute of knowledge, is powerful by His essence and not by an attribute of power, wills by His essence and not by an attribute of volition, speaks by His essence and not by an attribute of speech, and creates by His essence and not by an attribute of creation. It is, however, a fact that the world requires for its existence the agency of the attribute of creation and of other attributes. . .

Question: If the essence of God is sufficient for the existence of all His attributes, why should you posit additional qualities and expose yourself to the charge of multiplying eternal beings? The philosophers and the Mu'tazilah affirm the Essence only and deny attributes so that they can avoid that charge.

Answer: The essence of God is of course sufficient for the existence of attributes. But for the creation of things the existence of attributes is indispensable. The Divine Essence is most holy and sublime and is absolutely transcendent. He is completely self-sufficient and utterly incomparable with other objects. 'Lo! God does not need the world at all.'[100] However, His nature and wisdom require that for creation there must be a rapport between the Creator and the object of creation. This is why the qualities have to come one step down, assume a second-degree status (*ẓillīyat*) and establish a kind of rapport with the objects of the world. Were there no mediation of attributes, nothing could have been created. In the radiant light of the Essence, things cannot but perish,

dissolve and disappear. Only those who are incapable of thinking, deny the attributes and ascribe creation directly to the Divine Essence. Even the First Emanation is sure to dissolve and vanish before the radiance of the Essence.

Question: Though the philosophers and the Mu'tazilah have not affirmed objective attributes, they do posit ideal considerations (*i'tibārāt 'ilmīyah*) and believe in the differentiation of essential qualities in the Divine knowledge. They do not therefore attribute creation directly to the pure Essence; the ideal considerations are there to mediate.

Answer: The creation of the world is a reality, and the world exists out there. Therefore, there must be some real veils there to allow things to come into existence and to save them from dissolution and extermination. Ideal considerations cannot account for external existence and ideal veils cannot protect things that are out there. Ideal considerations may satisfy those Sufis for whom the world exists in the realm of idea, and may account for the subsistence of ideal beings. But the world exists out there, even though its out-there is a shadow of the real out-there, and its existence is the shadow of the real existence. Objective veils are necessary for the existence of an objective world. There must be objective qualities there to nourish things, to produce the reflection of the excellences of the Essence in the mirrors of the objects and bring them out into existence. The attributes are the veils of the Essence but its perfections become manifest through their agency. Like eye glasses they veil as well as reveal. Of course, this manifestation or revelation is in the realm of shadow; but we cannot help it, as our very existence is connected with shadow and our very being has been wrapped in veils. What is in the Essence is inseparable from the Essence.

III

Vol. II:5 (pp. 871–2)

The attributes of God are one as well as different from His essence.

The attributes of God have an objective existence and exist by His essence. They may therefore be considered in two ways: one as existing in themselves, and the other as existing by His essence. In the first respect they are connected with the world and are the source of all determinations; in the second respect they are above the world and have no relation with it or its inhabitants. Again, in the first respect the attributes appear in the eyes of *kashf* separable from the essence and the essence appears above them; whereas in the second respect they do not appear different and separation is impossible. In the first respect the attributes are veils hiding the essence, but in the second respect they do not act as veils. They are just like the whiteness of a cloth which does not hide the cloth. Whiteness is not a veil to the cloth either as such or as existing by the cloth. Even though we see whiteness, it does not act as a veil. On the contrary, the attributes of God as such are veils, but they are no more veils when you consider them otherwise (i.e. existing by the Essence). Do not consider that the difference between these two aspects is insignificant. I have taken some fifteen years to arrive at it even though I traverse the path quickly and am drawn to God strongly.

Earlier scholars did not distinguish between these two aspects. To them it was the same whether you consider an accident in itself or as subsisting in a substance. Some later scholars, however, perceived the difference and argued that the existence of an accident as such is one thing and its existence by a substance is another. We first identify an accident: 'Here is an accident', and then assert: 'It subsists.' Therefore, the existence of an accident in itself is different from its existence by a substance. This discovery of the later scholars about accidents has been a stepping-stone for a seeker and a great help. He has in fact utilised many

theological and philosophical findings in *sayr* and *sulūk*, and found them helpful in the perception of Divine truths.

IV

Vol. II:11 (pp. 884–7)

God in reality is always qualified; and the unqualified Absolute is either an abstraction of thought or the result of meditational concentration, in either case a subjective idea.

The attributes are veils for the essence at the level of its shadow manifestation (*ẓuhūrāt ẓillīyah*) which are in the realm of thought as distinguished from its real manifestation which is in the realm of existence. The attributes conceal the essence in thought, not in real existence. Don't you see that when you form an idea of Zayd in your mind, you conceive him with various attributes, tall or short, learned or illiterate, young or old, writer or poet, etc. All these attributes which you discern in the idea of Zayd will conceal his essence and these general qualifications will be of little help in identifying him. But when you get at the actual Zayd, perceive him with all his attributes, and pass from the shadow to the reality – as the idea of Zayd is the shadow of Zayd in existence who is its reality – the attributes will not veil Zayd, and what you perceive will be the concrete person of Zayd qualified with all his attributes. In the same way the abstraction of qualities from the Divine Essence is at the shadow levels of conceptual forms. But when you reach the Real you do not find the qualities separate from the Essence. The perception of the Essence is not separable from the perception of the attributes. People have differentiated the manifestation of the Essence from the manifestation of attributes and the manifestation of acts. But these different manifestations belong to the domain of shadow. After reaching the Real there is only one manifestation that includes all others. When you perceive Zayd you do not perceive him and his attributes separately. The time you perceive Zayd you perceive him as a learned

scholar. His learning and scholarship do not obstruct the perception of his self, they are inseparable from him. But when you form an idea of Zayd and comprehend him through shadowy forms his attributes will appear different from his self and will hide him, as I have explained.

Don't you see that the Being you would look at in the Hereafter will be a Being with all attributes and not a pure Essence divested of names and attributes which is only an idea. For the Essence is never without the attributes and the attributes are never separated from the Essence. Separation happens in a different context. When a perfect mystic is completely absorbed in the love of the Essence, he is no longer conscious of Divine names and attributes, and sees nothing except the Absolute One. Therefore the separation of the Essence from the attributes is a matter of the mystic's vision; it is not objective and real. . .

It is a great honour for man that he can rise up to the height of mirroring the Absolute One and manifest His pure Essence unqualified with attributes and modes, although the truth is that the Divine Essence is all the time qualified with attributes and modes, and is never isolated from them.

V

Vol. I:296 (pp. 782–4)

The attributes of God are indivisible.

The attributes of God are, like His essence, unique, indescribable and absolutely indivisible. There is, for instance, one indivisible knowledge in which all that is known from the beginning to the end is revealed; there is one perfect indivisible power by which everything past and present comes into being; there is one indivisible speech by which God speaks from eternity to eternity; and so are all His essential attributes. At this level the attributes are beyond all multiplicity that arises due to their relation with ideas and objects. Objects are known and produced by God, but His

attributes of knowledge and power are not affected by their objects. This truth is beyond the reach of reason, and would be hardly accepted by the people of reason and logic. They would rather regard it as impossible that things are known to God and yet His knowledge does not come in contact with its objects, or that things are produced by Him and yet His power is not connected with them. They do not know that at that (transcendental) level the eternal past (*azal*) and the everlasting future (*abad*) are one present instant (*ān*). Even the instant does not exist at that level; we speak of it just because it is the best term we have to express the truth. Everything past or future is available in that instant. God knows Zayd in one and the same instant as existing and as not existing, as a foetus and as a child, as young and as old, as alive and as dead, as existing in the intermediate state between death and resurrection and as existing at the time of resurrection and judgement. The instant can, therefore have no connection with these different beings. If it has, it will cease to be an instant and will be called time (*zamān*) which is divisible into past and future. We conclude therefore that these different beings exist and do not exist in the same instant.

Thus there is no wonder if the absolutely indivisible Being has a knowledge that is not connected with any object and yet all the objects are known to it in one act of knowledge. The union of contraries is indeed impossible when they refer to a thing at one and the same time, and to the one and the same aspect. But here there is no question of time, for God is not subject to time. And there is no reference to the same aspect, for whereas one refers to the object as such the other refers to the object as differentiated. No one would consider absurd or impossible the following statement if someone chooses to make it: 'I see in one single instant the different parts of speech (*kalimah*) – noun, verb and *ḥarf*[101] – all one as speech. I see the *munṣarif* one with the *ghayr munṣarif*, and the *mabnī* one with the *mu'rab*.[102] And yet speech which includes all the different parts is not at all connected with any of them, and is independent of them all.' No rational person would contradict this man, or doubt his statement.

Why should then one doubt the statement we have made about the attributes of God, or hesitate to accept it.

VI

Vol. II:3 (pp. 865–9)

The essence and attributes of God are above the categories of existence, possibility and necessity.

The Essence of God exists by itself and not by existence whether or not existence is identical with Essence. The attributes of God also exist by His essence without existence intervening between them. Therefore, the Essence and the attributes of God are beyond the three categories (of necessity, possibility and impossibility). But when we form an idea of the essence and the attributes of God in their various aspects and considerations – as there is no way to get at the inner reality (*al-kunh*) – we predicate of His Essence at the secondary level of ideal being a necessity that behoves His transcendence, and we predicate of His attributes as mental beings, a possibility which befits them by virtue of their dependence on the Essence. The Essence and the attributes of God in themselves are, however, beyond necessity, possibility and even existence. But at the secondary level of ideal being the Essence would be appropriately characterised as necessary and the attributes as possible. The attributes in real existence are neither necessary nor possible, they are beyond necessity and possibility. As mental beings, however, they are possible. But their possibility does not imply contingency (*ḥudūth*). For contingency does not characterise their essences as it does of the possible beings (of the world); it belongs to the attributes in their shadow manifestations.

Logicians make a similar distinction when they observe that the considerations of generality and particularity apply to essences as ideas in the mind and not as existing in the outer world. Zayd as an existing being, before he is com-

prehended through concepts, is neither a particular nor a universal; universality and particularity are accidents that happen later to his second-level being as an idea.

All relations, predicates and considerations which we assert of God like divinity and lordship, eternity and everlastingness other than the eight objective qualities, apply to Him as a concept and idea. In itself however, the Essence is without attributes, names and predicates. The Author of the *Shar'* has predicated of Himself names and predicates by way of comparison and contrast that He may be within the reach of the comprehension of man, and communicate with him in his own categories. As the real Ẓayd is often called a particular by way of comparison or characterised as an individual rather than a universal, without a specific reference to the idea of Zayd in mind, similarly the transcendental Essence of God is appropriately referred to as necessary and existing, rather than possible or impossible. It is however, obvious that neither necessity nor existence touches the threshold of His Holiness, nor possibility and impossibility dare rise up to him. Let this sacred truth be clearly grasped, for it is the foundation of religion and the substance of the knowledge of Divine Essence and attributes. No great thinker of the past has ever spoken of it. Glory to God who has favoured me with this singular truth, and blessings be upon those who will follow it.

VII

Vol. III:93 (pp. 1466, 1469)

Existence is not identical with Essence; the latter transcends existence.

What God has finally revealed to me as an act of grace is that the first determination of the Divine Essence is Existence (*wujūd*) which embraces everything and synthesises all contradictions, and which is pure goodness and abundant bliss. Most of the Sufis identify Existence with the Divine Essence

and are not prepared to consider it different from the Essence. The difference between them is too subtle for most people to perceive it, hence they fail to separate Existence from the Essence. This is why the determinational character of Existence has remained hidden till now, and no distinction has been made between it and (the Essence) that is determined. A great number of people have worshipped Existence as God and have failed to find the real object of worship and love that lies beyond it. They have regarded Existence as the source of all existential beings and the cause of all temporal events. The distinction of the Real from the not-Real is a great favour which was reserved for this humble creature who was to appear later; and the denial of any association of the not-Divine with the Divine which is the mission of the prophets was left to one who feeds on the crumbs of their table. . .

Question: Does the first ontological determination have an objective existence, or does it have an ideal being only? On examination neither view seems to be correct. For out there, according to these mystics, nothing exists except the Absolute One, and there is no question of determination or descent there. But if it is believed to have an ideal subsistance, it means that there is an ideal determination before the existential. But that goes against your assumption.

Answer: It does, of course, subsist. But if we regard it as something existing externally in the sense that it is there outside mind, that too is possible. God alone is the revealer of truth.

VIII

Vol. I:260 (p. 553)

God is above being and non-being.

There is nothing besides Being except pure non-being. When the mystic traverses various existential and ideal levels he reaches non-being which is opposed to Being. The essence

of God, however, is beyond being and non-being. As non-being does not reach Him, being too does not have access to Him. For the Being that is opposed to non-being cannot be predicated of Him; and if we ascribe being to God at that level, it is because of the limitations of the language about being. There is no non-being which opposes the being of God. In some of my letters I have, of course, written that the reality of God is pure Being. But this is because I was not aware of the truth at that time. I have similarly written about the Unity of Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) and other things, when I was not aware of the truth. But when I was informed of the truth I regretted whatever I had said or written in the beginning and in the middle of my career, and apologised. I beg the Lord to forgive me, recant from what He does not approve of, and turn to Him.

5. The World

I

Vol. III:109 (p. 1516)

The world is an illusion; but it is also a reality.

By the domain of illusion (*wahm*) we mean the state in which there is an appearance (*numūd*) without something existing there (*bi būd*). When the figure of Zayd appears in a mirror there is just an appearance, and nothing exists there. For the figure of Zayd does not exist in the mirror, it has only an illusory appearance (*numūd wahmī*) without existence. It has been revealed to us in an authentic *kashf* and a clear vision that by His perfect power God has created the world in the domain of illusion (*wahm*) and by His consummate skill conferred existence on sheer appearance (*numūd-i-maḥaḍ*). The domain of illusion has only appearance without existence. But since the world has been created by God in that domain, it has come to acquire besides appearance a kind of existence (*būd*). It exists because it is an act of Divine

will. Since the world is an appearance qualified with existence it is something real (*nafs amrī*); it can have real predicates and produce results. The domain of illusion is different both from the domain of ideas (*martabah 'ilmī*) and the domain of external existence (*martabah khārijī*). But in comparison to the domain of ideas it is closer to the domain of external existence; its existence is more like the existence of the external realm than the subsistence of ideas which are said to have a mental existence. On the other side of the domain of illusion, there is the domain of objective existence. The manifestation of Being in illusion has a greater resemblance with objective manifestation as compared to ideal manifestation which is the realm of the hidden and non-manifest Being. God introduces, so to speak, a shadow objectivity into the domain of illusion and brings out the idea in that domain, and thereafter produces the outer world with the shadow of His objective existence in the domain of shadow objectivity.

Therefore, in the real out-there (*khārij*) there is nothing except Absolute Unity, and in the shadow out-there the world in its multiplicity exists with a shadow being produced by the creative will of God. In the real out-there Unity is real, and in the shadow out-there plurality is real as it is real in the domain of idea. Therefore, both Unity and plurality are real, each in its own domain, and there is no contradiction. Just as the objectivity and the existence of the world are shadowy, similarly all its qualities like life, knowledge, power, etc., are also shadows of God's qualities. Even the reality (*nafs amr*) which is attributed to the existence of the world is a shadow of the reality of the Existing Being.

I have brought nothing from my house.
All I have is given by You,
And I also belong to You.

II

Vol. II:98 (pp. 1155–6)

The world does not exist.

Question: You accept that the world has a permanent subsistence (*thubūt*) – even though that is at the level of illusion and imagination, and associate eternal reward and punishment with it. Why don't you then predicate existence (*wujūd*) to the world and regard it as something existing? And you know that subsistence in the view of the theologians is synonymous with existence.

Answer: According to the Sufis existence is the highest, the noblest and the most sublime thing. It is the source of all goodness and perfection. The Sufis are therefore reluctant to predicate such a noble thing to the not-Divine, which is thoroughly evil and corrupt, and decline to attribute the highest to the lowliest. The ground of their belief is *kashf* and insight (*firāsat*). They know through *kashf* and vision that existence is a Divine prerogative. If they ascribe existence to the not-Divine, it is because the not-Divine is related to the Divine in some sense however unknown, and subsists by Him as the shadow subsists by its object. Its subsistence in the domain of illusion and imagination is a shadow of that Existence. Since it is out there and God is also out there, one may justifiably hold that the domain of unreality (*wahm*) produced and established by God Himself is a shadow of the Divine reality. One may also be justified to regard the unreal subsistence as an objective existence, provided one bears in mind its double shadowy character. And one may even believe that the world exists out there as a shadow being.

In short, whatever the possible has, is all borrowed from the Divine Being; 'from the house of her parents she has brought nothing.' To say that the world exists without indicating its shadowy character is to make an incorrect statement. It amounts to saying that the possible shares in the most distinctive attribute of God. Exalted is He by this allegation. In my letters I have often said that the world

exists out there and haven't qualified my statements, but they must be understood in the light of the above clarification, and the existence of the world must be taken in the sense of shadow existence. Theologians, of course, use *thubūt* (often translated as subsistence) and *taḥaqquq* (realisation) interchangeably with *wujūd* (existence). But this is a linguistic consideration. Philosophically *wujūd* and *thubūt* are two different concepts. A large number of people who believe in *kashf* and vision as well as those who believe in reason and argument hold that existence (*wujūd*) is the essence of the Necessary Being, and subsistence (*thubūt*) is a category of thought. There is obviously a great difference between the two.

III

Vol. II:99 (pp. 1171–2)

The nature of the world's non-existence.

Question: Non-being (*'adam*), according to you, is a mere non-entity, hence it is absolutely non-existent. And since it has no existence, though it has a mental being, it can have no properties and produce no consequences. If, at all it can, they must be mental and would not exist outside the mind.

Answer: Please note that even though non-being is nothing, the entire edifice of the world is built on it. Its mirror is the cause of the variety and multiplicity of things. The ideal forms of the Divine names which are reflected in the mirror of non-being individualise it, confer upon it an ideal existence, raise it above the level of pure nothingness, and invest it with properties and consequences. These properties exist outside the Divine mind in the domain of perception and imagination. And since they have a stability and permanence in that domain as a perfect act of Divine creation, they do not cease to exist by the cessation of perception and imagination. They can be regarded as objective and real.

Why do you wonder at the achievements of non-being!

This marvellous structure of the world has been erected on its foundations. Think of the mighty power of God; He has created the entire world out of non-being, and revealed the perfections of Being through their opposites. The merit of non-being lies in making perfect manifestation possible. The ideal forms of Divine names reside in the abode of non-being, sit in its arms and lie on its bed. He is blind who does not realise that there is an open road from appearance to reality and from shadows to the Original Essence. 'This is a reminder. If you like you may take the path to your Lord.'[103] Let not the words like mind (*dhihn*) and imagination (*khayāl*) confuse you, and let not the achievements and the prospects of non-being appear impossible to you. Whatever is, is not outside the mind or imagination. But there is a difference between one imagination and the other imagination. The world is in one domain of imagination, and the creations of fancy (*wahm*) are in another domain of imagination. The former is something real (*nafs amrī*) and can even be said to exist out there; whereas the latter does not partake in reality and has no permanence and stability.

IV

Vol. III:114 (pp. 1532–3)

The world is different from God, yet does not limit Him.

The world has been created on such a plane that it can have no opposition or confrontation with the Transcendent. It is true that the existence of two beings implies a limitation of one by the other, but that principle is not applicable here. For the existence of the world does not limit or condition the existence of the Transcendent, nor does it establish any relation with Him. The image of Zayd that appears in the mirror exists in such a domain that its existence does not oppose or confront the existence of Zayd, its original object. Neither does the image limit or condition Zayd's existence or enter into any relation with him. The world exists just

like the image which has its being in the domain of illusion (*wahm*) and as such it is not opposed to its original Reality who exists out there. Its illusory appearance does not place any limitation on the existence of the original Reality nor establish any relation with Him. How sublime are the ways of Allah!

From this elucidation it is clear that the meaning of the statement that the world exists in the domain of illusion is that the world in comparison to its original Reality has been created on a plane which is similar to the plane of illusion at which an image which is formed in a mirror through reflection has its existence. It may well be said that to predicate external existence to the Transcendent is to assert something on the basis of analogy, because the out-there has in fact no place in that perspective. And when existence has no access to the Transcendent, what can be said of the out-there which is related to and dependent upon existence?

V

Vol. II:98 (pp. 1152–4)

God is neither in the world nor outside it, neither one with the world nor different from it.

You have enquired as to how one should understand the doctrine of the theologians ('ulamā') that God is neither in the world nor outside it, neither one with the world nor different from it.

Let it be known to you that the relations of immanence and transcendence, union and difference presuppose a duality of beings. Whenever there are two beings they must stand in some of these relations. But since we believe that there are not two beings there, the question does not arise. God alone exists and the world that is other than God is imaginary (*mutakhayyal*) and illusory (*mawhūm*). But since it has been made by God, it is sufficiently sound and stable, and does not disappear with the cessation of imagination or thought.

It is a sufficient ground for eternal reward and punishment. The world, however, subsists in the realm of perception and illusion (*ḥiss wa wahm*), and has no existence outside that realm. It is the power of God which confers permanence and stability of an existent upon the imaginary and the illusory, and makes it behave like the existent. But the Existent is existent and the imaginary is imaginary, even though superficial observers may, in view of the permanence and stability that it has, think and believe that it exists. I have discussed this point at length in my other letters,[104] and you may refer to them if you want. The Existent has no relation with the imaginary: it is neither in nor outside the imaginary, neither one with nor different from it. For where the Existent is there is no trace of the imaginary, and no relation can be imagined to obtain between them. I will explain this point through an illustration. When a luminous point is in rapid motion it produces the illusion of a circle. But in reality there is just a point and the circle does not exist except in vision. At the level the point exists there is no trace of the circle. In this situation no one can say that the point is within the circle nor that it is outside the circle. None can likewise assert identity or difference between the two. At the level of the point there is no circle, hence there can be no relation between them. One has to have a canvas before one can paint on it.

Question: God has affirmed the relations of His nearness (*qurb*) to and comprehension (*iḥāṭah*) of the world. This is in spite of the fact that the Existent can have no relation of nearness or comprehension with the illusory; for where the Existent is there is no trace of the illusory, so that one can think of a comprehender and a comprehended.

Answer: This kind of nearness or comprehension is not the nearness or comprehension of one body with or by the other. This comprehension or nearness is one of those relations which are true but indeterminable. We affirm the nearness of God and His comprehension and have faith in them though we do not know their nature. This is in contrast to those four relations[105] which we have negated earlier; they are indeterminable as well as unreal. The *Shar'* does not speak of them; therefore we do not have to affirm them and

hold that they are indeterminable. We can possibly speak of an indeterminable union (*ittiṣāl*) of God with the world just as we speak of an indeterminable nearness and comprehension. But since the word union (*ittiṣāl*) has not occurred (in the *Shar'*) whereas nearness and comprehension have, one should not say that God is one with the world though one can say that He is near to it or comprehends it. If we assert of the moving point in respect to the imaginary circle in the above illustration that it comprehends, or is near to, or is one with the circle, these relations shall be unintelligible. For a relation requires two terms, but there is only one thing in existence, namely, the moving point. We can possibly think of an indeterminable oneness, difference, exclusion and inclusion in the above illustration although there are not two terms there. For a relation to be intelligible the existence of both the terms of relation should be known and defined. Whatever is indeterminable is beyond the reach of reason. If in such a case we assert existence of the objects of relation, it will be an unreal assertion, unworthy of consideration, and a judgement about an unknown object on the analogy of a known object.

VI

Vol. I:160 (pp. 335–9)

Sufis have three different views on the status of the world.

The leaders of Sufism are divided into three groups. The first group believes that the world exists out there and is a creation of God, and whatever excellence or goodness it has, is also created by God. They consider themselves nothing more than empty forms which, too, proceed from God. They are so lost in the ocean of nothingness that they forget the world and forget themselves. They are like a naked man who has put on a borrowed garment and is aware of the fact that the garment is borrowed. He is so overwhelmed by his awareness that he hands over, so to say, the garment to its

owner and finds himself completely naked. If this man is brought from the state of self-forgetfulness and ecstasy to the state of self-consciousness and sobriety and graced with living (*baqā'*) in God after the experience of passing away (*fanā'*) from the self, he would find that the garment is on him but he would know for certain that it belongs to someone else. For now the passing away from the self has become a matter of knowledge, and the attachment he had with the garment is completely gone. Quite similar is the case of the person who regards his virtues and merits as a borrowed garment. He is aware that his garment exists only in imagination, whereas in reality he is without a garment and naked. He is so overwhelmed by this awareness that he puts off the illusory garment and finds himself completely naked. But when he returns to self-consciousness and sobriety he finds that the illusory garment is there on him. However, the passing away of the first man is more complete; consequently, his living in God is more perfect as I will, God willing, shortly explain.

These people agree with the scholars of *Ahl 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah* in the matters of creed which have been formulated in the light of the Qur'ān, the Sunnah of the Prophet and the consensus (of scholars). Between the theologians and themselves there is no difference except that the theologians have arrived at these doctrines by the way of reason and argument, whereas they have known them through *kashf* and experience (*dhawq*). As God is transcendental these people draw no comparison between Him and the world and assert no relation of Him, least of all the relation of identity or the relation of a whole and its parts. They speak the language of the Lord and the servant, the Creator and the created. In a state of ecstasy they forget that relation too. At this stage they attain the real passing away and receive the illumination of the Essence (*tajallī dhātī*) and absorb its infinite radiations.

The second group of Sufis regard the world as the shadow of God, but they believe that it exists out there as shadow, not as Reality. The world depends for its existence on God as the shadow depends (for its existence) on its object. Imagine the shadow of a person who by his great powers

produces in the shadow a reflection of his various attributes: such as knowledge, power, will and even the feeling of pleasure and pain. When the shadow falls on a fire it feels pain. But there is no justification in logic or in language for saying that the person feels pain, as the people of the third group think. Likewise the evil acts which are done by the creatures cannot be regarded as the acts of God. If the shadow moves by its own will, one cannot say that the person is moving. One is entitled only to say that the movement of the shadow is an effect of the power and the will of the person; in other words, it is his creation. It has been demonstrated, however, that the creation of evil is not evil, only the performance or acquisition of evil is evil.

The third group of mystics believe in the oneness of Being (*waḥdat 'l-wujūd*). They believe that out there there is only One Being without a second, who is God. The world does not exist out there, it has an ideal subsistence only. They say: 'Ideal entities (*al-a'yān*) never have the smell of existence.' Though they also regard the world as the shadow of God, they think that the shadow beings are in the domain of perception, in reality out there there is nothing but pure non-being. They believe that God has necessary as well as possible attributes, that there are levels of descent, that at all levels it is the same One Being who is the subject of all the predicates that belong to those levels. They believe that it is the One Being who suffers pain and enjoys pleasure under the veil of these visible and imaginary shadows. They expose themselves to various logical and religious contradictions, and in answering them take recourse to far-fetched and fallacious ideas. Although these people are perfect according to various standards of perfection, their doctrines have led a number of people astray and landed them in heresy.

Of all the groups, the first is the most perfect and right and closest to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Their rightness and conformity with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah is obvious. Their perfection is due to the fact that some levels of human existence like the inner consciousness (*al-khafī*) and the inmost consciousness (*al-akhfā*) have, by virtue of their sublime non-corporeality, a great resemblance to the Primal

Reality. Therefore, the people who have realised the extinction of their hidden consciousness (*al-sirr*) but have not separated these levels from the Real and negated them along with other things, and have, rather, regarded them as one with the Real and identified themselves with God, say that God alone exists out there and we do not exist at all. But since the multiplicity of things is real, they have been forced to concede to them an ideal subsistence. This is the reason why they regard subsisting entities as something intermediary between being and non-being. Since they do not separate some levels of creation from the Real and believe them to be necessary, they have been led to regard them as intermediaries and to introduce an element of necessity in the possible. They fail to see that that element is in fact an element of possibility, though it has a semblance of reality. Had they eliminated that element and separated all levels of possibility from the Necessary they would not have identified themselves with God: instead they would have separated the world from God and refrained from asserting the Oneness of Being. Unless every element of them is negated they would not stop identifying themselves with God even though they might think that they have negated everything. This is also a failure of reason.

The second group separates all the levels of possibility from the Real, brings them into the category of the not-Divine and negates them completely. But since they conceive themselves as the shadow of the Real Being, they still have an element of Being. The shadow has a strong affinity with the Real which does not vanish from their vision.

The first group, by virtue of the complete identity of attitude and will which they have with the Prophet (peace be on him), separate all the levels of possibility from the Necessary, put them into the category of the not-Divine and negate them completely. They see no comparison between the possible and the Necessary, predicate no relations of God, and consider themselves nothing more than impotent creatures. They believe that God is their Creator and Lord. They cannot tolerate identifying themselves with Him or considering themselves as Divine shadows. Can there be any comparison between a tiny particle of dust and the Lord of

lords? They love and admire the objects of the world, because they are created by God. And since they and their acts are created by God these Sufis accept the world with joy, and never condemn its things or their function except when the *Shar'* wants them to do so. They accept the world and love it just as the believers in the oneness of Being do. But whereas the latter love the world because it is the manifestation of God, rather one with God, they love the world because it is created and made by God. What a world of difference between the two! You can love the person of the Beloved even if you do not have a strong feeling for Him, but you cannot love His work and creation or His people unless you love Him intensely. The honourable people of the first group are firmly established in servanthood (*'abdīyat*). What greater evidence can there be for the authenticity of their experience than the fact that all their revelations are in full agreement with the Qur'ān, the Sunnah and the Law (*Ẓāhir-i-Sharī'at*), from which they never deviate a hair's breadth. May God include us, just out of His love for Muḥammad (peace be on him), among their lovers and followers.

The Sufi who is the writer of these lines, was in the beginning a believer in the Oneness of Being. In his teens he was fully acquainted with the doctrine and was firmly convinced of its truth, but he had no experience of it. When he was initiated in the *sulūk*, the way of the Unity of Being (*tawḥīd*) was opened to him, and he travelled long, and passed through various stations on that way. A lot of ideas pertaining to various stations were also revealed to him, and many difficulties and doubts which the people of the Unity of Being feel, were resolved for him through the revelations that he had. After some time, however, he had a new vision of things which came to dominate his consciousness. But though he was strongly influenced by it, he hesitated to revise his attitude towards the Unity of Being in deference to that doctrine, not out of a disregard for it. He remained for a long time in the state of indecision. At last he was induced to renounce the doctrine. He was shown that the Unity of Being was a lower stage, and was asked to move to the stage of *ẓillīyat* (i.e., the vision that things are shadows of God).

He had no choice in the matter. In fact he did not like to move from that stage since many a great mystic was stationed there. However, when he reached the stage of *ẓillīyat* and discovered that he was a shadow and the world too was a shadow, as it is believed by the second group, he wished he were not taken away from that stage, for it had an affinity with the Oneness of Being (*waḥdat 'l-wujūd*) which was still the symbol of perfection for him. But it happened that God by a pure act of grace and love carried him beyond that stage and brought him to the stage of servanthood (*'abdīyat*). At that time he realised the greatness of that stage and scanned its lofty heights. He then regretted over the earlier stages, turned to God and begged for His mercy and forgiveness.

If this Sufi had not been guided in this way and shown the greatness of one stage over the other, he would have remained at the stage of the Unity of Being, for in his view there was no stage higher than that. God alone establishes the truth and shows the path. Let it be known that the reason for differences in ideas and doctrines expounded by this mystic in his letters, or by any other mystic for that matter, lies in the fact that he had to pass through various stages. Every stage has its own truths and every state its own ideas. There is, therefore, no contradiction between different truths, just as there is no contradiction between one rule of the Sharī'ah and the other rule that replaces the former. Let all your doubts be set at rest. May God bless the Prophet and his followers!

VII

Vol. II:45 (pp. 991–6)

The world is without a substance: it is only a pack of accidents which subsists by God as an object of magic subsists by the magician.

The whole world is the theatre for the manifestation of the names and attributes of the Necessary Being. If there is

life in the possibles, it is a reflection of the life of the Necessary Being; if there is knowledge it is the reflection of His knowledge; if there is power, it is the reflection of His power. But the Essence of God has no manifestation or reflection. There is nothing in the world that reflects and participates in the Divine Essence, not even in name and form. God transcends the world absolutely!

The case of the Divine names and attributes, however, is different. The world does reflect and participate in them even if it is in name and form only. If God has knowledge there is a reflection of that knowledge in the possible; if He has power, there is a reflection of that power in the possible. But the world does not have an essence (*dhāt*), it has not been endowed with self-subsistence. Since it has been created with nothing else than the forms of the Divine attributes and names, it is all accidents. The possible has no substance (*jawhar*) at all; it subsists by the essence of God.

Philosophers have divided the possible into substance and attributes. This is a superficial view of things. True that one possible exists by another possible, but it exists as an accident exists by another accident, never by a substance. The possibles are all accidents and exist by one Divine Essence. There is no substance among them, the Divine Essence sustains them all. They have no essence (*dhāt*); there is only one Essence which sustains all attributes, Divine and possible. The reference to a self that one makes by the word 'I' ultimately refers to the One Essence by which all egos exist, whether one is aware of it or not. But all the same, God is not the object of any reference nor is He identified with any thing.

Superficial readers might mix up these truths with the ideas of the Unity of Being (*tawḥīd wujūdī*) and identify one with the other. The protagonists of Unity believe that there is only One Being there, that His names and attributes are merely intellectual considerations, and that possible realities have no share in existence. In their words 'the essences never get the smell of existence'. On the other hand, I believe that the attributes of God are there with an existence which is distinct from His essence as the Scholars of the Truth (*Ahl 'l-Ḥaqq*) hold. I believe that the possibles which are theatres

for Divine names and attributes have an existence. And I believe that the possibles are nothing more than accidents; they do not exist by themselves, they are not substances. Everything in the world exists by the Divine Essence.

Question: From your doctrine it appears that the essence (*dhāt*) of the possible is the same as the essence (*dhāt*) of the Necessary, that the possible is one with God. This is, however, impossible, for it involves the transmutation of realities.

Answer: In my view the essence (*dhāt*) of the possible, namely its quiddity (*māhīyah*) or reality (*haqīqah*), is a pack of accidents which reflect Divine names and attributes, but are not in any sense identical or united with the Divine Essence. There is, therefore, no transformation of realities. All that I assert is that accidents subsist by the Divine Essence who sustains everything.

Question: Since the reference to one's self which every one makes by the word 'I' ultimately refers to the Divine Essence, it follows that the essence of the possible, that is its quiddity or reality, is the Divine Essence itself. For the referent of 'I' is nothing else than the quiddity or the reality of the speaker. This involves transformation of realities, and is not different from the doctrine of One Being (*waḥdat 'l-wujūd*).

Answer: Of course everyone refers to his reality by the word 'I'. But since that reality is only a pack of accidents, it cannot be the referent of 'I', for accidents in themselves are incapable of being the object of any reference. And since that reality cannot be the referent, the reference has to be directed to the Sustainer (*Qayyūm*) of the reality. In short, the quiddity of the possible is a pack of accidents, and since it is incompetent, it cannot be the referent of 'I'. The real referent is the one who sustains it, namely the Necessary Being. Our view, therefore, does not involve mutation of realities, or the transformation of the possible into the Necessary. It is totally different from the doctrine of One Being. The important thing in our doctrine is that though the 'I' of the possible ultimately refers to the Necessary Being, the possible remains possible as it ever was and never

utters: 'Glory to me', or 'I am God'. It cannot in fact utter that, because it never loses its discretion.

Question: The doctrine that the possible exists by the Necessary implies the inherence of the contingents in the Divine Essence. This is obviously ruled out.

Answer: The existence of contingents by the Necessary in the sense of inherence in the Divine Essence is, of course, impossible. But I do not take 'existence by' in the sense of 'inherence in'. I understand it in the sense of subsistence. The possible subsists by the Necessary Being.

Question: If the possible is all accidents, it must have a locus to inhere in. What is that locus? The Necessary is not the locus, and the possible cannot possibly be.

Answer: The accident to be sure does not exist by itself, it has to subsist by another. Philosophers who do not know any meaning of subsistence other than inherence have been compelled to assume a locus for every accident without which subsistence is inconceivable for them. But subsistence as we have indicated above has a different meaning in which a locus may not be required. We have seen and experienced that everything subsists by God without there being any inherence or any sort of locus there. The rationalists may or may not accept it. But what is obvious to us cannot be contradicted by their scepticism, and our certitude cannot be demolished by their doubts.

I will explain my point by an illustration. It is a common experience that magicians and wonder-workers produce fanciful objects and wonderful forms. Everyone knows that like accidents these objects do not exist by themselves. They and their accidents subsist by the magician who produces them; they have no locus at all. Everyone also knows that the subsistence of a magical object does not involve a locus or an inherent. It subsists by the magician without inhering in him. This is exactly the case in the matter under discussion. God has created the world in the domain of perception and imagination, and made it sound and stable. He has associated with it eternal happiness and perpetual suffering. The world does not exist in itself; it exists by God, but there is no inherence, no locus and no inhering object.

Let me give another illustration. Suppose there is a mirror

in which the forms of a mountain and the sky appear through reflection. He will be a fool who takes those forms as the real mountain or sky, and regard those images as substances existing in themselves. He will also be a fool who considers those forms accidentally subsisting by something else and looks for their locii, but when he fails to find the locii he denies the existence of the objects altogether. He is a fool; for he belies his clear experience just because it does not tally with the beliefs of the people. Even a man of little intelligence knows that images do not have a locus and do not require any. To the people of *kashf* and vision possible beings are just like those images and nothing more than those images. But by His perfect skill God has made them so solid and so stable that they have been immune from corruption and degeneration, and destinies of men and their lives in the Hereafter have been associated with them.

The Mu'tazilite theologian Naẓẓām[106] suggested the idea that the world is a conglomeration of accidents without a substance. This is not at all surprising, even a lier sometimes speaks the truth. But his intellect was not sharp enough to see that the accidents exist by God; consequently he became the object of slander and ridicule by scholars. The accidents must have something to exist by. But Naẓẓām did not believe in a substance and hence failed to find something for them to exist by.

From among the Sufis, the author of the *Futūḥāt Makkīyah* believes that the world is a complex of accidents subsisting in one existent which he identifies with the Absolute One (*Dhāt Aḥadīyah*). He also believes that the accidents do not exist till the second moment; every moment the world disappears into nothingness and appears again in existence. For me this is a matter of vision (*shuhūdī*), not of reality (*wujūdī*), as I have explained in my *Commentary on the Two Quatrains*.[107]

In the course of his spiritual journey and before he reaches the stage where the not-Divine goes out of his sight, the mystic perceives at one moment that the world does not exist, the second moment he perceives that it exists, the third moment he finds that it has gone out of existence, and the fourth moment he experiences it appearing again. This

alternation goes on till the mystic attains to complete extinction (*fanā'-i-muṭlaq*), and discovers that the not-Divine is all the time non-existent. At this stage the world appears in his vision as an interminable void (*mustamirr 'l-'adam*). Similarly, during the experience of living in God and returning to the world, sometimes the world appears in his vision and sometimes disappears. This experience may produce in the mystic the illusion of a continuous renewal of forms. But when his living in God and return to the world come to perfection, and he becomes competent to instruct and guide people, the world appears in his consciousness again, and he finds it an abiding existence. The whole experience is therefore a matter of the vision of the mystic, not of the existence of the world itself which lasts for ever. If there is ever a doubt about the existence of the world it concerns the vision of the mystic. Glory be to God who reveals the truth! The doctrine of the non-survival of accidents for more than a moment which is expounded by some theologians is problematic and not established, and the arguments that have been advanced in its support are at best inconclusive.

6. Man

I

Vol. III:21 (p. 1240)

Human ego is non-real as well as real.

Question: You have asked me that since shadow beings subsist as beings not by their essence but by the Essence of God, it means that the real referent of the words like 'he' 'you' or 'I' is God in every case. If that is true how can one refer some predicates which do not behove God to these pronouns? How can one, for instance, say: 'I eat' or 'I sleep'?

Answer: Please note that although the shadow subsists by the Reality it is always there as a shadow, and the fact that

it subsists in the domain of perception and imagination does not affect its existence. As shadow, it has its own stability and permanence; this is borne out by the saying: 'You have been created to be eternal.' One can rightly refer the predicates you have mentioned to those pronouns provided they are taken as shadows. Every level of being has its properties. One who is lost in God is not God.

II

Vol. I:289 (pp. 725–39)

Man is free and his will is effective, and its effectiveness is part of God's eternal decree. His acts are created by God, but he is their actor; the belief that God is the Sole Actor (tawḥīd fi'lī) which many sufis have, is a product of ecstasy and is incorrect.

Praise be to Allah who reveals the secret of predestination (*qaḍā wa qadr*) to His chosen people and conceals it from the common folk lest they go astray. Peace and blessings be on the Prophet through whom He has established the truth and removed the excuses of the sinners who will meet their doom, and blessings be on the people of his family and on his Companions, the righteous and the honest, who had faith in God's predestination and were resigned to His decree.

There is a lot of confusion and muddled thinking regarding predestination, and most of the people who have pondered over the problem have been carried away by fanciful ideas. Some think that men are completely determined in whatever they choose or do; others say that human actions have no concern with the Almighty. A third group takes the middle course, which is the right view and the correct stand. This view has been revealed to the people who shall be saved, namely, the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah* (may God be pleased with all of them, the ones who have gone before and the ones who will come after). They have avoided either extremes in this matter and chosen the middle course.

It has been reported that Abū Ḥanīfah[108] asked Ja'far bin Muḥammad al-Ṣadīq[109] (may God be pleased with them): 'O, son of the Prophet! has God entrusted all matters to men?' He answered: 'God is far from delegating His Lordship to people.' Abū Ḥanīfah next asked: 'Does God compel men to their actions?' He replied: 'God is too just to constrain them to act and then punish them.' 'How is that?' Abū Ḥanīfah sought for an explanation. Ja'far replied: 'The truth lies in between: there is neither compulsion nor delegation; man is neither constrained nor is he given complete power over things.' That is why the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah* believe that voluntary acts of men are determined by God in that they are created and brought into existence by Him, and determined by men in that they are associated with them in a particular manner which has been called acquisition (*iktisāb*). So the actions of men in relation to God's power are called creation, and in relation to his power are called acquisition.

However, Ash'arī[110] from among the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah* thinks that the will of man has no effect at all on his acts. God produces man's acts after he has chosen them. For in his opinion, the contingent will of man can produce no effect. Thus he comes close to determinism (*al-jabr*); consequently his view has been called 'qualified determinism' (*al-jabr 'l-mutawassiṭ*).

Abū Isḥāq Isfarā'īnī,[111] on the other hand, thinks that the contingent will of man does effect his acts; in fact, acts occur through both the powers (human and Divine) jointly. In his opinion it is quite possible that two powers produce a single thing acting on it in two different ways.

Qāḍī Abū Bakr Baqillānī[112] believes that the contingent power of man affects only the character of the act; that is to say, it makes the act an obedience or a sin.

In the opinion of this humble writer the contingent power of man affects the act as well as its character. There is no sense in saying that human power affects the character of an act, but does not affect the act itself. The character of the act is dependent upon the act, even though it is true that one has to effect it over and above effecting the act itself. For the existence of a quality is something more than the existence of the object it qualifies. There is no harm, in my

view, in believing that the will of man is effective even though Ash'arī disapproves of it. For the effectiveness of the human will is as much a creation of God as the will itself. The belief that the human will is effective is nearer the truth; the belief of Ash'arī, on the other hand, is a kind of determinism. For in his opinion man has no choice, and his will can produce no effect at all. The only difference between him and the determinists is that while for the latter an act is not at all the act of its doer and is attributed to him only metaphorically, for Ash'arī a voluntary act is the act of its doer even though he has no real choice. For the act is in fact attributed to the will of man whether his power is effective on the whole as people other than Ash'arī among the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah* think, or is nothing but a locus as Ash'arī believes.

This distinguishes the view of the People of Truth from the view of the people of falsehood. To deny the act to its doer and allow only a nominal attribution to him as the determinists do is sheer blasphemy and sophistry. The author of *al-Tamhīd*[113] writes: 'The determinists say that acts proceed from men apparently and in name; in reality we do not have any power. Men are like a tree which moves when the wind moves it; they are no less determined than the tree. This is infidelity, and one who believes in it is an infidel.' He has also this comment on the determinists: 'Their view that men do not in reality do their acts, whether good or bad, and whatever they do, its real doer is God, is infidelity (*kufr*).'

You may say that if the will of man has no effect on acts, and if he has no real choice, what is the sense in attributing acts to men as Ash'arī does? To this I will say: Human will even though it has no effect on the act, has been made by God a condition for the existence of acts in the sense that He will usually create acts after men have exercised their power and chosen the acts. Human will is the habitual cause for the existence of acts, hence it has a role in the occurrence of acts; they do not occur without it. Although power does not effect acts, it is their habitual cause (*al 'illah 'l-'ādīyah*). This is the ground why acts are actually ascribed to men. This is the most that one can say in defence of Ash'arī. However, the issue needs further investigation.

Know that all the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah* believe in predestination (*qadr*) and say that all things, good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, are determined by God. For to determine (*qadr*) is to produce (*aḥdatha*) and to create (*khalaqa*), and we know that there is no producer or creator except God. 'There is no god except He, the Creator of everything; therefore, worship Him.'[114] The Mu'tazilah and Qadrīyah deny predestination (*qaḍā wa qadr*), and believe that acts are produced exclusively by human power. They say that if God destines (*qaḍā*) evil and then punishes people for it, that would be unjust on His part. But this is sheer ignorance. For the predestination of God does not negate the power or choice of man; in fact He has destined that men will do or avoid doing acts of their own will. The truth is that God commands choosing and upholds choice, rather than negates it. The view of the Mu'tazilah and the Qadrīyah is wrong also because it is inconsistent with God's action. For the acts of God, when viewed in relation to predestination, are either necessary or impossible; because when He decides upon (*qaḍā*) the existence of something, that will necessarily happen, and when He decides upon the non-existence of something, that will never happen. 'Hence, if necessity (positive or negative) of actions proceeding from an initial choice is taken to be a negation of that choice, God will not be free in choosing (*al-Mukhtār*), which is blasphemous.

It is obvious to everyone that the view of the self-sufficiency of man in performing acts is not only facile but also absurd and absolutely foolish. That is why the doctors of the *Māwarā' 'l-Nahr*[115] (may God reward their efforts) have censured them in this matter. They have gone to the extent of saying that even Zoroastrians are better than them in this regard, as they associate with God only one partner whereas the Mu'tazilah associate innumerable partners.

The determinists, on the contrary, believe that men do not act and their movements are nothing different from the movements of inanimate objects. Men have no power, no will, no choice. They further believe that men are neither rewarded for good nor punished for evil, that the infidels and the sinners are quite helpless and, therefore, not responsible; for, all acts proceed from God and men are

compelled to do them. This is pure infidelity. A curse be upon the Murji'ah who say that sin does not harm and the sinners will not be punished. The Prophet has been reported as saying that the Murji'ah have been cursed by seventy prophets. Their view is obviously wrong. For there is a clear difference between the movement of the hand in striking and the movement of the hand in quivering. We know, to be sure, that the former is voluntary while the latter is not. Their view is also contradicted by established texts. For instance, we have in the Qur'ān: '(They shall be punished) for what they are doing',[116] and, 'Let him who likes believe, and let him who likes deny',[117] etc.

Know that many people have a weak will and are lacking in good intentions; they look for excuses and try to shift their responsibility. They are quite disposed to believe in the doctrine of Ash'arī, even the doctrine of the determinists. Sometimes they say that man has no real choice, and acts are his acts in name. Sometimes they speak of the impotency of the will, which implies determinism. They lend their ears to the words of some Sufis in this matter, that the doer of acts is one who is none other than God, that the will of man does not affect the acts at all, that his movements are just like the movements of inanimate objects, even his being and his attributes are 'like a mirage in sandy deserts which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water; when he comes to it, he finds it to be nothing, and finds God with him.'[118] Words like these have made them unscrupulous in words and deeds.

Having made this review, I will now proceed to expound what is the correct view in this matter. However, God knows the truth better. If men do not have a real choice, as Ash'arites think, God would not attribute wrongdoing to them. For Ash'arī men have no choice and their will is completely ineffective, and is nothing more than a locus. But God has ascribed wrongdoing to men at more than one place in His Holy Book. If human will is simply a locus, and can have no affect in any sense, that would not justify attributing wrongdoing to men. True, God can inflict pain and punish men even when they have no will, and this will not be wrong on His part; for He is the absolute owner of His property

and free to do in it whatever He likes. But if wrongdoing is ascribed to men they have to have a will; it is not proper to interpret the words (of the Qur'ān) metaphorically, leaving out their obvious meaning, when there is no compelling reason for that.

So far as the weakness of the human will is concerned, that may be understood as a weakness in comparison to the mighty will of God, and thus understood the point is well-taken and agreed upon. It may also be understood in the sense of the insufficiency of human will to produce acts; that is also accepted. But if weakness is understood to mean that the human will has no effect at all in producing acts; that is not acceptable. This is the crux of the problem. We have stated in detail the grounds as to why this view cannot be accepted.

One should know that God has obliged men to act according to their power and ability, and offered them concessions in view of the weakness of their constitution. He has said: 'God likes to reduce your obligations, and men have been created weak.'[119] And why not! He is Wise, Loving and Merciful. It is inconsistent with His wisdom, love and mercy that He should charge them with what they cannot do. He has not asked them to remove hills which they cannot. Instead He has asked them to do what they can easily do, such as prayers that comprise standing, bending, prostrating and reciting whatever is possible. One can do all this easily. Fasting is likewise easy, and so is *zakāt*, for it means to pay one-fortieth (of savings) and not the whole or half of it, which would be difficult. It is also out of His perfect love that God has instituted acts to make up for those that are not possible in certain circumstances. For instance, He has instituted *tayammum*[120] to make up for ablution (*wuḍū'*). Similarly, He has allowed to pray sitting one who cannot pray standing, and to pray lying on a bed one who cannot sit, and to pray by the movement of the head one who cannot do *rukū'* or *sajdah*,[121] and so on. This will be clear to everyone who looks at the Sharī'ah with an open mind. He will find the duties of the Sharī'ah quite easy and practicable, and will see the perfect love of God for man reflected in them. The proof that these duties are small is the fact that men

often wish to do more. Some, for instance, like to fast more than the obligatory fasts, others love to pray more than the obligatory prayers, and so on. This is nothing but for the fact that the obligatory duties are less than what men can easily do. If some people do not feel them easy that is due to the darkness of their soul and the dirtiness of their nature which is the result of pursuing evil desires and defying the will of God. God has said: 'What you invite them to, is difficult for those who believe in many gods',[122] and 'This prayer is hard on the people except those who are lowly.'[123] As the illness of the body makes the performance of duties difficult, similarly the illness of the heart makes one feel them hard. The purpose of the *Shar'* is to break the hold of the evil soul and curb its wicked aspirations; the pursuit of evil desires and the observance of the Sharī'ah are diametrically opposed. The feeling of difficulty is a proof of the existence of evil desires: the more difficulty you feel, the greater is the hold of evil desires on you. When evil desires vanish altogether, the sense of difficulty disappears completely.

So far as the words of some Sufis negating human will or its effectiveness, as has been referred to above, are concerned, one should note that if they do not agree with the Sharī'ah, they are null and void, they have no validity or authority. It is the words of the doctors ('ulamā') of the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah* which have authority. Only those words of the Sufis are acceptable which agree with the views of the 'ulamā', and those which disagree have to be rejected. The truth is that the Sufis whose experiences are correct hardly diverge from the Sharī'ah in whatever they feel, say or do, nor do they have ideas and revelations that differ from the Sharī'ah. They know that if they have any disparity with the Sharī'ah, that will be due to some wrong or defect in their experience; if their experiences are correct they would not differ from the Sharī'ah. In short, disparity with the Sharī'ah means misbelief and blasphemy. When a Sufi utters words that are in disagreement with the Sharī'ah, he does so under an ecstatic experience and intoxication. He is to be excused and his *kashf* is to be considered invalid and unacceptable, and should be interpreted in a sense different from what it

apparently means. The words of intoxicated people should never be taken literally. This is what I had the favour of God to write. All praise is for Him, and blessings be upon His righteous servants.

III

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The mystic may rise above some levels of possibility, but he can never participate in the Necessary.

Question: In many of your letters it has been explained that the essences of the possibles are non-beings which in their individualised forms reflect the names and the attributes of the Necessary Being. From this it follows that when the individual existence (*'ayn*) vanishes and the self passes away, no trace of the non-being would be left, which forms the essence of the possible, and nothing would remain except pure Being. For the absence of one contrary must entail the presence of the other, if the fallacy of simultaneous negation of contraries is to be avoided. According to the Sufis, Existence is identical with God or is one of His distinctive qualities. Either view involves the transformation of the essence, which is blasphemous.

Answer: The opposite of non-being is not Being that is identical with God or one of His essential qualities. It is rather a shadow or reflection of Being. Every being which is opposed by non-being has an element of possibility and needs the elimination of its opposite non-being. The attributes of the Necessary Being are beyond possibility, but as they are dependent on the Necessary Essence and thus opposed by non-beings, they are not altogether free from the contamination of possibility. They are constantly dependent on the Divine Essence even though they are eternal and inseparable from it. Dependence is a sign of possibility. If one thing depends on another thing, it is really imperfect and belongs to the category of the possibles. But if it does

not depend on something other than itself it involves an element of possibility but does not belong to the sphere of the possibles. That is the reason why the perfection of the Divine attributes is of a lower degree than the perfection of the Divine Essence. Hence absolute necessity is only for the Divine Essence which is above all imaginable imperfection and defect. Divine attributes are also necessary, but since they are dependent on the Essence, their necessity is of a lower level than the necessity of the Essence. Similarly their being is of a lower level than the Being of the Essence, because it is opposed by non-beings such as nescience and impotency. But the Being of the Essence has no opposite non-being and cannot be imagined to have one. If the Divine Being were opposed by a non-being he would require the negation of the opposite non-being. Want is a sign of imperfection and characterises the possible. God is above all this.

Obviously one should avoid using possibility in the context of Divine attributes, because it can be mistaken for temporality and the attributes of God are eternal. Though they are necessary in themselves they are necessary by the Divine essence from which they are inseparable. This implies possibility but not temporality. That the Necessary Being has no opposite non-being is a truth of *kashf* and experience, but rational arguments have been advanced in support of it, as they have been sometimes offered for self-evident truths.

Let me return to the question. I would respond to it in this way: It is true that when the mystic passes away (from his self) non-being is eliminated from his being. Nothing remains except being; non-being and all that it entails is completely wiped out. But the being that survives is the being which belongs to the possible and exists in the domain of imagination and perception; nevertheless it is a subject of real predicates. After the elimination of non-being it becomes the mirror for the qualities of the Necessary Being and replaces non-being as the essence and reality of the possible. Before the elimination of non-being this being was an attribute of non-being and belonged, as we have shown, to the domain of perception and imagination. But now after the elimination of non-being the same being takes the place

of non-being, becomes the essence of the possible and the subject of its predicates, and performs all the functions of non-being, even to the extent of having an opposition that involves an element of possibility. But when the mystic goes beyond the stage of opposition his being has no opposite any more; rather non-being has no courage to oppose it, and possibility has no leg to stand on. This is something unique; it is the stage where one should look for the truth of *aw adnā*.[124] So long as possibility and non-being are there, even as a consequence of opposition, the mystic is within the realm of *qāba qawsayn*.[125] But when possibility and non-being completely disappear, the mystic reaches the summit of *aw adnā*. But that does not mean that the possible becomes the Necessary. It only means that the possible subsists by the pure essence of God and no longer exists by the shadow of His Being. He who is lost in God is not God.

The mystic subsists by the Divine Essence just as God's attributes subsist by His Essence. He thus subsists by one which is above Divine attributes. However, the attributes are inseparable from the Essence, and their subsistence is eternal and everlasting. The subsistence of the mystic, on the other hand, is temporal and non-eternal. But the attributes are opposed by non-beings such as nescience and impotency, whereas the mystic goes beyond the stage of opposition by non-beings as mentioned above.

One may say that when the opposition of non-being is transcended, necessity should be realised, and the possible should become the Necessary. This is, however, impossible.

We would respond to this objection in this way. The possible can become Necessary if it assumes an objective existence. But the possible has no existence beyond the domain of vision and imagination. How can it attain necessity? We have thus another difference between the subsistence of attributes and the subsistence of the mystic. The attributes subsist as objective existence, whereas the mystic subsists as an imaginary existent, which, because of its stability and permanence, is the ground of the individual ego. Let it be clear that the ego of the mystic survives so long as non-being persists, which is his essence. But when non-being disappears there is no ground there for the ego

to stand on. Subsistence of the mystic after the disappearance of non-being is an intricate issue. Although being has now become the essence of the mystic, it is not the subject of the ego. In other words, 'I' refers to the negative essence and repels the positive essence. For the major part of the possible is non-being which makes the possible and brings out from its womb the entire world of contingency. The dependence of the possible and its origination in time is the effect of non-being; and its multiplicity and individuation are also due to non-being. The being of the possible is a borrowed being; in addition it is imaginary and illusory, although it is stable and permanent.

In discussing some difficult aspects of the problem of Divine Essence and attributes, we have used, due to the limitations of the language, some words which might appear to be imputing some characteristics of the possible to Divine attributes and to be imputing to them defect and imperfection. But they should never be interpreted literally. The Holy must be exalted above all defect and imperfection. We have also employed, following the examples of great Sufis, words like mirror, which the *Shar'* has not used in the context of God. I fear and tremble at this action. Our Lord! do not punish us for our lapses and faults.

One might object and say that *tajallī* (theophany) and *ẓuhūr ẓillī* (manifestation in shadow forms) and similar other terms occur in your writings. Do they not involve the descent of Being in various degrees as is believed by other Sufis? But curiously enough you deny the descent of Being. How would you explain this?

I would say: One has to accept the descent of Being if one identifies the forms of manifestation with the manifesting Reality as people have done. But if one does not identify them one need not accept descent.[126] And I have held that forms of manifestation are not identical with the manifesting Reality.

1. Al-Qur'ān, 15:99.
2. *Ibid.*, 4:136.
3. Abū Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Shaybān 'l-Qarmasīnī (d. 337/948), a disciple of Abū 'Abdullāh 'l-Maghrabī (179/795–299/911), was known, like his preceptor, for strict adherence to the Sharī'ah. [See al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 174; Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, p. 206.]
4. Al-Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, p. 174.
5. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Imārah, 18.
6. For Jāmī see Ch. 2, note 23.
7. These are the words of Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr 'l-Ḥallāj. For him see Ch. 2, note 46.
8. Al-Qur'ān, 7:43.
9. *Ibid.*, 108:1.
10. For Khwājah Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband see Ch. 2, note 17.
11. For Abū Yazīd 'l-Bisṭāmī see Ch. 2, note 35.
12. Al-Qur'ān, 25:21.
13. *Ibid.*, 7:143.
14. For Imām al-Ghazālī see Ch. 2, note 9.
15. Al-Qur'ān, 11:56.
16. For Manṣūr 'l-Ḥallāj see Ch. 2, note 46.
17. Al-Qur'ān, 42:13.
18. *Ibid.*, 18:10.
19. *Ṣaḥiḥ 'l-Bukhārī*, Isti'dhān, 1; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, al-Birr, 115, Jannat, 38; *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol. II, pp. 244, 251, 315.
20. For the ḥadīth see the footnote of letter I:70 [Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I, p. 199].
21. Al-Qur'ān, 4:80.
22. *Ibid.*, 4:150.
23. See Ch. 2, note 81. See also 'Aṭṭār: *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, *op. cit.*, Vol. 11, pp. 169–212.
24. Al-Qur'ān, 4:59.
25. Shaykh Abū Sa'īd Faḍl Allāh b. Abū 'l-Khayr (357/968–440/1049), a renowned Sufi of Persia, received Khirqahs from Abū 'l-'Abbās 'l-Qassāb and Abū 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān 'l-Sulamī (d. 421/1021). Shāh Walī Allāh says that the Shaykh opens a new chapter in the history of Sufism. He thinks that the *tawḥīd* which the Shaykh talks of cannot be identified as *tawḥīd wujūdī*, which was not distinguished from *tawḥīd shuhūdī* except in the following period whose leader is Ibn 'l-'Arabī (Walī Allāh: *Hama'āt*, Walī Allāh Academy, Hyderabad [Pakistan], 1964, pp. 18–19). The discourses of the Shaykh have been compiled under the title: *Asrār al-Tawḥīd*. [See Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, pp. 277–82; 'Aṭṭār: *Tadhkirat 'l-Awliyā'*, Vol. II, 270–82.]
26. See Ch. 2, note 83.
27. Palpably false words like these are interpreted only when they are uttered by a Sufi in a state of intoxication. But these words have been written in a sober state; hence they do not call for interpretation, and must be condemned.

28. For Ibn 'l-'Arabī see Ch. 2, note 10.
29. Ṣadr 'l-Dīn Muḥammad b. Isḥāq 'l-Qunāwī (d. 672/1273), the most outstanding disciple of Ibn 'l-'Arabī, and the interpreter of his philosophy, is the author of a number of books including *Miftāh 'l-Ghayb*, *Fukūk*, *al-Nafaḥāt 'l-Ilāhīyah*, besides a Commentary on *Sūrat 'l-Fātiḥah* [Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, pp. 504–6].
30. For 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Kāshī see Ch. 2, note 52.
31. Al-Qur'ān, 18:15.
32. *Ibid.*, 12:108.
33. For Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abd 'l-Bāqī see Ch. 1, p. 3.
34. Al-Qur'ān, 50:29.
35. *Ibid.*, 13:39.
36. *Ibid.*, 53:17.
37. *Ṣaḥiḥ 'l-Bukhārī*, Tahajjud 6; Tafsīr, Surah 48; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Tafsīr, Munāfiqīn, 71–9; *Sunan Tirmidhī*, Ṣalāt, 187; *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol. IV:251, 255; Vol. VI:115.
38. Al-Qur'ān, 57:21.
39. For Dāwūd Ṭā'ī see Ch. 3, note 26.
40. Al-Qur'ān, 3:152.
41. *Ibid.*, 21:90.
42. *Ibid.*, 13:21.
43. *Ibid.*, 21:49.
44. Al-Qur'ān, 10:25.
45. *Ibid.*, 52:7.
46. *Sunan 'l-Tirmidhī*, Da'wāt, 58.
47. For Rābi'ah see Ch. 3, note 27.
48. Al-Qur'ān, 7:23.
49. The reference is to the letter of Vol. I:301.
50. Al-Qur'ān, 7:43.
51. *Ibid.*, 7:43.
52. *Ibid.*, 9:72.
53. *Ibid.*, 42:13.
54. *Ibid.*, 62:4.
55. *Ibid.*, 15:99.
56. These are two very popular works in the Ḥanafī *fiqh*. *Al-Ḥidāyah* is a Commentary in 2 vols. on the *Bidāyat 'l-Mubtadī*, both by the same author, Burhān 'l-Dīn 'Alī b. Abī Bakr 'l-Marghīnānī (d. 593/1197). The other is a text on the principles of jurisprudence (*Usūl 'l-fiqh*) by Fakhr 'l-Islām 'l-Bazdawī, and has been published with its famous Commentary, *Kashf 'l-Asrār* by 'Abd 'l-'Azīz b. Aḥmad 'l-Bukhārī (d. 730/1330).
57. Al-Qur'ān, 6:90.
58. 'Abdullāh b. Muḥammad 'l-Mianjī Hamadānī (d. 525/1131), a judge of Hamadan, hence his title: 'Ayn 'l-Quḍāt, was the disciple of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī. A distinguished writer both of Arabic and Persian, he has discussed his theosophic ideas in his books, most famous of which is *Zubdat 'l-Ḥaqā'iq*. For his biography see A. J. Arberry: *A Sufī Martyr: the Apologie of 'Ain al-Quḍāt al-Hamadānī*

(London, Allen & Unwin, 1969); see also Hellmut Ritter, *Das Meer der Seele* (Leiden: Brill, 1955).

59. See Ch. 2, note 95.
60. See Ch. 2, note 35.
61. See Ch. 2, note 3.
62. See Ch. 2, note 19.
63. This is one of the popular sayings which have been attributed to the Prophet. It is not a ḥadīth. Al-Damīrī, al-'Asqalānī and al-Zarkashī say that 'it is baseless'. [Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī, *al-Mawḍū'at 'l-Kubrā*, Beirut, 1014 A.H., p. 247.] However, if it is understood to underline the responsibility of the 'ulamā' to preach and witness Islam in the Ummah, it can be supported by the authentic aḥādīth of the Prophet.
64. Al-Qur'ān, 17:84.
65. *Ibid.*, 57:21.
66. *Ibid.*, 62:4.
67. *Ibid.*, 66:8.
68. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Fitan, 135; *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Manāqib, 69; *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol. VI, p. 462.
69. Al-Qur'ān, 57:10.
70. *Ibid.*, 6:25.
71. *Ibid.*, 17:101.
72. *Ibid.*, 22:52.
73. For Simnānī see Ch. 2, note 51.
74. This ḥadīth is not in the *Ṣiḥāḥ Sittah*, *Muwaṭṭā*, *Musnad Aḥmad* and *Musnad 'l-Dārimī*.
75. For Shaykh 'l-Islām 'Abdullāh al-Harwī al-Anṣārī see Ch. 2, note 11.
76. Abū 'Umar 'Abd 'l-Raḥīm Iṣṭikhrī, as Jāmī writes his name, was the disciple of the famous Sufi of Baghdad, Ruwaym b. Muḥammad (d. 303/915). He was fond of pigeons and dogs, and loved to behave like a ruffian. This was his way of hiding his Sufism. [Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt 'l-Uns*, pp. 228–9.]
77. Khwājah 'Ubaydullāh Aḥrār (d. 845/1441), the most important figure in the Naqshbandī order next only to its founder Khwājah Bahā' 'l-Dīn Naqshband (d. 791/1389), established the supremacy of the order in Transoxiana which it never lost thenceforth. His chief work is *Fiqrāt*. In the *Nafaḥāt* (pp. 364–70) 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī, who belongs to the Naqshbandī order, has quoted some of the Khwājah's aphorisms. [For works on his life see Hamid Algar, 'Bibliographical Notes on the Naqshbandī Ṭarīqah', in *Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science*, (ed.) G. F. Hourani, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1975, p. 256.]
78. Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Ḥaqq Dihlawī (958/1551–1052/1642), a great scholar of ḥadīth, wrote a Commentary on the most popular selection of ḥadīth, *Mishkāt 'l-Maṣābīḥ*. The Shaykh was a prolific writer; his books include among others a work on the life of the Prophet, *Madārij 'l-Nubūwah*, a Commentary on the *Futūḥ 'l-Ghayb* of 'Abd 'l-Qādir 'l-Jīlānī, and a biographical work on later Sufis, *Akhbār 'l-Akhyār*. [For his life and work see Professor Khalīq Aḥmad

Niẓāmī, *Ḥayāt Shaykh 'Abd 'l-Ḥaqq Muḥaddith Dihlawī* (Delhi, Nadwat 'l-Muṣannifīn, 1964).]

79. Al-Qur'ān, 3:64.
80. *Ibid.*, 57:3.
81. *Ibid.*, 8:17.
82. *Ibid.*, 48:10.
83. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Dhikr, 61; *Sunan 'l-Tirmidhī*, Da'wāt, 19:67; *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol. II, pp. 381, 404, 536.
84. *Sunan 'l-Tirmidhī*, Mawāqīt, 69; *Sunan 'l-Dārimī*, Ṣalāt, 36.
85. *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol. III, pp. 135, 154, 210, 251.
86. For a discussion on this ḥadīth which has been reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of 'Imrān b. Ḥuṣayn, see Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū'at 'l-Rasā'il wa 'l-Masā'il* (ed.) Rashīd Riḍā, Cairo, n.d.), Vol. IV, pp. 93–6.
87. Al-Qur'ān, 58:2.
88. *Al-Futūḥāt 'l-Makkīyah* in four big volumes, about 2,630 closely-typed large-size pages (Dār Ṣadir, Beirut) is the work of Shaykh Akbar Muḥyī 'l-Dīn Ibn 'l-'Arabī. For him see Ch. 2, note 10.
89. *Musnad Aḥmad*, Vol. III, pp. 248, 376, 414, 427, 443, *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Zuhd: 16; *Sunan Abū Dāwūd*, Libas, 25.
90. These are the verses of 'Abd 'l-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Lawā'iḥ* (Lucknow, Nawalkishore, 1936), p. 17.
91. Letter 234 of Sirhindī's *Maktūbāt*, Vol. I, which is the next letter translated.
92. Al-Qur'ān, 4:79.
93. Ibn 'l-'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ 'l-Ḥikam*, *op. cit.*, Faṣṣ 4, p. 76.
94. Al-Qur'ān, 29:6.
95. *Fuṣūṣ 'l-Ḥikam* is the most famous work of Shaykh Ibn 'l-'Arabī, and contains a concise statement of his philosophy of *waḥdat 'l-wujūd* in its most developed form. There are over ninety Commentaries on this work in different languages. A critical edition of it has been brought out by Dr. A. E. Affīfī with copious notes, *Ta'līqāt* [Cairo, 'Īsā 'l-Ḥalabī, 1946]. Titus Burckhardt has translated it into French.
96. By People of Truth (*Ahl-i-Ḥaqq*) Sirhindī means the theologians of the *Ahl 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah*, the Ashā'irah and the Māturīdīyah.
97. Al-Qur'ān, 11:56.
98. Jāmī, *Lawā'iḥ*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
99. For Shaykh 'Alā' 'l-Dawlah Simnānī see Ch. 2, note 51.
100. Al-Qur'ān, 29:6.
101. All parts of speech other than noun, pronoun, adjective and verb are classified as *ḥarf* which includes prepositions, conjunctions and interjections.
102. Nouns which are declined are *munṣarif*, and those which are partly declined are *ghayr munṣarif*; and those which are fully declined are *mu'rab* and those which are not declined at all are *mabnī*.
103. Al-Qur'ān, 79:19, 76:29.
104. See letters Vol. III:109, p. 1516; II:98, pp. 1155–6; II:99, pp. 1171–2 and II:45, pp. 991–6 which we have translated. See also III:97, p. 1481; III:68, pp. 1370–2 and III:71, pp. 1375–7.

105. He means the four relations of God's being in (*dākhil*), outside (*khārij*), one with (*muttaṣil*) and different (*munfaṣil*) from the world.
106. Ibrāhīm b. Saiyār 'l-Naẓẓām (d. between 220–230/835–845), one of the first rank Mu'tazilite theologians of Basra, a brilliant poet and an acute dialectician. Many of his ideas were developed in the context of his arguments against naturalistic philosophers, Hellenic and Manichaean. He is known for his concept of *ṭafrah*, that is, the idea that a body moves not by passing through all the positions in space, but by jumping over the void between one position and another. [See al-Ash'arī, *Maqālāt 'l-Islāmīyīn* (Cairo); al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb 'l-Farq bayn 'l-Firaq* (Cairo, 1910) pp. 113–36.]
107. Sirhindī wrote a Commentary on the quatrains of his preceptor, Khwājah 'Abd 'l-Bāqī and tried to interpret them in the light of *tawḥid shuhūdī*, which is what he came to finally believe in. Shāh Walī Allāh, who differed from Sirhindī on the question of *tawḥīd*, interpreted the quatrains on *wujūdī* lines. I have not been able to get Sirhindī's Commentary, but have read the Commentary of Walī Allāh, *Kashf 'l-Ghayn fī Sharḥ 'l-Rubā'iyatayn* [Delhi, Mujtabā'ī Press, 1310 A.H.]
108. Abū Ḥanīfah, al-Nu'mān b. Thābit (80/700–150/767), the founder of the Ḥanafī school of *fiqh*, was also a distinguished theologian. His theological ideas form the basis of the *kalām* which was developed by Abū Manṣur 'l-Māturīdī (d. 333/944) and other theologians of Central Asia. A theological treatise, known as *Fiqh Akbar* is ascribed to Abū Ḥanīfah.
109. Ja'far b. Muḥammad 'l-Bāqir b. 'Alī Zayn 'l-'Ābidīn b. 'l-Ḥusayn (80/699–148/765), the sixth imam of the Shī'ahs, was a great scholar of his time. The two great imams, Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik b. Ans, were among his students. He was very bold and never lied; that is why he was called al-Ṣādiq. He lived and died in Madinah.
110. Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī 'l-Ash'arī (260/873–324/935), a pupil of the famous Mu'tazilite theologian, al-Jubbā'ī, realised at the age of forty that his theology was in conflict with the Islamic faith, gave it up and developed a new theology which goes by his name and has been the dominant theology in Islam. He wrote a number of books in which he expounded his ideas; the most important ones that are available are *al-Ibānah* and *Kitāb 'l-Luma'*. His *Maqālāt 'l-Islāmīyīn*, in two volumes, is the most authentic work on the theological views of his time.
111, Qāḍī Abū Bakr 'l-Bāqillānī (d. 404/1013) and Abū Isḥāq 'l-Isfarā'īnī
112. (d. 417/1026) are two outstanding theologians of the Ash'arī school which also includes scholars such as Imām 'l-Ḥarmayn 'l-Juwaynī (d. 478/1085), his famous disciple, Ḥujjat 'l-Islām Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad 'l-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), and Fakhr 'l-Dīn 'l-Rāzī (d. 606/1209).
113. Abū 'l-Mu'īn Maymūn b. Muḥammad al-Nasafī, 'l-Ḥanafī (d. 580/1184); the author of *al-Tamhīd li Qawā'id al-Tawḥīd*, belonged to the Māturīdī school of theology. Husām 'l-Dīn Ḥusaynī b. 'Alī 'l-Ḥanafī has written a Commentary on his *Tamhīd*.

114. Al-Qur'ān, 6:102.
115. The reference is to the theologians of the Māturīdī school and the *fuqahā'* of the Ḥanafī school who dominated Transoxiana and Central Asia.
116. Al-Qur'ān, 7:180.
117. *Ibid.*, 18:29.
118. *Ibid.*, 24:39.
119. *Ibid.*, 4:28.
120. *Tayammum* is to touch earth with the palms of both hands and rub on the face and the hands up to the elbows, in case one does not have water or cannot use it for the ablution which is required for *ṣalāt*.
121. *Rukū'* is bending the head in *ṣalāt* with the upper part of the body parallel to the ground, and *sajdah* is prostration on the ground.
122. Al-Qur'ān, 42:13.
123. *Ibid.*, 2:45.
124, The words *qāba qawsayn* and *aw adnā* occur in a passage of the
125. Qur'ān which refers to the Prophet's vision of Gabriel in his original form:

> He was taught by one Mighty in Power, endued with wisdom. He appeared while he was in the highest part of the horizon. Then he appeared and came near, and was at a distance of but two bow-lengths (*qāba qawsayn*) or nearer (*aw aḍnā*). So did he convey the revelation to (God's) servant what he intended to convey [52:5–10].

The Sufis using these Qur'ānic words refer to two stages of their experience, the experience of union (*jam'*), and the experience of oneness (commonly called *jam' 'l-jam'*) which transcends all distinctions.

126. The philosophy which Sirhindī expounds cannot admit the concept of descent (*nuzūl*) or determination (*ta'ayyun*) in the sense Ibn 'l-'Arabī uses these terms. This comes out very clearly in letter 122 of Vol. III of his *Maktūbāt*: 'I don't believe in determination (*ta'ayyun*). What determination can determine the Indeterminable? These words belong to the doctrine of Shaykh Ibn 'l-'Arabī and his followers (may God bless their souls). If and when they occur in my writings, they do not have that meaning, there is nothing common except the word.'

Glossary

abad: ever-lastingness, post-eternity; *abadī*: everlasting, non-ending, eternal.

'abd (*'abdīyah, 'ubūdīyah, 'ibādah*): literally slave, servant; in the Qur'ān, designates the nature, status and destiny of man that he is a slave of God, not a Divine being, that he has no share in God's powers and rights, and that his destiny is to realise his *'ubūdīyah*, servanthood, and be a perfect servant (*'abd*). In Persian and Urdu *'abdīyat* is more common than *'ubūdīyah*. *Bandah* and *bandagī* are Persian equivalents for *'abd* and *'ubūdīyah*.

'Ibādat, derived from the root *'abd*, means 'obedience with absolute self-surrender and humility', and refers to worship, reverence and prayer as well as to every act of honest and sincere obedience.

'ābid (pl. *'ubbād*): devotee, given to worship, prayer and remembrance (*dhikr*).

adab (pl. *ādāb*): manners; *ādāb 'l-Sharī'ah*: manners of daily life prescribed by the Sharī'ah; when distinguished from the *aḥkām* (commands) of the Sharī'ah, mean manners that are commended.

'adam: non-existence, non-being, nothingness; *ma 'dūm*: non-existent, nothing.

adhān: call for prayer, usually in mosques.

aḥad, aḥadīyah; *waḥdah*; *wāḥid, wāḥidīyah*:
aḥad: one, and *aḥadīyah*: unity; *wāḥid*: one, and *wāḥidiyāh*: unity. In Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy, however, these words designate various stages, of the descent of the One or Being. *Aḥadīyah* refers to Absolute or Pure Unity beyond all distinctions; *Waḥdah* (Unicity) refers to unity which is qualified with ideal distinctions, or ideas/ideal prototypes of things to emerge in the world; and *Wāḥidīyah* (Oneness) refers to unity that manifests in the multiplicity of things in the outer world without undergoing division or rarification.

ahl 'l-Ḥaqq: lit. 'People of Truth'; in Sirhindī's usage means the group of *ahl 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah* who hold the right beliefs (*'aqā'id*).

ahl 'l-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah: Sunnīs in general as distinguished from the Shī'ahs; strictly speaking, Sunnīs excluding the sects, such as the *Mu'tazilah* and the *Khawārij* who differ from the rest of the Sunnīs on some major issues.

akhlāq (sing. *khulq*: character): noble character, virtue, morality; ethics.

amr: (1) order, command; (2) God's command or Sharī'ah as distinguished from His *qadr*, creative determination; (3) also, at times, means *qadr*.

ān: instant, moment.

arba'īnāt: programmes of forty days of *dhikr*, devotion, and spiritual exercises carried on in cloisters (*khānqāhs, zāwiyahs*), mostly common among the Suhrawardī Sufis.

'ārif: gnostic, a Sufi who has attained *ma'rifah*.

aslāf: the elders, particularly the three generations of early Muslims: Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*) of the Prophet, their successors (*tābi'īn*) and the successors of the successors (*tab' tābi'īn*).

aw adnā: see *qāba qawsayn*.

awrād (sing. *wird*): a routine programme of *dhikr* and reading the Qur'ān.

'ayn (pl. *a'yān*): (1) the thing itself; (2) the real, concrete thing rather than its description or idea; (3) in a way, quite contrary, the idea of a thing in God's mind prior to its existence in the world. (Besides these three, *'ayn* also means eye and fountain.)

'ayn thābit (pl. *a'yān thābitah*): the ideas of things in God's mind prior to their existence in the world, their ideal prototypes. The adjective *thābitah* in Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy has a double connotation: (1) permanent or eternal, and (2) subsisting (*thubūt*) rather than existing (*wujūd*).

'aynīyah: identity, being one and the same; *'aynīyat 'l-wujūd*: identity of being/existence.

azal: eternity, beginningless-ness; *azalī*: eternal, without beginning.

baqā': to survive, abide; survival, continuance; the mystic experience of subsistence or living by and in God after dying (*fanā'*) to oneself.

basṭ: the experience of joy, elation and expansion of the self; opp. *qabḍ*: contraction.

bawadīh: a sudden witness to the heart from the Unknown causing joy or sorrow.

bay'ah: pledge of a disciple to follow his master (*shaykh*) at the time of his initiation.

bid'at: unauthorised innovation in religious matters; *bid'at ḥasanah*: justified and good innovation.

bi khudī: self-forgetfulness.

bi shu'ūrī: unconsciousness, self-forgetfulness.

da'wah: mission, preaching.

dhikr: to remember, remembrance; words used in remembering; *dhikr bi 'l-lisān*: *dhikr* by tongue; *dhikr bi 'l-qalb*: remembering in the heart; *dhikr 'amalī*: remembering God in action by obeying His commands; *dhikr ism dhāt*: to say 'Allah'; *dhikr nafy wa ithbāt*: to say *'la ilāha illa Allāh'*. (There is no god except Allah.)

dīn: lit. surrender, obedience; the commands one obeys, the beliefs and practices one follows; recompense; in contrast to Sharī'ah, means basic faith and religion as distinguished from detailed rules and laws.

fanā': to die, disappear; *fanā 'an*: to die to, to stop thinking or doing something, to forget, to be unconscious of; the mystical experience of losing the self in God.

fanā' shuhūdī: *fanā'* in vision, the mystical perception (*shuhūd*) of the annihilation of the self/world in God.

fanā' wujūdī: *fanā'* of existence, the belief emerging from the mystical experience that nothing (self/world) exists other than God.

fanā' 'l-fanā': the disappearance also of the idea that one has lost oneself; experience of oneness devoid of all distinctions.

fanā' dīnī/shar'ī: *fanā'* of religion or Sharī'ah, meaning the state of man who does not will anything other than what God's religion or Sharī'ah would like him to do. It is also called *fanā' irādī*; for, one completely subjects one's will to the will of God. Sirhindī calls it *fanā ḥaqīqī*, true *fanā'*.

farḍ: obligatory, duty.

fardānīyat 'l-maḥḍah: unique singularity of God.

farq: difference, separation; consciousness of difference between God and man which the Sufi overcomes in the experience of union (*jam'*).

farq ba'd 'l-jam' or *farq thānī*: experience of difference after union also called 'second difference', different in nature from the first difference (*farq awwal*) and regarded to be a higher experience.

fāsiq: disobedient, who violates the rules of religion openly.

faṣl: separation, a synonym for *farq*; opp. *waṣl*: meeting, union.

fatwā: legal opinion from a jurisconsult (*muftī*).

fayḍān: emanation, procession (*ṣudūr*) of the many from the One without affecting its unity.

fikr: contemplation, meditation.

fiqh: understanding, insight; jurisprudence; *faqīh*: jurist, pl. *fuqahā'*; *fiqh 'l-bāṭin*: 'jurisprudence of the heart', rules about the internal life of religion.

firāsat: insight, mystical or otherwise.

ghayb: hidden (opp. *shuhūd*: visible); unknown, unknowable; mystery; unmanifest, transcendent.

ghaybah: unawareness of the world around caused by a spiritual experience.

ghayr: other; *ghayr Allah*: other than God; (syn. *mā siwā Allah* or simply *mā siwā*).

ghayrīyat: otherness.

ḥadīth (pl. *aḥādīth*): report of the Prophet's words, or on his deeds, approvals and disapprovals.

ḥaḍrāt khams: the five presences (*ḥaḍrāt*) or descents of Being in Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy: *Aḥadīyah* (Indeterminate transcendental Unity); *Waḥdah* (Ideally determined Unity); *Wāḥidīyah* (Unity in its existential determinations): *ta'ayyun rūḥī* (the spiritual determination of Being); *ta'ayyun mithālī* (the symbolic determination of Being); *ta'ayyun jasadī* (the corporeal determination of Being).

ḥāl: state of mind or will; an affective state, feeling or emotion; in Sufism, a passing feeling experience such as elation, suppression, hope, fear etc., contrasted to more durable or permanent states such as patience, gratitude, love and trust, which are called *maqām* (pl. *maqāmāt*).

ḥalāl: legal, justified, permissible, right.

hama az ūst: All is from Him.

hama ūst: All is He.

ḥaqīqah (pl. *ḥaqā'iq*): (1) the real as against the metaphorical (*majāz*); (2) the internal reality as against the external form or appearance (*ṣūrah*); (3) the quiddity (*māhīyah*); (4) the ideal essence, or the idea of a thing in the mind of God; (5) reality.

al-Ḥaqq: truth; a name of God meaning, in the Qur'ān, the True, the Real; in Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy, the Real (Being) which is God as well as the world: it is the world as it appears in its finite manifestations, and it is God, when it is considered as qualified with all the relations and predications that apply to it in relation to its manifestations; Divinity as distinguished from creation (*al-Khalq*).

ḥarām: illegal, forbidden, strictly prohibited.

haybah: reverential fear.

ḥayrah: wonder, bewilderment, confusion, unknowing.

ḥudūr: presence, consciousness of God's presence; *ḥuḍūr bi ghayb*: consciousness of God uninterrupted by forgetfulness.

ḥulūl: interfusion, incarnation.

ḥuṣūl: knowing God through signs and arguments in contrast to direct awareness (*wuṣūl*) of Him.

'ibādah: worship, obedience with absolute humility and love, see *'abd*.

iḍmiḥlāl: withering away of the self, higher degree of *fanā'*.

iḥāṭah: comprehend, encompass; comprehension.

iḥsān: literally (1) to do something good and do it well; (2) to be generous and kind to somebody; in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, (3) to obey God's commands sincerely and follow His will in the best way; (4) to worship God 'as if you see Him'; (5) the highest level of religious life in Islam, higher than *taqwā* (piety).

ījāb: to obligate, prescribe.

ijmā': consensus of jurists.

ijtihād: the effort of the jurists to find out the right course of action in new situations in the light of the sources of the Sharī'ah. *Mujtahid* is the one who makes independent *ijtihād*.

ikhlāṣ: sincerity, to obey God sincerely and only for His pleasure.

ilāh: god; object of worship, love and obedience.

ilhād: heresy, deviation from right belief.

ilhām: inspiration.

'ilm: knowledge; knowledge of Islam through the Qur'ān and Sunnah.

'ilm aḥkām: knowledge of the rules (*aḥkam*) of the Sharī'ah.

'ilm asrār: knowledge of the mysteries or transcendental truths.

'ilm ḥuḍūrī: direct knowledge; knowledge through the presence of a thing in a vision.

'ilm ḥusūlī: knowledge acquired through common means, senses and reason.

'ilm ladunnī: knowledge directly from God, e.g. inspiration.

'ilm 'l-mukāshafah: knowledge through mystic *kashf*, illumination, vision, inspiration, etc.

'ilm 'l-warāthah: Shihāb 'l-Dīn Suhrawardī's term for the extraordinary knowledge which is born of piety.

ilqā': to put an idea in the mind; *ilqā' shayṭānī*: satanic insinuation.

īmān ba ghayb: faith in transcendental realities without seeing them.

īmān shuhūdī: faith born of a vision.

irādat: become a disciple; *murīd*: disciple of a Sufi master (*shaykh*).

isfār ṣubḥ: literally, 'the dawn of the morn', refers to the mystic vision of unqualified Essence of God.

'ishq: passionate love.

islām-i-ṭarīqah: the experience of difference after union, which is in agreement with the common faith of Islam.

ism dhāt: the name 'Allah'.

istitār: God's self-hiding; opp. *tajallī*: self-revelation.

ithnaynīyat: duality.

i'tibār: (pl. *i'tibārāt*): subjective or intellectual consideration.

ittiḥād: union, experience of union or oneness.

ittiṣāl: contact, meeting, union.

jadhb: (1) absorption in God; (2) God's pull of the Sufi towards Him, as distinguished from his effort to reach (*sulūk*) God.

jadhbah: strong and overwhelming love, absorption.

jahl: ignorance, unknowing.

jam': union, unitive experience; *maqām jam'*: stage of union with God.

jam' 'l-jam': lit. union of union; the experience of unity devoid of all distinctions, even of the idea of being one with God.

jizyah: tax levied on non-Muslims in lieu of their exemption from military service.

kabīrah (pl. *kabā'ir*): big sins, e.g. lie, theft, pride, ingratitude.

kalām: speech; articulated sentence; theology.

kalām nafsī: mental speech.

kalimah: word, speech; the word of faith: *lā ilāha illā Allāh Muḥammad rasūl Allāh* (There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is Allah's prophet).

karāmah: miracles granted to *awliyā'*.

kashf: (1) reveal, uncover; (2) knowledge through mystical means, e.g. vision, audition, dream, inspiration, insight, etc.; *makshūf*: the object revealed in *kashf* (pl. *makshūfāt*); *kashf kawnī: kashf* of the things of this world (*kawn*).

khafī: there are three levels of spiritual consciousness which are centres for the experience of the Divine. The first is called *al-sirr*, the hidden consciousness; the second is called *al-khafī*, the inner consciousness; and the third is called *al-akhfā*, the innermost consciousness.

khalīfah: deputy, vicegerent, successor.

khalq: creation, world.

khānqāh: cloister, convent.

khārij: outside, out-there, space.

khārij ẓillī: shadow or non-real space, refers in Sirhindī's philosophy to the space of an image, for instance, formed in a mirror as distinct from the space of its object.

khayāl: imagination; *khayālī*: imaginary, unreal.

khirqah: the gown which the Sufi teacher gives to a disciple either at the time of his initiation or at the completion of his *sulūk*.

khulq: (pl. *akhlāq*): character, noble character, virtue – moral and religious (e.g. trust, hope, etc.).

kufr: denial or suppression of truth, infidelity.

kufr-i-Sharī'ah: infidelity or unfaith as the Sharī'ah defines it.

kufr-i-ṭarīqah: the experience of union which suppresses and hides the distinctions affirmed in faith and ordinary life such as the distinction between God and man, faith and unfaith, good and evil, etc.

lawāmi' (sing, *lāmi'ah*): flashes of God's witness.

lawḥ maḥfūẓ: the Preserved Tablet.

ma'dūm: non-existing, see *'adam*.

maḥfūz: guarded; the mystics who are absorbed in God are protected (*maḥfūẓ*) by Him from committing sin or forgetting a duty, e.g. daily prayers.

māhīyah (pl. *māhīyāt*): essence, quiddity.

maḥw: to efface; experience of self-effacement, a higher degree of *fanā'*; *maḥw naẓarī*: effacement (of attributes) in vision; *maḥw 'ayni*: effacement of being.

ma'īyah: co-presence, being together, company.

majdhūb: one absorbed in God, see *jadhb*.

makrūh: undesirable, opp. *mustaḥabb*: desirable.

makrūh taḥrīmī: undesirable to the extent of being forbidden.

makshūf (pl. *makshūfāt*): mystical revelations, see *kashf*.

malakūt Allāh: God's authority; His heavenly kingdom.

mal' a'lā: the transcendental assembly of angels.

mandūb: commended.

maqām: mystical stations, see *ḥāl*.

maqām takmīl: the stage of perfection of a mystic.

ma'rifah: knowledge, particularly knowledge through mystical means, gnosis; *'ārif*: gnostic.

marjū': the mystic who is returned to the world, after he has achieved union, in order to reform the world and lead men to God.

martabah bi kayf: the Essence of God conceived without attributes.

martabah 'ilmī: a thing as an idea in the mind of God.

martabah khārijī: a thing in existence

ma'rūf: known; commonly recognised ways of good behaviour.

mashā'ikh: Sufi teachers; religious leaders.

mashhūd: object seen in mystic vision.

mawhūm: imaginary, illusory, unreal, see *wahm*.

mi'rāj: ascension, spiritual ascent.

mubāḥ: permissible, legal.

muḥaddath: the one talked to; a non-prophetic recipient of revelation.

muḥkam (pl. *muḥkamāt*): the verses of the Qur'ān which are clear in their meaning and intention.

mujaddid: one who renovates and revives (*tajdīd*) Islam.

mujaddidīs: the followers of the *ṭarīqah* of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, the *mujaddid* of the second millennium.

mujtahid: one who does *ijtihād*, see *ijtihād*.

mukāshafah (pl. *mukāshafāt*): to know through *kashf*; things known through *kashf*.

mukhlaṣ: the chosen, the elected.

mukhliṣ: honest and sincere in his worship and obedience to God, see *ikhlāṣ*.

munājāt: communion.

murāqabah: meditation, contemplation.

murīd: the initiate; disciple.

mushāhadah (pl. *mushāhadāt*): vision, the object of vision.

mushrik: polytheist; one who associates someone with God in His Divine essence, attributes, powers or rights, see *shirk*.

mutakhayyal: imaginary, illusory.

mutashābih (pl. *mutashābihāt*): allegorical verses of the Qur'ān.

muttaḥid: one who is united with God in mystical experience, see *ittiḥād*.

muwaḥḥid: unitarian, see also *tawḥīd*.

nabī: prophet.

nadhr: votive offering.

nafl (pl. *nawāfil*): supererogatory acts.

nafs: soul; carnal self.

nafs amr: in reality.

nafs amrī: real, actual.

naystī: non-being, non-existence, Persian equivalent of *'adam*.

nisbat: relation; relation of the soul with God.

nisbat fardīyah: in Naqshbandī terminology refers to the inner state of the Sufi when he reaches the final point of his mystical ascent (*'urūj*).

nisbat Naqshbandīyah: the ever-alive consciousness of God's presence in which one does not lose sight of God even for a moment.

nubūwah: prophecy.

numūd: show; appearance.

numūd-i-bi būd: appearance without real existence (*būd*).

numūd-i-maḥaḍ: mere appearance.

nuzūl: descent.

qāba qawsayn and *aw adnā*: literally: 'two bow-lengths', and 'or nearer'. These two phrases occur in a passage of the Qur'ān (52:5–10) which refers to the Prophet's vision of Gabriel in his original form. Sufis, however, use them for the two stages of their experience, viz. the experience of union (*jam'*), and the experience of oneness (commonly called *jam' 'l-jam'*) which transcends all distinctions.

qadr: to determine, pre-destine; pre-ordination.

qalb: heart; the spiritual centre for the reception of truths.

qiblah: the *Ka'ba* to which a Muslim turns in prayer.

qiyās: analogy; analogical reasoning in jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

qurb: nearness (to God), piety.

qurb aṣīl: real *qurb*/piety.

qurb dhātī: coming near to God's essence, union.

qurb-i-nubūwah: (1) the nearness to God which a prophet attains; (2) the *qurb* attained by following the prophetic way.

qurb-i-walāyah: the *qurb* attained through the Sufi way.

qurb ẓillī: *qurb*/piety of a lower order.

al-Rabb: the Lord, the Provident who provides, nourishes and takes care of, the Ruler.

rāh-i-ijtibā': the way God chooses to bring man to Himself.

rāh-i-ināhah: the way one takes to reach God.

rak'ah: one part of prayer (*ṣalāt*) consisting of *qayām* (standing), *rukū'* (bending) and *sujūd* (prostration).

raqīqah: appearance; *raqīqah malakīyah*: angelic appearance; *raqīqah shayṭānīyah:* satanic appearance.

raqṣ: dance, whirling in ecstasy (*wajd*).

rasm: (1) external rules; *'ulamā-i-rusūm*: jurists (*fuqahā'*) concerned with rules governing external behaviour; (2) overt identifying marks.

riḍā: to be happy with God's commands, and to be resigned to His decrees.

rujū': return of the mystic to people after union with God.

rukū': bending in *ṣalāt.*

rū'yā': dream.

rūyah: vision, sight.

sa'adah: happiness.

ṣaḥābī: (pl. *ṣaḥābah*): Companion of the Prophet.

ṣaḥw: sobriety; *ṣāḥī*: sober, the Sufi who has overcome his spiritual intoxication (*sukr*).

sajdah: prostration, a posture in *ṣalāt.*

ṣalāt: invoke God's blessings; the prescribed form of prayer in Islam.

ṣalāt tahajjud: *ṣalāt* in the later part of night, highly commended though not obligatory.

sālik: the traveller of the mystical path; his travelling is *sulūk.*

samā': hearing; musical session which Sufis attend in order to kindle love and promote ecstasy.

al-Ṣamad: the Self-Sufficient, the Transcendent, a name of God; *Ṣamadīyah*: self-sufficiency, holiness.

ṣawm: fasting.

sayr: lit. walk; in Sufism, journey of the mind, contemplation. The four stages of contemplation are: *sayr ilā Allāh:* contemplation beginning with the world and leading to God; *sayr fī Allāh*: meditation in God; *sayr 'an Allāh bi Allāh*: contemplation away from God with God, viz, the contemplation which leads the mystic from God back to creation while he is still occupied

with God; *sayr dar ashyā'*: occupation with the world to fulfil the will of God.

sayr āfāqī: contemplation on the world leading to its Creator.

sayr anfusī: contemplation on the self leading to God.

sayr maḥbūbī: contemplation by the one who is loved by God, rather than the one who loves God.

shahādah: witnessing; proclaiming the faith formula (*kalimah*); the *kalimah* itself.

shāhīd: witness; God's witnessing the mystic.

shā'n (pl. *shuyūn*): (1) state, engagement; (2) in the Qur'ān, the activities of God; (3) in theosophy, a mode of Divine Essence, regarded as an intellectual consideration, different from His attributes which are believed to be other than, and over and above His Essence; (4) to those who do not have this view of attributes and consider them as modes of the Essence, *shā'n* and attribute (*ṣifah*) are almost the same.

shar' and Sharī'ah: the way both of faith and practice which God has prescribed (*shara'a*); usually *dīn* (religion) is used for the fundamentals of faith, and *Shar'* or Sharī'ah for the rules governing practice.

Shāri': the one who gives the *Shar'* or the Sharī'ah, primarily God, and in a secondary sense, the Prophet.

shaṭḥ: ecstatic utterances of the Sufis.

shirk: to associate anything with God in His essence (*dhāt*), attributes, powers and rights whether in belief, action, attitude or feeling. The one who does it is *mushrik* with varying degrees of *shirk*.

shugl barzakh: meditation on the Sufi teacher (*taṣawwur-i-shaykh*) as an intermediary stage (*barzakh*) leading to the meditation on God.

shuhūd: vision; *mashhūd*: the object in vision; *mushāhadah*: to perceive in vision, object perceived, (pl. *mushāhadāt*).

silsilah (pl. *salāsil*): chain; a Sufi order which is a spiritual chain connecting generations of disciples to the first founder.

al-sirr: secret; inner consciousness which is the centre for mystical vision (*mushāhadah*), as *al-rūḥ* (spirit) is the centre for love (*maḥabbah*), and *al-qalb* (heart) is the centre for the reception of truths (*ma'ārif*).

siryān: pervasion, immanence.

sukr: inebriation, intoxication caused by a powerful spiritual experience; a higher degree of self-forgetfulness (*qhaybah*).

sulūk: travelling the Sufi path.

sunnah: literally the way or style of life; in Islam, the way the Prophet lived, in particular the ways and practices he wished Muslims to follow; the reports on his living, another term for *ḥadīth*; acts done by the Prophet and recommended by him without making them obligatory.

ta'ayyun: self-determination; a key term in Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy meaning that the indeterminate Being determines or manifests itself in the determinate forms of the world.

ta'ayyun jasadī: self-determination of Being in bodies (*jasad*).

ta'ayyun mithālī: self-determination of Being in symbolic forms (*mithāl*).

ta'ayyun rūḥī: self-determination of Being (God) in souls (*ruḥ*).

tābi'ī (pl. *tābi'īn*): the generation following the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) of the Prophet.

tābi'ī (pl. *tabi'īn*): the generation following the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) of the Prophet.

tafakkur: contemplation, meditation.

taḥmīd: to praise God, to say: *'al-ḥamdu li Allāh'*.

tajallī (pl. *tajallīyāt*): self-revelation, self-manifestation; appearance of God or of His powers.

tajallī-dhātī: appearance of the Divine Essence.

tajallī ṣūrī: appearance of Divine attributes.

tajdīd: renovation; reviving Islamic faith and life.

takbīr: to glorify God; to say: *'Allāh Akbar'* (Allah is great).

taqīyah: protection from possible harm by telling what is not true; dissimulation.

taqwā: to avoid incurring God's wrath or displeasure; piety.

ṭarīqah: way, method; way to God; the Sufi way to God or *tarīq walāyah* (the way of the saint/walī).

ṭarīq nubūwah: the prophetic way to God.

taṣawwuf: Sufism.

tasbīḥ: to speak of God's majesty; to say: *'Subḥān Allah'*.

tawābi' 'l-wujūd: implications of existence; predicates and consequences associated with the existence of a thing.

tawakkul: trust in God and reliance upon Him; to some Sufis means abandonment.

ṭawāli': beginnings of the experience of God's witness.

tawḥīd: to believe and witness that God is one; to fulfil the demands of that belief; in Sufism also means the experience of oneness with God, and the belief/doctrine that Being is One.

tawḥīd fi'lī: to see or/and believe that every act is done by God, that He is the only Actor.

tawḥīd shuhūdī: to perceive in vision One Being out there.

tawḥīd ṣifātī: to see or/and believe that the subject of all predicates is God and God only.

tawḥīd wujūdī: to believe that all existence (*wujūd*) is One; another term for *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*.

tayammum: to touch the earth with the palms and rub on the face and arms when one does not have water or cannot use it for ablution (*wuḍū'*).

tazkīyah, tazkīyat 'l-nafs: perfection of the self and its purification from evil.

thubūt: subsistence, permanence.

'ubūdīyah: servant-hood, service, obedience with humility and love, see *'abd*.

'ulamā', (sing. *'ālim*): a scholar of religion, a theologian.

'ulamā'-i-rāsikhīn: theologians perfect in faith and practice.

'ulamā'-i-wārithīn: scholars whom the Prophet has referred to in a ḥadīth: 'Scholars are the successors (*wārithīn*) of the prophets', namely, those who follow the prophets externally and internally, and carry on their mission of preaching and reform.

'ulamā'-i-ẓāhir: the doctors of the Sharī'ah, jurists (*fuqahā'*).

ulūhīyah: God-head, Divinity.

umm 'l-kitāb: the Supreme Book, identified by Sufis with the Second Presence of Being, Unicity (*waḥdah*).

uns: fellowship, intimacy.

'urf: custom, convention of society.

'urūj: the ascent of the mystic towards union with God.

waḥdah: the stage of the descent of Being between indeterminate Unity (*Aḥadīyah*) and Oneness in multiplicity (*wāḥidīyah*), see *aḥad*.

waḥdat 'l-shuhūd: the vision that all existence is One; unity of Being in vision.

waḥdat 'l-wujūd: the belief and/or doctrine that all existence is one; monism of *wujūd* (existence/being); pantheism.

wāḥid: one; *wāḥidīyah*: oneness, for explanation see *aḥad*.

wahm: conjecture, fancy, illusion.

waḥy: revelation, especially the prophetic revelation.

wajd: an emotional experience; ecstasy; union with Being.

wājib: obligatory, synonym to *farḍ*.

walāyat: (1) nearness to God involving His support and protection; (2) saintship.

walāyat-i-anbiyā': the close relation which a prophet has with God.

walāyat-i-awliyā': the close relationship with God resulting from following the Sufi path.

walāyat khāṣṣah: the special relation that one establishes with God by following the Sufi *ṭarīqah*, as distinct from the common relation (*walāyat 'āmmah*) that a good Muslim develops with God through faith and obedience to the Sharī'ah.

walī: (1) one who is close to God, a friend, enjoying God's support and protection; (2) a Sufi saint.

wāqiyah: vision in waking state.

warā' 'l-warā': beyond the beyond, absolutely transcendent.

wārith: inheritor, see also *'ulamā' wārithīn*.

waṣl: union, apposite; *faṣl*: separation, difference.

wiṣāl: meeting God.

wujūd: existence, being.

wujūdī: those who believe in *waḥdat 'l-wujūd*.

al-wujūd 'l-munbasiṭ: the All-Comprehensive Existence; in Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy stands for God as existing in and encompassing all existence; Walī Allāh, however, tries to distinguish if from Divine Essence.

wujūd ẓillī: shadow being, a being of a low order.

wuṣūl: meeting God.

yak bīnī: seeing One Being.

yaqīn: conviction; *'ilm 'l-yaqīn*: conviction born of knowledge; *'ayn 'l-yaqīn*: conviction born of sight; *ḥaqq 'l-yaqīn*: absolute conviction which is the highest form of conviction.

zāhid: ascetic.

al-ẓāhir: the Manifest, the Dominant; a name of God. In Ibn 'l-'Arabī's philosophy, Being (God) who manifests Himself in various forms and objects, which are its *maẓāhir*, manifestations (sing. *maẓhar*).

ẓāhir 'l-wujūd: the manifest being, existence.

zakāt: obligatory almsgiving.

zandaqah: misbelief, wrong ideas about the objects of faith deliberately cultivated.

ẓannī: uncertain, opp. *qaṭ'ī*: certain, absolutely true.

ẓill: (1) shadow; (2) a thing in its lower order of manifestation.

ẓillīyat: shadowism: Sirhindī's doctrine that the world has a shadow existence different from the existence of God.

zuhd: asceticism, austerity.

ẓuhūr: manifestation, externalisation; pl. *zuhūrāt*: manifestations.

ẓuhūr ẓillī: (1) shadow manifestation; (2) appearance of a thing in its lower order.

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