

Part 3: The Sufis

Chapter 42: Jalal al-Din Rumi

A. Life

Jalal al-Din Rumi is the greatest mystical poet of Islam. It can be said without fear of contradiction that in the entire range of mystical literature of the whole world there is none to equal him either in depth or in comprehensiveness and extent. There have been mystics both in the East and in the West whose experiences in the realm of the spirit may have equalled the spiritual perceptions of Rumi, but their emotional or intuitional side was not matched by an equally clear and powerful intellect. Rumi's uniqueness lies in the fact that in him reason is wedded to a wide and deep religious experience. The Muslim world has honoured him with the title of *Maulawi'i Ma'nawi* (the Doctor of Meaning), a religious scholar who is capable of philosophizing, of penetrating into the meaning of physical and spiritual phenomena, and lifting the veil of appearance to peep into the reality behind them.

When he argues he is a match for a superb dialectician of the stature of a Socrates or a Plato, but ever conscious of the fact that logic is a poor substitute for life. He inherited vast and rationalistic outlook of Hellenism sifting the grain from the chaff, separating the kernel from the husk. As a Muslim he has an heir to the spiritual wealth bequeathed to humanity by the glorious line of great prophets from Abraham to Mohammad. We find in him the sturdy ethics of the Israelite prophets, the dynamic view of life of Islam and the all-pervading love of Jesus. He calls his *magnum opus* the *Mathnawi*, the "Shop of Unity," wherein the diversities of life are harmonized and apparent contradictions transcended by creative unities. Nothing that is human or divine is alien to him. He expands with great force and conviction the original thesis of Islam, of the fundamental unity of all spiritual religions despite the contradictory dogmas that narrow theologies have formulated.

The windows of his soul are wide open in all directions. Although a believing and practising Muslim, he is

temperamentally a non-conformist for he realizes the secondary nature of the form in comparison with the spirit. He is a Protestant of Protestants, never tiring in the exposition of his thesis that in the realm of the spirit mere authority without personal realization is of no avail. Faith in the sense of believing in the unbelievable and indemonstrable realities is repudiated by him in very strong terms. For him, God is a reality to be experienced and apprehended as more real than the objects of sense-experience; similarly, the relation of man to God is not a matter merely to be rationalized and moulded into a dogma but to be realized in the depth of one's own being where the human gets into tune with the divine and the finite is embraced by the infinite. It is impossible to put any label on a genius like him.

During his life rigid orthodoxy was extremely suspicious of his beliefs and averse to some of his practices which were stigmatized as innovations and aberrations. There was sufficient material in his beliefs and utterances to convict him of heresy before a court of inquisition. His biographers have related an incident in his life which throws light on his catholicity. It is said that the chief of orthodox would expose his heresies. At the very outset, Rumi was asked to declare as to which of the 72 sects he offered allegiance. Rumi gave a very unexpected answer by saying that he believed in all of them, meaning thereby that there is some truth in every sect which has been exaggerated and distorted by the fanatical exuberance of the blind followers of its tenets. The theologian was non-plussed, not knowing how to tackle a man of such an indefinite attitude. Piqued by this disconcerting reply the theologian, in an angry outburst, said that it signified that he was a heretic and an atheist. The reply to this was still more disturbing for the theologian: Rumi said that he endorsed even this judgment about him.

Let us start with a short biographical sketch of this remarkable religious genius to note his background and the influences that moulded him. He was born in 604/1207 during the reign of Mohammad Khwarizm Shah whose empire extended from the Ural Mountains to the Persian Gulf and from the Euphrates to the Indus. The family had been settled there for several generations. As Balkh was in the Persian domain and Rumi wrote in the Persian language, the modern Iranian scholars claim him as belonging to the Iranian nation. On the other hand, the Turks call him a Turk because after his early youth the family settled in Anatolia which was a Turkish province but was formerly a part of the Roman Empire, and hence the great mystic poet is Arab because at the summit of his genealogical table we find the great Caliph Abu Bakr, the first successor of the Prophet.

The spirit of Rumi, the universal mystic, must be smiling at these attempts of racial appropriation. In one of his lyrics he says that heaven is his original homeland, to which he craves to return. In another lyric he asks his fellow Muslims as to what he should say about himself, "As to my homeland it is not Khurasan, nor any other place in the East or the West, and as to my creed I am neither a Jew, nor a Zoroastrian, not even a Muslim as this term is generally understood."

In his ancestry we find great names, great not only as scholars and divines, but also from the mundane point of view. On the maternal side he is a grandson of the great monarch Mohammad Khwarizm Shah who had given his daughter in marriage to the famous mystic Husain Balkhi, Rumi's grandfather. The

father of Rumi, Baha' al-Din was famous for learning and piety. He lectured from morning until evening on religious sciences as well as on mystical lore, and delivered sermons on Mondays and Fridays to crowded audiences. Commoners as well as scholars, aristocrats, and royalty gathered to hear him. The monarch held Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi, the commentator of the Qur'an and one of the great dialecticians, in great esteem and sometimes brought him along to hear Baha' al-Din.

Razi was reputed to be imbued with Greek dialectics, and attempted to prove religious truths by logic. Seeing Razi in the audience Baha' al-Din would pour his wrath on these attempts at the Hellenization of Islam, but the presence of the monarch and the prestige of the preacher prevented him from defending himself. Rumi as a young boy must have heard these denunciations from the lips of his learned father. In the *Mathnawi*, when Rumi takes up the cudgel on behalf of personal experience against mere logic-chopping, he points to Razi as a representative of a class of people who want to enter the realm of religious truth, walking on the wooden legs of mere argumentation:

“If dialectics alone could reveal the secrets of the spirit, Razi would have certainly reached them, but the feet of the dialectician are wooden and the wooden feet are most shaky.”

It is said that Razi was so jealous of the popularity and prestige of Baha' al-Din that he poisoned the mind of the monarch against him by insinuating that, if the influence of this preacher were allowed to develop indefinitely, he would wield a power that would surpass the power of the sovereign. Autocratic rulers in Christendom as well as in Muslim kingdoms have often shown fearful jealousy of religious leaders, be they popes or priests. There is no wonder that Khwarizm Shah became apprehensive of the growing influence and prestige of Baha' al-Din and his fears were fanned by the latter's rivals in the religious field. It is quite possible that Baha' al-Din left Balkh along with his whole family to forestall an adverse action against him. But there is also another version about his motive to migrate.

Shortly after he left Balkh the Tarter invasion over-whelmed the domains of Khwarizm Shah. It may be that Baha' al-Din had seen that it was imminent and so he decided to move to a safer region. The family moved first to Nishapur and then to Baghdad where Baha' al-Din stay was prolonged because Baghdad was a cultural centre of the Muslim world and attracted scholars from distant Muslim lands. A delegation from the Sultan of Rum, 'Ala al-Din Kaiqubad, happened to visit Baghdad during this period, its members were greatly impressed by Baha' al-Din's lectures and sermons. On their return to Anatolia they spoke to the Sultan about the spiritual eminence of Baha' al-Din and the Sultan persuaded him to come over to his realm. Baha' al-Din travelled from Baghdad to the Hijaz and passing through Syria he stayed for about a year in the town of Aque and then stopped for seven years in Laranda in Zinjan.

Here, in 662/1263, his illustrious son Rumi, now mature in mind and years, was married. It was here that Rumi's son Sultan Walad was born a year later. The Sultan invited the family to settle down in Quniya, capital of his kingdom. The Sultan with his retinue received him at some distance from the town and reaching the city wall he got down from his horse to escort the great divine on foot. Baha' al-Din's family were lodged in a palatial house and the Sultan would visit him on a regular basis.

We see from this family background that Rumi grew up in an atmosphere of religious learning in which religious problems were discussed and controversies entered into with great enthusiasm. Rumi must have learned much from his father and the great scholars who were devoted to him. The most eminent among them was Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq whose title denotes that he carried on independent research (*tahqiq*). Rumi's father entrusted the education of his promising son to this teacher who inculcated in his student the habit of independent thinking. Rumi's education continued after the death of his father and we find him at the age of 25 travelling in search of knowledge to great centres of learning like Damascus and Halab (Aleppo).

Rumi lived for some time in the hostel of Helariyyah College. There were eminent teachers on the staff of this College, one of whom was Kamal al-Din ibn 'Adim Halabi, who wrote a history of Halab, a fragment of which has been published in Europe. Rumi's education covered the whole curriculum: the Qur'anic commentary, Hadith, jurisprudence, and Arabic language and literature. His *Mathnawi* bears ample evidence of this vast learning. It is on account of this intellectual and academic training that his mysticism is not merely emotional. At every step we find him intellectualizing his supra-rational spiritual experiences. He spent seven years in the colleges of Damascus and we find him still engaged in academic pursuits even at the age of 40. The Holy Prophet Mohammad had started his mission at that age. In Plato's *Republic* Socrates proposed a similarly long process of education for those who would be philosophic rulers of his ideal republic.

Although it is stated in the *Manaqib al-'Arifin* that at the time of the death of Rumi's father his teacher and tutor Burhan al-Din certified his student's thorough attainment in prevalent sciences and then launched him on a long course of mystical practices which continued for nine years, yet we do not find any fruits of these spiritual experiences in the life of Rumi before his encounter with the mystical and mysterious Shams of Tabriz. Rumi now engaged himself in teaching theology and giving sermons as the learned religious teachers of his time and usually did. His verdict or *fatwa* was sought and quoted about religious questions on which he was held to be an authority. He avoided music as the rigid puritanical orthodoxy of his time did.

There is no doubt that his meeting with Shams was a turning point in his life. As to what happened when Shams and Rumi met for the first time, there exist a number of legends that are inconsistent. According to one version, Rumi, surrounded by books and students, was engaged in teaching when Shams suddenly dropped in and asked him, "What are these books about?" Taking him to be a man without any learning Rumi replied that the questioner could not know what they contained. At this the heap of books burst into flames. Rumi in great consternation asked him the meaning of this miraculous phenomenon. At this Shams said, "This is what you cannot understand." Another version of this legend is that Shams threw the books in a cistern of water and when Rumi became enraged at this Shams brought them out without the water having touched them, they were as dry as before.

Shibili, the eminent modern writer of a book on Rumi, is evidently right in his judgment that these

legends are not based on facts because Sipah Salar, who spent 40 years in intimate contact with Rumi, relates his meeting with Shams in a simple story unadorned by any legend. If anything unusual had happened, surely this friend and devotee would not have missed mentioning it. He says that Shams was the son of 'Ala' al-Din and was a descendant of Kaya Buzurg, an Imam of the Isma'ili sect before dissociating himself from it. Shams received his education in Tabriz and then became a disciple of Baba Kamal al-Din Jumdi, who introduced him to the mystic way of life.

He travelled from place to place living in caravanserais, weaving girdles and selling them for bread. He was staying in a serai of Qunyah when Rumi went to see him. The impression of this mystic on Rumi's mind was deep and lasting. Sipah Salar says that the two were closeted together for six months in Salah al-Din Zarkub's room, which none but Zarkub was allowed to enter. Now Rumi left off teaching and preaching and spent days and nights only in the company of Shams. It was rumoured that a magician had bewitched the great divine.

Rumi's sons and disciples turned against Shams whom they considered to be a charlatan and a sorcerer. Under these circumstances Shams left Qunyah suddenly, leaving no clue as to his whereabouts. After a long time Shams wrote to Rumi from Damascus. This letter kindled the flame in Rumi's mind again. In the meantime his disciples whose resentment had driven away Shams had repented of their conduct. Rumi's son Sultan Walad in his *Mathnawi* has mentioned this incident in detail because he was deputed by his father to go to Damascus accompanied by some other disciples to persuade Shams to return to Qunyah.

The epistle of Rumi written in verse is recorded in the *Mathnawi* of Sultan Walad. This letter shows how deeply Rumi had felt the pangs of separation from his spiritual guide and in what great esteem he held him. Shams accompanied this delegation and returned to Qunyah where he was received with great honour by Rumi and his disciples. It appears that Shams now meant to stay on, having allayed the suspicions of Rumi's disciples by marrying a maid of Rumi's house whose name is Kimiya. A residential tent was pitched for the wedded couple in front of the family residence of Rumi. Something happened again which turned Rumi's son 'Ala' al-Din Chalpi against Shams and others joined him with the result that Shams disappeared now for good.

Rumi's reliable biographer, Sipah Salar, says only this much, Shams left Qunyah again in indignation and although Rumi sent people to search for him in various places, no one could find him. But other biographers of Rumi are in full accord about the conviction that Shams was assassinated by some of Rumi's disciples, and the author of *Nafahat al-Uns* mentions the name of Rumi's son, 'Ala' al-Din, as his murderer. The assassination or disappearance of Shams took place in about 645/1247.

It is difficult to assess the mind and character of a man who appeared from nowhere and disappeared without leaving a trace after having influenced so deeply one of the greatest religious geniuses of all times. Could a man of Rumi's mental calibre be the subject of an abiding delusion created by a master hypnotist? The world has valued Rumi as a man of deep spiritual apprehension, a man whose religious

life was rooted in a personal experience which could stand the test of reason. We find him acknowledge his debt to Shams in a thousand soul-stirring lyrics. Shams found Rumi an academic theologian and conventional preacher and converted him into an ecstatic mystic in deep personal contact with the ineffable verities of life. The prosaic Rumi over-night was turned into an ecstatic lyricist, who now found poetry and music much better than philosophy and theology as vehicles for the expression of truth.

Rumi identified himself so completely with Shams that the voluminous collection of mystical lyrics is called *Diwan-i Shams-i Tabriz*. In hundreds of lyrics the inspiration received from this mysterious spiritual guide is acknowledged with vibrating gratitude. The realm of mystical experience is a doubly sealed mystery to be uninitiated, but he has to accept the testimony of Rumi about it, however personal and subjective it may be, when he says with unshakable conviction that in Zarkub's shop, where the guide and the disciple were closeted together in mysterious intimacy, he found a spiritual treasure of indescribable value and ineffable beauty, both of form and meaning.

We can say only this much, Shams must have been a man of extra-ordinary psychical power capable of influencing the master mind of his age, whose *magnum opus* of intellectualized and versified religious experience created a monument of mystical poetry in which eternal love and cosmic reason seem to have achieved perfect accord.

Rumi had no intention of either founding a new sect or initiating a new movement; his devotees and disciples, however, did form a distinctive group after his death, but they developed and perpetuated only some external observances and rituals, and degenerated into a community of whirling dervishes. A felt-cap without a seam – the leaders also wrapping a turban round it and wearing voluminous trousers of many folds – became the standard livery of this group which was incapable of comprehending either the depth of Rumi's thought or the spirit of his religious experience. Rumi was bitterly averse to imitation and blind conformity in religious life became a victim, by irony of accompanied by spontaneously gushing forth lyrics was an involuntary expression of a deeply stirred soul.

The imitators of externals adopted it as a regular practice of inducing religious emotion, unconsciously believing, like William James, that the voluntary adoption of the physical expression of an emotion tends to create the emotion itself. The ecstasy-seeking group sits in a circle, while one of them stands up to dance with one hand on the breast and the other arm spread out. In the dance there is no forward or backward movement but that of whirling around with increasing tempo. When accompanied by music, only flutes and drums are used. This a trying process of under-going a discipline of service to others before a candidate for membership could qualify for it. It starts not with the service of men but the service of animals for 40 days, obviously with the idea that if a man can serve animals dutifully with love and consideration he would serve his fellow beings still better. After this he sweeps the floors of the lodgings of poor devotees. It is followed by other terms of service for 40 days each of drawing water and carrying fuel and other general domestic chores. This is considered to be a cure for man's love of power and privilege and class and caste. At the end he is given a bath to symbolize riddance of lower

passions. He takes a vow of total abstinence from all forbidden acts and is allowed to wear the garb of the sect.

B. Beliefs and Philosophy

Rumi as a philosopher of religion stands shoulders above all those Muslim thinkers who are called *hukama'* in the history of Muslim thought. He compiled no systematic treatise either on philosophy or theology and made no sustained attempt to build a system of either speculative or mystical metaphysics. One cannot put him in the category of philosophers like al-Farabi, ibn Sina (Avicenna), ibn Rushd (Averroes), and even al-Ghazali. He did not hitch his wagon to these stars with the exception of al-Ghazali, who attempted a monumental synthesis of orthodox Muslim theology and mysticism attempting to bridge the gulf between the two. He is the heir to the ethical monotheism of the Israelite prophets which culminated in the dispensation of Islam, but by the time this heritage reached him it had already been supplemented by Hellenistic thought. But he deepens and broadens all that he inherits. He belongs to no school or sect. He picks up what he considers to be true and discards whatever he thinks to be false, however time-honoured and orthodox the view or dogma may be.

A patient study of his *Mathnawi* reveals him not as a mediocre eclectic but a man with a definite view of the nature of existence. He has a deep-rooted feeling about the basic unity of reality and appearance. For a man like him every thesis and anti-thesis is transcended by a higher synthesis wherein contradictions are resolved in the ever-advancing movement of life. He talks of mere dialecticians with disdain but does not shun dialectics to sustain a thesis. You may consider him a free-lance both in philosophy and religion, but his freedom is informed with a basic attitude that never wavers and perpetually returns to itself after numerous digressions and deviations.

While dealing with a genius like Rumi one is always conscious of a feeling of injustice towards him. The best that he has uttered vibrates with life, while an intellectual analysis in relation to life itself is, in the words of Goethe, like grey autumn leaves as compared with the sapful green tree which has dropped them. But this drawback is inherent in all intellectual analysis and theories and one has to regretfully remain contented with it. We will make an attempt to give a brief summary of his beliefs, outlook and metaphysics under a few headings.

C. The Nature of Existence and Evolution

The ground of all existence is spiritual. It is not easy to define the meaning of the term "spiritual," especially in the world-view of Rumi. For him, the ground of being is akin to what we feel in ourselves as spirit or ego. Infinite number of egos emerging out of the Cosmic Ego constitutes the totality of existence. In this view even matter is spiritual. The thinker nearest to Rumi in this respect is the German philosopher Leibniz, who centuries after Rumi conceived of existence as infinity of egos at different levels of consciousness. As in the metaphysics of Leibniz, Rumi believed God to be a universal cosmic Monad. There is nothing like lifeless matter; matter is also alive though at a lower gradation of being.

“Earth and water, fire and air are alive in the view of God, though they appear to be dead to us.”

In all speculative philosophy, the starting point, the point of departure, is an indemonstrable postulate. So is the case in the thought of Rumi. Assuming existence to be spiritual in the process of creation, he starts with a belief in devolution. There is no satisfactory explanation of why the infinite, self-existent, self-sufficient Spirit should start dropping egos to the lowest level of sentience and consciousness.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have inculcated a belief in creation *ex nihilo* by a voluntary act of the Creator at a particular moment of time. In Rumi's view there is no creation in time because time itself is created and is a category of phenomenal consciousness which views events in serial time, and mystic consciousness diving into the spiritual ground of being apprehends reality as non-spatial and non-temporal. We see here the Neo-Platonic influence replacing the orthodox Islamic concept of creation in time. Instead of creation in time, we have eternal emergence of egos. Rumi has repeated in many places his view of the eternity of spirits. “I existed when there were neither names nor the things that are named.

We see him moving only one step with Plotinus in conceding that there is emanation instead of creation in time, and then he suddenly parts company with him. Starting with initial unexplainable devolution he becomes a creative evolutionist. All beings have emerged from God by a kind of over-flow of the divine spirit, but every being or ego is impelled irresistibly by an urge to return to its origin. This urge which Rumi calls love becomes the evolutionary principle of all existence. Existence, viewed phenomenally, is graded, the egos in one grade being superior or inferior in self realization. The essence of all egos or monads is spiritual which may be called divine because they have all emerged from the self-same divine principle.

The doctrine of the fall of Adam is re-interpreted in Rumi's metaphysics. The original state from which the ego fell was not the traditional paradise of gardens and streams but the unitary ground of divinity. The Fall is concerned not only with man or the disobedience of Adam and Eve, but is a universal cosmic phenomenon. One might say metaphorically that monads in the realm of matter and vegetable and animal kingdoms are all fallen angels striving to return to their original divine ground. The principle that everything has a natural tendency to return to its origin holds good in all spheres and applies to every existent.

Previous to Rumi we find among Greek thinkers guesses about the biological evolution of birds and beasts and man having been gradually differentiated and developed from fish due to environmental changes and the needs of adaptation, but this speculation was never developed any further either by materialistic thinkers like Democritus or idealists and realists like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

We find a doctrine of graded existence and a theory of development in Aristotle's concepts of form and matter and entelechies. Inorganic matter is organized into different species of plants because every plant realizes the idea of its species. Every realized form serves as matter for the embodiment of a still higher

entelechy until we reach God who is pure idea or self-thinking though unconcerned with the particularities of phenomenal existence and unrelated to creatures contaminated with matter. Matter for Aristotle is a negative end-concept without a shadow of reality because all reality belongs to ideas and matter as such is bereft of any Idea. Aristotle is not a monadologist like Rumi and Leibniz and for him the human ego also has a transitory phenomenal existence; what is real in it belongs to universal reason and whatever is personal or individual has no abiding value or reality.

After Aristotle the doctrine of Emanation and Return is found in Platonis. In his view also there is a gradation in existence which is a result of more or less distance from the original ineffable One who is devoid of all qualities like the *Nirguna Brahman*, can rise again to their original ground by discarding material and biological urges. This leads logically to a negativistic, quietistic, and ascetic view of life of which we find no trace in Rumi because of the Islamic ethics of integration and the eternal value of the individual. For Aristotle, the scheme of graded existence was eternally fixed and there was no idea of the evolution of species. In Plotinus, too, there are more of eternally graded devolutionary states of existence than an eternal urge to develop into higher and higher states which is so clearly depicted in the metaphysics of Rumi. Rumi touches Plotinus and Aristotle only tangentially and then develops a thesis of his own, not found before him in any speculative or religious metaphysics except that of the Ikhwan al-Safa and ibn Miskawaih.

In the whole history of philosophy he is one of the outstanding evolutionary thinkers. He is not a mechanical or biological evolutionist like Darwin and Spencer. Bergson's creative evolution comes nearest to Rumi. For Bergson, too, life is creative and evolutionary; however, he believes this creative evolutionary process to be without any goal. But how could one say that life evolves unless there is an implicit idea of a goal towards which it moves? For Rumi God is the ground as well as the goal of all existence, and life everywhere is a goal seeking activity.

Bergson developed no concept of the self, nor is evolution for him a process of self-realization. Rumi tells us why life is creative and evolutionary and defines for us the nature of the creative urge. It was only in the last decade of his life that Bergson in his book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* identified the *elan vital* with love and moved from philosophy to religion by accepting the prophets and the saints as individuals endowed with intuition and saturated with love which is the creative urge of evolutionary life.

Rumi has presented his view in a language which conforms partially even with the view of materialistic and biological evolutionists. Like them he says that life has evolved from matter, but for him matter was from the outset essentially and potentially spiritual. This removes the insoluble problem of lifeless and goalless matter evolving out of itself a germ of life which even in the lowest and initial is adaptive and goal-seeking.

The Odyssey and voyage of the ego's self-discovery and its gradual unfolding are given in Books Three and Four of the *Mathnawi* with great definiteness. "For several epochs I was flying about in space like

atoms of dust without a will, after which I entered the inorganic realm of matter. Crossing over to the vegetable kingdom I lost all memory of my struggle on the material plane. From there, I stepped into the animal kingdom, forgetting all my life as a plant, feeling only an instinctive and unconscious urge towards the growth of plants and flowers, particularly during the springtime as suckling babies feel towards the mother that gave them birth.

Rising in the scale of animality I became a man pulled up by the creative urge of the Creator whom one knows. I continued advancing from realm to realm developing my reason and strengthening the organism. There was ground forever getting above the previous types of reason. Even my present rationality is not a culmination of mental evolution. This too has to be transcended, because it is still contaminated with self-seeking, egoistic biological urges. A thousand other types of reason and consciousness shall emerge during the further course of my ascent; a wonder of wonders!”

The same course is traced in Book Three of the *Mathnawi* hinting at higher stages until the ego reaches back the divinity from which it had emanated, a state which cannot be grasped by our present rationality nor could imagination visualize it. No category of reason or phenomenal existence applies to this state; it is ultra-existential. We must note here that it is not an impersonal existence which goes on moving from phase to phase but selves or egos from the very start which are perpetually engaged in self-realization. Orthodox Islam, like Christianity, believes in the creation of the universe in time.

The souls are believed to be created with the birth of the individuals though after that they are destined to be immortal remaining eternally either in heaven or hell. But, according to Rumi, the category of time does not apply to the realm of the spirit, so the question of the temporal creation of egos is irrelevant. For Rumi as for al-Ghazali, time and space are categories of phenomenal consciousness only. He says about serial time, “You think in terms of the past and the future, when you get rid of this mode of consciousness, the problem will be solved.”

There is also a hint in the verses that follow that our concept of time is inter-linked with space, an idea which has been mathematically and scientifically developed in modern times by Einstein. Rumi says that in the realm of divine light, which is non-spatial, serial time, divisible into past, present, and future, does not exist. Past and future are relative to the individual self. About space there are numerous verses in the *Mathnawai* and Rumi repeatedly points to his conviction, which may either be the result of spiritual experience or an epistemological thesis, that in the realm of the spirit the category of space does not hold and has no relevance. The Qur’anic verse *wa la gharbiyyah*, supports this view, and Rumi’s intellect and experience must have been strengthened by this scriptural corroboration.

As the human spirit, too, is basically divine, as corroborated by the Qur’an, in which it is said that God breathed His own spirit into Adam, man also, diving into his own real self, can realize the non-spatial nature not only of his own reality but also of all existence viewed as noumena and not as phenomena. He exhorts man to realize this basic fact both about himself and the universe. “You live in space but your reality is non-spatial; space is a phenomenal creation of that which in itself is not space.” Rumi develops

this thesis still further. He says that space is the basis of division and multiplicity, in which the basic unity of the cosmic spirit is infinitely pulverized and atomized.

Human egos are also basically one. It is only material frames in which the selves at the biological level create the illusion of diversity. Here, too, Rumi gets support from the Qur'anic teaching that there is a fundamental unity in the multiplicity of human egos. ***"It is He who created you of one spirit."***¹

Rumi uses similes to make his meaning clear. He says that sunlight entering houses through many windows is split up the spatial barriers but remains essentially the same. In another place he says that lamps lightening a hall may be many but the light that emanates from them and envelops all of them negates the illusion of separateness. It is a common trait of Rumi that he first uses logical and philosophical arguments and then invariably tries to enlighten the mind of the reader by similes and analogies, but at the end finding the intellect incurably bound by spatial visualization and fettered by the logic of identity and contradiction, refers invariably to ultra-rational spiritual experience which realizes reality as unity and conceives diversity as mere phenomenal appearance.

Talking of a group of divinized souls, he says that they feel themselves as the waves of the self-same sea whose diversity is created by wind. He relates a spiritual experience in which the spirit transcends our spatially inter-linked serial time and enters a dimension of Being wherein the mutually exclusive diversity of psychological processes is negated and a man's causal thinking, with the problem that it creates and attempts to solve, exists no more. As it is a spaceless reality that manifests itself into extended and divisible spaces, creating the illusion of separated things and events, so it is a timeless spirit that creates the categories of serial time with the illusory division of past, present, and future. It is possible for the human spirit to enter this non-dimensional dimension of consciousness and reality. Such an experience does not give one knowledge in the ordinary sense; it is a consciousness of wonder.

D. Love

As we have remarked already, two lines of intellectual and moral and spiritual development running their course independently for more than a millennium had converged in Hellenized Christianity, of which the first unmistakable evidence of the Gospel of John which identified Jesus with Logos. But after this amalgamation the distinctive features of the message of Jesus were not lost and remained recognizably different. Jesus identified God with love, while Hellenism had made reason the ground of reality. Islam, too, was an heir to Israelite prophetic outlook and grappled with the Hellenistic thought incorporating some of its elements and repudiating others which were antagonistic to the fundamentals of its ideology.

Islam attempted a synthesis of reason, love, and law, and an integration of the higher and the lower aspects, not sacrificing the lower and annihilating it altogether but transmuting the lower into the higher. It means surrender to the will of God which is not a passive attitude of submission but a continued volitional effort to attune oneself to eternal realities of which the focus is God. Whatever Islam took over as its heritage, it transformed it in the process of synthesis and assimilation, until the product became

qualitatively different. In the opening chapter of the Qur'an we find God neither as the self-thinking thought of Aristotle nor the top point of the Platonic pyramid of ideas but a conscious and eternally creative will.

The basic attributes of God given in this surah are: (1) *Rabb al-'alamin* (the Nourisher of all realms and beings), (2) *Rahman* and *Rahim* (Creative Love and Forgiving Love), and (3) *Malik Yaum al-Din* (the Master of the Day of Judgment). We see here that love is prior to law and justice and hence is more basic to the nature of God, who is the Ultimate Reality. The Western critics of Islam are wont to take original Islam as concerned more with unconditional obedience to the revealed will of God than with an attitude of love towards Him. They forget that this obedience is to be rendered to a being who is essentially a lover; as *Rahman*, He creates out of love, as *Rabb* He sustains out of love, and as *Rahim* He forgives out of love.

It is a misrepresentation of Islam to assert that the concept of love is foreign to it and was adopted from Christianity and philosophies of Sufis and mystical and metaphysicians. The fact is that what mystics and thinkers like Rumi did was to elaborate the meaning of love, not only making it basic to religious and ethical life but giving it a cosmic significance as a creative, ameliorative, and evolutionary urge in all creatures and all strata of existence.

It is stated in the Qur'an that God had enjoined love (*rahmah*) on Himself² and that it encompasses everything.³ In another verse the extent of paradise is given as the extent of the heavens and the earth, which means entire existence. The Prophet was asked by a non-Muslim where hell would be located if paradise covered all existence. He said, "Where is the night when the day dawns?" meaning thereby that when the love of God becomes manifest it shall be revealed as covering the entire existence.

The cosmic significance of love could be derived from the Qur'anic teaching but it required acquaintance with other ideologies to help Muslim thought in its elaboration. So far as theories and speculations are concerned, we can discover distinctively pre-Islamic concepts in Rumi. Here a passage may be quoted from Khalifah Abdul Hakim's book, *The Metaphysics of Rumi*, "So far as the theories of love are concerned a part of his arguments and views can be directly traced back to Plato who has had a decisive influence on all mysticism, both Islamic and Christian, by his conception of a super-sensuous Reality, as well as Eros (love) as a cosmical power. Rumi's Love as an experience was not a product of any theory, as something intimately personal; it cannot be a subject of criticism.

But the conceptual apparatus that he employs to philosophize about love requires to be understood in its historical connections. The contents of (Plato's two Dialogues) *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*...were not unknown to the thinkers of Islam. Ibn Sina's *Fragment on Love*⁴ is mostly a reproduction of the dialogue (Plato's) *Symposium*...Love as the movement towards beauty which being identical with Goodness and Truth represents Perfection and the Highest Idea, and Love, as the inherent desire of the individual for immortality;...given by Avicenna is a simple repetition of the Platonic theory of Love. The processes of Assimilation, Growth, (and) Reproduction are so many manifestations of Love. All things are moving

towards Eternal beauty and the worth of a thing is proportionate to its realization (or assimilation) of the beauty.”⁵

Newton explained the movement of heavenly bodies by physical gravitational pull and Kant promulgated the nebular hypothesis to explain the origin of heavenly bodies out of incandescent vapour. Hegel explained the ever-progressing dynamism of Nature and Mind as the dialectical unfolding in time of the Eternal Absolute. Darwin presented a biological view of the creation of higher species by the blind urges of the struggle for existence and life's adaptation with the environment. Rumi's evolutionary concept comprehends all these partial and fragmentary theories, taking them up in a grand synthesis.

Similarly, Rumi has an intuition of the gravitational pull of atoms and masses of matter but, instead of explaining it by mechanical dynamics; he resorts to love as the fundamental urge which creates attraction and affinities. “All atoms in the cosmos are attracted to one another like lovers; everyone is drawn towards its mate by the magnetic pull of love. Heavenly bodies draw the earth towards them in a welcoming embrace. It is on account of this cosmic pull of that earth remains suspended in space like a lamp, the forces from all directions pulling it by equilibrated attraction not allowing it to fly away or drop down in space, as if the stellar dome of heaven were a magnetic dome inside which a piece of iron is suspended without visible cord”

According to Rumi, the same force that creates heavenly bodies out of nebulae resulting in stars and planets and systems, proceeds further and generates life because love by its essence is creative. As atoms by their affinities conglomerate in the molecules so in a further evolutionary urge they emerge as life cells which first appear in vegetation and then advance towards animality. Hegel said that creation proceeds through a synthesis of the opposites, but Rumi says that these apparent opposites were already akin by the affinity of love. Love originates in God and moves towards God who is essentially a creator; therefore, love as it advances from phase to phase in the upward movement of creation brings into being new forms of existence at every step.

We have already stated that Rumi is a monadologist and when he talks of atoms and their mutual attractions he is really talking of egos that in the process of realizing their divinely-rotted self-consciousness. It is this urge for self-realization that makes the egos act as they do. As their source is God, so their goal is also God, and the process of moving towards this goal creates new perfections at every stage. Everywhere there is life and life is essentially a goal-seeking activity. The lower merges into the higher; it is not a process of progressive annihilation but assimilation.

Rumi says that the heavenly movements are not blindly mechanical but are waves in an infinite ocean of love. If cosmic love were not there, all existence would get frozen and shrink into nothingness. The inorganic would refuse to merge and emerge into vegetation would not be lifted up into animal life nor would life ascend towards the mind and spirit. The egos like infinite swarms of locusts are flying towards the harvest of life. Without love, nothing would move.

The religion of a mystic philosopher like Rumi is a universal religion which could be enclosed within any orthodox or dogmatic boundaries. His religion is not the creed of any one particular religious community but being the religion of the universe is a universal religion. It is the religion of glowing stars, of flowing streams and of growing trees. Whose belief, intuition, and practice accord with his outlook, he has attained the truth. Religion, if it is genuine is not a blind faith about the understandable unknown; it is an ever-present reality perceived and lived. It is the alchemy of life which through the magic of love transforms the lower into the higher.

We see ourselves that bread is transubstantiated into life and mind. Could any narrow scientific intellect explain this miraculous transmutation? In the Aristotelian logic of identity everything remains what it is, and in mechanistic materialism there is no way of explaining the goal-seeking tendency of life from non-purposive aimless atoms. Life has an infinite assimilative power; there is nothing that could remain eternally foreign to it. As fire burns even a dross and converts it into a pure flame, so every happening in life is capable of being converted into light and life.

The universe, according to Rumi, is a realm of love. In comparison with love, law and reason are secondary phenomena. It is love that creates to fulfil itself and reason steps in later to look at it retrospectively, discovering laws and uniformities to seek the threads of unity in the diversities of manifested life. Language was not created by any pre-conceived grammar, nor do the flowers blossom by any conscious planning or according to the laws of botany or aesthetics. Rational thinking follows creation but does not precede it. Rationalization, being a secondary phenomenon, is not by itself a creative force.

As Hegel has said, philosophy always comes too late only to contemplate retrospectively what the dynamism of history has already created and completed. Cosmic love transcends all creeds and all philosophies and so the religion of love could never be completely identified with any orthodoxy, dogmatism, or speculative theory. Rumi says that there is no contradiction between universal love and universal reason, but when the human intellect narrows itself, it begins to take a part for a whole, making the mistake of identifying a fragmentary phenomenon with the whole of reality.

Human intellect, divorced from universal reason, remains at the biological and utilitarian level, and language which is the outward garb of the intellect possesses no vocabulary for the description of the intuition of cosmic love. Human consciousness remains generally at the biological level and its perceptions, affections, and conations are governed directly or indirectly by biological needs. This biological instrument Rumi calls *khirad* or particular reason (*'aql-i juzwi*) to distinguish it from universal reason, which exultingly calls itself scientific reason, capable of explaining all reality and solving the riddle of the universe, proves to be utterly useless when faced with the intuition of life and love, and, instead of gracefully accepting its inadequacy, begins foolishly to deny the reality that it cannot comprehend.

The deep impress of Rumi which has continued to develop through the centuries in modern times

produced a disciple of the intellectual calibre and poetic genius of Iqbal. The reasons for this influence may be briefly summed up as follows. Here was a man who, like the great prophets and saints, did not accept religious faith at second hand; for him it was a personal experience more convincing than either logical argument or sense-perception. But religious experience, if it rests in its subjectivity, cannot be communicated; it cannot induce conviction in others who do not have it.

Rumi deploras the inadequacy of human speech to convey it and also points to the limitations of sense-experience as well as inductive or deductive reasoning of what he calls the particular intellect which deals with reality piecemeal. But side by side with his ultra-sensuous and ultra-rational mystic experience of the all-enveloping spirit in which every ego lives and moves and has its being, he presents himself to us as an acute logician and a skilled metaphysician. When you add his lyrical fervour and poetic genius to his remarkable capacities, he begins to tower above all those who are either mere mystics or mere philosophers or mere poets.

One finds in him anticipations of Kant who tried to prove phenomenality or subjectivity of time, space, and causality; anticipations of Bergson in his criticism of the intellect and in his conception of *elan vital* creative evolution, and anticipations of Nietzsche in his conviction that present humanity must be superseded in a further advance towards new dimensions of being. He is an idealist and spiritualist of the highest order. He is fundamentally an evolutionary thinker who conceived of existence not in static but dynamic terms.

The unconscious urge to rise to higher levels is implicit in all existence; the inorganic is always ready for being assimilated by the organic. In every entity there is an upward urge from within and a pull from above. The inertia of matter on which Newton based his physics and astronomy is declared to be an illusion, the reality of which is infinite motion or restlessness of what Democritus and the 13th/19th century physicists call atoms but Rumi calls egos. Rumi re-establishes the reality of the world and the dignity of all life, particularly of human life which has become self-conscious and conscious of its divine origin and goal. All movement is from God unto God.

Rumi performs the admirable task of ridding mysticism of quietism and irrationalism. He establishes with all the force of his genius the reality of free-will which is vouchsafed to man to identify it freely with the cosmic will. He has brought out the essence of universal religion as creative love. He preaches the infinite potentialities of life because all egos have their origin in the Infinite Self and are restless and nostalgic in order to realize their infinity. Many creeds and philosophers had declared life to be an illusion, but Rumi declares life at all grades to be Eternal Reality; it is not life but death which is an illusion. The purpose of life is more life, higher and better.

Nietzsche criticizes bitterly all creeds that say "No" to life and says that there are only two kinds of creeds: those that say "Yes" to life and those that say "No" to it. Rumi's is a life embracing creed. Although one of the greatest mystics of all time, he was not a body-torturing and self-annihilating mystic. In a verse he talks of great souls as great hunters of life trying to capture and assimilate the

spirituality of angels, saints, and prophets, finally aiming at capturing the cosmic spirit itself for perpetual and eternal enrichment of the self, actualizing its infinite potentialities. He wants you not to gather your garments to prevent them from getting wet but to plunge a life's challenge, is the way of life that he preaches and practises. Only for a sleeping soul life is an empty dream; creeds of illusion are the products of lovers of sleep and worshippers of the night.

About the infinity of life and its restlessness he says, "Human egos have experienced the shaping of universe after universe, could you say which of them mirrors the essence of yourself? Is it not that the seven heavens are below the empyrean but our flight is beyond the empyrean? Neither the heavens nor the empyrean could be our goal; we have to fly towards the rose-garden of union with the divine."

For Rumi life is an alchemy perpetually engaged in transformation and transubstantiation. You see before your eyes earth, water, light, and air being transformed into plant life, plant life turning into animal life by assimilation, and animal life, ascending to mind; why couldn't mind be transformed into a divinized spirit? "They say, copper turns into gold by alchemy, but the copper of our life converts itself not only into gold but becomes an alchemy itself with the quality of spiritualizing whatever it touches."

The space at our disposal compels us to finish this brief survey of Rumi's outlook on life with two of his lyrics: in one he gives the characteristics of the "Man of God" and in the other depicts a mystic's search for God through the emblems of various creeds, ending in finding God within himself. "The 'Man of God' is intoxicated without wine and full without meat; he is struck with wonder and cares not about food and sleep. He is a king in a dervish's cloak; he is a treasure found in a ruin. The constituents of a man of God are not the four elements – earth, air, water, and fire. He is a boundless ocean of the spirit containing countless pearls.

The heaven within him contains numerous suns and moons. He gains the truth by knowledge is beyond right and wrong. The heaven within him contains numerous suns and moons. He gains the truth by knowledge from God and from books. He stands above creeds and heresies, and he is beyond right and wrong. He has ridden away from Non-Being in glory and majesty. He is hidden, Oh Candle of Faith! Such a 'Man of God' do you seek and find."

Rumi is talking here of the ideal man or the ideal of humanity. He is hidden in the nature of every man. The purpose of life is to reach this perfection. In another verse he has repeated the story of Diogenes moving about in the market-place of Athens with a lamp in his hand in broad daylight seeking Man in a crowd of men who, according to him, were only counterfeiting humanity. When he is told that no such being could be found, he replies, "I am craving to find him who is not found."

Religion has been aptly defined by Hoffding as Faith in the conservation of values. According to Rumi's mystical metaphysics, the spirit is the origin and locus of all intrinsic and abiding values. The Real which is manifested in the human spirit is eternal and immortal. He exhorts human beings not to lament the transitoriness of phenomenal life because that which is real can never perish. The streams of

phenomenal life continue to flow and pass away, lament not their vanishing because inexhaustible eternal source remains undiminished and shall continue to issue in many more streams.

We must note that here we have no blank qualities, no transcendent infinity of a static Absolute, but a perpetually gushing fountain of eternal life, from which all egos quaff as much as they can. Mortality belongs to appearances alone, not life but death is an illusion. Every ego is destined to be immortal by participation in life eternal. The purpose of life is self-perpetuation and self-enrichment not only through the reproduction of the species but by the upward and forward urge of every ego. Life moves by a series of negations and assertions, self-realization cannot proceed without self-abnegation.

Every stage reached by an ego has to be negated and transcended so that “on their dead selves’ stepping stones men may rise to higher things.” Rumi says that from the very outset life has placed a ladder before you so that you may rise step by step. After this he reiterates his fundamental hypothesis that life has advanced from the inorganic to the organic, traversing the vegetable and the animal kingdom, reaching the stage of reason, knowledge and faith, until man, with his body which was only a part of the earth, evolves a mind and spirit and becomes a whole. But even after having become conscious of infinity, the voyage of discovery through the infinite continues. For a long time it was a journey towards God, but now it will be a journey in God’s infinity, from earth to heaven, from humanity to angel-hood until the finite embraces the Infinite: man the Son of God becomes one with the Father. It is the bodies that become old and decrepit, life remains eternally youthful.

The Qur’an says about the creation of man’s body was made of clay, but the material frame having been perfected, God breathed from His own spirit into him. Rumi in his discourses collected in *Fihi ma fihi* has quoted a tradition of the Prophet wherein it is said that Adam’s clay was kneaded in 40 days. The Qur’an says that God’s day is an epoch of a hundred thousand years. This mode of expression is not meant to convey an exact mathematical figure but is an idiomatic or rhetorical expression for an immensely long period. Accordingly, God’s 40 days might mean hundreds of millions of years.

Rumi concludes from this that man’s bodily organism too did not come into existence by the creative fiat of God in a moment but is a product of a long process of evolution. It was after the perfecting of the physical organism that the spirit of the Lord became manifest in man awakening the eternal essence of the human ego. With the emergence of this consciousness the human ego realizes that it is not a product of this evolution but, in its essence, is prior to the phenomenal course of the universe. After this realization, the universe with its diversity of objects is viewed not as a cause but as an effect, because the ego pours existence into its own moulds with the categories of time, space and causation.

Rumi says that the body is not the cause of the mind but is created by the mind as its instrument for working on the material or phenomenal plane. What we consider to be the qualities of an independently existing matter exist only in relation to a perceiving mind. In a lyric, Rumi describes his search for God after having realized the nature of his own ego. He moves from creed to creed and dogma to dogma. Not finding Him in temples, institutions, and symbols, he returns unto himself and discovers Him there in

the sanctuary of his own heart. He is not satisfied with any creed until God is directly experienced by him. Here is one of the finest mystical lyrics of Rumi:

“I existed at a time when there were neither the names nor the objects of which they were the names; the names and the objects named came into existence in relation to us at a time when egos were not yet individualized and there was not yet any question of ‘I’ and ‘We.’ I searched for God among the Christians and on the Cross but therein found Him not. I went into the ancient temples of idolatry, no trace of Him was there. I entered the mountain cave of Hira (where Arch–angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet) and then went as far as Qandhar but God found I not, neither in low nor in high places. With a set purpose I fared to the summit of Mount Caucasus and found there only *‘anqa’s* habitation. Then I directed my search to the Ka‘bah, the resort of old and young, God was not there even. Turning to philosophy I inquired about Him from ibn Sina but found Him not within his range. I fared then to the scene of the Prophet’s experience of a great divine manifestation only a ‘two bow–lengths’ distance from him’ but God was not there even in that exalted court. Finally, I looked into my heart and there I saw Him, He was nowhere else.”

This is the experience and language of the great mystics of all spiritual religions who were not satisfied with institutional religion, and who based their spiritual life on personal experiences and convictions not derived from theologies and philosophies. These experiences are the common heritage of all great souls and the common ground on which great religions meet, disregarding intellectual formulation of dogmas and diversities of modes of worship which have made religion a dividing instead of a unitive and harmonizing force.

Rumi is one of those rare saints and mystics whose intellectual fibre and creative moral and social effort is not weakened by subjective emotional experiences unrelated to the realities of everyday life. In him spirituality, rationality, and universal morality have found a healthy synthesis. God, universe, and humanity are embraced in a single all–encompassing vision, the vision of creative love. Tennyson ends his “In Memoriam” with a stanza which sums up Rumi’s vision and creed:

“That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.”

His appeal to the philosophers of religion, epistemologists, and metaphysicians is as great as his appeal to the mystics of all religions. Neither modern philosophy nor modern science has left him behind. For about a century now the entire philosophical and scientific thought has been dominated by the concept of evolution, and it is the evolutionary concept that has been mainly responsible for sabotaging ancient theologies and views of creation, resulting in almost universal scepticism and agnosticism. Theology everywhere has been making an attempt to save the abiding realities and values of religion by accepting universal evolution as an indubitable fact and recasting old beliefs and dogmas. Rumi performed this

task six centuries ago in a manner that can offer guidance to all who want to reconcile religion with philosophy and science.

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[1.](#) The Qur'an 6:99

[2.](#) Ibid., 6:12, 54

[3.](#) Ibid., 7:156

[4.](#) This fragment on love forms part of his collected works preserved in the British Museum Library and has been edited by N. A. F. Mehren (Leiden, 1894).

[5.](#) Khalifah Abdul Hakim, *The Metaphysics of Rumi*, Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1959, pp. 44 – 45.

Chapter 43: Mahmud Shabistari, Al-Jili, and Jami

A. Mahmud Shabistari

Mahmud Shabistari, so called after the name of Shabistar, a village near Tabriz in Adharbaijan, was born about the middle of the seventh/13th century and died about 720/1320. Little is known of his life. His *Gulshan-i Raz* (The Garden of Mystery) is a poetical exposition of the doctrine of the Unity of Being. It was written in 710/1311 in response to certain questions about mystical philosophy asked by one Amir Husaini from Khurasan.

The exposition of the doctrine of the Unity of Being in the book adds nothing to what had earlier been said by Ibn 'Arabi. Mahmud, however, is much clearer and much more precise than his spiritual teacher. Being, by its very definition, he says, is existent, and non-Being, non-existent. There is nothing in existence except the one. The contingent and necessary were never separate; they existed from eternity as one. If you look at one side of One, it is one, and if you see the other side, it becomes many – the only difference being that the aspect of unity is real, while that of plurality is illusory. Reality is one but its names are many, and it is this plurality which becomes the cause of multiplicity.^{[1](#)}

Essence as such is beyond our knowledge or comprehension. But according to Shabistari, this inability on our part to know God's essence arises because of His nearness to us. Essence as absolute light is

as invisible to the eye as non-Being which is absolute darkness. Nobody can look at the sun directly. But it can be seen as reflected in water. Relative non-being is like water. It serves as a mirror of the Absolute Light in which is reflected the illumination of *Haqq* (truth). This relative non-being is the latent reality (*'ain al-thabitah*) of ibn 'Arabi's system, which reflects the divine light in accordance with its natural propensities. The divine light as pure light was a hidden treasure, but when it was reflected in the mirror, the treasure became manifest. But, in this process, the essence that was One became many.²

Shabistari then describes the process of descent of the one after the manner of ibn 'Arabi. The first manifestation of the essence is the universal reason (*'aql al-kulli*), the stage of unity (*ahadiyyah*); the second is the universal soul (*nafs al-kulli*). Then comes the Throne (*'arsh*), the heavenly Chair (*kursi*), seven heavenly spheres, and four elements, the three kingdoms of minerals, vegetables, and animals. The last in the series is man who is the acme of creation. Though temporally last in the series, man is logically first, as tree is potentially prior to the seed. The entire world was created for him while he was created for himself, as the embodiment of God's highest manifestation. But he possesses certain baser elements which, however, are essential for his moral progress. A mirror, to be able to reflect things, must have one side totally blackened. If it were a crystal, it would cease to serve as a mirror.

As man is the final cause of creation, everything is made to obey his command. All things are manifestations of the different names of God, but, being the reflection of the Named, man comprises within himself all the names; therefore, all the creation is within him. He is the most marvellous creation of the Lord and owes everything to Him, his power, knowledge, and will are all God's.

Reason is perfectly useless, according to Shabistari. It's a long, winding, and arduous path. A philosopher is like a cross-eyed man who sees duality everywhere. He starts with the objects of the world conceived as real. On this basis he argues the existence of the Necessary, as distinct from and other than the contingent. Arguing on the basis of a continuous series of causes and effects, Shabistari asserts that the Necessary Being is the Primal Cause of the process of creation. The whole process of reasoning, according to him, is wrong. There is no possibility of the knowledge of God through the category of contingency as the latter does not possess any similarity to the former. "It amounts to discovering the burning sun with the help of the dim light of a tiny candle."

The best method, therefore, is to give up logical reason and enter the valley of gnosis.³ Knowledge gained through discursive reason leads one to sleep, while gnosis awakens one from slumber. Like Abraham, one must go beyond the divinity of the stars, the sun, and the moon which, according to him, represent sense-perception, imagination, and reason, respectively.⁴

In the sixth question of *Gulshan-i Raz* the Sheikh explicitly rejects the usefulness of reason in the mystic search for truth. He holds that there is "a way" beyond reason by which man is able to know the secret of reality. This intuitive power of man is hidden within him as fire is implicit in the stone. When this fire blazes forth, the entire world becomes bright and illumined.

Discussing the value of knowledge in the tenth question he says that by knowledge he does not mean the device by which people gain worldly power and prestige, for that is contrary to the spirit of a true mystic. Knowledge is useful only when it leads one to the right action, action that springs from the heart. Shabistari also suggests a study of both the sources of knowledge mentioned in the Qur'an – the external world (*afaq*) and the internal world of self-consciousness (*anfus*). But in practice the mystics' study of the internal world has always led them to emphasize the illusory character of the external world.

The account of moral qualities given by Shabistari is a mere reproduction of Platonic and Aristotelian theories. Wisdom (*hikmah*), moral purity (*'iflah*), bravery (*shaja'ah*), and justice (*'adalah*) are the main moral qualities. He discusses briefly the Aristotelian principle of the mean. Paradise is the result of following this middle path, while adopting either of the extremes would lead to hell. When moral purification is attained, man is vouchsafed divine light (*tajalli*) which illumines his soul and raises him to the highest level. Saints and prophets are the persons who fall in the category of the illumined souls.

This manifestation (*tajalli*) of God is not only in things that are good but also in things which in common usage, we call evil. As God is the only being and the only cause of everything, so all things without distinction manifest His light. The logical position of pantheism is that good and evil are all alike and, as manifestations of God, stand on an equal footing. But when we come to the ordinary common-sense view, we distinguish between them and attribute good to God and evil to Satan.⁵

Like all other pantheists, Shabistari is completely deterministic. He holds that the so-called sense of freedom possessed by man is due to his consciousness of selfhood as an entity distinct from God. Man is by nature non-existent and, therefore, it is meaningless to attribute freedom to him. Believers in freedom of choice are Zoroastrians who make a distinction between the god of good and the god of evil. To attribute power, will, and action to man is wrong and in this matter, according to him, both the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites have gone astray – the former in saying that man is free in his choice and the latter in making man responsible for his deeds due to the power of "acquisition" attributed to him.

According to Shabistari, man is not created for exercising moral responsibility, but for some other purpose. He does not explain what that other purpose is. His commentator, Lahiji, however, adds that it is to serve as a polished mirror for manifestation of God's essence, attributes and names. Can we ascribe any freedom to the mirror in reflecting objects? For every one of us, actions were pre-determined. God's actions are inscrutable. "Can you explain," he asks, "why one man is born Muhammad and another Abu Jahl?" Man's dignity lies in being under compulsion and not in having a share in free-will.

But, then, why is man held responsible for his deeds? Is it not injustice? The Sheikh thinks that it is not injustice but an argument in favour of God's absolute power and arbitrariness. Again, the object of making man responsible for deeds over which he has no control is to compel him to renounce this world forever, as he is elementally incapable of fulfilling the obligation of following the right path and obeying God's Law, i.e. *Shari'ah*.⁶

What are the steps by which an individual reaches the stage of perfection? He is born, according to him, as the acme of creation, the purest of the pure, and the highest of the high. But due to illumination which he receives through his intuitive powers or his rational capacity man realizes his weakness and then sets on a journey backward. It is travelling from contingency to necessity from plurality to unity, from evil to good.

There are three stages in this journey. The first is called absorption. Here, the light of God shines through his actions so that the mystic regards the actions of everything as illusory. Nothing besides God possesses any causal power. At the second stage the divine light shines through God's attributes and so the Sufi regards the attributes of everything else as merged in God. The last stage comes when the mystic receives illumination from the very essence and sees the real state of affairs. For him nothing is existent except He and the being of all things is derived solely from Him. When he reaches this stage, he becomes perfect and attains a state of union with his Lord "so much so that neither angels nor prophets can equal him. The whole circle of existence is covered and man reaches the point from where he started."⁷

The religious Law (*Shari'ah*), the mystic Path (*Tariqah*), and Truth (*Haqiqah*) – all go to form the perfect man. *Shari'ah*, according to the Sheikh, is like the protecting shell of the almond. It is useful to a certain stage. When the stage of perfection is reached, the shell becomes useless and is better thrown away. Nevertheless, a perfect Sufi needs religion – not for himself but for others.

Shabistari follows the general trend of mystic writers in describing the nature of saint ship (*wilayah*) and prophethood (*nubuwaah*). Saint ship is a more general category than prophethood. Saints so called and prophets are all saints in the first instance. In a mystic saint ship is hidden, while in a prophet it is manifest. A saint is a follower of the prophet in Law and in this he attains the highest position and becomes equal to the prophet in realizing union with the Lord. With the death of the Holy Prophet the first cycle of saint ship, a cycle in which prophethood and saint ship were both manifest in the world, came to an end.

After the Final Prophet, saint ship continued and the new cycle began to take its shape. One day the seal of saints will appear, who shall be the acme of saint ship and, with his appearance, the cycle of the two worlds will come to an end. He will be the whole, of which all the previous saints were parts. Like the "Seal of the Prophets," he shall be a blessing to the whole world. He will succeed in bringing peace and security to man; justice and equity will reign.⁸ The word "seal," according to ibn 'Arabi, does not signify a mystic with who saint ship will come to an end, but with Shabistari, the seal of saints, like the "Seal of Prophets," would terminate saint ship forever. The last of the saints is the "seal" with which the world will come to an end.

This world of matter, however, being the locus of God's manifestation (*tajalli*) cannot come to an end at all. There shall be no time when the manifestation of *Haqq* can be said to have ceased. The present world and the world to come will meet and there is no dividing line between the two. The next world is

something ever in the making. What we usually call this world and the next are mere names for what Shabistari, following ibn 'Arabi, calls the ever-new process of creation, an unending cycle of annihilation and recreation.

The life to come, man would be without body but it would be something subtle and transparent. Our deeds and mental dispositions of the present life would take concrete shape and become materialized in some tangible form. Good disposition will take the shape of light (paradise) and bad the shape of fire (hell).⁹

After the death, the individuality of man shall vanish at last and many shall be dissolved into One.¹⁰ Man shall be vouchsafed the beatific vision, but it will not be something external, it will be a manifestation within him.¹¹

B. Al-Jili

'Abd al-Karim b. Ibrahim al-Jili was born in 767/1365 and died at about 832/1428. Except for the few references in his book, almost nothing is known about his life. He was the disciple of Sheikh Sharaf al-Din al-Jabarti and lived in Zabid (Yemen). He also visited India during his travels. He claims that he received mystic illumination which led him to write his well-known book, *al-Insan al-Kamil fi Ma'rifat al-Awakhir w-al-Awa'il*. Its object is to expound and express the truth.

He holds that Absolute being is one and that all multiplicity is illusory. "Absolute Being is the essence ('*ain*) of what we call the phenomenal world (*khalq*) and God (*Haqq*). The Absolute Being manifests itself in two different realities, *khalq* and *Haqq*.¹²

Essence, Attributes, and Names

Absolute Essence is that to which names and attributes are ascribed. It is a Self (*nafs*) which exists by itself. It deserves every name which its perfection demands. No description in words can fully convey its essence. A thing can be understood by another thing which is related to it positively or negatively, but there is nothing in the universe which is so related to the Absolute. It is Pure Being which is equal to non-Being – a sum of contradictions. "It is two contradictories gathered in a unity and this sum of contradictions is not impossible."¹³ It has two attributes: eternity and everlastingness, two qualities: God (*Haqq*) and the world (*khalq*), two descriptions: eternity (*qidam*) and createdness (*huduth*), two names: *Rabb* and '*abd* (Lord and slave).

It has two faces: outward (visible), i.e. the present world and inward (invisible), i.e. the world to come. It has two predicates: necessity and possibility, two points of view: according to the first, It is non-existent for itself and existent for others, while, according to the first, It is non-existent for itself and existent for others, while, according to the second, It is existent for itself and non-existent for others. Two modes (*ma'rafah*): according to one, It is positive (*wujub*) in one plane and negative in the other, while,

according to the other, the position is reversed. With regard to Its Self (*nafs*), It is simple, with regard to Its form, It is compound, with regard to Its essence, It is unique, with regard to Its emanation, It is light, and with regard to its indivisibility, It is darkness, and still It is beyond what we have said about It.”¹⁴

It is clear that according to al-Jili reality is one¹⁵ and belongs to divine Substance (*jauhar*) which has two different aspects: God and the world. Multiplicity is only subjective and relative. “You can say what you like. You are at liberty to say the circle [of reality] is God and its inside is the world or that the circle is the world and its inside is God. It is God as well as the world.”¹⁶ “You should know that knowledge of that lofty essence is that you should realize through mystic experience that you are He and He is you. This is neither union (*ittihad*) nor incarnation (*hulul*), for the slave is slave and the Lord is Lord: the slave does not become Lord, or the Lord a slave.”¹⁷

A true mystic or the perfect man is able to realize in his super-sensuous experience that multiplicity is only a subjective way of look at things; otherwise reality that underlies it is one.¹⁸ What we call the world is nothing but the manifestation of God. In another place, he says, “Just as God was present in eternity in the Dark Mist (*‘Ama’*) which is also called Reality or realities, Hidden Treasures and White (Pure) Chrysolite, so is He present now in all the things of the phenomenal world without incarnation (*hulul*) and mixture (*imtizaj*). He is manifested in the parts and atoms of the phenomenal world without becoming many.”¹⁹

Like ibn ‘Arabi, he deals with the problem of transcendence and immanence as differentiating attributes of the essence which correspond to the twin characteristics of God and the world. Immanence (*tashbih*) is the form of divine beauty which is manifested in all things to the phenomenal world without any distinction.²⁰ The Christians are right when they say that Jesus, Mary, and the Holy Ghost are all manifestations of God, but they are wrong when they limit this manifestation to three persons only. As a matter of fact, God is immanent in the whole world.²¹ Any belief about reality that ignores any of these two characteristics, transcendence and immanence, is defective and wrong as is the case with Christianity for instance.

Transcendence (*tanzih*), when applied to God, implies that, in spite of His manifestation in all things, He is above and beyond all of them. But this sort of transcendence, according to al-Jili, is related to immanence and, therefore, does not fully represent the true essence which is characterized by what he calls essential which none claim to understand. He is, therefore, above even the transcendence which is asserted of Him in correlation with His Immanence.²²

Name (*ism*) is that which specifies the named in the understanding, pictures it in the mind, brings it in imagination, arranges it in thought, preserves it in memory, and presents to the intellect. A man who does not know the named gets its knowledge through the name. The name and the named are related to each other as outside to inside (*zahir to batin*) but in fact both are identical. There are some names the named of which do not exist in actual reality, as, for instance, ‘*anqa*’ which exists only in name. ‘*Anqa*’ and Allah stand at opposite poles, while the object of ‘*anqa*’ is non-Being, the object of Allah is Absolute

Being. We can reach knowledge of God through divine names and attributes or through the name of Allah which comprises in itself all names and attributes. Names are of two kinds: (1) of the essence, e.g. one (*ahad*), single (*wahid*), unique (*fard*), etc., and (2) of the attributes, e.g. knowledge, power, mercy, etc.²³

An attribute of a thing is that which leads one to the knowledge of its state. This distinction between attributes and essence is operative only in the sphere of the phenomenal world. "Everything in the phenomenal world which is qualified by an attribute demands that the attribute should be other than the thing, because it is subject to division and multiplicity. At the same time it demands that the attribute should be identical with it. We say that man is a rational man. It means that animality is a separate entity and so is rationality a thing different from man. But it also means that rationality and animality are both identical with man, because he is composed of both and is nothing beyond them. With regard to division, the attributes of a creature are different from its essence, while with regard to arrangement (*tarkib*) they are identical with it. But in God, this otherness disappears, for division and multiplicity does not apply to Him. His attributes are his essence and the two are identical."²⁴

Thus, according to al-Jili, the material world is not a non-reality, a *maya*, but a reality which expresses the outward form of the Real. Plurality and division in the external world are the manifestations of the divine essence as attributes which are in the last analysis identical with it. If we do not accept this view of identity, the universe would not, according to him, lead to the essence.

In the 57th chapter of *Insan-i Kamil*, al-Jili says explicitly that thought or idea is the material of the universe. "Thought is the life of the spirit of the universe...Existence is nothing but a thought. Thought is the origin and the source of being (*wujud*) and is the essence in which God is completely manifested. Do you not see your belief about God as having names and attributes which pertain to Him? Where is the locus of the belief (i.e. the universe) in which God has manifested Himself for you? It is nothing but thought."²⁵ Later on, he asserts that Being (*wujud*), as a matter of fact, is nothing but "a thought within a thought within a thought."²⁶ Thus by identifying attributes and essence, he is able to give reality to the physical world of nature which to the mystic becomes a source of the direct knowledge of God.

Among the important divine attributes he mentions divinity (*ilahiyah*), mercifulness (*rahmaniyyah*), and lordship (*rububiyyah*). Divinity is the sum of all the realities (i.e. all individualities) of Being and their maintenance in their respective positions (*maratib*) within the whole. It is the rank of God as Necessary Being. "You should know that Being and non-Being are two opposites, and the sphere of divinity comprises both. It is a sum of two pairs of contradictories: eternal and created (*hadith*), God and the world, Being and non-Being. At this stage God appears in the form of the world and the world in the form of God."²⁷

Divinity is the highest manifestation of the essence and is invisible, while its effects in the form of nature are visible everywhere. Essence is visible to the eye but its locus is not fixed or visible; we see it manifested but cannot describe its quality. Take the example of man. He is characterized by some

attributes, all of which never come within the compass of our comprehension, though we see man all right. It means that essence is visible while its attributes are not. Of the latter we see nothing but effects. For instance, we see the marching forward on the part of a generous man. “Marching forward, and “giving alms” are not bravery and generosity respectively, but only the effects of these attributes.[28](#)

Mercifulness (*rahmaniyyah*) is the manifestation of the essence in the realities of names and attributes. It refers only to the creative and not to the creaturely attributes, while *ilahiyah* refers to both. In this respect, mercifulness appears to be higher in scale than divinity, as sweetness of sugar does with regard to the sugar cane. If you prefer sweetness to the sugar cane, mercifulness is better than divinity, but if looking at the generality and comprehensive character of the sugar cane, you prefer it to sweetness, then divinity will be prior in rank. The name that manifests itself in this rank is that of *Rahman* (the Merciful) which includes both the attributes of the essence as oneness (*ahadiyyah*), uniqueness (*wahdiyyah*), eternity (*samadiyyah*), etc. and attributes of His Self which are seven, viz. life, knowledge, power, will, speech, hearing, and sight.[29](#)

The first mercy of God was the creation of the universe from His own Self.[30](#) His manifestation permeated all existents and His perfection appeared in every atom and particle. In spite of manifestation in the many, He does not become many but remains One as His nature demands. The nature of His permeation is that He created the world out of His Self which is not divisible.

God is the substance (*hayula*) of the universe.[31](#) In order to clarify his position, al-Jili gives the example of water and ice. God is like water which is the reality of ice and the world is like ice which is nothing but water (i.e. God) in a congealed form. The use of the term “ice” is only metaphorical and secondary, and not real. For the world and God are identical. “The world is nothing but ice, and ice, according to our opinion, is nothing but water. Or belief is that ice and water are identical.”[32](#)

God permeates the whole of existence through His name *Rahman* and this permeation is neither incarnation (*hulul*) nor contact, for both these conceptions imply duality; as a matter of fact, He is consubstantial with existents (*‘ain al-maujudat*).

Lordship (*rububiyyah*) is the name of the rank which demands those names that require the being of the existents and comprehends such names as the knower (*‘alim*), the hearer (*sami’*), the seer (*basir*), the self-subsisting (*qayyum*), and the willing (*murid*). Each name under this category demands its logical correlate. The knower implies the object known and willing implies the objects towards which the will is directed.[33](#)

There are four kinds of attributes: beauty (*jamal*), perfection (*kamal*), majesty (*jalal*), and essence (*dhat*).

Every divine name and attribute has its effect which reflects one of the three: beauty, majesty, or perfection. All existents absolutely reflect all the names and attributes of beauty and some of the names and attributes of absolute beauty, while hell is the manifestation of absolute majesty. The perfect man alone is the complete manifestation of all these divine names and attributes.

Al-Jili then deals with the ten main attributes: life, knowledge, will, power, speech, hearing, sight, beauty, majesty, perfection, even though they are so innumerable that none can comprehend them in their entirety.³⁴

1. Life

Complete life is the existence of a thing for itself, while incomplete or relative life is its existence for another. God exists for Himself, is living (*hay*) and, therefore, His life is complete and not subject to death. All creatures live for God and, therefore, their life is relative and hence subject to decay and death. Life of God as manifested in created beings (*khalq*) is one and complete and yet the creatures receive it in different degrees. In some, this life appears in its complete form as, for instance, in the perfect man and the exalted angels and those things which are not composed of material elements, as the Exalted Pen, the Preserved Tablet, etc. In others, this life appears in its real form but is incomplete, as, for instance, in animal, man, lower angel, and *jinn*, because though each of them lives for his own self and knows that he exists and possesses different attributes, yet his existence is not real, for he is far removed from the sources of life. In others, as in animals, life does not appear in its real form. There are others for whom life has lost its real significance and, therefore, they live for others and for themselves as, for instance, plants, minerals, etc.

Everything existent is alive, for existence by itself implies life, through different things manifest it in various degrees; some enjoy complete life while others have imperfect life. But if we look at the matter from the transcendental point of view, life of everything is complete, though there seems to be a quantitative difference due to the inherent capacity of the thing itself. Life as such is a fountain, a unity, a substance, existent in everything by its own perfection and is not subject to diminution or division.

The essence of a thing is its life, that is, life of God, whereby everything subsists. The life of things with regard to themselves is created (*hadith*) but in relation to God it is eternal (*qadim*), for the life of a thing is in reality His life. "You should know that forms, shapes, actions, words, minerals, and plants to which we attribute 'existence' possess like man complete life by themselves and for themselves. But because most people do not know this fact, we include them in a category lower than that in which they should be placed. As a matter of fact, everything possesses being for itself and complete life with which it speaks, hears, sees, understands, and has power and will of its own and does what it wishes to do. This fact has been learned by me from direct revelation in mystic experience."³⁵ In other words, everything, material as well as non-material, is, according to al-Jili, self-determined, and possesses a unique individuality of its own.

2. Knowledge

Of all the attributes, knowledge is nearer to life as life is nearer to essence. Every living thing (or everything, for, according to him, everything has life) possesses knowledge in one form or another. The first form of knowledge is instinctive or what he calls inspirational (*'ilm-i ilhami*), possessed even by

animals. The other is clear, necessary, or inferential knowledge possessed by man, angels, and *jinn*. Life and knowledge are correlated and each demands the other.

Al-Jili holds that knowledge by which God knows Himself and knowledge by which He knows the objects of the universe are one and the same and there can be no division or difference in the two. According to ibn 'Arabi, God's knowledge of the objects is dependent on what they (objects) give of themselves to Him. Commenting on the Qur'anic verse (3:178), "Verily God is not unjust to His servants," ibn 'Arabi says, "No, I dealt with them only according as I knew them, and I knew them only by what they 'gave' me of themselves of what they themselves really are."³⁶

Similarly, discussing the problem of creation, ibn 'Arabi says that when God says "Be" to a thing, it is not God's will that brings a thing into existence because God wills nothing and commands nothing the existence of which is not made necessary by the very nature and laws of things themselves.³⁷ Thus, according to him, God's will and knowledge are both dependent on the nature of the objects. Al-Jili rejects this view as wrong. God's knowledge of objects, according to him, is totally independent of the objects themselves.

It is true, he says, and that God's decree (*hukm*) with regard to a thing is determined by what its essence demands it to be, but it is wrong to infer from this that God's knowledge of objects is thereby determined by the nature of the objects themselves. As a matter of fact, the objects demanded of Him that very thing which He knew by His universal, essential, and fundamental knowledge before they were brought into existence. God's knowledge of objects is determined not by the necessity or demand of those objects but by its own inner demand.³⁸

3. Will

God's knowledge manifests itself according to the demands of His essence and it is will which gives existence to His objects of knowledge as His Knowledge demands. Our created will is identical with God's will, but when attributed to us it becomes temporal, while attributed to God it is eternal, just as Being when attribute to us is created (*makhluk*) and when attributed to God is eternal.

Here again he disagrees with ibn 'Arabi, according to whom God is nothing but the name of immutable laws which operate in the universe. "Ibn 'Arabi rules out not only the individual freedom of man, but that of God's will, as well. God does not will in the sense that he chooses, but in the sense that He decrees what He knows will take place. That the thing or action which God has decreed should take place depends entirely on its own necessary laws."³⁹

But, according to al-Jili, just as God is free and undetermined in His knowledge, so His will is absolutely undetermined and uncaused. God's will operates in every form and shape without any cause or condition; it is absolutely God's free act. He says that, according to ibn 'Arabi, it is wrong to call God free (*mukhtar*), for He does not operate in the universe by His free-will, His actions are determined by the

necessity and nature of the objects. But, according to al-Jili himself, God operates in the universe through His free-will and is not determined by any necessity external to Him.[40](#)

4. Power

It is an attribute of the essence which brings objects of knowledge into the world of actuality. Power is the creation or bringing into existence of objects from the state of non-Being.

Here, again, he controverts the position of ibn 'Arabi according to whom there is no creation at all. The objects of the physical world existed from eternity as objects of God's knowledge. What we usually call creation is nothing but manifestation of these already existing objects of knowledge on a different plane. There is no question of temporal priority or posteriority nor is there any creation *ex nihilo* at all.[41](#) Al-Jili does not accept this position in *toto*.

He says that it is true that creation means the coming into actual existence of things which are previously the objects of God's consciousness.[42](#) But ibn 'Arabi, according to him, forgot to note the fact that God's existence was prior to the existence of latent realities, things as objects of His consciousness (*a'yan al-thabitah*), and at this stage the things were non-existent and there was in existence nothing but Allah to whom alone we can attribute eternity (*qidam*). It follows that He created the objects of His consciousness from non-existence (*'adam*).

Allah's essence is independent and His being is first only as a matter of rank (*rutbah*); creatures are dependent on Him and, therefore, their being is posterior in the same sense. The creatures are non-being with reference to the First Being. There is no lapse of time between the non-existence of things and their becoming objects of God's consciousness.[43](#) The question of priority is only logical and not temporal.

The same line of argument is presented in discussing the nature of eternity (*azal*) and everlastingness (*abad*). Eternity is of two kinds. One is the eternity of a created thing. It refers to the time when it had no being. Eternity of one creature is different from the eternity of others. For instance, eternity of inorganic matter is different from that of organic substances, for it is prior to the latter. We can, therefore, speak of eternity with reference to the organic substances when the inorganic substances were in existence and had not yet developed and evolved into organic form; it does not, however, imply any temporal priority.

The other is absolute eternity which belongs only to God who is above Being and non-Being. God's eternity has no relation whatsoever with that of the creatures because He is (logically) prior to them. We cannot say, as ibn 'Arabi, for instance, holds, that in the state of absolute eternity the world existed, if not objectively, as the object of God's knowledge, for if we accept this position, we would be bound to regard the verse (76: 1) in support of his thesis, "Has there not been over a man a long period of time when he has nothing – to be spoken of?"

Al-Jili holds that time (*dahr*) in this context means Allah and a portion of time (*hin*) is one of His

manifestations when man had no being, either as an intelligible (*'ilmi*, i.e. an object of God's consciousness in the form of latent reality) or an actual reality (*'aini*). The part of the verse "nothing – to be spoken of" signifies that he did not form the content of God's mind.[44](#)

Similarly, when we apply everlastingness to God, it is logical and not temporal. "Eternity and everlastingness are only logical determinations and not temporal events in reference to God." "These two, i.e., eternity and everlastingness with their temporal implications, have been employed only to clarify the real existence of God (in relation to the world), otherwise (as a matter of fact) there is neither temporal eternity nor everlastingness. Time has no reference or significance in relation to God."[45](#)

Difference between eternity and everlastingness is that eternity refers to the logical priority of God, while everlastingness means that He was never non-existent nor in need of an efficient causality for His Being. We apply to Him the term "everlastingness" only for understanding His eternity, otherwise ascription of temporal priority and posteriority to Him as related to the world is out of the question. Temporality (*huduth*) implies that things, although they have been in the knowledge of God since eternity, in respect of their existence are created things.[46](#)

5. Speech (Kalam)

Speech is a reflection of the Being of God, it is an over-flowing or emanation (*faid*) from the essence of God. It is an intelligible epiphany. It manifests itself in two directions. The first is of two kinds. (a) The kind of speech (*kalam*) issues forth from God's position of power (*'izzah*) which must be obeyed by all. The Qur'anic verse 41:11, refers to this fact.[47](#) (b) The second kind of speech issues forth from the position of Lordship in the language of the people such as the revealed books. In this case, the question of obedience and disobedience arises. Some obey while others disobey the injunctions contained in them.

The second significance (direction) of speech is metaphysical and is the basis of the doctrine of Logos. The Word of God is the reality of the existents and every existent is a Word of God. Al-Jili refers to the Qur'anic verse, "If the sea were ink for the Words of my Lord, the sea would surely be consumed before the Words of my Lord are exhausted" (18:109). Thus, Nature is the materialization of the Word of God and exists in its physical form. It is the objective and material of the contents of God's consciousness, the physical shape that the objects of His knowledge, called *a'yan al-thabitah*, assume.[48](#)

6. Hearing is Divine Epiphany

It is an attribute of His essence which His perfection demands. He hears the words of His own consciousness as well as those of His manifestations (*shu'un*). The second hearing (of the manifestations) is the demand of His names and attributes which are to be manifested in the physical world. It is revelation of Himself to Himself in the state of self-consciousness.[49](#)

7. Sight

The attribute of sight with reference to seeing the object of knowledge is nothing but God as He is in His essence, and the same is the case with His attribute of knowledge. With regard to the epiphany of knowledge which is the originator of the universe, it is the revelation of the attribute of knowledge from Himself to Himself, while the epiphany of *'ain*, which is the objective physical world, is the manifestation of the attributes of seeing, and both are identical with His essence. Seeing and knowing are two different attributes and yet, with reference to His essence, they are one: His seeing is His knowing. When the things were on the plane of the unseen, they were the objects of His knowledge, when they appeared on the plane of existence; they became the objects of His hearing.[50](#)

8. Beauty

It is of two kinds. The first is real and is reflected in the “beautiful names” in which God sees Himself. The second is sensory and reflected in the physical created world. He is the absolute beauty, and reveals Himself in its different manifestations.

9. Majesty is Beauty in its Intense Form

Beauty signifies His exalted attributes, while majesty is His essence as manifested in His names and attributes.

10. Perfection is the name of Divine Essence which is perfectly unknowable

All attributes of God are identical with His essence and not added to it and so perfection is His by His very nature.[51](#)

Self-revelations of the One

The ultimate Reality, according to al-Jili, is One which manifests itself in the multiplicity of forms without thereby becoming many. The state of the One before It revealed Itself is called, after ibn 'Arabi, blindness (*al-'Am'*). The term was adopted from a prophetic tradition. The Holy Prophet was once asked about the place of God before creation. He answered that God was in *'Ama'*. On the basis of this simple answer, ibn 'Arabi and al-Jili have built a super-structure of their pantheistic systems.

The essence is Absolute Being in which all relations, modes, and directions disappear. As such it cannot be called a necessary or eternal being for this implies determination of one sort or another. It is even above the characterization of absoluteness.[52](#) Al-Jili calls this essence *'Ama'* and describes it as essence in its inwardness. It is like a flint which hides fire in its innermost recesses. Though sometimes fire is revealed, yet it remains hidden within it. It is the Reality of realities which is above the distinction of God (*Haqq*) and the world (*khalq*), beyond the determinations of names and attributes.[53](#)

It is the one epiphany which has no relation whatsoever with “other.” In spite of this, it comprises within itself all (later) manifestations or revelations which are present in it only potentially like stars in the light of the sun. In this epiphany of essence, God knows nothing but Himself, while in other epiphanies He knows Himself as well as others.[54](#)

This state of blindness is related to the Absolute Oneness (*ahadiyyah*), in both of which names and attributes are annihilated and nothing is manifested, with the difference that in the former the inward aspect is emphasized, while in the latter its outward aspect takes its form. ‘*Ama*’, with regard to inwardness and occultation or hiddenness, is the essence, while Absolute oneness with regard to God’s manifestation to Himself in His mind (*nafs*) in which all relations are negated.[55](#)

Absolute Oneness denotes that the Pure Being is about to start on the process of descent, coming down towards manifestation.[56](#) This is the first stage of the descent or self-revelation of the essence from the darkness of ‘*Ama*’ to the light of manifestations. At this stage, unity is complete and all multiplicity is negated, although it resides in it; it is divested of all attributes, names, relations, and modes, and yet they all lie hidden in its innermost being. Its apparent unity is identical with its hidden plurality. It is like a wall when seen from a distance.

Although it is composed of different constituents like bricks, mortar, etc., and is, thus, a plurality, yet it shows itself to an observer as a unity which has a peculiar existence of its own and is not merely a conglomeration of different parts. It is the first self-revelation of the One and is above the distinctions of God and the world. No one can claim to receive illumination from the One at this stage, for it is beyond all multiplicity; what we experience is really unity in its second stage, *Rabb* or Allah.[57](#)

The unity (*ahadiyyah*) of God at a particular stage of manifestation spreads out into a pair of opposites which later on are reunited at the stage of uniqueness or simple oneness (*wahdiyyah*). The intervening stage between *ahadiyyah* and *wahdiyyah* is represented by He-ness (*huwiyyah*) and I-ness (*aniyyah*).[58](#)

Ibn ‘Arabi employs the term *huwiyyah* (He-ness) as equivalent to divine essence.[59](#) But for al-Jili this He-ness is a stage removed from the essence. It is derived from the pronoun *huwa* (he) which refers to the “absent one” (*aha’ib*) and, therefore, refers to the essence of God from which names and attributes are absent, that is, to His unity which negates the many. It is the inward aspect of the unity which informs us about its inwardness (*batin*) and absence (*ahaibubiyyah*). It is the inmost consciousness of Allah.[60](#)

Aniyyah (I-ness) is the outward aspect of unity in which One blossoms forth into multiplicity. *Zahir* (outward) and *batin* (inward) are not two different aspects of the One but only its different views; as a matter of fact, the outward and the inward are identical. He-ness and I-ness, outwardness and inwardness refer to the reality which is signified by the name Allah because *ilahiyyah* is a sum of contradictories.[61](#)

The stage of self-revelation called simple Oneness (*wahdiyyah*) is the manifestation of the essence in

which all different attributes are gathered together. Here everything is One and many, many is One and One many.

At this stage, essence is manifested as attribute and attribute as essence. Every attribute is identical with the other, as generosity is with revengefulness, for both are identical with (and *'ain* of) Allah. In *ahadiyyah*, there is no manifestation of names and attributes and the Real is the pure essence. In *wahdiyyah*, names and attributes as well as their traces and effects are fully manifested, but they are not separate from the essence; here every attribute is identical with (the *'ain* of) the other. In *ilahiyyah* names and attributes are manifested but are distinguished one from the other and are even contradictory to one another.⁶²

Ascent of the Soul

The different grades of the self-revelations of the One are only a logical description of how, according to al-Jili, the Real, i.e., God, manifests Himself in nature and man. It is man in whom He becomes self-conscious and who realizes the ultimate truth that there is no multiplicity or division, for reality is one. But, as al-Jili says, this realization does not dawn on him all of a sudden. It is not possible for man to realize and comprehend all the divine realities at the time of birth. He ascends to the truth only by gradual stages.⁶³ Al-Jili enumerates four different stages which man has to traverse before he is able to achieve unity with the source and origin of life, the One.

1. Illumination of Action

At this stage man feels that God permeates all objects of the world; it is He who moves them and is ultimately responsible for their rest. The power of performing action is attributed by al-Jili to God only and man is looked upon as devoid of all power or will. He enumerates several degrees and grades of this stage. There are some who first see the divine will and then look to the action and, thus, they are made to realize the conflict between God's will and religious injunctions. There are some who follow His will, although thereby they violate His order (*amr*). With regard to the first, i.e. will, they are obedient, while, with regard to the second, they are classed among the disobedient. Al-Jili leaves the problem unsettled by asking the question, "Is it better for man, in order to win God's favour, to put on the dress of disobedience for the sake of fulfilling God's will or to put on the dress of obedience and defy thereby His will, though, as a matter of fact, only that happens which is according to the will of God?"⁶⁴

2. Illumination of Names

When a mystic receives illumination from any one of the divine names, his being is completely submerged under the light of the name. Both are greatly identified that when anyone calls God by that name the response comes from the mystic. The result is that he comes to realize his unity with the Real. "Anyone who calls Laila (my beloved) by her name receives answer from me; when anyone calls me, then Laila answers on my behalf. We are one soul though in two different bodies or us two are like a

person who in essence is one but has two names. As a matter of fact, we are not two persons that have become one, but are one; the lover is the beloved.

Al-Jili enumerates several grades and degrees of this illumination, all of which are based on his mystical experiences. Other people may arrive at a different set of stages on the basis of their mystical experience. The first is the illumination of the name Eternal (*Qadim*). Here God reveals to man his position as he existed before the creation of the world in the consciousness of God (i.e. as *'ain al-thabitah*). His physical existence vanishes.

As the knowledge of God is eternal, so are the objects of His knowledge. This being so, the man who receives illumination from the name Eternal *ipso facto* loses his temporality and becomes as eternal as his latent reality (*'ain al-thabitah*). He who receives the epiphany of the name *al-Haqq* (the Truth) realizes the hidden truth contained in the Qur'anic verse (15:85), "We created the heavens, the earth, and whatever is in them with truth." For him the phenomenal world ceases to exist and only the essence, devoid of all attributes and relations, remains. There are others who receive epiphany of the name *al-Ahad* (the One). God reveals to them the true nature of the phenomenal world and they realize in their mystic revelation that this world is a reflection (*buruz*) of His essence and is related to Him as waves to the sea. In this state the mystic sees the One in the many; rather, the many disappear altogether and only the One remains as the Real.

Al-Jili sums up his position in these words, "I lost my (separate) being (*wujud*). On my behalf He represented me; rather, He was I and I, He. Being was one and there was no conflict or difference. I was annihilated and achieved abiding life (*baqa'*) with Him and in Him, and all the veils of difference and dualities were removed. I raised my self (*nafs*), the veil was lifted and I awoke as if I had not fallen asleep. With the eyes of reality I found myself as *Haqq*. Then His attributes became my attributes and myself (*dhat*) His essence. As a matter of fact, my name is His name and the name of his essence is my name.

There are some who receive light (*tajalli*) from the name *al-Rahman* (the Merciful). At this stage, the mystic receives illumination gradually and turn by turn from all the divine names and is illumined according to the capacity of the light inherent in his nature. Then the name *Rabb* (Nourisher) and all other names that are related to it like *'Alim* (Knower), *Qadir* (Powerful), etc. descend on him. This process goes on until he is illumined by all the names. Last of all comes the epiphany of the Name *Qayyum* (Self-Subsisting). This is the final stage after which the mystic passes on to the next higher stage of the illumination of divine attributes.[65](#)

3. Illumination of Attributes

At this stage, the self (*nafs*) and existence (*wujud*) of the mystic are annihilated. When the light of slavehood (*'abdiyyah*) and the spirit of creatureliness in him pass away, God substitutes in his body, in place of the thing that has been snatched away, a spiritual substance of His own essence without

incarnation. This spiritual substance, called the Holy Spirit (*Ruh al-Quds*), becomes an inalienable part of his self. God's epiphany to man in this state means His epiphany to His own Self, we call man slave, though, in reality, and there is no distinction between Lord and slave. When slave disappears, his logical correlate, Lord, must also disappear. The creatures are like waves which, though many, are parts of the sea. If the sea is in motion, it is all waves; when it is calm, there are neither waves nor number (i.e. multiplicity)."

He enumerates several grades of this illumination which different people attain according to their inborn capacities and the magnitude of their knowledge of the power of their will. When a person is illumined by the divine attribute of life, he feels that he is the sole source of life as manifested in all the creatures in different proportions. Al-Jili says that when he was at this stage he felt that he was life itself, one and indivisible.

When a mystic is illumined by the attribute of knowledge or sight, he knows the reality of everything that was, is and will be and sees everything, even the unknown of the unknown (*ghaib al-ghaib*). When he is illumined by the attribute of hearing, he hears the speech of every creature: minerals, plants, animals and angels.

Some receive the light of the attribute of speech (*kalam*). In this condition, the recipient looks upon all existents as God's Word. Sometimes he hears the Words of God without a veil of names, without any direction, without the help of any bodily organ. This hearing of God's words cannot be described in usual physical terms, for the ear does not play any part in it. In this state man attains a very high position. He is addressed by God as His lover and beloved. "You are My mouth among My people. You are My inmost secret and the best reflection of My life. You are My name, My person (*dhat*), My attribute. You are the epitome and the (final) object of existence and creation (*huduth*). If there had been no Lord (*Rubb*), there would have been no slave. You manifested Me as I manifested you. You brought me into existence, as I created you. If you had not been existent, I would not have been existent. My lover, I am the (hidden) meaning of you and you are the (apparent) manifestation of Me."

A man who reaches this stage receives God's Word according to his capacity. When carried to the Highest Tree (*sidrat al-muntaba*) he is addressed by God. Then he sees light in the heart and is convinced by its very brilliance that its source is God. He is told, "My friend, your I-ness (*aniyyah*) is my He-ness (*huwiyyah*). 'You' is identical with 'I.' Your simplicity is My compositeness and your compositeness is My simplicity. You are a point (centre) round which the circle of existence revolves, and in that circle you are the worshipper as well as the worshipped; you are the light, the manifestation, the beauty."

Some are illumined by the divine attribute of will. At this stage the illumined person sees that everything in the world is subject to his will. Some are illumined by the attribute of power. At this stage, which al-Jili claims to have reached, he heard the ringing of bells, his whole physical body seem to have been torn asunder and his existence changed into non-being. He experienced here darkness upon darkness until

by the grace of God he was relieved of all this and came upon light. At this stage, the illumine one gets extra-ordinary spiritual powers, a thing comes into existence at his bidding. The last stage is the illumination of the attribute of divinity (*ilahiyah*), where two contradictory positions seem to be reconciled and incorporated into the world as true and yet he looks upon all of them (including Islam) as false, for, according to him all Muslims, believers, gnostics and the righteous ones are on the wrong path and he does not accept the opinion of any but the perfect Sufi (*muhaqqiq*) as true.[66](#)

4. Illumination of the Essence

When God reveals Himself to man through this epiphany, man dies to himself and, in place of that, receives from God a divine substance (*latifah ilahiyyah*) which is either attributive (*sifati*) or essential (*dhati*). When this substance is essential, i.e. when man is illumined by divine essence, he truly becomes a perfect man.[67](#)

Doctrine of Logos and the Perfect Man

According to al-Jili there are three metaphysical categories: (1) Absolute Being which is completely unknowable. It is the essence above all kinds of determinations, relations, and modes.[68](#) (2) The reality viewed as *Haqq*, the aspect of He-ness or Divinity. (3) The reality viewed as *khalq*, the aspect of I-ness, or humanity. Ultimate Reality is One, but it appears in two different aspects of God and man (*Haqq* and *khalq*).[69](#) Sometimes he expresses this doctrine in a form which most Western writers (like Nicholson) construe to be the acceptance of the Christian doctrine of Trinity. Al-Jili says, "Essence has two aspect: 'You' and 'I'...'You' refers to your He-ness (*huwiyyah*); 'I' refers to my reality...'I,' as 'I'-ness, is God and 'You' in its creaturely aspect is man. You make look at yourself as 'I or as 'You'; in reality, there is nothing here except the Universal Reality."[70](#)

Later on, al-Jili says, "In itself the essence is one. If you say it is one, it is true. And if you say, it is two, and then it is, as a matter of fact, two. If you say, 'No, it is three,' you have spoken the truth." Explaining it further, he says, "Look at His oneness (*ahadiyyah*) which is His essence and here He is one (*wahid*) and unique. If you look at Him with regard to the two aspects of Creator and creature, Lord and slave (*Rabb* and *'abd*), He is two. And if you look at His real nature and at that wherein two contraries are gathered together, you will be amazed. You will not be able to call His loftiness lowly and His lowliness lofty. You will have to fix a third name to illustrate His nature which is characterized by the two attributes. This third thing is that whose name is Ahmad with reference to the celestial sphere and Mohammad with reference to the terrestrial sphere.[71](#) This is the doctrine of Logos or the perfect man which he discusses in detail in the 60th chapter of his book.

The perfect man, according to him, is the Pole (*Qutb*) on which the sphere of existence revolves from first to last. He has been one and unchangeable since being came into existence. He is dressed in different ways and in each guise he has a different name. His real name is Mohammad. In every age he has a name which is most suitable for that time. Referring to his personal experience he says that he

had a chance of seeing him (i.e. Mohammad as a perfect man) in the form of his Sheikh, Sharf al-Din al-Jabrati, at Zabid in 796/1393, though he did not know at the time that he was Mohammad. The Holy Prophet, as a matter of fact, in his capacity as the perfect man, has the power of assuming different forms.

When the mystic observes him in the form which he possessed in his earthly life, he calls it the form of Mohammad. But when he (the mystic) sees him in some other form, though he knows that it is in reality, Mohammad applies to nothing except the reality of Mohammad (*haqiqat al-Mohammadiyah*). Al-Jili is, however, very careful to point out that this is not the doctrine of metempsychosis. Mohammad has the power, according to him, to manifest himself in different forms and he has been appearing in the form of the perfect man in every age. Such men are outwardly his (i.e. Mohammad's) vicegerents, while inwardly he constitutes their essence.⁷² At another place, al-Jili calls Mohammad as "the heaven and the earth and the length and the breadth."⁷³

The basic reality of Mohammad is present in all people in proportion to their inherent capacities. Saints and prophets all partake of it in different degrees, while Mohammad alone possesses it in its fullness and, therefore, according to al-Jili, nobody except he can be called a truly perfect man.⁷⁴ Different names and attributes are manifested individually and separately in different saints and prophets, but in the perfect man they are manifested in their totality.

The perfect man is the whole of reality in miniature; he is the microcosm who combines in himself the inward and the outward aspects of reality. He is the copy of God as a tradition of the Prophet says, "Allah created Adam in His own image." God is living, knowing, mighty, willing, hearing, seeing, and speaking and so is the perfect man. Then there is the perfect man's he-ness (*huwiyah*) as against God's He-ness (*huwiyah*), I-ness (*aniyyah*) against I-ness, essence against essence, who against whole, universal against universal, particular against particular.⁷⁵

The microcosmic character of the perfect man is further explained by al-Jili as follows, "The perfect man in his essence represents all the realities of existence. In his spirituality he corresponds to the spiritual realities and in his corporeality to the physical realities. His heart corresponds to the Throne of God (*al-'arsh*),⁷⁶ his *aniyyah* to the Heavenly Chair (*kursi*),⁷⁷ his mind to the Exalted Pen (*al-qalam al-a'la*),⁷⁸ his soul to the Guarded Tablet (*al-lauh al-mahfuz*),⁷⁹ his nature to physical elements, his potentialities to *hayula*, etc., etc. In short, every faculty of the perfect man corresponds to different manifestations in the physical world."⁸⁰

According to al-Jili, there are three stages (*barzakh*) of development for the perfect man. In the first stage called beginning (*bada'ah*) the perfect man becomes endowed with divine names and attributes. In the intermediary stage (*tawassut*) he is able to grasp both divine and human realities. When he is able to acquire all that is possible to do at this stage, he gets knowledge of all hidden things and becomes aware of the secrets of the unseen world. In the third and final stage (*khitam*) he acquires creative power and is given full authority to manifest this power in the world of nature. "At this stage, there are only two

things: he, the perfect man himself and God the Great.”[81](#)

He is called “the guide” (*al-mehdi*) and the seal (*al-khatam*). He is the vicegerent to whom God refers in the story of Adam. All things are drawn towards him in obeying his order as an iron is attracted by the magnet. The entire world is subdued to his power and greatness, and he does what he wishes to do. Nothing remains hidden from or unknown to him. The saint (i.e. the perfect man) possesses the divine substance as simple essence (like God Himself) and is not limited by any rank (*martabah*) of Creator and creature,[82](#) and as such he is able to bestow on things what their nature demands without any lot or hindrance.[83](#)

Saint ship and Prophethood

Al-Jili quotes Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir on the authority of Ibn ‘Arabi, “Oh prophets, you have been called prophets but we have received something which you did not get.” Another mystic says, “We have dived in the river (saint ship) while the prophets are staying at its banks.” Al-Jili remarks that there is truth in these statements, but a prophet as prophet is superior to a saint *qua* saint.[84](#)

Al-Jili regards prophethood as a developed stage of saint ship. The seventh stage of the spiritual development is nearness (*qurb*) which he calls great saint ship (*wilayat al-kubra*). It has four aspects. The first is friendship (*khullah*), the position attained by Abraham. The second is love (*hub*), where Muhammad was given the rank of a lover of God (*habib Allah*). The third is finality (*khatam*), the rank of Muhammad (*maqam-i Mohammadi*) where the banner of Ahmad was hoisted for him. The last and fourth is the rank of slave hood (*‘abdiyyah*) where God called him by the name of slave (*‘abd*).[85](#) In this rank he was made a prophet and sent with a message to the people.

Other people who succeed in attaining this rank are only entitled to be called slaves and they are the vicegerents of Muhammad on all planes (*hadarah*) of existence. There are some saints who have undergone spiritual discipline and attained perfection, but their objective is not the reform of the people. Such saints are prophets, but their prophethood follows from that of Muhammad. They are his brothers about whom there is reference in the following tradition, “I have a great regard for those of my brethren who will come after my death.” These people are prophet-saints. The prophethood of these saints, according to al-Jili, is institutional (*tashri’i*) but that of nearness, propagation (of the message of the Holy Prophet), and enforcement of the divine Law. These prophet-saints receive their prophetic knowledge directly i.e. from the same source from which the prophets derive their knowledge.[86](#)

Al-Jili draws a distinction between saint ship (*walayah*), prophecy of saint ship (*nubuwwat al-wilayah*), and prophecy of institution (*nubuwwat al-tashri’i*). Saint ship is a rank in which God reveals to a mystic His names and attributes through knowledge, state, and power and, thus, becomes his protector and friend (*mutawalli*). In the prophecy of saint ship, the perfect servant (*al-‘abd al-kamil*) is commanded by God to turn his attention to the people so that he may reform them in the light of the divine Law towards a better moral and spiritual life. He who performed this task before Muhammad was an apostle (*rasul*)

and he who undertook this work after him is his vicegerent, but in his missionary work he has no independent status; he is the follower of Mohammad, like such saints as Bayazid, Junaid, ‘Abd al-Qadir Jilani, ibn ‘Arabi, etc. He who enjoys an independent status and does not follow any other prophet belongs to the rank of prophecy of institution, but this has come to an end after the death of Mohammad.

Thus, saint ship represents a peculiar relation between the Lord and the servant, prophecy of saint ship is an aspect of the saint which is common between the Creator and the creature; prophecy of institution is an independent and permanent assignment, an apostleship is an aspect which refers to the relation between the (Lord’s) servant and the creatures.

A prophet is a saint as well as a prophet, but the aspect of his saint ship is superior to the aspect of his prophecy, though every prophet-saint is superior to a saint.⁸⁷ According to al-Jili, Mohammad is the final prophet because he did not leave any wisdom, guidance, knowledge, and secret unexplained. Whatever was necessary for the people to know and learn had been communicated by him. No Sufi saint can know or experience anything which was not experienced by him and, therefore, he cannot but follow him. “After Mohammad institutional prophethood came to an end.”⁸⁸

Psychology – Qalb

The term “heart” (*qalb*) is very often used by the mystics as the repository of the innermost secrets of divine knowledge. It is definitely not the physical organ of the human body but a symbolical term for the rational or spiritual aspect of man. Following ibn ‘Arabi, al-Jili identifies it with the spirit of God which, according to the Qur’an, was breathed into Adam (15:29).

The heart (*qalb*) is the eternal light which was revealed in the essence (*‘ain*) of existents (i.e. in Mohammad or the perfect man), so that God may see man through it. It is the centre of God’s consciousness and the circumference of the circles of all existents. It symbolizes that which is described in the Qur’an as the light (24:35). It reflects all the divine names and attributes and yet at times it directs its attention to some particular name and then becomes a complete reflection of it.

The true nature of the heart is divine and pure.⁸⁹ But due to animal passions sometimes it loses this purity which, however, can be recovered after a period of physical and spiritual training, the duration of which varies according to the degree of influence of the animal passions. Al-Jili holds that certain men of eminence subjected themselves to a rigorous mystic discipline as a result of which they received divine illumination as a right and not as a favour. In his support he quotes a verse of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Qadir Jilani who says, “I continued grazing in the fields of *rida*’ (submission to God’s will) and attained a rank which was the result not of God’s favour (but of my own efforts).”

Qalb is like a mirror to the realities of Being or it may be called the reflection of the universe. God says, “The sky and the earth do not contain Me, it is only the heart of My believing servant which can contain Me.” This statement, according to al-Jili, proves that the heart is primary and the universe is only

secondary.

God's comprehension by the heart is of three kinds: (a) by knowledge. Heart alone is able to comprehend and know God as He is. Other things can and do know God either in one or other of His aspects, but heart alone can know him in all-comprehensiveness. (b) By observation (*mushahadah*). Through this seeing (*kashf*) the heart observes the beauties of the face of Allah and enjoys the taste of His names and attributes. (c) By vicegerency. At this stage, man becomes a complete embodiment of divine names and attributes so much so that he feels his essence to be identical with divine essence. He then becomes God's vicegerent.

Reason

There are three kinds of reason: the first intelligence (*'aql al-awwal*), universal reason (*'aql al-kull*) and ordinary reason (*'aql al-ma'ash*). The first intelligence is the locus of the form of divine knowledge in existence and as such it is identical with the Exalted pen. It contains explicitly and analytically what is contained implicitly and synthetically in divine consciousness. It is the light of divine knowledge which became the first manifestation of the essence in the phenomenal world.[90](#)

Universal reason is the luminous percipient in which those forms of knowledge are made manifest which is deposited in the first intelligence. Al-Jili rejects the view of those who regard universal reason as the sum of reasons of all rational beings, for reason are a unit and a substance.

Ordinary reason is a light which is judged and measured by the laws of reflection. Its sphere of activity is confined only to one of the several aspects of the universal reason; it has no access to the first intelligence which is beyond logical inferences and is the sphere where sacred revelation takes place. Ordinary reason has only one scale, i.e., of nature, while knowledge gained through ordinary reason is of limited scope, fallible, and is mostly of the nature of conjecture. He relates the three reasons as follows: the first intelligence is like the sun, universal reason is like water which reflects the rays of the sun, while the ordinary reason is like the reflection of water which falls on a wall.[91](#)

Judgment (Wahm)

The *wahm* of Mohammad was created by God from His perfect light and, therefore, it was manifested in the phenomenal world in a perfect form. *Wahm* is the strongest faculty possessed by man because it over-powers reason, reflection, and imagination. It has, thus, the greatest capacity of (intellectual) apprehension and preservation. It has power and influence over all existence. It is through it that an intellectual person is able to acknowledge God and worship Him. It is the light of certitude and anyone who is able to attain supremacy over it becomes the master of the two universes, terrestrial and spiritual. But he who is over-powered by it becomes subject to darkness and bewilderment.[92](#)

Himmah is concentration of mind upon an object. It corresponds to what is usually called will or power of will. It is a very powerful faculty which, according to al-Jili, is always busy in the contemplation of God. If

anybody decides to attain a particular objective and concentrates his will upon its attainment, he is sure to succeed in his aim. There are two necessary conditions for success, (a) determination in thought about the possibilities of the success or otherwise of the objective and then a conviction about the result, and (b) concentration of all effort on its achievement. If anybody fails to manifest this type of activity, he has no chance of success. In the beginning one encounters great difficulties and hindrances but, once they are overcome, man is on the verge of conquest of his self as well as of the physical universe.

Al-Jili makes a distinction between will (*himmah*) and attention (*hamm*). The object of the former is God and the spiritual world, while that of the latter is the physical world and pursuits related to it. But for a mystic it is not proper to stay at the stage of attention for long, because after some time it becomes a hindrance to future progress.⁹³

Reflection (Fikr)

It is a key to the Unseen. According to al-Jili, there are two methods of approaching the Unseen: (a) pertaining to God, which is attained through divine names and attributes, (b) pertaining to the world which depends on realizing the true nature of man, all of whose aspects are ranged against the aspects of the Merciful. One of these aspects is reflection by which we can peep into the mysteries of the Unseen. When a man is able to attain perfection in the exercise of reflection, he sees spiritual objects in a physical garb.

This ascent (*'uruj*) is of two kinds: (1) One kind of ascent is achieved by traversing the path chalked out by the Merciful. The man who adopts it is on the straight path and attains creative powers. (b) The second kind of ascent is the "red magic" which is involved in thought and imagination and in which truth and falsehood are mixed together. It is the path of speculative thought which lands man in the morass of uncertainty and doubt.⁹⁴

But it does not imply that the exercise of reflection should be condemned outright. Al-Jili admits that reflection has the potentiality of leading men astray from the right path, but he also suggests certain principles by following which it is possible for men to benefit from the light of reflection and save themselves from its pitfalls and darkness. The first principle, according to him, is reason (*'aql*), which is in perpetual quest, as well as the acquired experience the veracity of which has been testified by men in their mystic life. The second is *naql*, i.e. knowledge gained through a study of the Qur'an and Tradition, by which a man comes to believe in the reality of the Unseen. But if a man refuses to follow these principles and gives himself over to purely discursive reason, he is sure to be led astray.⁹⁵

The Self (Nafs)

According to al-Jili, as the title of chapter 59 illustrates, self is the origin of Lucifer (*Iblis*) and other evil powers. But it does not imply that the origin of the self itself is evil, for, as al-Jili says, its origin is the spirit itself of Mohammad. "The self of Mohammad was created by God out of His own Self and the self

of Adam was made a copy of the self of Mohammad.” Later on, he says, “Allah created the self of Mohammad from His own essence and as his essence is the unity of two contraries, two contraries emanated from Him.”

Satan was cursed for his act of disobedience but this curse, according to al-Jili, consisted in removing him from divine presence. The period of this separation is limited to the Day of Judgment after which he will be reunited with the divine presence. Thus, according to al-Jili, self is spiritual in origin and does not represent any evil power which is antagonistic to the forces of good. “The self is the inmost secret of the Lord and (a part of) His essence on account of which it has delights. It was created out of the light of attributes of Lordship and, therefore, possesses lordly qualities.” Al-Jili, therefore, identifies self with the soul which was breathed into Adam and enumerates the following five stages of the development of the soul on the path of spiritual progress:

1. The animal soul is an aspect of the soul which governs the body.
2. The evil-prompting soul (*nafs al-ammarah*) is that aspect by which the soul is engrossed in fulfilling the demands of passions and, thus, becomes indifferent to divine commandments and prohibitions.
3. The inspired soul is that aspect by which human soul is directed and guided by God to do good action.
4. The self-reproaching soul is that aspect by which man is engaged in subduing his inclinations and passions and in turning his attention to God.
5. The tranquil soul is that aspect because of which all evil inclinations are totally removed and man feels satisfied with God.

But beyond these five stages, there is a final stage where body is completely under the control of the soul and partakes of the knowledge of the Unseen and is able to fly over the earth, etc. At this stage man is characterized by God’s attributes and becomes identical with His essence.[96](#)

Religion

A theory of life which is based on pantheism ends in a conception of religion which is universal. As the unity of Godhead is manifested in the multiplicity of divine names and attributes, so the basic urge of man to worship God takes various forms all of which are equally valid and right. He argues his case on the basis of certain verses of the Qur’an and traditions. He holds that all existent things are created for the purpose of divine worship. Everything by its state and activity, nay bit is very nature and attributes, actually does worship God and, therefore, all existents are servants or worshippers of God.

The forms of worship, however, due to differences in the nature of names and attributes, are different. Though humanity was originally and by nature one, yet due to differences resulting from the

manifestations of diverse names, people adopted various pathways towards God – pathways which appeared right to the people and which God had decreed for them; for none follows a path except that which he wish them to follow and all paths are undoubtedly paths leading to Him as the following verse of the Qur'an indicates, ***“There is no living creature but He has it in His control.” (11:56).***

Death is the extinguishing of the vital heat, while life is the soul's concentration on the body. The life of the body is maintained only so long as the soul continues to look at it. After death, the soul assumes a bodily form appropriate to it in accordance with the place it occupies. Some mystics wrongly deny resurrection of the body. Al-Jili believes on the basis of his personal experience and observation that bodies along with souls shall be resurrected.[97](#)

The stage intermediate between death and resurrection (*barzakh*) is an incomplete and non-permanent stage of life after death. It is a world of fantasy. There the people will meet with the forms appropriate to their actions. If a man had been doing good actions, he would experience different forms and shapes of these actions which would carry him progressively to better states. Similarly, an evil-doer would experience torments which will gradually increase in their intensity.

Al-Jili enumerates eight different levels of paradise the last of which, called the lauded station (*maqam al-mahmud*), and is meant for none but Mohammad. It is the paradise of the essence. Similarly, he describes seven different grades or levels of hell.

But after giving a graphic description of hell and heaven, al-Jili denies their existence as separate localities. As the epiphanies of the Lord, they are on an equal level; the inmates of hell will receive tidings of punishment as the people of paradise will receive tidings of reward.[98](#) Hell is nothing but the natural darkness which is fire.[99](#) In the 59th chapter he discusses in detail the nature of Iblis and his manifestations and yet he asserts that Iblis is not an individual; it is only the personification of the evil aspect of man's nature.[100](#)

He tries to explain away the usual significance and nature of fire in hell. God will create in the people thrown into hell the power to bear punishment and, thus, this punishment will change into pleasure.[101](#) But even then this so-called punishment in hell will not last forever.

Al-Jili thinks that the beatific vision is the manifestation of God's *tajalli* and His nearness is not confined to the people of paradise or the so-called next world. Every individual, here in this life and in life after death, whether he is placed in hell or in paradise, continually receives God's *tajalli*; as a matter of fact, his existence is all due to it.[102](#)

According to al-Jili, God's will is absolutely free from external restraints; His actions are not determined by causes and conditions.[103](#) Man, on the other hand, according to him, is completely determined in his action.[104](#) He says that revealed books demand obedience, while people as a matter of fact act as they are determined by their nature. Freedom of choice (*ikhtyar*) is attributed to them only formally so that God's way to man may be justified.[105](#)

God's decree, according to al-Jili, is of two kinds. One is unchangeable and in conformity with the demands of the divine attributes and as such is not subject to change. The other kind of decree is that which takes place according to the law of nature as demanded by the inherent capacity of the existents. Decrees of the latter type sometimes do not come to pass due to the contingent character of the things of the world.

Al-Jili subscribes to the doctrine that Being as Being is good and evil is only relative and apparent. With regard to the Real, there is no distinction between good and evil, for everything without any distinction is the manifestation of the divine beauty and is as such good. Evil or defect in the phenomenal world is only due to certain relations. Fire is evil for a person who is burned but is good for the insect that lives in it and gets nourishment from it. In short, there is nothing in this world which is absolutely evil. [106](#)

Al-Jili holds that what is called sin or disobedience is, in one respect, obedience between God's will and His command as enunciated by ibn 'Arabi. Sometimes an action takes place in full conformity with God's will, though His command may be against its occurrence. In such a situation man is disobedient with regard to His command but obedient with regard to His will. This point of view affects al-Jili's treatment of Satan's role. God rebuked him for his disobedience but he neither repented nor bewailed nor tried to seek forgiveness, for only that comes to pass which is according to God's will.

Al-Jili enumerates seven stages in spiritual progress. The first is what he calls Islam which covers five principles: declaration of God's unity and Mohammad's prophethood, prayer, fasting, poor-tax and pilgrimage.

The second stage is faith (*iman*). It is the first manifestation of the world of the Unseen and implies heart's acceptance of the truth thus revealed. It is something different from reason. Faith is not belief in a fact arrived at through discursive reasoning but acceptance without rational argumentation. Light of faith is superior to the light of reason. *Kalam* (scholastic theology) was invented to defend religion against disbelievers and innovators (*ahl al-bid'ah*). It never helps in producing faith in a person.

The third stage is called piety (*salah*) which results in good actions. But the motive is desire for divine rewards and safety from punishment. A person at this stage leads a life of obedience to the laws of the *Shari'ah* for the sake of his self.

The fourth stage is called *ihsan* where one observes the effects of divine names and attributes. Such a person does good actions not for the sake of his own self nor for rewards, but for his love for God.

The fifth stage is martyrdom (*shadadah*) which is of two kinds. The lower grade represents the death of a person in an epidemic or on a journey or in the battle-field for a righteous cause. The higher grade of martyrdom is to see the Real in every existent.

The sixth stage is called *siddiqiyyah* which is signified by the mystic saying, "He who knows his self knows the Lord." This stage has three different planes. The first is faith through knowledge or reason

(*'ilm al-yakin*). The second is faith through personal experience and mystic *kashf* (*'ain al-yaqin*). The third is true and perfect faith (*haqq al-yaqun*). The mystic who has attained this stage of *siddiqiyyah* passes through all these planes of faith. In the first, he sees the Unseen and is able to observe with the light of faith those secret realities which are not open to the common people. Here he attains *fana'* and then reaches the stage of *baqa'* where he receives the *tajalli* of all divine names one after the other. He perceives the essence through names. This is the final plane of *'ilm al-yaqin*.

In the next plane, i.e. of *'ain al-yaqin*, he receives illumination from the divine attributes one by one until he feels himself one with the Real in its aspect of attributes. He progresses gradually until names and attributes lose their significance for him. He attains gnosis of the essence and through it he is able to understand the operation of names and attributes. He now knows the essence through the essence. Thus, he reaches the third and the highest plane, i.e. *haqq al-yaqin*, which is the first step in the seventh stage of nearness (*qurb*).

Here man is able to manifest in his person different attributes of the Real, though this manifestation cannot be total and absolute. A person who is able to bring a dead man to life, for instance is manifesting a particular attribute of God, though in a limited form. He stands in nearness to God. The first step in this stage is the station of friendship where he is able to create through the word "Be" (*kun*) after the manner of God. In the words of a tradition, "God becomes the ears by which he hears, the eyes by which he sees, the tongue by which he speaks, the hands by which he holds, the feet by which he walks." The second step in this stage is the station of love where the lover and the beloved become one and where the one represents the other. The last step in this stage is the station of *khitam* where the individual is characterized by the essence (*haqiqah*) of the Real. This station is beyond the reach of ordinary mortals.

C. Jami

'Abd al-Rahman Jami (817 – 898/1414 – 1492), a famous poet and great scholar, was the follower of ibn 'Arabi. His book, *Lawa'ih* (Flashes), is an exposition of the doctrine of the unity of Being. In the preface he states that this doctrine is the result of mystic experience of several eminent saints, but his role is that of a mere interpreter, for he has not undergone or experienced any mystic trances. He has only put in words what others had experienced at first hand. [107](#)

His statement of the theory follows the logical definition of the word "existence." Existence (or Being) is sometimes used as a universal concept which in logic is called "secondary concept" (*ma'qul-i thaniyyah*) and has no objective reality corresponding to it but which attaches itself to the quiddity (*mahiyyah*) of a thing mentally. Taking Being in this sense, several critics have raised an objection against ibn 'Arabi's state that God is the Absolute Being. According to them, abstract existence having no objective reality cannot be said to be the source of external reality. Jami, therefore, tries to defend ibn 'Arabi by saying that Being or existence has another sense.

When pantheists use the word “Being” (*wujud*), they refer to reality which exists by itself, and on which depends the existence of other beings. As a matter of fact, none exists except He and all objective existents are His modes. [108](#) But the truth of this statement, according to Jami, is verifiable not so much through reason as through mystic experience and intuition. The Absolute Being is called God who is the source of all that exists and yet is above all multiplicity. He transcends all manifestations and is unknowable.

Essence, pure and simple, is completely without any determinations and is above the distinctions of names, attributes, and relations. It is only when this essence descends towards manifestation that attributes such as knowledge, light, and existence makes their appearance. The essence is above all determinations but it is only when God is viewed by our human finite intellect that He is said to possess attributes.

Following ibn ‘Arabi he rejects the Ash‘arite theory of divine attributes according to which attributes subsist in and are co-eternal with God, and yet are neither identical with or different from Him. In “Flash” (*La’ihah*) 15, Jami explains that attributes are distinct from the essence in thought but are identical with it in fact and reality. God is knower due to the attribute of knowledge, powerful due to the attribute of power, active due to the attribute of willing, etc. There is no doubt that as these attributes are different from one another with regard to their content, they are similarly distinct from the essence. But in reality, they are all identical with the essence in the sense that in Him there is no plurality of existence.

The Ultimate Reality, i.e. God, is the ground of everything that exists. He is one so that multiplicity cannot affect Him. But when He reveals Himself in multiplicity of forms and modes, He appears to be many. These distinctions of one and many, however, are only subjective. God and the world are two aspects of the same reality. “The universe is the outward (expression) of God and God is the inner (reality) of the universe. Before manifestation the world God and God after manifestation is identical with the world.” As a matter of fact, reality is one, and the dual aspects of God and the world are only our ways of looking at it. [109](#)

The nature of things in the universe in relation to the Absolute is like modes which Jami, following ‘Arabi, calls *shu’un*; they have no existence or reality in themselves and are mere adjectives of the One Being. [110](#) These modes are included in the Absolute as qualities in here in a substance or as a consequent follows from its ground – as half, third, and fourth, and other fractions are related to the integer; these fractions are potentially included in the integer one and become explicit only when repeated. [111](#)

It is clear that the theological sense is not the actualization of the hidden potentialities of the Creator, but the production of individuals and things which, through deriving their existence from this source, yet enjoy self-determination and independence to some extent. According to Jami, Creator and creatures are two aspects of the same reality.

This subjective determination, according to Jami, has two stages. In the first stage called *martabah-i 'ilmi*, these existents appear in divine knowledge in the form of archetypal ideas (*a'yan-i thabitah*). In the second stage called rank of the physical world (*martabah-i 'ain*), they acquire the attributes and properties of external existence. "In short, there is nothing in the external world except one reality which appears to be many on account of being clothed in diverse modes and attributes." [112](#)

As essence, the Real is beyond all knowledge; neither revelation nor reason can help anyone to comprehend it. No mystic saint can ever claim to experience Him as such. "His highest characteristic is the lack of all characterization and the end of all knowledge about Him is bewilderment." [113](#) The first stage of the descent is *ahadiyyah* which is a bare unity devoid of all modes and relations. When it is conditioned by these modes, it is called *al-wahdiyyah* where the Real characterized by manifestation, etc. It is at this stage that he assumes the attributes of being the Creator and Sustainer and is characterized by life, knowledge, and will. It is at this stage also that the existents first appear in the consciousness of God as the objects of His knowledge, but they do not involve multiplicity in the One.

At a later stage these objects of God's knowledge are clothed in existence and they assume multiplicity. They all exhibit in varying degrees some of the divine names and attributes. [114](#) But in spite of all these manifestations and splitting of the One into multiplicity, the unity remains unimpaired. It causes no change in the essence or in its attributes. "Although the light of the sun illuminates at once the clean and the unclean, yet it does not affect the purity of its light." [115](#)

Though the one essence is interfused in all existents, its presence in them does not mean that everything is equal in this respect. There are differences of degree due to the power of receptivity of each thing. No doubt God and the world are two aspects of the Real, yet God is God and the world is the world. "Every grade of Being is determined according to its rank. If you ignore this distinction, you become an infidel." [116](#)

In ethics Jami follows the usual pantheistic tradition and advocates full-fledged determinism. As God is the essence of all things and is the inward aspect of the world, all actions that are usually ascribed to man should, as a matter of fact, be attributed to the Real. But if man is so determined, then how to account for the evil? Jami here again follows ibn 'Arabi. It is true, he says, that all actions of men are God's, yet it is not proper for us to attribute evil to God, for Being *qua* Being is absolute. According to him, therefore, evil has no positive content; it is privative content; it is privative, lacking something which should have been there. Take, for instance, the case of cold. There is nothing evil in it as such, but with reference to the fruits which it does not allow to ripen, it becomes evil. [117](#)

The ultimate goal of man should be not only *fana'*, passing away of consciousness, but *fana'-i*, passing away of the consciousness of having attained the state of *fana'*. At this stage, an individual loses not only awareness of self but also awareness of this "non-awareness of self." Then, according to Jami, faith, religion, belief, or *kashf* (mystic knowledge and experience) all become meaningless. [118](#)

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[1.](#) Gulsham-i Raz, Question 12.

[2.](#) Ibid., Q. 2.

[3.](#) Ibid., Q. 1.

[4.](#) Ibid., Q. 2.

[5.](#) Ibid., Q. 10.

[6.](#) Ibid., Q. 9.

[7.](#) Ibid., Q. 4.

[8.](#) Ibid.

[9.](#) Ibid., Q. 11.

[10.](#) Ibid.

[11.](#) Ibid.

[12.](#) ‘Abd al-Karim al-Jili, *al-Insan al-Kamil*, Urdu translation by Fadal Miran, Sufi Printing and Publishing Company, Pindi Bahauddin, p. 4. All references to *al-Insan al-Kamil* are to this Urdu translation.

[13.](#) Ibid., p. 30.

[14.](#) Ibid., pp. 30 – 32.

[15.](#)

Ibid., p. 27. He says that Being is of two kinds. One is Pure Being and that is the divine essence, the other is related to non-Being and that is the phenomenal world.

[16.](#) Ibid., p. 39.

[17.](#) Ibid., p. 44.

[18.](#) The Qur’an (28:88) is usually translated as “Everything is liable to destruction except His Face.” But al-Juli interprets the word wajhahu pantheistically and translates it as “its (i.e. thing’s) essence,” thereby implying that one reality subsists in all multiplicity; *ibid.*, p. 36.

[19.](#) Ibid., chapter 62, para. 1.

[20.](#) Ibid., chapter 2, pp. 69 – 70.

[21.](#) He quotes several Qur’anic verses (25:58, 49:53, etc) to prove this point; *ibid.*, p. 156. See also p. 145.

[22.](#) Ibid., pp. 67 – 68.

[23.](#) Ibid., pp. 33ff.

[24.](#) Ibid., pp. 120 – 21.

[25.](#) Ibid., pp 214 – 15.

[26.](#) Ibid., pp. 216 – 17.

[27.](#) Ibid., p. 48 – 49.

[28.](#) Ibid., p. 47 – 52.

[29.](#) Ibid., p. 58.

[30.](#) He refers to the Qur’an verse (45:13) in which the words jami’ ‘an minhu are interpreted by him to mean as “all (created) from His own self.”

[31.](#) He refers to the Qur’anic verse (46:3) for the phrase bi al-Haqq which is interpreted by him to mean that everything was

created out of Haqq, i.e. Haqq served as matter for the world.

- [32.](#) Al-Insan al-Kamil, p. 60.
- [33.](#) Ibid., p. 61.
- [34.](#) Ibid., p. 116.
- [35.](#) Ibid., p. 96.
- [36.](#) Fusus al-Hikam (Urdu translation, Lucknow, 1927), p. 172. See Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul 'Arabi*, Cambridge, 1939, p. 152.
- [37.](#) Fusus, pp. 155, 272; Affifi, *op. cit.*, 31.
- [38.](#) Al-Insun al-Kamil, pp. 96 – 100.
- [39.](#) Affifi, *op. cit.*, p. 156.
- [40.](#) Al-Insan al-Kamil, pp. 101 – 04.
- [41.](#) Ibid.,p. 105.
- [42.](#) Ibid., pp. 105 – 06.
- [43.](#) Ibid., pp. 127 – 33.
- [44.](#) Ibid.,pp. 129 – 30.
- [45.](#) In a certain sense, he argues, a'yan al-thabitah can be called eternal. God is eternal and His knowledge must also be eternal. As objects of God's knowledge, a'yan al-thabitah must of necessity be eternal. And yet, he adds, in their essence, they are hadith. Because huduth is an actual existential fact (amr al-'aini) and qidam only a logical determination (amr al-hukmi), al-Jili prefers to call a'yan hadith rather than qadim. Al-Insan al-Kamil, p. 132
- [46.](#) The verse is as follows: "He said to (the heavens) and to the earth, 'Come both, willingly or unwillingly.' They both said, 'We come willingly.'"
- [47.](#) Al-Insan al-Kamil, pp. 107 – 09
- [48.](#) Al-Insan al-Kamil, pp. 109 – 11.
- [49.](#) Ibid., p. 92.
- [50.](#) Ibid.
- [51.](#) Ibid., p. 64.
- [52.](#) Ibid., pp. 65 – 66.
- [53.](#) Ibid., p. 64 – 66.
- [54.](#) Ibid., p. 92.
- [55.](#) Ibid. pp. 54 – 55.
- [56.](#) See Affifi, *op. cit.*, p. 24, footnote 1. Also p. 114 where He-ness is identified with 'Ama'.
- [57.](#) Al-Insan al-Kamil, p. 122.
- [58.](#) Ibid. p. 124
- [59.](#) Ibid., pp. 56 – 57.
- [60.](#) Ibid., p. 140.
- [61.](#) Ibid., pp. 71 – 74.
- [62.](#) Ibid., pp. 75 – 78.
- [63.](#) Ibid., pp. 79 – 90.
- [64.](#) Ibid., p. 93.
- [65.](#) Ibid. p. 92.
- [66.](#) Ibid., p. 4.
- [67.](#) Ibid.. p. 8.
- [68.](#) Ibid., p. 17,
- [69.](#) Ibid.. pp. 260 – 61.
- [70.](#) The terms "length" and breadth" were first used by Jallaj for lahut (divinity) and nasut (humanity) and later employed by ibn 'Arabi and al-Jili to denote the two aspects of the essence.
- [71.](#) Al-Insan al-Kamil, pp. 253 – 54.
- [72.](#) Ibid., p. 262.

[73.](#) 'Arsh, according to ibn 'Arabi and al-Jili, signifies universal body. "It is the theatre of majesty, the locus of tajalli and a characteristic of essence and is known as the place of that essence – a place which is devoid of all (spatial) reference." Ibid., pp. 171 – 72.

[74.](#) Kursi, the Footstool under the divine Throne, "signifies the tajalli of all (divine attributes of action. The divine activity in manifesting the realities of the universe looks first of all to kursi. At this stage the effects of contradictory attributes are manifested in detail and the Word of god (divine amr) comes into existences." Ibid., p.

[75.](#) Ibid., p. 262

[76.](#) 'Arsh, according to ibn 'Arabi and al-Jili, signifies universal body. "It is the theatre of majesty the locus of tajalli and a characteristic of essence, and is known as the place of that essence – a place which is devoid of all (spatial reference. Ibid., pp. 171 – 72.

[77.](#) Kursi, the Footstool under the divine Throne, "signifies the tajalli of all (divine) attributes of action. The divine activity in manifesting the realities of the universe looks first of all to kursi. At this stage the effects of contradictory attributes are manifested in detail and the Word of God (divine amr) comes into existence." Ibid., p. 173.

[78.](#) "The Exalted pen means the first individualization of the creatures analytically. First, the khalq is individualized in the divine consciousness generally and without differentiation, at the stage of 'arsh, its being is synthetic and logical; at the (third) stage of kursi, khalq is manifested analytically. At the (fourth) stage of the Pen, its existence is differentiated. In the first three stages, this manifestation (of khalq) was in the Unseen (i.e. in God), while in the fourth stage, its manifestation is made objective." Ibid., p. 174. See also p. 200, "The source of knowledge of the first intelligence and of the Exalted Pen is the same light. When it is referred to creatures, it is called the first intelligence, and when it is related to Haqq, its name is the Exalted pen.

[79.](#) Al-lauh al-mahfuz, according to al-Jili, stands for the universal soul. Ibid., p. 176.

[80.](#) Ibid., pp. 261 – 62.

[81.](#) Ibid., pp. 263 – 64. Cf. ibn 'Arabi: "Only two beings rightly call themselves God: God Himself who in His books and the perfect man like Bayazid." See Affifi, op. cit., p. 78.

[82.](#) Al-Insan al-Kamil, p. 93.

[83.](#) Ibid., p. 153. Al-Jili distinguishes between saint ship and prophethood as follows: "When Adam was sent down to the earth, he was made a prophet, for prophethood means legislation (tashr'uf) and imposing obligation (taklif) which pertain to this earth. While in paradise Adam was a saint, for it is the place of miracles and observation and this is saint ship." Ibid., p. 308.

[84.](#) Reference is to the Qur'anic verse (17: 1), "Glory be to Him who carried His servant ('abdihi) by night from the Holy Mosque to the Remote Mosque.

[85.](#) Al-Insan al-Kamil, pp. 319 – 20.

[86.](#) Ibid., pp. 320 – 21.

[87.](#) Ibid., p. 144. The qualifying word "institutional" implies that prophet of the other is still possible and, thus, on p. 320 he explicitly says that nubuwwat al-wilayah will continue.

[88.](#) "Names and attributes form the nature of the heart." Ibid., p. 193. he argues from the Qur'anic verse (95:4), "We indeed created man in the fairest mould."

[89.](#) "From the first intelligence which is referred to as the Principle of Mohammad, God created Gabriel. Thus, Mohammad in this sense becomes the father of Gabriel and the source and ground of the whole universe. The First Intelligence is called al-Ruh al-Amin (the Truthful Spirit) because it is the storehouse of divine knowledge and its protector." Ibid., p. 200.

[90.](#) Ibid., pp. 197 – 200.

[91.](#) Ibid., pp. 200 – 06.

[92.](#) Ibid., pp. 206 – 10.

[93.](#) Al-Jili relates that he himself was submerged in this path of speculative philosophy and this was due only the spiritual influence of his teacher, al-Jabarti, who was staying with a group of mystics in Zabid in 779/1377 at the house of one Shihab al-Din Ahmad. Ibid., pp. 212 – 13.

[94.](#) Ibid., pp. 210 – 14.

[95.](#) Ibid., pp. 292 – 93.

- [96.](#) Ibid., pp. 272 – 73.
- [97.](#) Ibid., p.239.
- [98.](#) Ibid., 224
- [99.](#) Ibid., p. 243.
- [100.](#) Ibid., p. 239
- [101.](#) Ibid., 134
- [102.](#) Ibid., Chaps. 17, 18.
- [103.](#) Ibid., p. 34. He argues, like other Muslim pantheists, from the Qur’anic verse (97:96), “Allah had created you and what you make,” interpreting ta’malun as “what you do.”
- [104.](#) Ibid., p. 108.
- [105.](#) Ibid., p. 114.
- [106.](#) Lawa’ih, Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow (India, 1936, p. 4
- [107.](#) He subscribes to ibn ‘Arabi’s doctrine that the universe is nothing but accidents, all pertaining to a single substance, i.e., the Ultimate Being. He tries to give rational arguments in its support. See Lawa’ih 18 and 26.
- [108.](#) Lawi’ih 13, 14.
- [109.](#) La’ihah 25.
- [110.](#) See La’ihah26 where Jami tries to explain certain statements of ibn ‘Arabi as discussed in Fass al–Shu’aibiyah.
- [111.](#) La’ihah 19.
- [112.](#) La’ihah 18.
- [113.](#) La’ihah 24.
- [114.](#) La’ihah 17. See also La’ihah 24,where the idea of One’s descent is further elaborated.
- [115.](#) La’ihah 20.
- [116.](#) La’ihah 23.
- [117.](#) La’ihah 30.
- [118.](#) La’ihah 8 and 9.

Chapter 44: Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

A. Life and Studies

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, better known as Mujaddid Alf Thani, was the son of Sheikh ‘Abd al–Ahad Makhdum, who was a devout Muslim always anxious to derive spiritual enlightenment from saints. Sheikh ‘Abd al–Ahad Makhdum met Sheikh Allah Dad at Ruhtas and Sayyid ‘Ali Qawam at Juanput. He learned a great deal from both and then returned to Sirhind and lived there until his death in 1007/1598. A great master of all the branches of contemporary knowledge, he taught the prevalent textbooks on philosophy and religion to his students extensively. He was also an acknowledged authority on jurisprudence.

Besides, he taught mysticism to those who were eager to learn it, using ‘*Awarif al–Ma’arif* and *Fusus al–Hikam* as his texts. He was an ardent reader of ibn ‘Arabi and was an authority on his teachings. He acknowledged ibn ‘Arabi’s superiority in philosophy and spiritual insight, but he never followed him if he

found him deviating from the Sunnah. He was such an ardent and close follower of the Holy Prophet and his teachings that he never left a *sunnah* (tradition) unpracticed. He loved the devotees of Khuwaja Baha' al-Din Naqshband of Bukhara called the Naqshbands,¹ and his son inherited this love and devotion to them from him.

Sheikh Ahmad was born in 971/1563 at Sirhind. His name was Ahmad and his surname was Badr al-Din. From his father's side, he descended from the Caliph 'Umar. In his early childhood he was sent to a school where in a short time he learned the Holy Qur'an by heart. Then for a long time he was taught by his father. Later he went to Sialkot and there covered some more courses under the guidance of Kamal Kashmiri. He also studied some works on Hadith from Ya'qub Kashmiri, a great scholar of the time. By the young age of 17 he had mastered a great deal of Islamic sciences and had begun teaching them to others.

He visited Agra where he met some great men of learning including Abu al-Faidi. After some time he accompanied his father to Sirhind. On his way home, he was married to the daughter of a noble named Sheikh Sultan of Thanesar. On his return to Sirhind he stayed with his father and through his help established spiritual relationship with the Qadriyyah and Chishtiyyah schools of mysticism. Through the training received from his father, he learned the fundamentals of Sufism. In his studies too he had been greatly influenced by his father. He could not go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in his father's life-time, although he yearned to do so. He was anxious to serve his father during his life and could not leave him alone.

After his father's death in 1007/1598 he started on this long cherished pilgrimage. On his arrival at Delhi, he heard of the reputation of Khuwaja Baqi Billah as a saint from a friend, Maulana Hassan. He went to him promptly and was well received. The Khuwaja inquired of him about his intended pilgrimage and then wished him to stay with him for a week or so. He was greatly impressed by the spiritual attainments of the Khuwaja that he made up his mind to become his disciple. The Khuwaja was very fastidious in taking anyone as his disciple but he immediately accepted the Mujaddid as his follower and focused his entire attention upon him. The Mujaddid's heart became the seat of the praise of Allah and he made rapid progress in spiritual knowledge. Under the Khuwaja's guidance he was able to complete his Naqshbandi training in a few months. He was warmly congratulated and was invested with a gown as a symbol of the completion of his training. He went back to Sirhind and began to teach people. After the Khuwaja's death he used to go to Delhi at the *'urs*² of the late chief.

B. The Shari'ah

An important period of his life is that between 1028/1618 and 1032/1622. One year of this period was spent in the prison of Gwalior and the other three with the Emperor Jahangir and his army. His increasing popularity aroused the jealousy of his rivals who poisoned the ears of the Emperor and reported him to be dangerous both to the Emperor and the State. The Emperor had faith only in the

ascetics and hermits. He could not tolerate a widely popular Sufi in his land. Perhaps Asaf Jah and some other nobles had a hand in this intrigue against the Mujaddid. The matter was worsened still by his refusal to bow before the Emperor on the ground that it was against the tenets of Islam, with the result that he was imprisoned at Gwalior. He was released a year later, but he had to stay for a further period of three years with the army as a *detenu*. Two years before his death he was allowed to go to his home at Sirhind. There he died on the morning of the 28th Safar 1034/10th December 1624.

Some hold that the Sheikh's release was due to the fact that the Emperor had at last become his disciple and had repented of his action of the previous year, but others hold that the above view was not borne by facts.

It was the crying need of the time that there should appear a man who might have the boldness to oppose the worship of the Emperor by refusing to bow before him, and, thus revive the true spirit of Islam and the extirpate heresy. He fearlessly faced the displeasure of an absolute monarch and chose to go into imprisonment rather than renounce his own beliefs and principles. He stood firm as a rock against the tide of the Mughul heresy introduced by the Emperor's father, Akbar the Great. He is called the Mujaddid because he started the movement of purifying Islam and restored its traditional orthodoxy. His courageous stand against anti-Islam practices resulted in a religious renaissance in India.

The method adopted by him to achieve his purpose was equally bold. He trained groups of disciples and sent them to all the Muslim countries and to the various cities of India to propagate what he regarded as the spirit of Islam. He especially asked them to make people realize the importance of the Sunnah and prepare them to counteract the forces of heresy and to observe and to make others observe the tenets of Islam. His letters to the great men of the Muslim world was given wide publicity. In them he discussed problems connected with Islam and its revival. He pressed the people to follow the Sunnah rigidly and to uproot heresy. He brought numerous noblemen and courtiers to his fold, and in this way tried to change the attitude of the Emperor and his Court.

The Mujaddid strictly adhered to religious practices and sanctioned by the Holy Prophet and was very hard upon those who coined excuses to violate them. He was an authority of *Fiqh* and Tradition. His knowledge was encyclopedic and he was endowed with critical insight in matters of religion. His views on mystical revelation and illumination, pantheism, pre-destinarianism, sectarianism, and Sufism are very important. Sheikh Ahmad's reforms can be easily divided into three categories: (1) call to the Muslims to follow the Sunnah and discard heresy (*bid'ah*), (2) purification of Islamic mysticism (Sufism) from the practices and thoughts which had crept into it through non-Muslim influences and (3) great emphasis on the Islamic Law.

1. Heresy and the Mujaddid's Opposition to It

Heresy implies an innovation. The '*ulama*' (theologians) had divided it into two categories, namely, the good innovation (*bid'at-i hasnah*) and the bad innovation (*bid'at-i sayyi'ah*). The Mujaddid says he can

find no beauty, benefit or light in either. In many of his letters he is at pains to tell his correspondents that all heresy is reprehensible. He quotes many sayings of the Holy Prophet in denouncing it. He symbolizes every kind of heresy with dust, dirt, and pitch darkness and regards it as misleading. Those who practice heresy do so for lack of foresight and insight. The Holy Prophet said that heresy misleads people and uproots the Sunnah itself. When a heresy creeps into religion, it deprives the believers of traditional practice. He was of the opinion that Islam is complete in itself; heresy is a useless appendage of it.

Even if it appears right, it is in fact a blot on their fair face of Islam. Any approval of a heresy of disavowal of the completeness of Islam. In the course of time, the Sunnah would disappear, and heresy would prosper. Respect shown to an upholder of heresy is to deal a blow to Islam. Heresy is a cutting axe to religion and the Sunnah is a guiding star. To strengthen Islam heresy must be uprooted. "May it please the Lord," said he, "to show the *'ulama'* that no heresy is good."

2. Reforms in Sufism and the Nature of Sufistic Perfection

"If the contemporary Sufis are just, they should not follow their leaders but the Sunnah. They should never uphold heresy on the pre-text that their Sheikhs did so."³ If a heresy appears in the guise of an inspiration, it is immediately accepted by the people as a long lost truth. For the long conversations and commentaries of the Sufis had been tending away from the religious law (*Shari'ah*) and a time came in the history of Sufism when the Sufis began to proclaim that Sufism and the religious Law were poles apart. They did not show the respect that the law deserves. They regarded it as formal and ineffective and, as a result, religion and its values suffered much at their hands, though very few knew the harm that was being done. This attitude of the Mujaddid elicited an unqualified praise from Iqbal for him. Speaking of him he says, "He was the guardian of the Muslim faith in India whom God had given a timely warning."

The Mujaddid said, "The Sheikhs who in their state of insensibility (*sukr*) praise infidelity and induce men to wear the Brahmanical thread⁴ are to be excused because they are not themselves. Those who follow them consciously in these matters are not to be excused because they do so while they have their senses."⁵ The rectitude of speculative knowledge depends on its being in concord with theology, and the smallest departure from it is insensibility. According to him, someone asked Khuwaja Naqshband to define the Sufistic institution. He replied that the ultimate end of Sufism is achieved when the rational knowledge becomes revelational or inspired, and the abstract becomes concrete. He did not say that we should seek something over and above the revealed law. The non-essentials that a Sufi meets on his way to Sufistic perfection lose their importance when he reaches his destination. The Law alone is then seen as real. The Prophet received it through a messenger but the Sufis get it by direct inspiration from God.⁶

The Caliph 'Umar was highly incensed when he was told that Sheikh 'Abd al-Kabir Yamani was of the view that Allah has no omniscience. He did not attribute this remark to the Sheikh's insensibility or

unconsciousness. He rather thought it to be an infidelity, even if it was committed by the Sheikh with a view to being denounced by the world,⁷ as public denunciation was considered by some Sufis to be contributive to Sufistic perfection. “The true aim of Sufistic institution is to attain sound faith, which depends upon spiritual tranquility without which salvation is impossible. When this tranquility is reached, the heart becomes unconscious of everything but God.”⁸

3. Significance of the Shari’ah

The divine law is connected with the soul and the spiritualization of the soul depends upon obedience shown to it alone. The Sufi learns this after his perfection.⁹ While still on their way to Sufistic perfection, many Sufis flounder on this mysterious road. One should never lose sight of the divine Law whenever one’s beliefs and deeds are involved.¹⁰ The Naqshbandi Sheikhs have sub-ordinated revelation to the divine Law (*Shari’ah*) and with them intuition and inspiration are subject to the divine decrees. Ecstasy should not be given priority to the divine Law. The Naqshbandis are never influenced by the senseless and exaggerated discourses of the Sufis. They never uphold Ibn ‘Arabi’s *fass*¹¹ against the explicit verses of the Qur’an (*nass*).¹²

The light of God which is revealed on occasional flashes to others is to them constantly illuminating. Everything but His name is erased from their hearts, and even if they try for ages they can think of nothing but Him.¹³ The touchstone of the Sufistic revelations and intuitions should be the commentaries of the Sunnite theologians, for even the adherents to heresies and all those who go astray regard the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah together as the fountainhead of their beliefs. They misinterpret them only because of their perverted mentalities.¹⁴ The Sufistic discourse which is congruous with the Sunnite interpretations is agreeable, while that which is otherwise is not. Upright Sufis never transgress the limits set by the divine Law even in their ecstatic discourses, dealings, and philosophies. Whenever a Sufi in his ecstasy or transport opposes the Law, his revelation is a mirage. It should be interpreted and explained correctly.¹⁵ Perfection comes through meek submission to God, which implies submission to His Law. This is the best of faiths in the eyes of the Lord.¹⁶

You can tell an imposter from a sincere believer by their respective attitude to the divine Law. A truly faithful Sufi never transgresses the Law in spite of his insensibility and ecstasy. Despite his claim, “I am the True One,” Mansur Hallaj used to offer five hundred *rak’at*¹⁷ every morning in submission to God even while he was chained in a prison cell. It is as difficult for an imposter to observe the tenets of the Law as to remove the Mount Caucasus from its place.¹⁸

According to the Mujaddid, the only duty performed by the theologians (*‘ulama’*) is to issue decrees while it is the people of Allah (saints) who do the real work. An attempt at internal purification is to enable one to observe the divine tenets, one who is busy only in internal purification to the extent of neglecting the divine Law is an infidel and hence his revelations and intuitions are like those of an obstinate sinner. The way of uprightness is through divinity and the sign of the real internal purification is the sincere observation of and submission to the divine Law is an infidel and hence his revelations and intuitions are

like those of an obstinate sinner.

The way of uprightness is through divinity and the sign of the real internal purification is the sincere observation of and submission to the divine Law. The restoration of the Sunnah and the obligatory prayers is the best of worships and will be rewarded in heaven.¹⁹ The Naqshbandi devotees dislike the mystical revelation that contradicts the Law and denounce the senseless wrangling of the Sufis. They do not like dancing and listening to music. They do not like loud recital of God's name for He is supposed to be ever with them. With them guidance and discipline depend upon one's submission to and acknowledgement of the prophetic institution; it has nothing to do with external trappings such as the cap or the genealogy of the Sheikh as is the case with the other sects.²⁰

C. Existential or Experiential Unity

C. Existential or Experiential Unity (*wahdat al-Wujud* or *wahdat al-Shuhud*)

In order to understand the rift somehow created between Islam and Sufism one must ponder over the philosophical aspect of pantheism. Pantheism was the real bane of Islam. The Mujaddid knew its fallacy and he was one of those who denounced it vehemently. He based his stand on the training he had received from his father and his Sheikh, Khuwaja Baqi Billah. The State of pantheism was revealed to him shortly after he had adopted the Naqshbandi way of approach to reality. He was anxious to understand the mysticism of ibn 'Arabi. The light of God and of His attributes dawned upon him and this, according to ibn 'Arabi is the ultimate end of Sufism.

For years he kept thinking that he had reached the state in which he had realized the ultimate, but all of a sudden this state vanished. Then he came to realize that union with God is only experiential and not existential; God is not and cannot be one with anything. God is God and the world is world. All that the Sunni theologians said in this respect was true. As the Mujaddid had loved pantheism much in the earlier stage of his life, he was rather uneasy at this change. Yet, with the new revelation, the veil was lifted and the reality appeared to him in its true form. This world is merely a *mark* of the existence of its Creator, and it merely *reflects* the various attributes of the Lord. It does not *consist* of these attributes. A pseudo revelation, he thought, like erroneous deductions in religious matters, may not be denounced, but it must not be followed, lest others be misled.

With the followers of ibn 'Arabi, pantheism is the final stage of Sufistic perfection, while in reality it is nothing but one of the states experienced by every devotee. After the devotees have passed this preliminary state, they walk on the right Path. Khwaja Naqshband says that all that is heard or seen or known is a veil. It must be negated with the word "none" (*la*). "I had accepted pantheism," says the Mujaddid, "as it was revealed to me and not because I was directed to it by someone else. Now I denounce it because of the right revelation of my own which cannot be denied, although it is not compulsory for others to follow..."²¹ The presence of the One means that the Sufi sees nothing except the One. The pantheist acknowledges the presence of the One in everything and thinks all besides it as

nothing, yet the very same non-entity is regarded by him as the incarnation of the One.

Pantheism is not at all essential, because sure knowledge is possible without it, and sure knowledge does not entail the denial of the existence of others. The sight of the One is in no way a denial of the existence of the others. The prophets never preached pantheism, nor did they ever call the pluralists infidels. They invited people to the oneness of Being. No prophet ever preached that creation is an incarnation of the Creator. Their aim was to inculcate faith in the One Lord who is unique and has no like.²²

D. Revelation and Intuition

Only the Qur'an and the Sunnah are to be trusted. The duty of the theologians is simply to interpret these fundamental sources and not to add anything to them. The mysticism of the Sufis and their revelations and inspirations are to be accepted only if they conform to them, otherwise they are to be rejected. The promise of God is to unveil Himself to His good people in the hereafter and not here. The revelations and "lights" of which the Sufis are so proud are nothing but their own mental projections and fantasies in order to console themselves.

The open sight of God is absolutely impossible to people in this world. "I am afraid the beginners would be discouraged if I were to point out the drawbacks of these revelations and 'lights,' but if I remain silent, the true and the false shall remain undistinguished. I insist that these 'lights' and revelations must be judged with reference to the revelation of God on the Mount of Sinai, when Prophet Moses prayed for the sight of Him. Who can bear the sight of Him?"²³

"Abundance of miracles is not the sign of a devotee's spiritual superiority. A person who has no miracle to his credit may possibly be superior to others in certain respects. Sheikh Shaihab al-Din Suhrawardi says, "Miracles are a boon from God to render the faith firm, but the man who has been gifted with a firm faith does not require them; it is enough for him that his heart praises and remembers Him."

Miracles can be divided into two categories. Those of the first category comprise the transcendental knowledge of God and His attributes. These are beyond the sphere of rational inquiry and are revealed only to a few of His favourites. The second category is concerned with revelation about creation and information concerning this universe. Unlike the former, even imposters can have a share in the latter. The people having miracles of the first category have more chances to reach God than those having miracles of the second, but to the common man, the latter are more acceptable."²⁴

Ibn 'Arabi is reported to have said that some pious devotees were ashamed of their miracles at their death-beds. Why should they have been so if the miracles were the only true touch stone of a pious devotee's superiority? Numerous saints are unaware of their position and status but as they are not prophets they do not need the awareness of their position. Sainly men can invite people to the religion of their prophet without miracles. Their real miracle is to purify the souls of their disciples. The soul being

immaterial, they have to turn their attention away from materialism. These people even without miracles are the sureties of peace and prosperity in this world.

The distinction between a true and a false devotee is that the former adheres strictly to the Law, and the latter adheres to his own whims. The man whose company inspires you to be more attentive to God is a true devotee.²⁵ Not even a prophet is safe from the evil designs of the devil. If a devotee is tempted by Satan he should judge his inspiration by its accord to the tenets of the religion of his prophet. If anywhere the divine Law is silent and the Satan's "inspiration" cannot be proved right or wrong, the "inspiration" should be regarded as questionable. The divine tenets are silent in matters which are superficial, and, therefore, may neither be accepted nor rejected.

Sometimes, without any attempt on the part of the Satan to mislead us, we have false inspirations as in dreams. These false inspirations are the creations of our own fancy.²⁶

E. The Religious Law

According to the Mujaddid, religious Law has three aspects: knowledge, actions, and fidelity. To acquire these aspects of the law it is necessary to win the pleasure of God which excels all blessings. Sufism and Gnosticism help in purifying one's soul by completing the important aspect of infidelity. They have no end in view but this. Ecstasy, "intoxication," and "illumination" are by-products of Sufism. They are not its ends. They are merely fantasies and projections in order to please the beginners. After passing these on his way, the Sufi has to surrender to the divine will, which is his real destination. One among thousands achieves pure fidelity. Blind men take the by-products for the principle articles and are, therefore, deprived of the truth. A Sufi has to experience these states before his acquisition of the truth.²⁷

The Mujaddid himself experienced these intermediate states for years, and ultimately achieved the goal of fidelity. Those who think the Law superficial and regard gnosis as the right Path are misled. They are content with the states, the means and ignore the end.²⁸ The straight Path is the path of the Holy Prophet whose guidance the best. Internal purification completes the external and is not contradictory to it. When we submit devoutly to God's beloved, the Holy Prophet, we become His beloved.²⁹

Submission to the Prophet's tradition (Sunnah) is the real bliss, while opposition to it is the cause of all disasters. Hindu *sadhus* or ascetics undergo much privation but all in vain, for it is not in accordance with the true Law. The most that such ascetics can achieve is some material gain which is transitory. The devotees of the religion Law are like dealers in diamonds who work less but gain more.³⁰

On the completion of a Sufi's life, real pleasure is derived from the performance of obligatory prayers, while in the beginning non-obligatory prayers are more pleasant.³¹

The states of ecstasy, gnosis, and "illumination" are good if they are subservient to the law; otherwise,

they are misleading. If not weighed in the balance of the Law, they are worthless.[32](#)

The Sufistic conduct helps one to abide by the divine Law. It controls one's lower passions and undermines their influence. It is neither antagonistic nor equivalent to the religious Law. It is rather subservient to it.[33](#)

Some people are punctilious in the observance of the form of Law, but they ignore its intrinsic truth and worth and regard salvation as their only aim. Some people achieve the truth but assert that they have achieved it through their own effort and not through the help of the divine Law and not of the spirit of it. Either group is ignorant of its intrinsic virtues and is deprived of the divine guidance. True theologians alone are heirs to the prophets.[34](#)

Those who regard a saint (*wali*) superior to a prophet are senseless and are not fully aware of the attributes of prophethood which is superior to saint ship (*wilayah*) in all respects.[35](#)

The Mujaddid was a great religious enthusiast. The movement that he started in religion is still continued by his followers in various parts of the Muslim world. His heritage is indispensable for a modern reconstruction of religious thought in Islam. He was a Sufi but he did not think of Sufism as the sole aim of life. For him it was merely a means to an end, the end being complete and unconditional adherence and fidelity to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For an essentially just estimate of his teachings one must consider him with reference to his times. His books are a valuable record of his practice and thought. He gave us a treatise on Sufistic perfection, but the best of him is found in three volumes of letters. The total number of letters in all these volumes is 535. With some exceptions, these are arranged in their chronological order. Five of his letters have been lost. They prove beyond doubt that the encyclopedic knowledge he had, and make a pleasant and enlightening reading.

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[1.](#) Devotees of Khuwaja Baha' al-Din Naqshband of Bukhara are called the Naqshbandis.

[2.](#) 'Urs, a gathering to celebrate the death anniversary of a holy man.

[3.](#) Maktubat-i Mujaddid, Book 2, Letter No. 23.

[4.](#) A thread worn by the Brahmins around the neck.

[5.](#) Maktubat-i Mujaddid, Bok 1, Letter No. 23.

[6.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 30.

[7.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 100.

[8.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 161

[9.](#) Ibid. Letter No. 172.

- [10.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 220.
- [11.](#) Fass, reference to Fusus al-Hikam by ibn 'Arabi.
- [12.](#) Nass, an explicit verse of the Qur'an.
- [13.](#) Maktubat-i Mujaddid, Book 1, Letter No. 243.
- [14.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 286.
- [15.](#) Ibid., letter No. 289.
- [16.](#) Ibid., Book 2, letter No. 42.
- [17.](#) A rak'at is the unit of a formal Islamic prayer and consists of praying in four different positions, standing, kneeling, sitting and falling down in adoration. Each prayer consists of several units.
- [18.](#) Maktubat-i Mujaddid, Book 2, Letter No. 95.
- [19.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 87.
- [20.](#) Ibid., Book 1, Letter No. 221.
- [21.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 31.
- [22.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 272.
- [23.](#) Ibid., Letter no. 217.
- [24.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 293.
- [25.](#) Ibid., Book 2, Letter No. 92.
- [26.](#) Ibid., Book 1, Letter No. 107.
- [27.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 36.
- [28.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 40.
- [29.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 41.
- [30.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 114.
- [31.](#) Ibid., Letter no. 137.
- [32.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 207.
- [33.](#) Ibid., Letter No. 210.
- [34.](#) Ibid., Book 2, Letter No. 18.
- [35.](#) Ibid., Book 1, Letter No. 251.

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