

[Home](#) > [Irfan and Tasawwuf \(Sufism\)](#) > [Irfan and Tasawwuf \(Sufism\)](#) > [Some Profound Doctrines of `Irfan](#) > 3. Tawakkul

Irfan and Tasawwuf (Sufism)

by Dr. Ahmad Ahmadi

Introduction

Sufism, in the sense of piety, search for deliverance, godliness and freedom, originated under the inspiration of the `spiritual teachings of Islam.

Pious and devout men like Salman, Abu Dharr, Suhayb ibn Sinan, and 'Ammar, since the earliest days of Islam, were found amongst the Ashab al-Suffah,¹ who enjoyed the special attention of the Prophet of Islam (S). Some works mention Salman al-Farsi, Uways al-Qarani, and al-Hasan al-Basri etc. as `sufis' and many a spiritual accomplishment and quality are attributed to them.

During the Umayyad rule, when despotic monarchy and worldliness replaced the right teachings of Islam, a group of true Muslims disgusted by the prevailing state of affairs decided to isolate themselves from worldly affairs and devote themselves to piety and worship. According to Ibn Khaldun it was this group which came to be called as the `sufiyyah.'

Some historians are of the view that the Shu'ubiyyah movement, a revolt against the hegemony of the Arabs over all the other peoples, majority of whom were Persians, was responsible for the emergence of Sufism.

Some say that the word `sufi' is derived from `suf' meaning wool and the sufis were the people who dressed themselves in coarse woollen clothes in order to torment themselves physically with a view to achieve self-perfection.

The oldest book which uses the word `sufiyyah' for a sect of pious persons is al-Bayan wal-tabyin by al-Jahiz. The first person for whom the word `sufi' was used was Abu Hashim al-Sufi², a contemporary of Sufyan al-Thawri (d. 161 A.H.) and Ibrahim Adham al-Balkhi (d. 162 A.H.).

The Origin of Sufism

Sufism is based on the notions of self-purification, abstinence, discovery of truth through spiritual training, and reliance on self-control. At this stage heart is purified from all forms of turbidity, and the Divine light, by way of emanation, is reflected in one's being, and the invisible becomes visible in the immediate spiritual experience and all the veils are removed.

This effort and spiritual struggle is witnessed since the oldest times in history of all religions and faiths. That is why it is not possible to trace the historical origin of this spiritual movement in any particular period of history, land or people:

در هیچ سری نیست که سری ز خدا نیست

There is no head without a secret of Divine mystery in it.

Sufism was very simple in, the beginning. As a spiritual approach it was applicable to those who led the life of piety, seclusion, and total dedication to God.

However, with the passage of time, its simplicity and ingenuousness gradually disappeared as it got mixed with alien doctrines of emanation (Neo-Platonism), gnosticism, Pythagoreanism, stoicism, Iranian Khusrawi philosophy (fahlawiyyat)³, Hinduism (Vedanta), Buddhism, Christianity and similar mystical tendencies prevalent in Manichaeism; Mazdaic and Magian religions.

These influences were instrumental in developing a synthetic philosophy based upon the conceptions of unveiling of the mystic reality (muhashafah), vision (mushahadah), love and rapture. This philosophy was inclined towards Absolute Unity of God (tawhid mutlaq), Unity of Being (wahdat al-wujud), annihilation of the self in God (fana' fil Allah), and eternity within God [by merging one's self in Divine essence] (baqa' bi Allah).

Therefore, Sufism is neither a specific religion nor a system of thought separable from all the other systems of thought. It may be said that its basis is pure monotheism and the notion that everyone can communicate with God; as it has been said:

الطرق إلى الله بعدد نفوس الخلائق.

The ways to God are as many as the number of human beings.
In other words every heart opens an avenue leading to God.

In the 3rd century A.H. gnostic teachings found their way into Islam. Although Sufism took its origin in the verses of the Quran, the Sunnah and hadith of the Prophet (S), and other Islamic traditions, one may

say that in addition to the influence of the faiths mentioned above, Islamic gnosticism is mainly derived from Semitic monotheism, Greek rationalism, combined with pythagorean and stoic influences, together with the theory of causation, Aristotelian teleology and Neo-Platonic pantheism, which in combination shaped the special character of this movement.

Our predecessors have declared four ways of reaching the truth, namely:

1. Peripatetic philosophy (hikmat-i mashd¹);
2. Philosophy of emanation (hikmat-i 'ishraq);
3. Scholastic philosophy or philosophy of Kalam;
4. `Irfan.

Peripatetic Philosophy

Peripatetic Philosophy: It is discursive, i.e. based upon reason and proof. It is derived from Aristotelian philosophy. Its main exponents in Islam are al-Kindi, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina.

Philosophy of Emanation

Philosophy of Emanation, or Illuminationism: This school holds that the absolute reality is realizable only through muhashafah, mushahadah, shawq, ishraq, (illumination), `ishq (love) and riyadah (spiritual self-discipline).

In this philosophy the faith (al-Din) confirms the findings of religious experience, not that it can by itself lead one to reality. Philosophers of this school, like the peripatetic philosophers, do not necessarily follow Divine revelation and the Shari'ah. However, it does not mean that they deny the basic tenets of the Shari`ah.

Philosophy of Kalam

Islamic Scholasticism, or the Philosophy of Kalam: This school holds that the reality is knowable by reason and its tools, i.e. logical arguments. It strives to prove rationally the validity of Divine commands (ahkam) by reconciling them with the dictates of reason, and refute the objections raised by the opponents.

The important mutakallimun are Wasil Ibn `Ata', Al-Ash'ari, al-Baqillani, Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, al-Shahristani; al-`Allamah al-Hilli, and Khwajah Nasir al-Din alTusi. All these were strict followers of the canonical Law or the Shari`ah.

'Irfan

**`Irfan (Gnostic Philosophy):** It is based on (ishraq) illumination, epiphany (inhishaf), and absorption (injidhab in God). The `Urafa' (gnostics) consider reason and logic insufficient instruments for the realization of God.

They abide by the Revelation, the Divine Book, the sayings of the prophets and the leading Muslim saints ('awliya'). The true `urafa' continuously recite the verses of Quran and remember God. They always follow the decrees of the religious law.

Shari'ah, Tariqah and Haqiqah

Shari'ah (Religious Law)

Literal meaning of `shari'ah' is approach to the source of water from where water is fetched. However, as a term it means the religious commands conveyed by God through the Prophet (S) to his people, by his words or actions, to properly regulate and manage their affairs in this world and the Hereafter.

Since the Shari'ah is a manifestation of God's benevolence, which is common to all, God Almighty has benefited the entire humanity by sending His messengers to all of them.

According to Sharh-e gulshan-e raz, the Shari'ah comprises the Law governing outward behaviour and serves as the outer shell. Qushayri says; "Shari'ah is necessarily related to submission [to God]." Submission or servitude in relation to God means acceptance of Divine unity, bearing testimony to God's messengers, and adherence to Islam. According to Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali (A), Islam means submission; which means, to act in accordance with the requirements of servitude.

Exoteric and Esoteric Aspects: Islam has both exoteric and esoteric aspects. The exoteric aspect of Islam is the verbal affirmation or apparent submission to Islamic laws.

The esoteric aspect of Islam, in addition to its verbal affirmation, demands unconditional attachment (with God) by heart or inner being. It is pure faith (Iman). Because it is the `heart' and the spirit which constitutes the true reality of man.

The basis of Shari'ah is the identification of the (absolute) truth, which is only possible through self-realization: من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه (one who knows his own self also acquires the knowledge of God). One of the traditions in al-hadith al-Qudsi states:

كنت كنزاً مخفياً فأحببت أن أعرف فخلقت الخلق لكي أعرف

I (God) was a hidden treasure, and I desired to be known. I, therefore, resorted to the act of creation, so that I may be known.

Thus God with His grace started the process of creation and created man endowed with manifest light in his being. He appointed man as His vicegerent and entrusted to him the task of absolute realization (of God). Hafiz says:

آسمان بار امانت نتوانست کشید

قرعه کار به نام من دیوانه زدند

The heavens could not hold the burden of the (Divine) trust So the lot was drawn in the name of a madman like me.

At first creation is an act of Divine will, and all the other creatures were also willed by His will. Realization of God and His remembrance are achieved only through worship.

In order to remember God at all times, one should engage oneself in worship, viz. prayer, fasting, zakat (obligatory alms-giving), khums, jihad, etc., and should never be negligent of God's remembrance and recite always His Names.

In Sufism, the first stage is represented by the laws of Shari`ah to be followed with strict adherence. Unless one does not fulfil his duties as prescribed by Shari`ah, he cannot prepare himself for higher stages.

According to Ibn Sina, the self should prepare itself through worship (`ibadah) and spiritual exercise (riyadah), so that it is fully prepared when *al-nafs al-mutma'innah* (the contented self) drives it towards the vision of reality.

Those who do not follow the laws of Shari`ah are far away from true `irfan. They call themselves `arifs, but are in reality raw, naive, and irresponsible. A Sufi when he has passed through the phase of Shari`ah enters the phase of Tariqah with the title of an `arif.

However, those who remain preoccupied with appearances and outward aspects of religion and do not have a clear vision, remain stuck to the lower stage.

If the real urafa' make the self-named sufis the object of ridicule, they aim at exposing the self-deceptive inflated claims of those extroverts whose hearts are not illuminated by the light of truth. A sincere wayfarer of this path must pass through the stages prescribed for attaining purity.

Tariqah

A disciple who resorts to remembrance of God by the way of worship, prepares himself to rise to the next stage called Tariqah, or the Sufi Path. The Quran declares:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا

As for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our paths(29:69)

The conditions essential for Shari'ah are sincerity (ikhlas) and true faith (Iman); those who reach this stage are ready to move on to the path of spiritual progress (saya wa suluk) and are able to attain spiritual and moral purification. The condition for advancing on this path is to have a guide, as the poet says:

طی این مرحله بی هم‌رهی خضر مکن

ظلمات است بترس از خطر

Do not go on this path without the companionship of Khidr (guide),
For it is a dark region;
Beware of the danger of getting lost.

According to Shaykh Mahmud Shabistari, Tariqah means a special journey specific to the wayfarer (salik) on the Path of Truth, which includes renunciation of the world, permanence of the state of remembrance (of God) (dhikr), concentration on the Divine Source, seclusion, continued observance of ceremonial bodily purity (taharah), ablution, truthfulness (sidq), sincerity (ikhlas), etc.

Al-Qushayri in his al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah defines Tariqah in the terms of adherence to Shari'ah and fulfilment of obligations imposed by it, which implies purification of one's morals, achievement of sublime human qualities, endeavour to resemble Divine saints (awliya' Allah), and action in accordance with the Sunnah of the Prophet and the model characters of Amir al-mu'minin `Ali (A) and all other Imams and Muslim saints. The main object of Tariqah is to train a perfect man.

According to Ibn Sina, the first stage of spiritual progress is purification of one's will (iradah), which is obtained through iman, leading to affirmation, certainty and peace of heart. A person who has so undergone the initial purification of iradah is called a "murid" (disciple).

A disciple, before anything else, should have eagerness or determination to acquire this state. It is this eagerness which urges him to undergo self-mortification, i.e., subordination of the carnal self to the

`contented self' (al_nafs al_mutma'innah). The disciple to reach this place should pass through the following three stages:

1. Takhliyah (lit. detachment): It means emancipation from all sensual cravings and inclinations, so that the body is made free from all impurities.
2. Tahliyah (lit. adornment): It means furnishing one's soul with high moral virtues.
3. Tajliyah (lit. illumination): It means immersion in Divine Essence, that is, abandoning of egoism in order to confess that the Creator is one and there exists nothing except Him.

Once the `arif passes through these stages, he has to cross seven valleys⁴:

1. *Talab* (yearning): It refers to the disciple's feeling of pain and his state of being in waiting. His heart yearns for the invisible world and searches for the Beloved everywhere.
2. *Ishq* (love): At this stage the salik, or the wayfarer on the spiritual path, burns in the fire of separation seeking union (wasl) with his Beloved. He leaves no stone unturned in his search for the Beloved.
3. *Irfan* (gnosis): Having acted on Shari'ah and after traversing the path of Tariqah, the sun of Divine knowledge is set aflame in his heart and he begins to perceive the Divine realities to a greater or lesser extent. He realizes that except God there is no other power in the world. He reaches the stage of realization of God through selfrealization, and finds the signs of the Divine everywhere.
4. Istighna' (contentment): At this stage, the salik turns his face from everyone except the Divine Essence, looking towards Him only.
5. Tawhid (Divine Unity): The salik realizes the unity of Divine Essence and the flame of tawhid burns in his heart.
6. Hayrah (bewilderment): This is the stage where the salik gets drowned in a state of perplexity before the majesty of God, and finds himself lost in wonder and astonishment.
7. Faqr wa Fand' (poverty and self-annihilation): At this stage multiplicity is transformed into unity, like waves sinking back into the ocean of Being. This is a stage which is inexplicable and cannot be expressed in words.

Sufi Practices

These are of three types:

1. `Ibaddah: Outward forms of worship as prescribed by the Shari'ah, such as prayers (salat), fasting (siyam), khums, zakat, jihad, etc., which are practised by all the Muslims without any difference among them.

2. Riyadah (spiritual exercise): It is meant for the training of the individual and teaching him to remember God verbally or by heart, i.e. recitation of His Names in manifest and concealed ways. It also includes forty-day seclusions (chillah) and observance of the prescribed journey or stay at one place for a particular period for performing the recommended acts of worship (mustahabbat).

3. Special rites and observances, such as obedience to the rules of the monastery (khanaqah) and to the instructions of the spiritual guide (murshid). It also includes certain recommended acts such as participation in devotional music and dancing and such other practices which vary between different Sufi brotherhoods.

For further clarification, one may refer to books like Misbah al-hidayah, Miftah al-kifayah, Kashf al-Mahjub, Suhrawardi's 'Awarif al-ma'arif, etc.

Occasionally there arose some differences between the Sufis and the adherents of Shari'ah in regard to their observances and religious rites, leading to controversies, and several books were written to refute and repudiate each other's views. In this respect the following books may be consulted:

Kitab tabsirat al-'awam by Sayyid Murtada Da'i al-Razi, al-Fasl fi al-milal wa al-ahwa' by Ibn Hazm, Asrar al-tawhid, the works of al-Majlisi and Aqa Baqir al-Behbahani, Aqa Muhammad 'Ali al-Kirman-shahi, Hajj Muhammad Ja'far Kabutar-ahangi, Hajj Mulls Zayn al'Abidin al-Shirwani, etc.

Detailed accounts pertaining to them may be obtained from books like al-Rawdat, Mustadrak al-wasa'il, and Tara'iq al-haqaiq etc. Mulla Isma'il al-Khwajawi (d. 1173) has written a book in Persian in refutation of the doctrine of the unity of being (wahdatal-wujud). Most of the Sufi poets in their verses have overtly or covertly ridiculed the staunch followers of Shari'ah.

Haqiqah (Absolute Truth)

As mentioned earlier Shari'ah is the recognition of the path towards God, whereas Tariqah is treading that path through self-purification and by traversing the stages of detachment (tahriliyah), adornment (tahliyah), and enlightenment (tajliyah), and consequently crossing the 'seven valleys,' viz. yearning (talab), love ('ishq), gnosis ('irfan), contentment (istighna'), Divine Unity (tawhid), perplexity (hayrah), and poverty and self-annihilation (faqr wa fana').

Haqiqah or realization of the Absolute Truth is arrival at the ultimate destination, which is nearness to God and vision of His rububiyyah (Lordship). According to al-Lahiji, Haqiqah is the unveiled manifestation of the Divine Essence, achieved after disappearance of the mists of all distinctions and false plurality by the light emanating from the Divine Essence.

It is said that the first stage of Haqiqah is shuhud (witnessing of the Divine Reality), and its last stage is annihilation of the finite self in God (fana' fi Allah). Thereafter comes the stage of attaining eternity with God (baqa' bi Allah). In the same way as the Words of God are unlimited, so also the stages of

realization of Haqiqah.

Khwajah `Abd Allah al-`Ansari says: "Consider Shari'ah to be the body, Tariqah to be the heart, and Haqiqah as the soul." Ibn Sina states: "An `arif ascends spiritually and observes the universe of sanctities and makes use of his power of imagination (khayal) to relate his observations, whose expression is impossible and whose meanings are incomprehensible for the common man⁵.

He further says that what is perceived by the `eye of certainty' (`ayn al-yaqin) cannot be acquired through positive demonstrative knowledge (ilm al-yaqin). The salih, the murid, and the `arif can achieve communion with God through kashf and shuhud, and are blessed with the beatific vision.

This nearness and unity with God cannot be attained through ratiocination.' Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, in his Sharh al- Isharat, while stating the differences between the ascetic (zahid), the devotee (`abid) and the gnostic (`arif), says;

"A zahid who is not an `arif resembles craftsmen and tradesmen who barter in exchange of their commodity. An `abid who is not an `arif resembles a labourer who works for wages. Although there is difference between the deeds of a craftsman and a labourer, yet so far as their objective and intention, i.e. receiving of wages or reward, is concerned they are similar to one another.

However, the zuhd of an `arif is aimed at being permanently attentive to God, turning from everything else. His abstinence is a sort of purification of his conscience (inner being) so that it restrains him from being engaged in anything other than God.

In his state of concentration and attention, he does not care for anything else and looks at them with contempt. The `arif is in search of the Absolute and does not seek anything else. He worships, because he considers only God worthy of all worship. An `arif's worship is not on account of fear or hope. He does not love God for the sake of paradise, but because God Himself is his objective.⁶

Amir al-mu'minin 'Ali (A) says, "My God, I do not worship Thee for fear of Hell or in hope of Heaven. I bow my head before Thee since I consider Thee only worthy of worship."

Some Profound Doctrines of `Irfan

1. Tawhid (Divine Unity)

According to the `urafa' multiplicity does not exist. All reality is essentially one. The human souls and selves despite their multiplicity are one. Multiplicity is the product of the categories of time and space and applies only to the physical world.

In the world of spirit there is nothing except unity (wahdat). Since the soul belongs to the `World of Command' (`Alam al-`amr)' it is beyond multiplicity. The Holy Quran says:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ ۚ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

***They will ask thee concerning the spirit. Say: 'The spirit is by command of my Lord. You have been given of knowledge nothing except little.'* (17:85)**

The Quran also says:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ

It is He Who created you from one living soul. (7: 189)

The unity of soul is generally expressed metaphorically as a single light which is reflected in mirrors of different colours:

همه شیشه‌هی گوناگون بود عالم

افتاد در آن پرتو انوار وجود

هر شیشه که بود سرخ یا زرد و کبود

خورشید در آن هم به همان رنگ نمود

The world was a gallery of coloured glasses,
In which have fallen the rays of existence;
Every glass, red, yellow or blue,
Reflected the light on its own hue.

The world of existence is like a wave or a bubble which is visible but not real; the sea is the only reality. The reality of the world of existence resembles the rays of the sun, which are scattered everywhere, but reality lies only in the sun. Mawlawi says:

منبسط بودیم و یک گوهر همه

بی سرو بی پا بدیم آن سرهمه

یک گهر بودیم همچون آفتاب

بی گره بودیم و صافی همچو آب

All of us were simple and like a single pearl,
We had no body and were indistinguishable;
We were like the pearl of the sun,
We were without knots, crystal clear like water;

چون به صورت آمده نور سره

شد عدد چون سایه های کنگره

کنگره ویران کنید از منجیق

تا رود فرق از میان این فریق

When that pure light descended upon us and gave us form,
It was multiplied like the shadows of a rampart;
Destroy the rampart with the catapult,
So that the difference between one and the other may disappear.

In the terminology of the `urafa ; reality is one and is manifest everywhere. Everything is a sign of God and the rays of Divine light are reflected in all beings. The Holy Quran says that man's body was created out of mud and the Divine spirit was breathed into him⁷.

Whatever is real is true, and is one, and what is true and one is necessarily eternal. Hence the soul is a Divine spark and is eternal and uncreated.

According to the world view of the `urafa', the sensible world does not have an external existence, and is like the back side of a mirror, the soul being the mirror's face. The world is body and God is its soul. The soul is one and single. The relationship between God, the Spirit, and the individual soul, is explained in three ways:

1) creation (khalq);

2) incarnation (hulul);

3) emanation (sudur).

The theory of creation is of semitic origin. The theory of incarnation (hulul) is explained with reference to the Christian belief that Christ is Son of God. The theory of emanation owes its origin to NeoPlatonic philosophy. All `urafa' have made use of these three doctrines for propounding their views.

یک گوهری چو بیضه جوشید و گشت دریا

کف کرد و کف زمین شد و ز دود او سما شد

گر چه صدف ز ساحل قطره ربود و گم شد

در بحر جوید او را غواص کشنا شد

An egg-like pearl, overflowed and turned into an ocean,
It foamed, and the foam was turned into the earth,
And its smoke formed the shy;
Although the shell steals a drop from the shore and disappears,
An expert diver seeks for it in the depths of the ocean.

The Sufis occasionally interpret emanation (sudur) as the intense yearning of the Beautiful to `appear' in the process of illumination (tajalli). Hence Jami, the poet, interpreted the tradition I was a hidden treasure, "كنت كنزا مخفيا" in his composition Yusuf wa Zulaykha, in terms of Eternal Beauty and Its desire to be `seen.'

As regards the theory of emanation (sudur) and incarnation (hulul), it is stated that although man is created, he is made in the image of God:

خلق الله آدم على صورته

God created man in His own image.

The ideas of creation and incarnation combined together come very close to the simile of the water and the ocean. Mawlawi says:

من آن روز بودم که اسماء نبود

نشان از وجود مسمی نبود

ز ما شد مسمما و اسما پدید

از آن روز کانجامن ومانبود

I existed the day when there were no names,
Nor was there any sign of the named;
The named and the name are derived from 'us,'
Since that day there was neither 'I' nor 'we.'

The will of man is the will of God, and all that is existent or nonexistent is God. God is everywhere, and the allegory of simurgh in Mantiq al-tayr and other similar mystical allegories in Sufi literature indicate the element of pantheism in the characteristic Sufi doctrine of tawhid.

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. He is one and the eternal. He has the knowledge of everything and is omnipresent. He is sempiternal and shall remain for ever. The whole universe is witness to His existence, and He shows Himself to the nearest of His servants.

2. Return Unto God Love

According to Mawlawi:

هر کسی کو دور ماند از اصل خویش

باز جوید روزگار وصل خویش

Everyone who is separated from his origin,
Seeks to return to it;

and the Quran states:

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

... Verily we are from God, and verily we shall return unto Him. (2: 156)

The state of separation of the soul from God is not discussed in `irfan literature: it is considered an established fact. It is said that human soul was some day in the vicinity of Divine presence, but later it was separated. The soul now laments due to the pain of separation and is greatly eager for reunion; it is always moved by the desire of returning to its origin.

The `urafa' believe that this attraction is due to the force of love (`ishq), which is an element other than reason. It is the only means to achieve the objective, i.e. union with God.

In view of `urafa', reason is a torch and a guide, but the real path leading to the ultimate reality is love. Love is divided into two varieties:

- (i) Exoteric and apparent love (`ishq-i suri wa zahiri): It means attraction towards apparent beauty and elegance.
- (ii) Esoteric and real love (`ishq-i batini wa haqiqi): Since all beauties are reflections of the beauty and perfection of God, one can reach the stage of real love through apparent love.

The opposition between love and reason has been always a subject of Sufi works. These two forces are in conflict within the human being. A similar conflict between the religious Law (Shari'ah) and love is discussed in the discourses of the Sufis.

To be brief, love is a method of purifying inner being through spiritual discipline. After being purified and cleansed, the heart becomes ready to receive the light of God.

It has been said by the Prophet (S), **تخلّفوا باخلاق الله**, "Mould yourselves in accordance with Divine norms;" when the heart becomes a mirror reflecting all manifestations of God, reality (or truth) is imprinted therein and a clear vision is obtained. Now whatever man sees is God, and it is at this stage that real unity and perfection are achieved.

3. Tawakkul

One of the basic beliefs of the Sufis is tawakkul (trust in God, resignation to His Will), which means acceptance of the Divine will in all matters. Stress on trust (tawakkul) and submission (taslim) to God, and consent to Divine good pleasure (rids) shows that these qualities are regarded as the pillars of Islamic mysticism.

As a matter of principle, Muslim mystics consider `Islam' as submission, i.e. acceptance of the will of God and predestination. They believe that every man's fate is predestined. (Some Sufis accordingly retired into seclusion and refrained from doing anything at all.)

However, others believe that work and effort is the means through which God has enabled us to struggle

for attaining our goals in accordance with the Quranic edict:

لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى

...Man shall have nothing except what he makes an effort for. (53:39)

Someone said to Sari al-Saqati that so and so in mountains sends his regards (salam) to you. Sari replied, "Since he has resided in the mountains, he has nothing to do. One should rather go out into the bazar, keep himself busy, and there not forget God even for a moment!"

Mawlawi defends the freedom of individual's will, and despite recognizing the principle of tawakkul, considers work and effort essential for life.

گفت آری گر توکل رهبر است

این سبب هم سنت پیغمبر است

گفت پیغمبر به آواز بلند

با توکل زانوی اُشتر بیند

رمز الکاسب حبیب الله شنو

از توکل در سبب کاهل مشو

He said: Yes, if resignation is your guide,
It is because it is also the tradition of the Prophet;
The Prophet proclaimed loudly;
"Tie the leg of a camel along with trust. "
Listen to the secret of `the worker is God's friend.'
Resignation does not mean to be heedless of the means.

God has mixed good and evil, and true and false, so that man is able to produce in himself a touch stone (of faith) by resorting to tolerance and resignation; such a man accepts all kinds of evil and adversities,

but always discovers beauty in everything.

[1.](#) "Companions of the Porch" at the Prophet's Mosque in al-Madinah. Abu al-Fida' describes them thus: "They were poor strangers, without friends or place of abode, who claimed the promises of the Apostle of God and implored his protection. Thus the porch of the mosque became their dwelling, and hence they derive their name. When Muhammad (S) went to meals, he used to call some of them; and he selected others to eat with his companions." For further study see Hafiz Abu Na'im al-'Isfahani, Hilyat al- Awliya', and al-Hujwiri, Kashf al-mahjub.

[2.](#) Al-Jami , Nafalzat al-'uns.

[3.](#) The doctrines of the Fahlawiyytin may be found in the books of such philosophers as Shaykh al-'Ishraq and Mulla Sadra.

[4.](#) These stages or steps are also described by Sana'i in Sayr al-`ibad ila al-`ibad and `Attar in Mantiq al-tayr.

[5.](#) Ibn Sina, al-'isharat, part 9, Persian translation, p. 54.

[6.](#) Editor's note; The reader's attention is called here to Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Husayni Beheshti's article "The Qur'an and the Theory of `Alam al-'Khalq and `Alam al-'Amr," Al-Tawhid, vol. I, No. 2, in which he rejects the entire theory of Alam al-'amr and `alam al-khalq as a notion alien to the Qur'an and as a deviate transference of a non-Qur'anic notion to it by the Mutakallimun.

[7.](#) Ref.. to Sura Sad, 38:71-72.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/vol1-n4/irfan-and-tasawwuf-sufism-ahmad-ahmadi/irfan-and-tasawwuf-sufism#comment-0>