

The Quranic Sufism
by Dr. Mir Vali-ud-din

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FOREWARD

Sufism or *Tasawwuf* is variously defined. But whatever the variations in definition, its essential role, as recognized in all hands is to set in motion a process of spiritual culture, operating in one form or another, for spiritual tranquility. The mystic tendency in human nature, which *Tasawwuf* treats of, has been [a] characteristic of serious minds in all ages and among every section of humanity. The experience in individual cases has varied, both in scope and intensity, according to the vision caught of the Ground of things in life. Indeed long before the advent of Islam, it had been subjected to a searching analysis particularly in societies given to metaphysical speculation such as the Greeks and the ancient Indo-Aryans, and reduced to a system of spiritual training.

Mysticism as practised by the followers of Islam has had a chequered history. In its earliest manifestation it meant nothing but living from moment to moment, so to say, in the eyes of God, implicitly following the lines of thought and conduct as the Prophet had laid both for himself and his followers. The primary aim was to transform every spiritual flight in the realm of self-perfection into an urge for the spiritual perfection of human society at large. But as Islam expanded into a widening political power, drawing into its fold people born to other modes of life and thought, the mystic tendency among Muslims underwent a kaleidoscopic change. The change was marked by the rise of a bewildering variety of mystic schools influenced chiefly by the Neoplatonism of Alexandria and the Vedantism of India, promoting in the mystic mind the mood for self-negation. A feeling of alarm was therefore felt in serious minds. As a way out, attempts were made at important stages in the history of Sufism to reconcile the early approach to the new forces at work. But the purists among the Sufis, though resolved into several orders, themselves by the pressure of time and factors of geography, and though

unable to dispense altogether with the terminology of the innovating heterodox schools, have struggled hard to keep to the original way of thought and living. It is the ideology of these and their practices, which form the subject of this monograph.

The task, it may be observed, has been discharged not by a student of research interested in the subject only at the intellectual plane, but by a scholar who is not only an ardent believer in the ideology, but who has tried to practice it in his own personal life. As a student of philosophy and as professor of that subject for years at the Osmania University, it was open to Dr. Mir Valiuddin to have spread the subject on a wide metaphysical canvas and instituted comparisons. He has, however, very rightly confined himself to presenting the view, at it has appeared to him, of the mystic heritage which, undisturbed by the disturbance of history, has continued from the earliest times to mould and shape the life of many a godly man and woman in Islam.

The work is intended to present, what the author believes to be, the contribution of the Qur'an to Mysticism, and has therefore a value to all seekers of knowledge on the subject.

Syed Abdul Latif

CHAPTER I

What is Sufism?

INTRODUCTION

Scholars wrangle about the derivation of the word '*Sufi*' though about its exact connotation I do not think that there is any reason to quarrel. Let us cast a hurried glance at the various attempts of the lexicographers:

(1) Some say: "The Sufis were only named Sufis because of the purity (*Safa*) of their hearts and the cleanliness of their acts (*athar*)". Bishr ibn al-Harith said: "The Sufi is he whose heart is sincere (*Safa*) towards God". Another great Sufi has said: "The Sufi is he whose conduct towards God is sincere, and towards whom God's blessing is sincere." It is evident that the whole of the body is reformed and all the actions improved by purity and sincerity of heart. The unveiling of divine gnosis is entirely dependent on inner purity. As the Prophet said:

"Mark, in man there is a lump of flesh, if it is kept wholesome the whole body remains in a healthy condition and if it is corrupted, the whole body is corrupted, mark, it is the heart!"(Bukhari)

But if the term 'Sufi' were derived from “Safa” the correct form would be ‘Safawi’ and not 'Sufi.'

(2) Others think that the Sufis were called Sufis only “because they are in the first rank (*Saff*) before God, through the elevation of their desires towards Him, the turning of their hearts unto Him and the staying of their secret parts before Him.” But if the term 'Sufi' were referred to *Saff* (rank) it would be *Saffi* and not 'Sufi.'

(3) Others have said: “They were called Sufis because their qualities resembled those of the people of the Bench (*Ashab al-Suffa*) who lived in the time of God's Prophet. They had left this world, departed from their homes and fled from their companions. They took of this world's good only so much as is indispensable for covering the nakedness and allaying hunger.” One of them was asked: “Who is a Sufi?” He replied: “He who neither possesses nor is possessed.**” By this he meant that he is not the slave of desire. Another said: “The Sufi is he who possesses nothing, or if he possesses anything spends it.”**

But if the term Sufi were derived from ‘*suffah*’ (or bench) the correct form would be “*suffi*” and not Sufi!

(4) Lastly it has been claimed that they were only called Sufis because of their habit of wearing *suf*, i.e. wool. “For they did not put on raiment soft to touch or beautiful to behold, to give delight to the soul. They only clothed themselves to hide their nakedness contenting with rough hair cloth and coarse wool.” If the derivation from *suf* (wool) be accepted the word is correct and the expression sound from the etymological point of view. According to Arabic lexicon the word “*Tasawwafa*” means, “he donned woollen dress,” as for instance, ‘*taqamma*’ means ‘he put on a shirt’. Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi thinks that the word Sufi “at the same time has all the necessary meanings such as withdrawal from the world, inclining the soul away from it, leaving all settled abodes, keeping constantly to travel, denying the soul its carnal pleasures, purifying the conduct, cleansing the conscience, dilation of the breast, and the quality of leadership.” Ibn Khaldun was also of the opinion that the word Sufi is derived from *suf*. But it is necessary to remember that it is not merely by putting on rough hair cloth and coarse wool that one is called a Sufi. As Hujwiri has said: “Purity (*safa*) is a blessing from God and the ‘wool’ (*suf*) is a proper dress of the cattle.”

According to the researches of Imam Qushayri the word 'Sufi' came into vogue a little before the expiry of the second century *Hijri* (or 822 A. D.). After the death of the Holy Prophet, “Companions” was the title adopted by the people of that age. They needed no better title, for “companionship” was unanimously regarded to be the highest and the best. Those who associated with the “Companions” were called in their own times *Tabeyin* (Followers). And the

“followers of the Followers” was the title conferred upon those who sat at the feet of the Followers. After the expiry of this period, there was a slackening of religious spirit. Hearts were turning more towards the pleasures of the world than towards God. A number of systems and orders cropped up. Each order was divided into a number of branches. Seeing this state of affairs, those who adored God above all things and were wholly consumed by the fire of His love, separated themselves from the rest of the world and devoted themselves to the recollection and remembrance of God - the only object of their love. These men were later called the “Sufis”. They were cut off from the mundane world for God's sake - clean of impurities, full of meditations, in their eyes gold and mud were of equal value. And that is why Abu Ali al-Rudhbari has defined a Sufi thus:

“One who wears wool over (his) purity, gives his lusts the taste of tyranny, and having overthrown the world, journeys in the pathway of the chosen one” (i.e. the Prophet)

In the light of these historical facts, it is now easy to determine the exact meaning of Sufism. If you cast a glance over the various definitions of Sufism given by the Sufis themselves, you will find not a few necessary attributes ascribed to them. It is not necessary to try to state them all here. But the gist of them all is beautifully expressed in a definition formulated by Shaykh-al-Islam Zakariyah Ansari, which is as follows.

“Sufism teaches how to purify one's self, improve one's morals, and build up ones inner and outer life in order to attain perpetual bliss. Its subject matter is the purification of the soul and its end or aim is the attainment of eternal felicity and blessedness.”

The following few sayings of the more prominent Sufis amplify and extend with fresh details the definition above formulated. Imam Qushayri, the author of the great Sufi compendium *Rasa'il*, takes Sufism in the sense of purity (*safa*), i.e. the purity of inner and outer life and says that “purity is something praiseworthy in whatever language it may be expressed and its opposite, impurity (*kadar*) is to be eschewed.” In support of it he cites a tradition, which explains the meaning of Sufism and affords proof for it:

“Abu Hujafa told us that once the Holy Prophet Muhammad visited us and his face showed us that he was deeply perturbed. He said: “The *Safw*(pure part i.e. the best) of this world is gone and only its *kadar* (impurity) remains.”** Consequently death is now a boon for every Muslim.”**

Imam Ghazzali, under the heading "On the way of the Sufis" in his book entitled *Al-Munqidh min-al-Dalal* (Rescuer from Error) states:

“When after acquiring proficiency in these sciences, I turned my attention to the methods of the Sufis, I came to know that their method attains perfection by means of theory and practice. The gist of their knowledge is to mortify the self and acquire freedom from baser passions and evil attributes so that the heart may get rid of the thought of anything save God and to embellish it with Divine remembrance.”

During the hey-day of his fame and glory, Imam Ghazzali gave up his literary pursuits and the job of *Qadi*. Adopting the ways of Sufis, he wandered alone in [the] forests. During this period, in one of his rambles, somebody met him and asked for a decree on some problem. He said to him, "Avaunt! You have reminded me of the false times, had you approached me when I was engaged in literary pursuits and was a *Qadi*, I would have issued a decree in the matter." The eminent Imam now considered the lessons of the schools as humbug and he took that period for false times or a time of destruction. True it is:-

**O heart, thy high-prized learning of the schools,
Geometry and metaphysic rules,
Yea, all but lore of God is devil's lore:
Fear God and leave this lore to fools.**

In praise of Sufism Abu'l Hasan Nuri says: "Sufism is the renunciation of all selfish pleasures." In other words it is giving up of unlawful carnal pleasures. A Sufi is usually free from greed and lust and knows that, "so long as he is a victim of lust he is, as it were, in a prison." He makes his self subservient to God's will, thus his greed and lusts are annihilated. He is well aware that following the dictates of desires and lusts is misleading and is destructive. As the Qur'an Says:

***"And follow not the lusts (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the Path of God."* [Qur'an 6:19]**

**What good advice was offered by Bayazid Bustami in these words:
Listen to a good word of the Sage of Bustam**

Spurn the lure of the grain if thou carest not to fall into the net.

To Abu Ali Qazwini, "sufism is good manners." Abu Sahl Sa'luki defines it as "abstaining from objections." Abu Muhammad al-Jurayri states: "Sufism is the building up of good habits and the keeping of the heart from all evil desires and passions." To Muhammad bin al Qassab, "Sufism is good manners which are manifested by a better man in better times before a better nation."

Muhammad b. Ali has expressed the view that Sufism is goodness of disposition, he that has the better disposition is the better Sufi."

It is clear, then, that according to these great Sufis, Sufism is nothing but the purification of the senses and the will. It is the effacement of one's desires in the will of God. It is the building up of a solid wall between the pure self and the Gog and Magog of passions and desires. It is, in a word, 'self-discipline', the avoidance of what is forbidden and the performance of what is ordained. Alkalabadhi thus sums up their "doctrine of the duties imposed by God on adults, [the Sufis] are agreed that all the ordinances imposed by God on His servants in His Holy Book and all the duties laid down by the Prophet (in the Traditions) are a necessary obligation and a binding imposition for adults of mature intelligence; that they may not be abandoned or forsaken in any way by the man, whether he be a veracious believer (*Siddiq*), or a saint or a gnostic, even though he may have attained the furthest rank, the highest

degree, the noblest station, or the most exalted stage. They hold that there is no station in which a man may dispense with the prescriptions of the religious law, by holding permissible what God has prohibited, or making illegal what God has declared legal, or legal what God has pronounced illegal, or omitting to perform any religious duty without due excuse or reason, which excuse or reason is defined by the agreed judgement of all Muslims and approved by the prescriptions of the religious law. The more inwardly pure a man is, the higher his rank and the nobler his station, so much the more arduously he labours with sincerer performance and a greater fear of God.”

In this sense, Sufism is a purely Islamic discipline which builds up the character and inner life of the Muslims by imposing certain ordinances and duties, obligations and impositions, which may not be abandoned in any way by any man. The Prophet Muhammad was sent to “instruct” mankind “in Scripture and Wisdom and to sanctify them.”

The Sufis keep these “instructions” before their eyes; strive their utmost to perform what has been prescribed for them to do; and to discharge what they have been called upon to do subsequent to that prescription. God says; “*And those who fight strenuously for Us We will surely guide them into Our way.*”

And again:

“Oh ye who believe! Do your duty to God, seek the means of approach unto Him and strive with might and main in His cause: that ye may prosper.”

Believing in these exhortations the great Sufi Yahya has said; “the spirit of gnosis will never reach thy heart, so long as there is a duty owing to God which thou hast not discharged!” Thus Sufism, in the words of Abu’ Ali al Rudhbari is “giving one’s lust the taste of tyranny” and “journeying in the pathway of the Holy Prophet.”

Now I shall consider the definitions of Sufism, which lay stress on building [an] inner life. What is meant by 'inner life' itself [will] be made clear later.

Junayd has defined a Sufi as “dead to himself and alive in God.” He passes away from what belongs to himself and persists through what belongs to God. When he is 'dead' in relation to his own self, he becomes 'alive' in his relation to the self of God.

Husayn b. Mansur al Hallaj thinks that a Sufi is, “singular in his being, he neither accepts anybody nor does anybody accept him.” He feels the immediate Presence of God alone within and senses the Presence of God without and his mental faculty gets rid of the thought of anything save God and is totally captivated by God:

The eye does not see anything except God!

Predication of everything is of Him only.

When 'Amr b. 'Uthman-Makki was asked the meaning of Sufism, he replied: "A Sufi is alive to the value of time and is given every moment to what that moment demands."

O votary of earthly idols feign,

Why let those veils of flesh enwrap thy brain?

Tis folly to pursue a host of loves;

A single heart can but one love contain! (*Jami*)

When Abu Muhammad Ruwaym was asked to define Sufism, he said: "Sufism is nothing else save submitting one's own self to the will of God. A Sufi becomes dead to his self-will and God Almighty's will alone enters [into] him and as a consequence of it, he has no wish of his own, neither does he want, desire or yearn for anything. In the words of Shaykh Jilani [this] now becomes: "At rest in body, contented in mind, broad chested, his face beaming with the light of God, with an enlightened heart and oblivious of all things due to his nearness with God."

Ma' aruf Karkhi defines Sufism as: "The grasping of realities and disappointment from what is in the hands of people." When the truth is revealed to the Sufi that really God Almighty alone can inflict pain and bestow blessing, He alone can resuscitate and deal death to us, He alone is the Creator, the Cherisher, he becomes blind to every other thing except Him. In calamity and in affluence, he considers God Almighty alone to be the real agent, the real doer, and does not accept any other being as cause or instrument.

Shibli says: "A Sufi is severed from the world (*Khalq*) and connected with God (*Haqq*) alone, as God Almighty had said to Moses, "*I have chosen thee for Myself (for service) and have disconnected thee from others.*" Later addressing Moses He said: "*By no means canst thou see Me.*"

The same meaning is conveyed by what Dhu'l-Nun said: "Sufis are those who preferred God Almighty to all things; and liked Him, God Almighty, too, then, preferred them to all things and liked them."

The [goal] and aim of a Sufi's life is God alone; he loves God alone; [the Sufi's] thinking, meditation and prayer are for God alone. He is ever ignorant of everything save God and when he thinks of God alone his mind is purified, and in this sense, he finds himself attached to God and disconnected with everything save God. He is totally captivated by God alone!

Of my soul's union with this fleshly frame

Of life and death,

Thou art the end and aim.

I pass away:

Thou only dost endure

When I say “me”, it is “the” I mean to name

If you think over the above definitions of Sufism, you will have to admit that its teachings are limited not only to purification of the will and senses, but it also confers on us nearness to God as a consequence of which a Sufi having lost his sense of self-subsistence loses himself in the self-subsistence of God. He feels the immediate Presence of God within (*yافت*) and senses the Presence of God without (*shuhud*). His knowledge and actions are guided by God alone.

The first step of a Sufi is to teach a traveller on the path how to get release from the clutches of desire or lust (*hawa*), how to emerge out of his own individual sphere of knowledge and enter into the knowledge of God. This part of the Sufi teaching is the same, which is imparted by the *Shari'at*. It's gist could be expressed in these words: God alone is our deity (*Illah*) i.e. He alone is our Master, Our Lord and our Helper. We worship God alone and Him alone we ask for help in all our wants and desires: “*Thee (alone) do we worship and Thee (alone) do we ask for help.*” [Qur'an 1:5]

From the viewpoint of worship and help, we are cut off from everything save God and we express our humility and subjection before Him alone. This conviction in the Supremacy and Lordship of God Almighty purifies man of all the baser attributes and embellishes him with all the other nobler qualities -- his heart is freed from unbelief, false worship, hypocrisy, innovation and sins and is filled with faith, unification, truth and virtue. To begin with, Sufism means this sanctification of heart only. The same has been spoken of in the preceding definitions by eminent Sufis as “Purity of Character,” “building up good habits and the purification of heart from all evil desires and passions.” It has been also described as “good manners.”

When the Islamic faith imparts to us the knowledge that God alone is our deity, [that] He alone we should worship and He alone we should ask for help, the question then necessarily arises in our mind, ‘Where should we seek this God whom we worship and before whom we express our humility and subjection?’ Truly speaking, Sufism gives a reply to the above question in the light of the Qur'an and the Prophet's traditions, and it is also called “the knowledge of the nearness of God.” (*Ilm-i-qurb*).

Really Sufism is nothing but this knowledge only. The Sufi who is conversant with the 'knowledge of nearness' knows the secret of the relation between *Haqq* and *Khalq*, God and the phenomenal things, the secret of nearness and proximity, immanence and transcendence, Firstness and Lastness, Outwardness and Inwardness of God with the phenomenal things. Not only does he know this secret but he feels the immediate Presence of God within his own self. Now he is dead to his self and consequently we can call

him the one whom God has drawn near to Him (*muqarrab*). Note in Sura 56 (*waq'ia*) in the Qur'an, men are sorted out into three classes:

1. The companions of the Right Hand (*Ashab-al-Maimana*).
2. The companions of the Left Hand (*Ashab-al-Mash'ama*).
3. Those nearest to God (*Muqarrabun*).

The companions of the Right Hand are "Those who believe in the Unseen," are "steadfast in prayer" and "have assurance of the Hereafter" in their hearts. The companions of the Left Hand are "those who reject faith and go after false gods." The Qur'an describes them as "*those who bartered guidance for error*" and "*have lost their true direction.*"

This classification is, thus, according to the knowledge out of which spring their actions, knowledge of the right path and knowledge of the wrong path. But who are the "*Muqarrabun*?" They are just not the companions of the Right Hand only - otherwise they would have not been placed in the separate category. The Sufis believe that it is just another name for those who are not only on the right path guided by their Lord, but also know the right relation between the "*Haqq*" and "*Khalq*" or between the Creator and the created, between God and man.

To be more explicit, those who regard their Creator as their "*Ilah*" or Deity and worship Him alone and ask for His help alone and believe that there is none other than He [Him Who is] worthy of our devotion and able to help us, are called in Qur'an the Companions of the Right Hand. And those who regard some created beings as their Deities and worship them and seek their aid, thus rejecting the faith which lays down that God alone is our Cherisher and Sustainer, are termed the Companions of the left. The *Muqarrabun* are those who not only believe their Creator as their only Deity and worship Him alone and seek for His help alone, but also know the true relationship that exists between them and their Creator. They have been promised "Rest and Peace and a Garden of Bliss."

Thus the great Sufi Sheikh Shahabuddin Suharwardi in his famous Sufi Compendium '*Awarif-al-Maarif*' (Chapter I) holds that though the term 'Sufi' is not used in the Holy Qur'an, the word "*Muqarrab*" connotes the same meaning, which is expressed by the term Sufi.

A little later, once again he makes explicit: "know that by the word Sufis we imply "*Muqarrabun*" only, those whom God draws nearer to Himself."

Now you have read a very brief account of the knowledge of those 'nearest to God' (*Muqarrabun*); you will read its details in the third chapter of this book. This knowledge is concerned with the "Secret of the Omnipresence of God." The Qur'an and the traditions definitely prove that the 'essences' of created

beings are the 'other' of God. The relation between the Creator and the created, is not one of 'identity but is definitely that of "otherness", things created are the 'other' of their Creator. "Then will ye fear other than God?" "Is there a Creator other than God?" In spite of this 'otherness', the omnipresence, proximity, immanence, 'firstness' and 'lastness,' 'outwardness' or 'inwardness' of God, (or in the terminology of Sufis "identity") too, is indisputably posited by the Qur'an and the Traditions. Apparently this would seem rather contradictory. We will have to consider it in the light of the Qur'an and the Traditions and remove the contradiction. Sufism (The mystical knowledge of the nearness of God or '*Ilm-i qurb*') removes this contradiction and proves -- proves by the words of God Almighty -- proves by the commentary of His Prophet -- that the essences of phenomenal things before their creation, subsist in the Divine Knowledge, are the objects of God's Knowledge, are the Ideas of God and are definitely the 'other' of their Knower, the Creator. For the 'essences' of things form, determination, limitation, individualization are necessary. God is free from these limitations or determinations --is not a form. Being or existence does not belong to us. It belongs to God alone. We possess attributes of non-existence, and God Almighty is gifted with the superlative attributes of existence. Having no existence and existential attributes we possess no activity of our own. God alone is active, the only agent or doer.

In spite of all that was said above it is possible to position us what belongs to God, e.g. Being, *Anniyya* (self-consciousness) attributes, actions etc. How, then, those aspects of God Almighty were related to the essences of created beings and how was limitation caused in them? Because it is quite clear that all these aspects are certainly found in us with the only difference that these are perfect, absolute and eternal for God and imperfect, limited and contingent for us. The explanation and the answers to these important questions in the light of the Qur'an and the Traditions form the subject matter of Sufism and you will find an exhaustive discussion of these topics in this book.

Knowing all this, the Sufi (or *Muqarrab*) becomes aware of his 'poverty' (*faqr*). He begins to realize that kingdom and power, actions and attributes and existence really belong to God Almighty alone and that according to all these aspects he is a 'pauper' . . . a 'supplicant!' (*Faqir*).

O mankind! Ye are the supplicants in your relation to Allah! He is the All Sufficient, the Owner of Praise. [Qur'an 35:15]

Therefore he now sees that God alone is the Living - outwardly and inwardly, the "Living and the Self-subsisting Eternal." He alone is the Knower and the Powerful - outwardly and inwardly. It is He alone who has Knowledge and Power. He alone is the Hearer and the Seer outwardly and inwardly. "*He alone is the One who heareth and seeth.*"

By this distinction of his “poverty” he automatically gains the distinction of “trust” (*amanat*); he begins to see that *huwiyya* (ipseity) *anniya* (I-ness) and attributes and actions are found in him as a ‘trust’ Therefore, the Sufi exists through the Existence of God alone, lives through His life alone and knows through His Knowledge alone. Through His will and power he has power and will, hears through His hearing alone, sees through His sight and speaks through His speech. The Tradition of the Proximity of Supererogation (*Qurb-i-Nawafil*) is aptly applicable to him in which is explained:

“My servant continually seeks to win my favour by worlds of supererogation until I love him; and when I love him, I am to him an ear and an eye and a hand. Through Me he hears and through Me he sees and through Me he takes.”

and according to some traditions:

“I am to him a heart and a tongue, through Me he understands and through Me he speaks.”

Thus it may be said that God becomes the hands, feet, and ears of a Sufi and probably the same meaning is expressed by Junayd when he said “God causes you to be dead to yourself and makes you alive in Himself.” Then alone he will be able to say:

“I bear only the name for its own sake, the rest is He alone.”

He has no life of his own, nor any being, but only as he lives in Him and He, by His Spirit, lives in him. Because God is, he is, without Him, he feels; he can do nothing and is nothing, not even a memory! Now realizing his innate nature and being confirmed in the knowledge of his “poverty” (*faqr*) the Sufi regards all created beings as dead and thus “total disappointment from what is in the hands of the people” is created in his mind. He regards God Almighty alone as the doer and submits himself to the will of God. (*vide* Ruwaym’s definition of Sufism above).

You will find an explanation of all these statements of mine and their vindication by the Qur’an and the Traditions in the following Chapters. As Junayd has aptly remarked about Sufism: “Our system of doctrine is firmly bound up with the dogmas of Faith, the Qur’an and the Traditions” and that which is refuted by the Qur’an and the traditions is nothing but heresy!

There are two causes of heresy being mixed up with Sufism:

- 1: Peripateticism [Aristotelianism]
- 2: Neo-platonism

(1) After going through Aristotle and the works of other Greek Philosophers the later authors crammed Greek Logic and Philosophy in the orthodox

Scholasticism (*kalam*) and instead of refuting those objections and doubts raised against Islamic doctrines by the opponents, themselves began to examine theological doctrines and busied themselves in judging them by the standard of theoretical reasoning. Differences of opinion are sure to arise among the devotees of 'pure reason', that is why the history of philosophy is replete with contradictions and inconsistencies. Since the very beginning there were two parties among the Scholastics of Islam viz. the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites. The earlier Ash'arites made their reasoning subservient to Divine knowledge and during their time those dogmas alone were accepted which were supported by the Qur'an and the Traditions.

Greek Philosophy and Logic did not find their way in them. But they laid special emphasis on the fact that the Mu'tazilites should be refuted, so that the common people may not fall prey to their wiles. The Mu'tazilites (who are one of the groups of the followers of Wasil bin 'Ata, and excepting the question of *Imamate*, the Shi'ites, too, in most of the tenets, agree with the Mu'tazilites) made their doctrines totally subservient to theoretical reasoning. The result was "that thrown into the wide sea and utter freedom of Greek thought, their ideas expanded to the bursting point and more even than a German metaphysician, they lost touch of the ground of ordinary life, with its reasonable probabilities, and were swinging loose on a wild hunt after ultimate truth, wielding as their weapons definitions and syllogism."

As regards the problem of the relation between the Creator and the created, the Mu'tazilites denied the omnipresence of God with created beings, because pure reason led them to believe that if the omnipresence of God be admitted with the created beings, then by the divisibility of the created being it would necessarily follow that the Being of the Creator, too, is divisible. Further it would mean that God's Being is capable of incarnation and identification and this is clearly denying the transcendence of God. That is the reason why they interpreted in their own way all the Quranic verses in which encompassment, omnipresence, proximity and immanence are clearly described. By doing so they thought that encompassment etc. should be in knowledge only.

The late Ash'arites, too, with a view to making God's transcendence safe, made use of this sort of interpretation. But the truth is that in the Qur'an, we find verses of transcendence and verses of immanence in abundance. To believe in one and reject the other is the way of those who deny God and His apostles, as indicated by the Qur'an. The great Sufis have diverted our attention towards this fact. In this book you will find the true creed of transcendence and immanence and unless the right creed is adopted the true understanding of the Qur'an and the Traditions is impossible.

(2) When neo-platonism found its way in[to] Sufism, its first consequence was that the “otherness” (*gairiat*) of objects was denied. The ‘otherness’ of the created things is clearly emphasized in the Qur’an.

Under the influence of the teaching of Plotinus, phenomenal things were regarded not as other than God but identical with Him. God alone is, and other than God, in essence as well as in existence, is merely non-existent! “Everything is He” (*hama ost*)! The necessary outcome of the negation of the ‘essence’ of things and ‘otherness of things was heresy and *ibahat* (i.e. regarding everything as permissible). There was now no further need of following the *Shari’at* (The Law), the antithesis of the Law and the Path (*Tariqat*) was presented for the first time and thus a campaign was launched to throw off the yoke of the Islamic Code.

[The] Islamic Code was regarded as the creed of the imperfect, it was considered unnecessary for the Perfect to follow it; even the very conception of any other being save God was impossible. *Shari’at* is compulsory [in]sofar as one has to admit ‘otherness’ when ‘otherness’ has been got[ten] rid of and God alone remained, there is no need to follow *Shari’at*. “To follow beauty is the work of women and to follow majesty that of men.” The science of *Shari’at* is “book knowledge” (*Ilm-i-Safina*) but the Science of *Tariqat* is “heart knowledge” (*Ilm-i-Sina*) which is bequeathed from one mind to another since aeons, it is arcane secret - a veiled mystery. Further details of these wild rhapsodies and a satisfactory refutation of them are given in Chapter IV of this book.

Another consequence of neo-platonism was that the thing, which was not the sole object, began to be regarded as such and the real object was totally overlooked. Now higher achievements which are merely the necessary effects and are born by themselves began to be regarded as the sole object: ecstasy and ‘states’, ‘clairvoyant illuminations’ and ‘control (*tasarruf*), ‘miraculous powers’ and ‘true dreams’ etc. were considered to be the sole end or aim of a *salik* (a traveller on the Path) and they were regarded as a characteristic symbol of holiness and piety. For the attainment of these feats unwarranted exercises and practices came in vogue, to learn and to be initiated in such sciences even the yogis and sanyasis were not spared. Thus a hodgepodge of Indian rites, Greek theories and ideas too kits birth which was known as Islamic Mysticism of Sufism. The object underlying it was to possess extraordinary psychic powers and remarkable feats. The desire of attaining this supernatural power originated in the mind merely to show off one’s superiority among people and to captivate their hearts. But real Sufism, as you have read in the foregoing paragraphs, consists in steering clear of lusts and sinful desires and in realizing the Immediate Presence of God! It teaches us to be dead to self and attain everlasting life in God. How on earth could it have any relation with the so-called Islamic Mysticism!

**'Here is the candle extinguished and
there the living lamp of the Sun!
Do mark the difference between
the one and the other! (Hafiz)'**

There is a vivid and lucid description of real Islamic Mysticism in this book, the object of which is the attainment of *abdiat* and the upshot of which is the realization of the Immediate Presence of God. The source of this Sufism is the Holy Qur'an and the Traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Probably for the first time it is presented to you with such lucidity and logical sequence. Some of the important points of the chapters of this book were orally explained to me by the perfect mystic, my master, Maulana Muhammad Husayn. Every line of this book is supported by the Qur'an and the Traditions; it has also the support of the great Muslim Saints, though I did not deem it necessary to give references of their works. It would benefit the righteous person alone who has been blessed with true insight into religion, who has made his reasoning subservient to God Almighty's knowledge and who regards the Qur'an and the Traditions the only criterion of right and wrong. He who understands what I say, has no flaw in his insight. No one can understand me except the one who is gifted with insight.