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Sayyid Wahid Akhtar

Authors(s):

Sayyid Wahid Akhtar [1]

This text introduces the idea that Sufism is the meeting point of the Shia and Sunni schools of thought, suggesting unity of these sects.

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Sufism has been defined as the essence of Islamic morality by some eminent Sufis. There have been different views regarding the etymology of the term tasawwuf, and its doctrines were, formerly, usually considered borrowed from non-Islamic sources. Among the orientalists, now, few are of the view that Sufism is not derived from the core of Islamic teachings.

Some eminent orientalists, such as Nicholson, Masignon and Henry Corbin, have been instrumental in removing the earlier misconceptions about its origins. Undoubtedly all religions have a mystical dimension that may be said to be the common element or essence of religion.

Yet Islam is different from other religions because of its special nature. Except original Judaism no religion emphasized the organic unity of the worldly and the otherworldly and laid down a comprehensive law to govern human life and society. Morality may justifiably be considered to be the essence of Islam, because morality has two dimensions that are inseparable: individual and social.

Islamic teaching comprises three aspects: beliefs (*'aqa'id*), worship (*'ibadat*) and social obligations

(*mu'amalat*). The fundamentals of the faith were revealed to the Prophet (S), and he prescribed the details of ritual and worship, decreed by Allah in His Book in general terms. Hence the Quran and the Sunnah are two sources of the Muslim creed and practice. The path to attain perfection in piety is not isolated from social obligations; a Muslim has to reach the highest spiritual stage through his dealings with other human beings.

Muslim theologians in general and Sufis in particular believe that Allah can forgive man's lapses with regard to His rights (*haqq Allah*), but will not forgive one's failure to fulfil his duties toward fellow human beings (*huquq al-nas*). Hence morality, which is possible in society alone, is as important as dogma and worship.

From the Islamic viewpoint, the fundamentals of the faith and ritual worship also aim at perfecting morality.

The Prophet (S) himself declared:

إِنَّما بُعِثتُ لِأَتَمِم مكارم الأخلاق

I have been sent (*by Allah*) *with the mission of perfecting morals.*[1]

It may therefore be concluded that defining Sufism as the essence of Islamic morality is more compatible with the spirit of Islam and the content of Sufism than any other definition of tasawwuf.

That is why, a part from linguistic controversies regarding the etymology of this term since the time the terms sufi and tasawwuf came into vogue, Sufis have been emphasizing safa (purity) as the main characteristic of a Sufi.

The Quran declares:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن تَزَكَّى

'indeed shall be successful who purifies himself.' (*87:14*)

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا

'will be indeed successful who purifies it (*the soul*)*, and he will indeed fail who corrupts it.'* (*91:9-10*)

The verses preceding these say that God fashioned the human soul and inspired it with the understanding of what is right and wrong for it (91:7-8). The purification of the heart and the soul is not

an end in itself, but a mean to attain Divine good-pleasure, which is the Sufi's summum bonum (supreme good).

The way to perfection passes through social life; it is not attainable in isolation. The Islamic conception of spirituality is grounded in man's social life, which provides him the possibility of winning Divine good-pleasure. The word sufi does not occur in the Quran or hadith, but the term *rida* (good-pleasure) occurs in many places in the Quran in its different forms:

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

'soul at peace! Return unto thy Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well pleasing (Him)! Enter thou among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise!'(89:27-30)

The highest stage that man can attain in pleasing his Lord is that at which his will becomes one with the Divine Will:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

'And among men is he who sells his self to seek the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is Affectionate to the servants.' (2:207)

In my view the above two verses contain the truest definition of a Sufi. I hold this view on the basis of the unanimous exegesis of the verse 207 of the Surat al-Baqarah, according to which this verse was revealed on the night of the Hijrah when 'Ali offered to sleep in the Prophet's (S) stead, risking his own life thereby.

Incidentally 'All ibn Abi Talib (as) is accepted as the source and fountainhead of all Sufi orders (salaasil) with the sole exception of a branch of the Naqshbandiyyah. 'Ali (as) is called Sayyid al-'awliya' (the chief of allwalls and Sufis). Thus surrendering one's life to Allah is the only way to win Divine pleasure and, even, to becoming the instrument of Divine Will.

The greatest sacrifice in the history of Islam is that of al-'Imam alHusayn (as) at Karbala'. Many *mufassirun* are of the view that the verses 27-30 of the Surat al-Fajr (cited above) refer to al-'Imam al-Husayn's martyrdom. It is pertinent to note that the sacrifices of 'Ali (as) and al-Husayn (as) were of great socio-political significance in the history of Islam as well as in human history as a whole.

No honest historian can deny the high spiritual status of 'Ali (as) and al-Husayn (as).

What I want to infer from this rather lengthy introduction to Sufism is that in Islam true spirituality is morality of the highest order in one's attitude towards Allah and His creatures. Sufism, in whatsoever

terms it be defined, is inseparable from this spirit. It is from this point of view that at the very outset I said that Islamic mysticism is different and distinguished from all other forms of mysticism which usually seek Divine good-pleasure, or in some cases oneness with God, in renouncing the world. On the contrary Islam explicitly prohibits and denounces asceticism and renunciation of social life: '*There is no monasticism in Islam*'.

What makes Sufism distinct from the mystical dimension of all religions and religious philosophies is its basic social character. The Prophet (S) himself lived among the people and conducted their social and political affairs. He is the Perfect Man (*al-'insan al-kamil*) in the view of all Muslims. No Sufi in his spiritual ascension can claim a higher status than him.

The Imams of his Family (*A'immat Ahl al-Bayt*) also had been always actively involved in instructing Muslims and seeking to uplift them morally and socially as the true servants of Allah. They are also held in high esteem by all Sufis, and some of the early Sufis are said to be direct disciples of one or the other Imam. Usually the orientalists have ignored the important role of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt in the origin and development of Sufism.

In order to understand the socio-political aspect of Sufism one has to study their relation to Sufis and Sufi doctrines. Henry Corbin's observation in this regard is very significant and relevant to this study. He observes that the distinction between Shariah and Tariqah is made by Sunnis, while no such distinction was ever made by Shi'is, for the former separated political leadership from spiritual leadership while the latter combined both forms of leadership in their conception of the Imamate.

In the Sunni world from the 3rd/9th century when Sufism assumed the form of a movement, it was vehemently opposed by fuqaha' and 'ulama', but among the Shi'is no such opposition arose due to the Shi' belief in the Infallible Imams who combined both the esoteric and exoteric aspects in their persons.[2]

Henry Corbin and Kamil Mustafa al-Shaybi, the author of Tashayyu 'watasawwuf, are unanimous that Sufis borrowed their notions of qutb or qhawth from the Shi'i conception of Imamate.[3]

Sufis believe that the world can never remain without a qutb, upon whom depends the preservation of the faith and the guidance of human beings. He is nearest to God, is the guardian of the faith, and receives instructions from Allah directly. 'Ali (as), addressing his pupil, Kumayl ibn Ziyad, one of the earliest Sufis, to whom some Sufi orders attach themselves, says:

> اللهم بلى، لا تخلو الأرض من قائمٍ لله بحجةٍ. إما ظاهراً مشهوراً أو خائفاً مغموراً لئلا تبطل حجج الله وبيناته. وكم ذا وأين أولئك. أولئك والله الأقلون عدداً و الأعظمون قدراً. يحفظ الله بهم حججه وبيناته حتى يودعهم نظراءهم ويزرعوها في قلوب أشباههم هجم بهم العلم على حقيقة البصيرة، وباشروا روح اليقين، واستلانوا ما استوعره المترفون، وأنسوا بما استوحش منه الجاهلون وصحبوا الدنيا بأبدانٍ أرواحها معلَّقة بالمحلّ الأعلى. أولئك خلفاء الله في أرضه والدعاة إلى دينه. آه آه شوقاً إلى رؤيتهم. انصرف إذا شئت.

But the earth is never devoid of him who stands for God with a proof. He is either manifest and well-known, or afraid and concealed so that God's proofs and Hip clear signs should not disappear (or, be invalidated) (by his death). How many are they and where are they?

By God, they are few in number, but great in esteem near God. Through them God maintains His proofs and signs, till they entrust them to others like themselves and plant them in the hearts of their likes. Knowledge has led them to the reality of understanding and they have attained the spirit of certitude.

That which is hard upon the seekers of comfort comes easy to them. They endear what the ignorant regard with aversion. They live in the world with their bodies, but their spirits are in a higher realm. They are the vicegerents of God in His earth and His callers to His Din. Oh, how much I yearn to see them. O Kumayl, I have told you all that I had to say, you may go back whenever you like.[4]

No description of the Sufi may be better than the one given in the above passage. It is generally believed that 'Ali (as), as his views mentioned in Nahj al-Balaghah appear to indicate, was a person disillusioned with this world and hating it. On the contrary, he seems to anticipate the view of Leibnitz – the European rationalist philosopher who said that ours was the best of all possible worlds – in his following statement which he made when he heard someone accuse the world:

إن الدنيا دار صدقٍ لمن صدقها، ودار عافية لمن فهم عنها،ودار غِنى لمن تزود منها، ودار موعظةٍ لمن أتعظَ بها. مسجد أحباء الله، ومصلَّى ملائكة الله، ومهبط وحيِ الله ومتجر أولياء الله. اكتسبوا فيها الرحمة، وربحوا فيها الجنة. فمن ذا يذمها وقد آذنت ببينها.

Verily this world is a house of truth for those who look into it deeply and carefully, an abode of peace and rest for those who understand its ways and moods, and it is the best working ground for those who want to procure provisions for the Hereafter. It is a place of acquiring knowledge and wisdom for those who want to acquire them, a place of worship for the friends of God and for the angels.

It is the place where prophets receive revelations of the Lord. It is the place for the virtuous and the saints to do good deeds and to earn rewards for the same; only in this world they could trade with God's Favours and Blessings, and only while living here can they barter their good deeds with His Blessings and Rewards. Now who can speak ill of the world after all this?[5]

The above passage sums up the functions and the role of a Sufi in this world, though apparently it seems different from what is generally believed to be the goal of a Sufi.

At this juncture I would like to substantiate the thesis regarding the intimate relationship between the Shi'i belief in Imamate and the Sufi conception of spiritual leadership with reference to the history of Sufism.

Henry Corbin, in his history of Muslim philosophy, Mustafa Kamil al-Shaybi, in Tashayyu ' wa tasawwuf,

Shah Wali Allah, in Hama'at, and I. P. Petroshvensky, in Islam dar Iran, holding the view that Sufism is the natural outcome of Quranic teachings, maintain that it originated in the practice of the early Arab Muslims,6 who, disillusioned with the corruption of Muslim society due to affluence resulting from immense, continuous flow of wealth into Arabia and its major cities and occupation of fertile lands by Muslims soon after the death of the Prophet (S), withdrew from the society, which had deviated from the ideals of Islamic justice and simple living, and concentrated only on worship and rituals.

This tendency began during the regime of the Third Caliph and was strengthened further after the tragedy of Karbala', the episode of Harrah in Madinah, and the carnage of Makkah. Al–Hasan al–Basri belongs to the first generation of zuhhad, 'ubbad and mutakallimun. Shah Wali Allah does not discuss these details in Hama'at, yet he holds the view that Sufism owes its origin to the zuhhad and 'ubbad among the Companions and their successors (Tabi'un and Tabi' al–Tabi'in).

All of them, with few exceptions, were Arabs. This fact is sufficient to dispel the commonly held misconception that Sufism was a reaction of the Iranian mind.7

Al–'Imam al–Hasan's relinquishment of the caliphate marked the beginning of the consolidation of the Umayyad's dynastic rule which was contrary to the Islamic ideal of a just socio–political order. After the tragedy of Karbala' the Imams of the Ahl al–Bayt withdrew from active politics and devoted themselves to teaching and developing the religious sciences with a view to preserving Islam and its spirit. Al–'Imam 'Ali ibn al–Husayn's collection of supplications, al–Sahifah al–kamilah, is one of the most authentic sources of the mystic dimension of Islam in the first century of Hijrah.8

After the greatly popular sermons and sayings of Imam 'All (as) , which were a rich treasure house of Islamic spiritual and mystic literature, containing in itself most of the issues that later acquired significance in Muslim thought and provided the foundation for the development of kalam, 'irfan and the principles of Islam's socio–political philosophy, al–Sahifah al–kamilah is the first collection that embodies Muslim gnostic experience.

'All ibn al–Husayn's son al–'Imam Muhammad al–Baqir (as) started giving regular instruction in tafsir, fiqh and 'irfan. His son al–'Imam Ja'far al–Sadiq (as) developed, what came to be called later, the school of Ja'farifiqh, and is said to have trained and educated more than three thousand pupils in the fields of fiqh, usul al–fiqh, kalam and 'irfan.9

He refused to be drawn into politics after the fall of the Umayyads when the caliphate was offered to him by Abu Muslim al–Khurasani. Thus he maintained and continued the tradition of his grandfather and avoided, at least publicly, the arena of politics. All other Imams of the TwelverShi'is followed this tradition and were known and revered for their great piety and learning.

The Shi'i belief in their infallibility has its origin in the Quranic view of the impeccability of the prophets, and as Donaldson holds, has nothing to do with the Iranian belief in the Divine origin of kings or the Isra'ili tradition.10

These Imams were accepted as spiritual guides by some of the well-known Sufis of their times, such as al-Harith al-Muhasibi, Ba Yazid al Bistami, al-Hasan al-Basri and Sufyan al-Thawri.

Among the ladies of the Ahl al-Bayt some are known as the earliest exponents of the school of 'ishq (love) in Sufism. 'A'ishah, the daughter of al-'Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) and a contemporary of Rabi'ah al-Basri, Nafisah (2nd/8th century) and Fatimah (d.244/838) are prominent among them.'[11]

Though the Shi'is and the 'Alawis usually did not call themselves Sufis, there are some names from the family of the Prophet (S) that are mentioned in Sufi tadhkirahs, such as: 'Abd Allah, grandson of the Zaydi leader Ibrahim ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-Hasan (mentioned by al-Shi'rani in al-Tabaqat al-kubra), Abu al-Hasan al-'Alawi (d.291/904) (mentioned by al-Hujwiri in Kashf al-Mahjub and in Tabaqat al-sufiyyah by 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari), Abu Hamzah al-Khurasani (d.290/903) (mentioned in Tabaqat by Khwajah 'Abd Allah al-'Ansari), Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-'Alawi, in whose house Mansur al-Hallaj stayed. while in Kufah (mentioned in Kashf al-mahjub by al-Hujwiri), Hamzah ibn 'Abd Allah al-'Alawi, a disciple of Abu al-Khayr al-Tinati, Hamzah ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah (mentioned in Sharh Manazil al-sa'irin), Ibrahim ibn Sa'd al-'Alawi (known as al-Sayyid al-Zahid, Abu Said al-Kharraz met him and narrated traditions from him – Kashf al-mahjub), Zayd ibn Rifa'ah, a friend of al-Shibli and supposedly one of the authors of the Rasa'il Ikhwan al-Safa' (Tatimmat Sawan al-hikmah by al-Bayhaqi and Tarikh Baghdad), and Muhammad ibn Abi Isma'il 'Ali al-'Alawi (d.395/1004) (Ta'rikh Baghdad)." [12]

Despite the belief of some Sufis, like Khwajah 'Abd Allah al'Ansari, who held that the lineage of 'Ali (as) is incompatible with Sufism, and the Shi'is' reluctance to call themselves Sufi, there has been a close connection between Sufism and the Shi'ah and the 'Alawis. Sufis invariably attached themselves and their orders to one or the other of the eleven Imams of Ahl al-Bayt. The Shi'ah did not establish any order for centuries, but in the course of time there emerged a number of purely Imami Shi'I salasil of Sufis, of which are Tayfuriyyah,

Bektashiyyah, Safawiyyah, Haydariyyah, Ni'matullahiyyah, Jalaliyyah, Nurbakhshiyyah, which also attracted hundreds of Sunni followers. On the other hand, Shi'i 'urafa' – who seldom used the term Sufi and usually called themselves 'arif, and their knowledge of the highest spiritual order 'irfan – accepted the Sufi teachings of al-Ghazali and Ibn al-'Arabi.

Murtada Mutahhari, in An Introduction to 'Irfan, says:

The 'urafa' and Sufis are not regarded as forming a separate sect in Islam, nor do they claim themselves to be such. They are to be found within every school and sect; yet, at the same time they coalesce to form a distinct social group. The factors that set them apart from the rest of Islamic society are a distinctive chain of ideas and opinions, .a special code governing their social intercourse, dress and even, sometimes, the way they wear their hair and beards, and their living communally in their hospices. (Persian, khaniqah; Ar. zawiyah; Turk. tekkiye). Of course, there are and have been 'urafa' – particularly amongst the Shi'ah – who bear none of these external signs to distinguish them socially from others; yet,

at the same time, they have been profoundly involved in the spiritual methodology of 'irfan (*sayrwasuluk*).13

He makes distinction between ethics and sayr wa suluk (lit, journeying), for, in his view, while ethics is static 'irfan is dynamic and progressive movement toward attaining and realizing the higher moral values through spiritual elevation. This distinction is made by Mutahhari in his account of the difference between Shariah, Tariqah and Haqiqah. It is important to note that Mutahhari traces back the origins of 'irfan to hadith, tafsir, fiqh, kalam and usul al–fiqh.14

This is a purely Shi'i point of view, because Sunnis separate Sufism from Shariah and do not accept the role of reason and philosophy in the development of tasawwuf. Al–Ghazali, when he turned to Sufism, rejected philosophy altogether. On the contrary we find some eminent Shi'i philosophers and fuqaha' who reconciled 'irfan with philosophy and kalam. Though al–Ghazali is greatly respected among Shi'i 'urafa', his rejection of philosophy particularly that of IbnSina, was never accepted by them.

The Shi'i tradition of philosophical mysticism, known after Mulla Sadra as al–hikmat al–muta'aliyah, developed on the basis of a wonderful synthesis of rational and spiritual tendencies, culminating in the metaphysics of al–Sabzawari. As mentioned earlier, there has been no gulf between Shi'i 'irfan and Shariah; similarly the Shi'i 'urafa' and 'ulama' were never separated into two distinct groups. Even during the Safawid period, when al–'Allamah Baqir al–Majlisi made an all–out effort to demolish tasawwuf and 'irfan in Shi'i Iran, among his contemporary 'ulama' some were of Sufi inclination, such as al–Muhsin al–Fayd al–Kashani.

'Irfan regained its foothold in Shi'i Iran in the reign of the Qajars. It is much more surprising that with the return of the Ni'matullahipirs from India to Iran, other Sufi orders were also revived irrespective of their Shi'i or Sunni origin. Mutahhari, who separated Sunni and Shi'i muhaddithun, fuqaha', mutakallimun and mufassirun in his series of books entitled Ashnaiba 'ulum–e–Islami (An Introduction to Islamic Sciences), could not, or intentionally did not, mention any Sufi or 'arif as Shi'i or Sunni.

This is in itself evidence that sectarian differences disappear in the fold of Sufism. QadiNur Allah al–Shushtari, known in India and Pakistan as Shahid–e Thalith, despite being a staunch Shi'i, included in his accounts of Shi'i personages the names of Bishr al–Hafi, Ba Yazid al–Bistami, Shafiq al–Balkhi, Ibrahim ibn Adham, Yahya ibn Mu'adh al–Razi, Abu Sari Mansur ibn 'Amir, Sari al–Sagati, Junayd al–Baghdadi, al–Shibli, Muhammad Sawar, Sahlibn 'Abd Allah al–Tustari, Husaynibn Mansur al–Hallaj, Shaykh Ahmad Jami, Ibn al–Farid Muhyi al–Din ibn al–'Arabi, Sadr al–Din al–Qunawi, Najm al–Din Kubra, Sa'd al–Din al–Hamawi, Farid al–Din 'Attar, Jalal al–Din Rumi, Shaykh Sa'di Shirazi, Hafiz, Awhad al–Din al–Maraghi, 'Ala' al–Dawlah al–Simnani, and many other Sufi poets and saints along with certain known Shi'i 'urafa' like Kumayl ibn Ziyad, Bahlul al–'Agil, Shihab al–Din al–Suhrawardi al–Magtul, Sayyid Haydar al–Tuni, and Sayyid Haydar al–'Amuli.15

It may be noted that QadiNur Allah al–Shushtari was executed on the charge of being a staunch

defendant of the orthodox Shi'i faith. His orthodox view is evident throughout his works, Majalis al–mu'minin and Ihqaq al–haqq. But in the case of Sufis he set aside his prejudice against other sects. This is an indication how tasawwuf and 'irfan can provide a converging point for various sects.

As for other Muslim sects, such as Zaydiyyah or Isma'ilis, it may be said that their approach is similar to that of the TwelverImAm! Shi'ah in many respects. The Zaydiyyah do not accept the Imami view of the Imamate, for they accept the first two caliphs and do not accept the last eight Imams of the Twelver Imamis. The Isma'ilis believe in the same concept of Imamate as accepted by the Twelvers, with a greater emphasis on the esoteric aspect of the Quran, hadith and Imamate, because of which they are known as Batiniyyah.[16]

IbnSina is said to have been of Isma'ili inclinations. The Ikhwan al–Safa' are also believed to be of Isma'ili inclination. Nasir Khusro, an Isma'ilida'i and a great Persian poet–philosopher, was also of the same sect. The similarity between the Isma'ilis and the Imamiyyah in their approach to 'irfan is very obvious, for both the sects synthesized reason, which is the source of intellection in kalam and philosophy, and inner spiritual experience of the totality of human existence. What distinguishes Shi'i 'irfan from the general Sufi approach to God and the human self is its acceptance of the role of reason in existential mystic knowledge.

It is true that al–Ghazali held that intuition (kashf) was the higher level of reason ('aql) and was organically united with it, but in his mystic experience he seems inclined to reject reason. Another contradiction in al–Ghazali is his presentation of mystic experience and rejection of philosophy in a rigorous philosophical style.

The Shi'ah, Kamil Mustafa al–Shaybi rightly points out, reached theoretical Sufism starting from kalam and passing through the crucible of philosophy. This point needs further elaboration. Sufi practices were in vogue even in the early part of the 4th/10th century among the Shi'ah, as Ibn Babawayh al–Qummi has referred to them. He has also referred to the tradition of futuwwah (chivalry).[17]

AlSayyid al–Murtada (d. 436/1044), in al–Amali, Abu 'Ali al–Tabarsi (d. 548/1153) and some other early Shi'iImami 'ulama' made sympathetic references to Sufism, showing the extent to which they thought the Shi'i faith to be compatible with the Sufi approach.[18]

Khwajah Nasir al–Din al–Tusi defended Mansur al–Hallaj's utterance 'Ana al–haqq'. Al–Khwansari regards Khwajah al–Tusi as one in whom 'irfan and ratiocination were synthesized.[19]

Of other Shi'i 'ulama' who had a predominant 'irfani inclination some can be mentioned here. Kamal al–Din Maythamibn 'All ibn Maytham al–Bahrani (d. 679/1280), in SharhNahj al–balaghah, has interpreted Imam 'Ali's words in terms of Sufism. It was he who directed the attention of Muslims toward the significance of Nahj al–balaghah from the viewpoint of the doctrines of 'irfan. He claims that 'Ali (as) is the leader and master (wali) of Sufis. Despite al–Ghazali's criticism of the Shi'ah, he refers to him as an authority on the issues of 'irfan. He, in his Sharh, criticizes Ibn Abi al–Hadid for his hostility toward

philosophers and Sufis.[20]

Among the Imami 'ulama' of Hillah, the scholars of the Tawus family, viz., Sharaf al–Din Muhammad al–Tawus, Majd al–Din al–Tawus, Radi al–Din al–Tawus, were all of a mystic disposition, particularly the latter, who was famous for his taqwa and zuhd. All the 'ulama' of this family were considered men of supernatural powers and attached to Sufism.[21]

The most eminent of Shi'ifuqaha' to subscribe to the Sufi approach and views was al–Hasan ibn Mutahhar al–Hilli, popularly called al–'Allamah al–Hilli (648–727/1250–1326). He converted KhudaBandeh to the Shi'i faith after overcoming the arguments of Sunni 'ulama' and fuqaha'for which Ibn Taymiyyah condemned him. But al–'Allamah al–Hilli gently answered his criticism in one of his verses. He was a committed seeker of the path of love. He regarded Imam 'Ali (as) as the source of Sufi teachings and as the leader of all Sufi orders. He was very fond of Ibn al–'Arabi without being an advocate of wahdat al–wujud (Unity of Being). [22]

His son, Muhammad, known as al–Muhaqqiq al–Hilli (682771/1283–1369) was the teacher of the man who ultimately reconciled tashayyu' and tasawwuf. This great and versatile scholar was Shaykh Baha' al–Din Haydaribn 'Ali al–'Ubaydial–'Amuli (d. after 793/1391).[23]

Sayyid Haydar was an 'Alawi and is the first Imami scholar who in spite of holding the status of marji'iyyahin the Shi'i world linked himself to a Sufi silsilah which reaches Ba Yazid Bistami. He has given an account of his Sufi lineage in Nass al–nusus, a commentary on Ibn al–'Arabi's Fusus al–hikam. Ibn Abi Jumhur al–'Ahsa'i calls him "the culminating point of knowledge and possessor of the capacity (quwwah) of kashf." His major work in 'irfan is Jami' al–'asrar wamanabi' al–'anwar, in which he proved that the creed of the Sufis was compatible with the Imami faith. The writing of this book brought about a radical change in his outlook, as a consequence of which he gave up his prejudice against Sunnis and embraced the liberal faith of the 'urafa'.

He called the followers of wahdat al–wujud the 'People of Unity' (arbab al–tawhid). It is his influence that restrains Shi'ifuqaha' from refuting Ibn al–'Arabi's doctrine of tawhid. In his view the Imams of the AhlalBayt (as) occupy the position of the spiritual leadership of both the Shi'ah and the Sufis. He maintains that the Shi'ah and the Sufis are closely related to each other, but are not fully aware of this fact. In order to prove his point he refers to the favourable views of the Shi'ah with regard to Sufis and the views of the Sufis supporting the Shi'i stand on various issues.

Quoting from Ibn Maytham al–Bahrani's Sharh Nahj al–balaghah, al–'Allamah al–Hilli'sMinhaj al–karamah and Khwajah Nasir al–Din al Tusi's views reproduced in Sharh al–Tajrid, and from among Sunnis from the works of al–Ghazali's and Ibn al–'Arabi, he posits the view that no one but 'Ali possessed Divine wisdom and the knowledge of the truths embracing the entire span of time from eternity to eternity. He calls himself 'Shi'ah Muhammadi', a term which was recently modified by Ali Shari'ati, who claimed that Tashayyu' 'Alawi and Tasanun Muhammadi were one and the same thing.

With a view to bring the Sunnis closer to the Shi'ah, Sayyid Haydar al–'Amuli, following Ibn Maytham al–Bahrani, says that tabarra' does not mean vilifying the first three caliphs, but implies emancipation from one's self and renouncing its worldly attachments. Similarly, he reinterpreted the term taqiyyah, explaining that it meant abstaining from disclosing the Divine mysteries to the vulgar public. He made a great contribution to Shi'i–'irfani literature reinterpreting many ideas of Amir al–Mu'minin (as) , particularly his views on tawhid.[24]

SayyidHaydar al–'Amuli's influence paved the way for a tradition embracing in its fold Sunnis and Shi'is of various inclinations. In later periods, this tendency was extended by Shi'i 'ulama' of a Sufi bent of temperament. As a reaction to IbnTaymiyyah's vehement accusation of al–'Allamah al–Hilli, many of his contemporary gravitated towards a liberal Sunni view. For instance Najm al–Din al–Sarsari (d. 716/1316), a Shafi'i–Ash'arifaqih, declared himself a Shi'ah of 'Ali, and another, Qadi Jamal al–Din Muhammad ibn Mukarram al–'Ansari, dubbed himself a Shi'i. In this period 'Shi'ah' became a term for those Sunnis who accepted 'Ali's spiritual superiority over other Companions, while the traditional Shi'is were called 'Rawafid.'[25]

Between the fall of the Ilkhanis and the emergence of Temur and the establishment of his vast empire, various political movements arose which were Shi'i but in the garb of Sufism. Sufism provided these movements a secure ground to struggle against alien rule by attracting multitudes of followers. They also created an atmosphere conducive to the spread of the Shi'i faith amongst Sufis, and, at the same time, weakened the common Shi'i resistance to Sufi teachings and practices. It was in the reign of the Ilkhanis and the Temurids that Shi'i orders came into existence.[26]

Sufism, apparently an apolitical movement, was in reality an expression of the non–cooperation of pious Muslims with the tyrannical rule of the Umayyads. Metaphysical notions or spiritual tendencies do not arise in a vacuum. Howsoever removed from mundane realities a theory may appear to be, it is necessarily related to its contemporary historic situation and its demands. The Sufis consistently refused to accept favours from the rulers and sided with the masses in their struggle for attaining the rights accorded to them by Islam.

The 'Abbasid movement to overthrow the Umayyads also assumed a mystical character. The Isma'ili da'is, too, worked among people, organizing secret societies on the basis of esoteric ideas. The socio–political aspect and content of Sufism needs to be discussed in a separate article or rather in a monograph. Here I will briefly mention the Sufi movements that arose as a result of the fusion of Sufi and Shi'i ideas of social justice culminating in revolutionary upheavals in the Muslim world.

The most successful of such Sufi movements took the form of the Sarbadarid revolt in Khurasan and soon spread to the other adjoining areas. This movement was initiated by Shaykh Khalifah, a Sufi shaykh of an unknown spiritual lineage. He organized his followers to revolt against Togha Khan and Miran Shah, successors of Temur, in whose regimes villages were devastated and farmers were forced to pay heavy taxes.

The revolt started soon after the crucifixion of Shaykh Khalifah at the hands of secret mercenaries of the rulers in 736/1335. His angered followers revolted first in Khurasan from 738/1337 to 783/1381 under the leadership of Shaykh Hasan Juri, the successor of Shaykh Khalifah, who claimed to be associated with a Sufi order that attached itself to al–'Imam Ja'far al–Sadiq through Ba Yazid Bistami. Then it spread to Samarqand, Kirman and Mazandaran between the years 738/1337 and 825/1422.

This was a Shi'i–Sufi movement that succeeded in establishing its rule on the basis of the Islamic ideals of justice and equality. But differences plagued this movement and Hasan Juri was assassinated in the process. This regime continued for some time, but ultimately it fizzled out. Other similar movements emerged and failed in the course of time because of organizational weaknesses.

Among such movements were the Sufi movements of the Hurufiyyah and the Nugtawiyyah, leaders of which were executed by the monarchs. The Safwid order, whose founder was a Sunni Sufi, Shaykh Safi al–Din al–'Ardabili, was converted to the Shi'i faith after a few generations. After capturing power, in order to stabilize their monarchy they tried to suppress other Sufi movements and orders with a heavy hand. This policy of the Safawids resulted in a staunch opposition to Sufism in Iran and India.

Sayyid Dildar 'Ali Ghufran Ma'ab, the first Shi'imujtahid in India, during the reign of the Shi'i dynasty of Awadh wrote a book al–Shihab al–thagib condemning Sufis under the influence of the short–sighted sectarian rule of the later Safawids, which broadened the gulf between the Sunnis and the Shi'is of the Subcontinent.

Even today the Shi'ah unwittingly believe that Sufism is incompatible with their creed. This breach was created by the divisive forces which wished to disturb communal harmony of the Muslim community. The Saudi–Wahhabi regime of the recent usurpers of the leadership of Muslims is trying to cash on this unfounded suspicion, expending billions of petro–dollars to divide Muslims. The only way to meet this challenge from within is to converge on Sufism, which in the long course of Islamic history has been one of the great sources of strength for Muslims.

Sufism, that is sticking to the true spirit of Islamic tolerance for other faiths has been instrumental in the spread of Islamic ideals in the Subcontinent, and its composite culture has still retained its potential to unite warring factions and sects of Muslims, and this potential may be actualized by giving up narrow sectarian prejudices and adopting the attitude that enabled 'Urfi to declare:

The mystic is ruined by Islam and kufr equally:

The moth discriminates not between the mosque's lamp and the church's candle.

1. Safinatul Bihar, vol. 1, pg. 411:
2. Henry Corbin, Ta'rikh–e falsafeh–ye Islami, Persian tr. Asad Allah Mubashshari (Tehran: Intisharat–e Amir Kabir, 1361 H.Sham.) pp. 50–96, 252–57.
3. Ibid., 252–257; Kamil Mustafa al–Shaybi, Tashayyu' wa tasawwuf, Persian tr.'Ali Rida Dhakawati Qaragozulu (Tehran:

Intisharat-e Amir Kabir, 1359 H.Sham.)

4. Nahj al-balaghah, Hikam 147, conversation with Kumayl Ibn Ziyad.

5. Ibid., Hikam 131.

6. Henry Corbin, op. cit., p. 252-55; Kamil Mustafa al-Shaybi, pp. 30-35, Shah Wali Allah, Hama'at, Urdu tr. Muhammad Sarwar (Sindh Sagar Academy), introduction; Elia Pawlovich Petroshvensky, Islam dar Iran (Tehran: Intisharat-e Payam, 7th ed., 1363 H. Sham.) pp. 319-25.

7. Refer to Hanna al-Fakhuri and Khalil al-Jarr, Tarikh-e falsafah dar jahan-e-Islami, Persian tr. 'Abd alMuhammad Ayati (Tehran: Zaman, 2nd ed., 1358 H. Sham.)

8. Al-'Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, al-Sahifah al-kamilah, English tr. Sayyid Ahmad Muhani (Tehran: Islamic Propagation Organization, 1984); Persian tr. JawadFadil (Tehran: Intisharate-eAmirKabir, 14th ed., 1363 H.Sham.).

9. Refer to AsadHaydar, al-'Imam al-Sadiq (Dar al-kitab al-Gharbiyyah, 2nd ed., 1971); Sayyid Ahmad Safa'i, Hishamibn al-Hakam: mudafi'-ye harim-e wilayat (Tehran: Nashr-e Kawkab, 2nd ed., 1359 H.Sham.)

10. Kamil Mustafa al-Shaybi, op. cit., p. 27.

11. Petroshvensky, op. cit., p. 327.

12. For details see Kamil Mustafa al-Shaybi, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

13. Martyr Murtada Mutahhari, "An Introduction to 'Irfan", Pertr, al-Tawhid (I.P.O.: Tehran), vol. IV, No. 1, pp. 74-75.

14. Ibid., p. 82.

15. Qadi Nur Allah al-Shushtari, Majalis al-Mu'minin (Kitab furushi Islamiyyah: Tehran, 1365 H Sham.) vol 2, p 2-178.

16. See Henry Corbin, op. cit., pp. 104-130.

17. Kamil Mustafa al-Shaybi, op. cit., p. 69; cf. Rawdat al-jannat and IbnBabawayh'sMa'ani al-'akhbar.

18. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

19. Ibid., p. 93; cf. Rawdat al-jannat.

20. Ibid, pp. 95-102.

21. Ibid, pp. 104-107.

22. Ibid., pp. 107-110.

23. Ibid., p. 111.

24. Ibid., pp. 112-125.

25. Ibid., pp. 142-43; cf. Shadharat al-dhahab, VI, 39.

26. Petroshvensky, op. cit., p. 363. Rajah

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