

## A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MYSTICAL TRADITION IN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

*Bisma Ilyas Cheema\**

*Dr. Humayun Abbas\*\**

Islam and Christianity are considered to be the world's largest religions. Both are closely related to each other as both of them revere Abraham and the other prophets as are mentioned in the Bible as their spiritual ancestors. The religious beliefs of both religions have some commonalities as well as differences too. As far as Mysticism is concerned, in Islam it is called Sufism or Tasawwuf and in Christianity it is taken as Mysticism or Spirituality. There are many things common in Islamic Sufism and Christian Mysticism. First of all both Islamic Sufism and Christian mysticism are firmly rooted in mystical view of God and Religion. Both of them depict the same mystical concept or experience of religion. Islamic Sufism and Christian mysticism consist of a subjective experience involving an interior journey of the spirit or soul to God, rather than an objective experience involving facts and figures. Both are based on imagination rather than reason. In both the experience does not come about automatically.

### Introduction

Islam and Christianity are considered to be the world's largest religions. Both are closely related to each other as both of them revere Abraham and the other prophets as are mentioned in the Bible as their spiritual ancestors. The religious beliefs of both religions have some commonalities as well as differences too. As far as Mysticism is concerned, in Islam it is called Sufism or Tasawwuf and in Christianity it is taken as Mysticism or Spirituality. There are many things common in Islamic Sufism and Christian Mysticism. First of all both Islamic Sufism and Christian mysticism are firmly rooted in mystical view of God and Religion. Both of them depict the same mystical concept or experience of religion. Islamic Sufism and Christian mysticism consist of a subjective experience involving an interior journey of the spirit or soul to God, rather than an objective experience involving facts and figures. Both are based on imagination rather than reason. In both the experience does not come about automatically. It (experience) is something that is achieved by the mental and physical exercises. The main target of attention is to get a "Personal God" by something like meditation, imagination, chanting, dancing and music etc.<sup>[1]</sup>

---

\* Ph.D Scholar, Dept. of Islamic Studies & Arabic, G.C. University, Faisalabad.

\*\* Professor/Chairman, Dept. of Islamic Studies & Arabic, G.C. University, Faisalabad.

### Origin of Mysticism in Christianity and Islam

As far as the origin is concerned, it is a collective belief of Muslims that the Sufi tradition was first started with "Ali Ibn-e-Abi Talib", the cousin and son in law of the last Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W). He is taken as the great Leader, Sheikh of inner and deep principles and practices of Sufism which is not far from Islam. Even it is said that Islam shows the outer and apparent religion and Sufism depicts the deep and inner religion that is truer than true. It is also believed that Sufism is directly derived from Al-Quran which is regularly recited, meditated and followed practically in life. Even it is claimed that the lives of Sufis are the practical sayings of Al-Quran.<sup>[2]</sup>

According to some Muslims, Sufism is in fact the strict emulation of the way of their great Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (S.A.W.W), by following His method, the connection of heart with Almighty strengthened. As far as the Christian mysticism is concerned, it is believed that it was started with the 4 Avengliests or 12 Apostles who copied the Christ and then their writings and practices guided the other.<sup>[3]</sup> Even prior to that, Christian Mysticism is derived from Dionysius' writings and later from Neo-Platonism. The works of Greek writers and later translations influenced the mystic path of Christians. That's why Christian mystical tradition has amalgamation of both Greek and Christian ideas. Then there is another issue. Since Christianity is guided by 12 Apostles so are the Mystics. The followers of one Apostle i-e John may not be believed or rather trusted by followers of another like Mathew. In contrast, Muslim Sufis of every order take the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W) as their model. All firmly believe in truthfulness of the sayings, deeds and experiences shared by Companions (R.A.A).<sup>[4]</sup>

### Beliefs of both Traditions

In Muslim Sufism there are numerous beliefs such as "Oneness of God, Prophets, Revealed books, Angels, Predestinations, Day of Resurrection".<sup>[5]</sup>

Sufis believe that it is very much possible to draw closer to God and to embrace Almighty God's presence in life. The chief aim of all Sufis is to seek the pleasing of God by working to restore within them the primordial state of *fitra* that is beautifully described in Al-Quran. In this state nothing one does defies God and all is undertaken with the single motivation of love of God. To

take guidance Sufis firmly believe that Ali Bin Abi Talib is the Father of Sufism.<sup>[6]</sup>

There are many ideas in Sufism such as “Abdal, Baqaa, Dervesh, Dhawq, Fakir, Fana, Haal, Karamat, Haqiqa, Ihsan, irfan, Kashf, Lataif, Manzil, Marifa, Nafs, Noor, Qalander, Qutb, Silsila, Sufi-cosmology, Sufi metaphysics, Sufi philosophy, Sulook, Tazkiah, Wali, and Yakeen” and also there are many practices like, “Anasheed, Dhikr, Hadra, Muraqaba, Sama, Whirling, and Ziyarat”. There are many sufi orders according to their way of prayers. But all are like chain to each other and link each other to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W).<sup>[7]</sup> Although the lives and experiences of Christians Mystics are beyond doubt, yet we do not find their general acceptability. Even the idea propounded by one mystic is not wholly accepted and employed by another. That’s why the Christian Mystical terminology is not as much developed as we find Sufi terminology in Islam. In Christian mysticism, we find general religious terms like Unification, Salvation, Resurrection, Confession, Stoicism, Deification, and Transformation and so on. The popularity of Sufi terminology can easily be located even in West. But this is not the case with Christian Mystical terms. Similarly, there is no Christian Mystical Order or chain as we see a developed system of Sufi orders in Islamic Sufism.

To talk about the beliefs of Christian mysticism, the mystic saints believe that God speaks to them directly and guides them through the Holy Spirit which is the one part of the Divine Trinity. They also believe in the existence of the Holy Spirit in every being which can speak to them through intuition and dreams. Christians have Priests, Popes, Monks, Bishops and Ministers and other Clergy members to guide the people where as Sufis have Sheikhs, leaders and wise men.<sup>[8]</sup>

### **Metaphysical Experiences and contributions from both sides**

Let’s see first what is Metaphysics? ‘Metaphysics’ is a traditional branch of philosophy concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of ‘Being’ and the world that encompasses it. It answers two basic questions in the broad terms, what is ultimately there? What is it like? The word ‘Metaphysics’ goes back to Aristotelian philosophy. Aristotle was one of the early metaphysical philosophers. The Perennial topics in metaphysics are “Being, Existence and Reality, Objects and their properties,

Cosmology, Cosmogony, Determinism, Free will, Identity and change, Mind and matter, Necessity and possibility, Religion and spirituality, Time and space” etc.<sup>[9]</sup>

In Christianity, the letters of Saint Paul and Gospel of John are thought as the best metaphysical writings that influenced the Christian mystics. In Islamic Sufism, Al-Quran is the only source of Sufism. Further writings of Muslim Sufis as Jalal-ad-Din Rumi, Sayed Ali Hijwiri etc were the influential spiritual writings. The Apostle Paul was considered next to Christ and clearly the most intriguing figure of 1<sup>st</sup> century in Christianity. His written letters are primary sources. The major effect that he left in Christianity after him was indeed through his letters, but in his own age, he perceived himself as a Prophet to the non-Jews, who had to bring message from Messiah and he did it in a very astonishing and extraordinary way. He used letters written in precise prose style as ancient world’s letters used to be. Indeed his understanding of Jesus’ life, death, Resurrection and his theological articulation of it in his letters that diligently forms the scriptural backbone of entire Christian religion. So Paul of Tarsus can be said to be the second founder of Christianity after Jesus Christ. His letters are full of spiritual messages for Christian mystics and help to lead them near to Divine Bliss.<sup>[10]</sup>

Another metaphysical writing in Christian mysticism is the Gospel of John, one of the four canonical gospels in the Christian Bible. In present “New Testament” appears fourth after the synoptic gospels of Mathew, Mark and Luke. In his gospel, John has given a lot of Spiritual messages and explained the Christ esoterically. He explained Christ as the bread of life, the light of the world, the gate of the sheep, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth and the life and the vine.... In his gospel, he has focused on love as the central theme. Muslims talk about Allah as God but Muslim Sufis as Rumi have always had other more esoteric concept “Allah Hu” is the “God beyond God”, a power or pre-existence reality that is “Beyond the Beyond”. John and his mystery school disciples or community were exactly in the same line of believers. He threw ample light on God, Christ, relation between God and Christ; the remaining messages left by Christ and explained it for the sake of humanity.<sup>[11]</sup>

**Fundamental Doctrines of Mysticism in the Bible & The Holy**

## Quran

There are a number of different versions in the ancient Hebrew language of the Jews book called the Torah (law) and it usually refers to Christianity as the Old Testament. Naturally, there have been many different translations to a great number of languages over the centuries. And no one could expect them to be identical in text or meaning. There is still a larger amount of these testaments or documents in English today. There are also different versions of the Gospel or what is commonly called “The New Testament”. It is available in many languages. The Catholic Bible (C. 325 A.D) contains 66 books although the newer (Protestant version) was derived from the Catholic Bible even then it does not match completely with each other. There is no common denominator for any of the many different versions of the Bible<sup>[12]</sup>. Whereas Al-Quran has only one version in Arabic language. Al-Quran is divided in 30 equal parts called “Juz” in Arabic. The arrangement of the parts is superbly commanded by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W).

The Bible is the collection of writings by different authors and translators, Al-Quran is a dictation or recitation. The speaker in Al-Quran in the first person is God Almighty Allah Who talks to man directly. In Bible, there are many men writing about God and in the same place the word ‘God’ also speaking to men and still in other places some men simply writing or exchanging the information to one another. (Ex. Epistle of John 3). However both Books help in the seeking of God and are fundamental documents in the field of mysticism.

Sufism is the branch of Islam which wholly takes its guideline from the Al-Quran, the religious Doctrine of Muslims. By combining adherence to Quranic themes with several carefully chosen hadith, Sufism is firmly rooted in the traditional sources of mainstream Islam. Instead of composing or seeking an alternate scripture, Sufism contains alternate readings of the Quran and literature about Holy Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.W) who is the Model of Al-Quran.<sup>[13]</sup>

Sufism is called the internal knowledge found in Al Quran. This inner meaning of Quran at greater level is taught in Sufism. The Quran bounds us to keep ourselves in Allah’s remembrance (*Dhikr*).

“And when you have finished the prayer, remember Allah, standing and sitting, and lying on your sides.”<sup>[14]</sup> This *dhikr ala dhawan* is common in Sufi *dhikr*. So the Sufis put the Quranic teachings in practice<sup>[15]</sup>

Like all Muslims, Sufis have looked to the scripture of Islam for inspiration and justification for their particular interpretation of how to practice religion. A number of verses in the Quran are cited by Sufis to illustrate the legitimacy of an esoteric interpretation of scripture. The famous "Light Verse" reads:

"Allah is the Light of Heaven and Earth. His light may be compared to a niche in which there is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass; the glass is just as if it were a glittering star kindled from a blessed olive tree (that is) neither Eastern nor Western, whose oil will almost glow though fire has never touched it. Light upon light, Allah guides anyone He wishes to His light<sup>[16]</sup> ."

Purifying the souls of people was one of the most important tasks of the great messengers including the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.W). Allah described Him (S.A.W.W) as,

**"Similarly we have sent (Muhammad) of your own, reciting to you Our verses and sanctifying you, and teaching you the book and Al-Hikmah..."<sup>[17]</sup> "**

And

“Indeed he succeeds who purifies himself.”<sup>[18]</sup>

Sufism is an Islamic discipline which makes the character and inner life of the Muslims by imposing certain specific ordinances. The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.W) was sent to “instruct” mankind “in Scripture and Wisdom and to sanctify them.”<sup>[19]</sup>

The Sufis keep “instructions of Al-Quran” before their eyes and effort hard to perform what has been suggested for them to do; and to ignore what they are stopped for. God says;

“And those who fight strenuously for us we will surely guide them into our way.”<sup>[20]</sup>

And

“Oh yes 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.”<sup>[21]</sup>

Here is a verse that concisely pin points the Sufi goal of returning to and uniting with God is, "Verily we are for Allah, and verily unto Him we are returning."<sup>[22]</sup>

To suggest the close relationship between man and Creator, there is a verse in which God says of man:

"We are nearer to him than his jugular vein."<sup>[23]</sup>

Sufism is not a sect but Sufism is a classical Islamic science of the understanding how the soul needs Allah through extra *Ibadaah*-worship and learning, better *'adaab*-manners and Love in all our actions. It is the science of learning *Ihsan*-excellence in every moment and every action we do with the best of clean intentions to please Allah and not our egos to show off or to please others with our actions.

On the other hand, Christian mysticism takes many resources that participated in its formulation. Yet the major resource is Christian doctrine, "The Bible". However the Bible too has many versions, Old Testament, and New Testament etc. Anyhow it is tried to search the Biblical sayings about Mysticism. The term "Christian mystic" is an oxymoron. Mysticism is not the experience of a Christian. Whereas Christian doctrine states that God dwells in all Christians and that they can experience God directly through belief in Jesus. Christian mysticism aspires to apprehend spiritual truths that are not reachable through intellectual means, typically by emulation of Christ.<sup>[24]</sup> The Bible says

"Christ-likeness is achieved only by dying to self—not by self-effort at emulating anyone—and that spiritual truth is discerned through the intellect as guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit, who lives in all believers."<sup>[25]</sup>

Christian mysticism has its roots in Biblical spirituality. God favors love, sacrifice, devotion and morals and these entire things are taught by Christ.

"For God is one and Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and men."<sup>[26]</sup>

*Mysticism, according to its historical and psychological definitions, is the direct intuition or experience of God. And a true mystic can easily recognize God through direct experience. The Bible guides mystic in this regard as,*

*“Beloved, do not believe every spirit to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”*<sup>[27]</sup>

Consciousness of God is part of the common definition of the mystic’s experience, but the only valid experience of this nature for the Christian is that which is allowed according to Scripture.

"The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."<sup>[28]</sup>

Christian Mystics believe that God will guide them through his near ones after Christ. In fact Jesus said about what the nature of the spiritual process would be after he had left this world:

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you”.<sup>[29]</sup>

The apostle Paul said this as following:

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.’ But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”<sup>[30]</sup>

The Christian Mystics are believed to make prophecy, their, this quality is challenged by people but we see that the Bible advocates it by saying:

“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>[31]</sup>

### **Mystic Literature of Christianity and Islam:**

Literature offers an important record of Sufi teaching. Poems have been composed in Persian, Arabic, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu. A common characteristic of mystical literature and especially of poetry is presence of a sense of Oneness, Wholeness or Completeness. We find unity of opposites in mystical experience and ‘Unifying vision of the One in the All’ and ‘The All in the One’.<sup>[32]</sup>

William Blake (175-1827), the English poet, mystic, painter and printmaker elaborated this idea in his famous lines:

“To see the whole world in a grain of sand  
And Heaven in a wild flower,  
And eternity in an hour.”<sup>[33]</sup>

See one such verse by Rumi.



“The Religion of love is apart from all religions. The Lovers of God have no religion but God alone”.<sup>[34]</sup>

The mystical experience depicts the nature of ‘the true self’, cosmic self: the self that is beyond difference and duality, beyond life and death. The idea is present in mystical poetry of Christianity and Islam. However, imagery used by Christian mystics is different. Some of them call it ‘Spark of the Soul or the ground of the spirit.’<sup>[35]</sup>

John Ruysbroeck, a Catholic mystic during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, said:

“.....the spark of the soul.... Is the inward and natural tendency of the soul towards its source. And here we receive the Holy Spirit; but in the act of receiving we become one spirit and one love with God.”<sup>[36]</sup>

See an example from Tao Te Ching;

“My words are very easy to know, and very easy to practice; but there is no one in the world who is able to know and able to practice them.”<sup>[37]</sup>

Meister Eckhart, the 13<sup>th</sup> century German theologian and mystic says:

“The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees me.”<sup>[38]</sup>

Christian mystics also hold the idea of punishment in their writings. Clement of Alexandria says: “Excellent souls are punished honorably by martyrdom; other kinds are purified by some other appropriate punishment.”<sup>[39]</sup>

Muslim scholars, who discuss the issue of mysticism and wish to promote love among the adherents of various faiths, leave their faith to their God. They cite the most cited saying of the Holy Prophet that:

“There are as many Paths to God as there are human souls.”<sup>[40]</sup>

And also:

“Human beings are members in a body whole related, from a single essence are they all created.” Shaykh Sa‘di (d.1292).<sup>[41]</sup>

In Islamic history, the imagination of Rumi, Jami and Shabistari, the popular mystic poets of Persia, transcended the boundaries of orthodox traditions of Islam.

Let us see from Rumi first:

The sect of lovers is distinct from all others,  
Lovers have a religion and a faith of their own...

If spiritual thought were equivalent of love of God,  
 Outward forms of temples and prayers would not exist.<sup>[42]</sup>

The meditative mystics believe in theory of unity of being. For them all the visible created things demonstrate the dominant presence of one absolute Reality and hence there is nothing as absolute virtue and vice. When penetrating into the essence of being, the differences of creeds, doctrines and sects are revealed to be superficial. The following verses of Shabistari refer to the same fact:

“If “other” and “others” are before your eyes,  
 Then a mosque is no better than a Christian cloister;  
 But when the garment of “other” cast off by you, the cloister  
 becomes a mosque.”<sup>[43]</sup>

See this verse of Jami also:

“Thou movest under all the forms of truth, under the forms of all  
 created things.”<sup>[44]</sup>

Ibn Hazm, a first rate moral psychologist suggests implicitly about the issue that:

Put your trust in a pious man, even if the religion that he practices is a different one from your own. Do not put your trust in anyone who scorns sacred things even if he claims to belong to your own religion.<sup>[45]</sup>

Having said this, human nature is the same everywhere but different customs and religious beliefs have created apparent difference.<sup>[46]</sup>

He also states that the Qur’ān and the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.W) “never foreclosed the channels of religious dialogue, nor of cordial interaction with non-Muslims at the socio-economic and cultural levels”.<sup>[47]</sup>

Ibn al –Arabi, known as al-Shaykh al-Akbar or the “Greatest Master”, is probably the most influential thinker of the second half of Islamic history. As a Sufi, he tried to offer a positive view of religious diversity. He is also on the same track, as he states:

“God says, we never chastise, until we send forth a messenger. Note that he did not say, “until we send forth a person”. Hence the message of the one who is sent must be established for the one to whom it is directed. There must be clear and manifest proofs established for each person to whom the messenger is sent, for many a sign(aya) has within it obscurity or

equivocality such that some people perceive that what it proves. The clarity of the proof must be such that it establishes the person's messenger-hood for each person to whom he is sent. Only then, if the person refuses it, will he be taken to account. Hence, this verse has within it a tremendous mercy, because of the diversity of human dispositions that lead to a diversity of views. He who knows the all-inclusiveness of the divine mercy, which, God reports, embraces all things, knows that God did this only because of mercy toward His servants.”<sup>[48]</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, too, has ascribed the similar approach to Ibn al-Arabi.<sup>[49]</sup> He has also quoted these lines of al Hallaj: “I meditated upon religions, making great effort to understand them, And I came to realize that they are a unique principle with numerous ramifications”,<sup>[50]</sup> as preamble of the ninth Chapter, of his book, Knowledge and Sacred.

So in their writings and teachings, the mystics of both sides often portray the world through a different perspective, using poetic expressions, parables and esoteric language to convey their message. The ideas shared in their works are not so comprehensible but encourage the reader to know the simple truth underlying the complex metaphor.

### **Originality of Sufism**

Sufism, in other words, Islamic mysticism, means that it is the major and most powerful part of the Revelation of Islam. Although it is totally dependent on Revelation, yet Sufism is totally independent of everything else. Believing in the Prophet's saying: ‘Seek knowledge even if it be in China’, Sufis can pluck few flowers from gardens other than their own. That is why, while being self-sufficient, Sufism has very few ideas from other faiths. For example, since the establishment of Islam in the Sub-continent, Sufis have several changes with Brahmins. Eventually, Sufism adopted certain ideas and terms from Neo-Platonism. But Sufism was founded long before parallel mystical influences. Even such non-Islamic elements touched only the surface. But this fact is not clear to those thousand Western men and women who claim to be ‘Sufis’. They consider Sufism independent of any religious tradition and think it has always existed. That is why they fail to reach its particular and therefore original impetus.<sup>[51]</sup>

The Sufis claimed that the Sufism or Tasawwuf has its origin to the Prophet (S.A.W.W). They say that the Divine

revelations received by Prophet (S.A.W.W) had two dimensions- one took the shape of Quranic words, the other remained within His heart as Divine inspiration. The former message was meant generally for all. The latter was given to chosen seeds and delivered directly to them from heart to heart. Thus 'Book Knowledge' *Ilm-e-Safina* was the knowledge of the words of the Quran and Hadith. And *ilm-e-Safina* was the "knowledge of the Heart". *Ulama* or religious scholars became proficient in the knowledge of the Quran and Hadith, 'The Knowledge of the heart' was bound within the domain of those who were later called Sufis. The Sufis claim that Tasawwuf has its roots in the life of the Prophet (S.A.W.W) and Companions (R.A.A). They refer to Prophet's extreme simplicity, rejection of all luxury, His charitableness, total submission to God's will.<sup>[52]</sup> The Prophet (S.A.W.W) fasted for months on the end and slept little preferring to spend major portion of the night in prayers.<sup>[53]</sup> Thus his life became an exemplary model of knowledge and commitment to the theory and practice of Islam. The Sufis follow His footprints.

The Sufis say that the Prophet (S.A.W.W) His Companions (R.A.A) remained almost lost in their prayers every time. This is the sign of extreme love. Such extreme love resulting in ecstasy is also testified by many Sufis for which they were tortured and even stoned to death. Such complete absorption in prayer is the very foundation of Tasawwuf.

Sufism in Islam, in fact, is practiced by following the footsteps of Prophet (S.A.W.W) who is sent as a Perfect model. It is a collective firm belief of Muslim Sufis that their Prophet (S.A.W.W) is a perfect example for them in every field. As a soldier, merchant, business man, ruler, king, brother, father, leader, preacher, teacher etc he can be followed easily. So whatever they see in their great model, they follow him and get the unlimited success. Sufis do not have to see to their Mosque's Maulana for help because of the clear, lucid instructions of their Holy Prophet (S.A.W.W) and His followers.<sup>[54]</sup> They are not bound to obey any outside authority like Clergy in Christian culture nor do they take any influence from others. In contrast, the Christian mysticism passed through many ups and downs in its way. It got the impact of every age and of philosophic movements such as Hellenism, Platonism, and Neoplatonism. Even in the West the materialistic inclinations affected their spiritual upgrading. It is thought today

that if they want to uplift their 'inner self' they must look up to the East for it. <sup>[55]</sup>

Tasawwuf adopt the method of meditation which is generally regarded as a deviation by religious scholars, from the practice of real Islam. But Sufis say that the practice of meditation also existed during the days of Prophet (S.A.W.W) and His Companions (R.A.A) in the form of contemplation, reflection and pondering. However, the Sufis gave it the form of discipline.

Mystical experience is the situation that is felt or experienced beyond the walls of ordinary consciousness. Sometimes it is referred to a state of altered consciousness. This state can involve ineffable awareness of time, space, and physical reality. Mystical experiences mostly deny physical description, and can best be only hinted at. Such experiences are universal and share common characteristics, despite the culture or religion in which they occur. They are invariably spiritual, but it can be said that Sufism is the best area where an individual mystical shows itself in full bloom. The example of mystical experience can be found in the lives of Sufis such as Jalal-ad-din Rumi, Ali Hijwiri, Kabir, Mansoor etc. <sup>[56]</sup>

Sufism devotedly seeks the fullness of the knowledge of God. It has been universally believed that such a search should be accompanied by outer manifestations. The aim will be gained when the worshipper sees God alone in all that he contemplates and at the same time experiences a complete and ecstatic sense of His presence. Sufism rests on the belief that when the individual self is lost, the Universal Self is found, or, in religious language, that ecstasy affords the only means by which the soul can directly communicate and become united with God. <sup>[57]</sup>

In Sufism, the ecstasy or trance-like 'state' is called a *hal*, though in Sufism, a *hal* more strictly refers to the succession of illuminations, through experiencing which the Sufi progresses a further 'stage' (*maqam*) towards the goal of spiritual perfection. For Sufis, such experience is not a hypnotic phenomenon to which the human spirit is susceptible in appropriate circumstances. In fact it is gift from God confirming the Sufi's striving for his presence. Each stage reached by the disciple is the result of his own effort, each experience is the sign of the divine favor upon the endeavor as it is said that the *hal* is a spiritual mood depending not upon the mystic but upon God. <sup>[58]</sup>

In Sufism Muslims seek to find divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. Sufism is defined as the experience of mystical union or direct communion with ultimate reality, and the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through subjective experience.

The union of man's soul with God (*Wasl*) is the most important theme in Sufism. Sufis believe that God does not live in mosques but in the mind and heart of human beings. Sufi longs for direct commune with God i.e., union of human soul with God through devotion. The most important relationship in Sufism is between God and human. Sufi assumes man as a lover and God as a beloved. When Sufi gets near to God through *Dhikr* and meditation, God Himself comes down to bless him. Then a Sufi directly communes with God and god speaks by his tongue, God sees through his eyes, his hands move according to the will of God.<sup>[59]</sup>

The early Sufis were famous for their asceticism. Poverty was their ideal. They thought that the worldly pursuits were taboos in their communication with God. So, if they desisted from accumulating worldly things, they would be free from distraction, be able to achieve a high level of concentration and, as a result, their prayers would attain a special quality. And direct communion with God would be achieved.<sup>[60]</sup>

When Sufi passes through all the stages courageously he becomes the one, who has fully realized his essential oneness with the Divine Being in whose likeness he is made.<sup>[61]</sup>

The orthodox group of believers referred to the tradition that the Prophet (S.A.W.W) forbade people who spent all their time in worship and snubbed them for not taking part in worldly affairs. But Sufis do not take these Hadith very relevant. They link themselves to the Companions who stayed in the porch of the Mosque of Madinah and were *Ashab-e-Saff*. They totally devoted themselves to the Divine worship and had nothing to do with the worldly activities. And above all the Prophet (S.A.W.W) did not forbid them for doing so.<sup>[62]</sup>

The early Sufis denounced the world and had no intense fear of God. They were ascetics in the real sense of the word. Ibn e Khaldun calls their way of life as the 'way of Truth and Salvation'. He says that they were zealous to guard piety, kept away from every object of worldly attraction, like pleasure, power and wealth.

They let society and led a life of absolute seclusion for the service of God. Ibn Khaldun considered these as the fundamental principles of Sufism that were practiced by the companions and Muslims of early times. <sup>[63]</sup> The first Caliphs and many of the great Companions of the Prophet (S.A.W.W) must have been sanctified by the magnetic presence of the Messenger (S.A.W.W) Himself and thus of Divine interpretation. But it cannot be said same about the Christ's Companions. As we find not more than of the two Saint John's and Saint Peter---- to name only three---- were alive at the time of Christ. So Apostolic Age is the only age when the Christian believers found the 'Gates of Heaven' open to them. On the other hand, the first community was directly open to mysticism in Islam, which might have continued the mission of the Prophet (S.A.W.W) throughout. Thus through the impact of miracles a multitude of souls must have been endowed with more certainty than the people of other ages who have been benefitted from the mystics. <sup>[64]</sup>

#### **World Wide Popularity of Muslim Mystics.**

Islamic history bears witness to the fact that the spread of Muslim empire owes a great to the efforts of the Sufis. Their message of Love, Compassion, Companionship and Charitableness made Sufism popular in the medieval ages and made Islam acceptable to all. Thus in the era of political expansion of Islam, credit should be given to the Sufis who spread the spiritual spirit of Islam.

The most superb example of popularity of Sufism in Western society is the best selling poetry of Jalaluddin Rumi, the artistic performances of the Dervishes of Turkish Mevlevi tradition, popular Sufi music like *the qawwali* singers of Pakistan and famous books on Sufism such as Idries Shah. It seems that the willingness to participate in the commoditization of Sufism relates with the openness to Western society positively. Sufism has rather become an established frame work within the New Esoteric/age market. <sup>[65]</sup> Today Jalal-ulDin Rumi is worldwide famous. UNESCO announced 2007 as the international year of Rumi. 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Persian Sufi was celebrated on 6 September of the year. New translation of poetry of Rumi had topped the poetry best-seller charts in the Western world. <sup>[66]</sup> The role played by Sufi doctrine in the life of modern man can hardly be overstressed. the modern man who is over cerebral and thinks too much, often

negative, the puzzle of antithetical concepts, ambiguities and intellectual vanities are the major taboos in the way of integration of mind and it can only be cured by the purifying effects of Sufi metaphysical doctrines that washes away the dross of contingency and multiplicity. Sufi doctrines also describe the inner levels of existence between the corporeal world and God denying the Cartesian dualism of modern European Philosophy.<sup>[67]</sup>

Islam and Sufism have influenced many religious movements of India from 13<sup>th</sup> century onward like Buddhism. Sufism also influenced Sikhism on the side of its theoretical teachings. Sikhs also join the congregation in Gurudwara twice a day, at sunset and sunrise. Like Al-Quran, Guru Granth Sahib is also wrapped in clothes. Influence of Sufism is so obvious in the teachings of Guru Nanak, Kabir, Dadu and other saints of Bhakti movement in medieval India.<sup>[68]</sup>

The positive effects of Sufism in mid -2nd c. H.G on Iranian society are, no doubt, immense. It sometimes affected it like a drug in Iranian world vein and blood and caused a kind of reactionary movement regarding Iranian society. So it can be said that Sufi thinking became the important part of Iranian thinking. The effects of Sufism in the historical life of Iranian nation are undeniable.<sup>[69]</sup>

#### REFERENCES & NOTES

1. Netton, Ian Richard, (2011), *Islam, Christianity and the Mystic Journey: A Comparative Exploration*, Edinburgh University press.pp:12-13.
2. Sulami, Muhammad Ibn al-Husayn (1953) *Kitab Tabaqat as-Sufiyya*, Nuraddin Shariba(ed). Cairo. p:227
3. Swami, Abhayananda, (2007). *History of Mysticism: The Unchanging Testament*, Revised E-Book edition, Indiana, U.S. p:89
4. Netton,opcit;p:75
5. Nicholson A. Reynold, (1979), *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, Cambridge University Press, U.K. p:59
6. Ibid; p:83
7. Chittick, William C, (2005), *Sufism: A Short Introduction*, Suhail Academy, Lahore,pp:1-3.
8. Smart, Ninian (1992). *The World Religions*, Cambridge University Press U.K. p:201
9. Smith, Margrat, (1995). *Studies in Early Mysticism in the Near and Middle East*. One world publications Oxford. p:111



10. Ralph Inge-Anglican, William, (1905) *Studies of English Mystics, St. Margaret's Lectures*, John Murray, Albemarle Street.p:111
11. Schuon, Frithjof, (2001), *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, Suhail Academy, Lahore. p:48
12. Ibid; p:129
13. Vali-ud-din, Mir, Dr. (1991), *The Quranic Sufism* Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, Booksellers & Exporters, Lahore, Pakistan.
14. Al-Quran,4:104.
15. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, (1988). *Three Muslim Sages*, Suhail Academy, Lahore.
16. Al-Quran,24:35.
17. Al-Quran,2:151.
18. Al-Quran,91:9.
19. Al-Quran,62:2.
20. Al-Quran,29:69.
21. Al-Quran,2:16
22. Al-Quran,2:156.
23. Al-Quran,50:16.
24. Suzuki, D.T (2003). *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, Routledge: London and New York.
25. John,16:13
26. John,2:8
27. John,4:1
28. Romans,8:16
29. John,14:26
30. 1Cor,2:6-10
31. John,1:21
32. Jamal, Mahmood (2009). *Islamic Mystical Poetry*. London, Penguin Books, England.
33. Blake, William,(1789), *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. London
34. Rumi, Jalal'l-Din, (1977). *Jalal'l Din Rumi, Mathnavi, The Sheperd's Prayer*, SH. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers Lahore.
35. Lings, Martin, (2005), *A Return to the Spirit*, Suhail Academy, Lahore,p:15.
36. Jauodi, Maria, (1993), *Christian and Islamic Spirituality*, Paulist Press, New Jersey.
37. Isfahni, Abu Nu'aym. (1932-38) *Hilyat al-auliya*, "The ornament of the Saints", V:10, Cairo.
38. Blackney, Raymond B. (1941), *Mister Eckhart, A Modern Translation*, N.Y, Harper Torchbooks, New York,p:147.
39. Bentley, Layton (trans), (1987), *The Gnostic Scriptures*,NewYork: Doubleday and company, Inc. p:443.

40. Bukhari, Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ismael, (1987) 'Al Jamiya Al Sahi', *Kitab al-Tawhi*, Ch :15, No. 30. Dar Ibn kaseer.
41. Shaykh Sa'di, (1975) *Gulstan*, trans. Maulana Qazi Sajjad Husain. Maktaba Rahmania: Lahore.
42. Rumi, opcit, p:118
43. Shabistari, S'ad 'I-Din Muhammad, (1992). *The Secret Rose Garden*, Lederer Florence (trans), SH. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, Lahore. pp:63-4.
44. Jami (1984). *Jami, Salaman and Absal: The Persian Mystics*. Lahore: SH. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers. P:36.
45. Hazm, Ibn,(2006), *Al Akhlaqwal Siyar, Morality and Behavior*, Translation Collected from 2005 the truereligion. Org(1990), Ta-Ha Publisheres, Lt. , London, 1<sup>st</sup> Edi.p:15.
46. Ibid; p:29
47. Ibid;p:15
48. Arabi, Ibn Muhyi al-Din ibn al- Arabi, (1994). *Al-Futuh al-Makkiyya, III*. New York: State University of New York Press,pp:156-157
49. Nasr, opcit;p:116-118
50. Massignon, Louis. (1994) *Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr*, (trans) Herbert Mason, Princeton University Press New Jersey. pp:104-105
51. Lings, opcit; p:16
52. Fakhry, Majid, (2000), *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: A Short Introduction*, Oneworld Publications, Oxford. p:122
53. Al-Quran; 73:20
54. Fakhry, Majid, opcit, p:149
55. Inge, William, Ralph, (2006), *Christian Mysticism*, BiblioBazaar: ISBN 1-4264-8186-1.
56. Ibn Khaldun, (1958), *The Muqaddimah*, vol.1. F. Rosenthal, (trans)Routledge & Kegan Paul, London. P:46
57. Nicholson, opcit, pp:39-45
58. Ibn Khallikan, *Biographical Dictionary*, Vol.3 (trans) William McGuckin de Slane. Paris: Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland. Sold by Institut de France and Royal Library of Belgium.
59. Hozien, Muhammad, (2001), *Dictionary of Islamic Philosophical Terms*, [<http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/pd/p-dmp.htm> Accessed: 9/3/2002]
60. Ibid.
61. Nicholson A. Reynold, (1914), *The Mystics of Islam*, Routledge, Kegan Paul, London. P:78
62. Ibid; pp:87-110

- 
63. Ibn Khaldun, opcit p:49
  64. Lings, opcit;p:102.
  65. Markus Dressler, Ron Geaves, (ed) ( 2009), *Global Networking and Locality*, P:87
  66. Dart John, 21 march (1981), Los Angeles Times, part I-A.
  67. McColman, Carl, (2010), *The Big Book of Christian Mysticism:The Essential Guide to Contemplative Spirituality* , Charlottesville; Hampton Road Publishing Company. Inc.p:222.
  68. Sher Singh, 1993,pp:114-15
  69. Karamali Ghadamyari,(2012), *European Journal of Experimental Biology* .p:6.