

their sect. Secondly, an infidel having power over himself, and his minor children, is on that account qualified to be a witness with regard to his own sect; and the depravity which proceeds from his faith is not destructive of this qualification, because he is supposed to abstain from everything prohibited in his own religion, and falsehood is prohibited in every religion. It is otherwise with respect to an apostate, as he possesses no power, either over his own person, or over that of another; and it is also otherwise with respect to a *zimmī* in relation to a Muslim, because a *zimmī* has no power over the person of a Muslim. Besides, a *zimmī* may be suspected of inventing falsehoods against a Muslim from the hatred he bears to him on account of the superiority of the Muslims over him. [2.21.2.690-91]



CHAPTER XV

THE MYSTICS

The majority of Muslims neither knew nor understood the theological formulations of their faith. For them life was bounded by the Shari'a and by the round of mosque, pilgrimage, fasting, alms-giving, and ritual prayer. But many outside the comparatively small circle of scholars found this unsatisfying, particularly if, as often but not always, they were non-Arab converts with different religious traditions. They craved for a more emotional, indeed emotive religion, one in which God appeared as a loving, succoring Friend rather than as an abstract definition of undifferentiated unity incomprehensible in His Essence, inscrutable and arbitrary in His decrees. Moreover, as Islam grew to world power, the pious were scandalized at the compromises of political life and at the readiness of lawyers and theologians to accept service under "ungodly" rulers. Many withdrew into an ascetic seclusion, seeking to avoid the Divine Wrath on the Day of Judgment.

Many Muslims, therefore, found their thirst for God and for piety quenched in mysticism rather than in theology. The religious history of Islam after the twelfth century, particularly in those lands of the Eastern Caliphate which later came under the political dominance of the Turks and the Mongols, was largely that of the Sufi mystic movements and of the struggle of the *ulamā* to keep those movements within the Muslim fold. Although Islamic mysticism may have been stimulated by Christian, Gnostic, or Hindu mysticism, it already had a firm basis in the inspiration of the Qur'an and in the early experience of the Prophet. His earlier revelations betray an intense consciousness of God as a living, everpresent reality. "We are nearer to him [man] than his jugular vein" (Qur'an 50:15); and "Whenever ye turn there is the faith of God. Adore, and draw thou nigh" (96:19), or "He loveth them and they love Him" (5:59). It was this text which was particularly used by later Sufis to justify their attempts to lose themselves in the Divine Love.

Sufism was at the confluence of two streams of thought in Islam—the

ascetic and the devotional. But by the second century after Hijra, the second had gained the upper hand. In many, the mystical element of love and adoration overcame the fear of the Day of Judgment. This victory is summed up in the sentence from al-Hasan al-Basrī (643-728): "I have not served God from fear of hell for I should be a wretched hireling if I served Him from fear; nor from love of heaven for I should be a bad servant if I served for what is given; I have served Him only for love of Him and desire for Him," or by the saying of the woman saint, Rabī'a al-Adawīya (d. 801): "Love of God hath so absorbed me that neither love nor hate of any other thing remain in my heart."

Before the second-century Hijra (A.D. 722-822) had ended, the Sufis had already worked out methods of attaining gnosis (*ma'rifat*) or mystic knowledge of God along a path (*tarīqa*) to ecstatic union with God or with one of His attributes, either by the indwelling of God in the man, or by the man's ascent to God. The true mystic was he who had cast off self and lost himself in God. The language of the Muslim Sufis during or after the moment of supreme mystical experience was often borrowed from that of inebriation or sexual love. A famous mystic, al-Hallāj, eventually, in 922, executed for heresy in Baghdad, "was so carried away by his ecstatic experience that he did not feel the dual nature of man, that is to say, his existence here as a single creature, and his rapture in mystical communion with the Divine. He taught that man was God incarnate and he looked to Jesus rather than to Muhammad as the supreme example of glorified humanity. God is love, and in His love, He created man after his own image so that man might find that image within himself and attain to union with the Divine Nature." Al-Hallāj expressed the intensity of the feeling of complete harmony with God in the following terms, "I am He whom I love and He whom I love is I. We are two spirits dwelling in one body. If thou seest me, thou seest Him, and if thou seest Him, thou seest us both."

The spiritual life which rises to this climax of insight was usually described as a journey passing through a number of stages. A typical mystic "road map" showed the following as milestones along the journey: repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience, trust in God, satisfaction. Only when the Sufi has passed all these stages is he raised to the higher plane of consciousness (gnosis) and realizes that knowledge,

knower, and known are one. Repentance is described as the awakening of the soul from the slumber of sin and heedlessness; abstinence and renunciation mean not merely the relinquishing of material pleasures but also the abandonment of all desire—even of the desire to abandon everything itself. Poverty meant the stripping away of every wish which could distract men's thoughts from God. Patience meant both patience in misfortune and patience to refrain from those things which God has forbidden to mankind. Trust in God betokened confidence in His grace toward the sinful pilgrim and satisfaction means for the pilgrim, eager acceptance of Divine decree. All these stages or stations (*maqāmāt*) were arrived at through the efforts of the pilgrim. The later part of the journey toward God was only made possible by the gift of God Himself. Indeed the light of intuitive certainty by which the heart sees God was a beam of God's Own Light cast therein by Himself. The two supreme states (*hāl*) were annihilation and subsistence. Annihilation (*fanā*) means a transformation of the soul through the utter extinction of all passion and desires, the contemplation of the Divine attributes, and the cessation of all conscious thought. Most Sufis were insistent that the individual human personality was not annihilated in this state. Some said that in this state the Sufi becomes like a drop of water in the ocean. Upon this follows subsistence (*baqā*) or abiding in God. This can mean either, or all, of three things—union with one of the activities symbolized by the names of God, union with one of the attributes of God, or union with the Divine Essence. When the Sufi has attained annihilation and subsistence, the veils of the flesh, of the will, and of the world have been torn aside, Truth is beheld and man is united to God. The wisest mystics, e.g., al-Ghazālī, recognized that this supreme experience could not be expressed in words; others ignored the limitation of language and scandalized the orthodox while often failing to communicate their own experience.

It is perhaps not surprising that Sufis should soon have come under suspicion from the orthodox theologians. Although early Sufis of the ascetic sort lived retired meditative lives, their claim to judge men and themselves by an inner light and to enjoy a direct personal relation to God could not but antagonize the *ulamā*, the doctors of a Sharī'a which claimed to regulate only outward conduct and who had no sure means of detecting hypocrisy. Although some early mystics were scrupulous in the

observance of the Shari'a, others were not recognizably within the Muslim fold at all. A friend of the philosopher Ibn Sina, Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī'l Khair, a Persian mystic, wrote:

Not until every mosque beneath the sun,
Is ruined will our holy work be done,
And never will true Muslim appear,
Till faith and infidelity are one.

There was always the danger that, in the intensity of his personal religious experience, the Sufi would deny the value of the mandates of the Shari'a. "The mystics learned from God, the ulamā from books." As al-Ghazālī was to ask: "In what do discussions on divorce and on buying and selling prepare the believer for the beyond?" Al-Wāsitī (d. 932) said: "Ritual acts are only impurities."

These dangerous antinomian tendencies were matched by dangerous pantheistic tendencies. It was difficult for orthodox scholars to stomach some of the expressions used by mystics in the moment of supreme insight and experience. Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī (d. 875) cried: "Praise be to Me!"; al-Hallāj (d. 922): "I am the Truth. Is it Thou or is it I?"; Ibn Sahl Tustarī (d. 896): "I am the Proof of God, in face of the saints of my time"; Ibn Abī'l Khair: "Beneath my robe there is only God"; Ibn Sab'īn (d. 1269): "There is nothing but God." The famous Sufi teacher Muhyī ud-dīn ibn al-'Arabī was a thorough monist. The one reality is God; the universe is His expression of Himself. The universe does not proceed from God by emanations but by manifestations; He makes himself known to Himself in everything. The mystic does not become one with God; he becomes conscious of his oneness with God. Clearly, in such a doctrine, Islam and other faiths are put on an equality. Everything (including infidels and infidelity) is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. The execution of al-Hallāj in 922 in Baghdad was a measure of the antagonism aroused among the lawyers and the dialecticians by such ideas as the above. Moreover under the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs, Sufism was not popular with political authority. In the course of the third century after Hijra Sufism became popular among the artisan and minor trading classes of the cities of Iraq and Persia, uneducated in the traditional religious disciplines and sometimes the victims of the 'Abbāsīd tax machine. Although Sufism was never a revolutionary movement politically, its call for a personal spiritual revival threw into sharp relief the worldliness of the ruling powers.

That orthodoxy was reconciled to mysticism within Islam was largely the achievement of the great theologian and mystic al-Ghazālī, who probably forestalled a schism in Islam. He was an Erasmus who was enough of a Luther to make a Luther unnecessary. In India, the measure of his success may be gauged by the absence of tension between the ulama and the mystics during the sultanate period. In Mughal times, however, partly because some of the Mughal rulers appeared positively to encourage unorthodoxy, antagonism broke out again.

Al-Ghazālī made the personal, emotional relation of the individual to God the core of popular Islam. Man's perfection and happiness consist in trying to imitate the qualities of God, in trying to do His Will. This Will he may discover from theology—but few are equipped to follow that severe discipline. Rather is he likely to discover the real attributes and purposes of God by mystical experience. In winning over Islam to this view, al-Ghazālī won for Sufism an abiding home in Muslim orthodoxy. In doing so, however, he pared away some of the more extreme forms of mystic expression. He refused to try to express what he himself had experienced. "To divulge the secrets of Lordship is unbelief." Al-Ghazālī held Sufism back from pantheism; at the moment of supreme illumination there is still a distinction between God and the mystic.

Al-Ghazālī's monumental exposition of Islam was accepted by consensus within a century of his death. The consequences for the Muslim world were second only perhaps to the deaths of Hasan and Husain at Karbala in 680. Many of the peoples in western Asia, particularly in the lands dominated by the Turks, were finally won over to orthodox Islam. Sufism henceforth became the most vital spiritual force in Islam with its exponents courted by princes as much as by the ordinary man. However, the victory of al-Ghazālī's synthesis altered the whole course of Muslim civilization. It opened the floodgates (and nowhere more so than in India later) to forms of religious belief and practice from which Muhammad himself would have recoiled. Principally these innovations meant the worship of saints in the teeth of the Qur'an, tradition, and orthodox theology. Many Sufis cared little whether their practices and their teachings were in harmony with received Islamic doctrine. "Know that the principle and foundation of Sufism and knowledge of God rests on saintship," wrote al-Hujwiri.

The victory of al-Ghazālī was followed by the invasion of Neo-Platonic

and gnostic ideas into Sufism. The extreme expression of these ideas is found in Ibn 'Arabī, the Spaniard (1165–1240), in the doctrine of the Light of Muhammad. He taught that things emanate from divine prescience as ideas, and that the idea of Muhammad is the creative and rational principle of the universe. He is the Perfect Man in whom the Divine Light shines, the visible aspect of God. The aim of the Sufi should be to unite with, and in, the Perfect Man who unifies all phenomena into the manifestation of the real. The Perfect Man is "a copy of God." He is a cosmic power on which the universe depends for existence. Later, popular Islam was to attach this idea to the persons of famous mystics. At the head of the community stood prophets, and below them, saints who were the elect of the mystics. The saints formed an invisible hierarchy on which the order of the world depended. It was not surprising therefore that popular sentiment attributed miracles to the Sufi shaikhs or that after death their tombs became places of pilgrimage.

These ideas, and those of an earlier stage of Sufi belief and practice, became institutionalized in the century after al-Ghazālī's death in the great Sufi orders. Already al-Ghazālī had stated that the Sufi disciple must have recourse to a spiritual director for guidance. The novice was received into the fraternity by a ceremony of initiation. The head of the fraternity (shaikh or pīr, lit. elder) claimed the spiritual succession from the founder of the order and through him from the Prophet or 'Alī. The shaikh and his followers lived in a community endowed by supporters (who often included sultans) giving themselves up to spiritual exercises, meditation, and the attainment of mystical experience. In the twelfth century the Muslim world was covered by such retreats as a result of initiates going out from the parent retreat and founding satellite retreats linked to the parent by ties of reverence and common rituals. Membership in the orders was often very broad; it was of two kinds—a class of initiates (murīd) engaged in continual meditation or devotional exercises, and a larger number of "lay members" meeting to partake in "remembrance of God," but otherwise following their normal occupations. The total number of Sufi orders is (and was in the twelfth century) very great. The Muslim conquest of North India was contemporary with the introduction of some of these orders into India. There they were to dominate Muslim thought and social life, reaching out at times toward Hinduism.

SUFISM IN INDIA DURING THE SULTANATE PERIOD (c. 1200–1500)

Muslim mysticism in India, like Muslim scholastic theology in India, entered the country in a well-developed form and did not greatly change its ideas (as opposed to its practices) in its new environment. The increasing influence of Ibn 'Arabī's pantheistic doctrines in Mughal times was due to a fresh immigration of Sufi orders new to India, rather than to changes in existing Indo-Muslim mystical schools of thought.

Between the end of the twelfth century and the end of the fifteenth, three great Sufi orders had migrated from Iraq and Persia into northern India, the Chishtī, the Suhrawardī, and the Firdausī. The first was the largest and most popular. Its "sphere of operations" was the area of the present Uttar Pradesh, where its great saints Nizām ud-dīn Auliya (1238–1325) and Nasir ud-dīn Muhammad Chirāgh of Delhi (d. 1356) lived and taught. Among its adherents were numbered some of the greatest luminaries of Indo-Muslim culture in the sultanate period—including Amīr Khusrau, the poet, and Ziā ud-dīn Barnī, the historian. The tombs of the mystic-saints of the order are still honored by both Hindus and Muslims. The Suhrawardī order was primarily confined to Sind. The Firdausī order could not establish itself in the Delhi area in face of the Chishtī order, and moved eastward to Bihar.

All these mystic orders were indebted for the theoretical expression of their ideas to a small number of "mystic textbooks" written in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, notably *The Uncovering of the Veil (Kashf ul-Mahjūb)* by Shaikh 'Alī Hujwīrī, written partly at Lahore, the capital of the Punjab when annexed by Mahmūd of Ghaznin. In India no such systematic theoretical treatises were written, but to popularize Sufi teaching, disciples of great Sufi teachers recorded the sayings and discourses of their masters or wrote their biographies. Notable among the former is *The Morals of the Heart (Fawā'id ul-Fuwād)* by the poet Amīr Hasan Sijzi, a record of the conversations of Shaikh Nizām ud-dīn Auliya in his retreat at Ghiyāspūr between A.D. 1307 and 1322. Another "Indian Sufi teachers' handbook" is the collection of letters (*Makṭūbāt*) of Shaikh Sharaf ud-dīn Yahyā of Manīr, a mystic of the Firdausī order who flourished

in Bihar toward the end of the fourteenth or the beginning of the fifteenth century. The letters were addressed to a disciple.

The readings will illustrate the following themes: the Sufi emphasis on the love for God as the principle of human existence on earth and their consequent unworldly attitude; the urge toward union with Him; the stages of the mystic path toward that union; the avoidance of pantheism and monism and the acceptance of the Shari'a by the mystics of the sultanate period; and the role of the saints.

The Love of God

[From Shaikh 'Alī Hujwiri, *Kashf ul-Mahjūb*, pp. 307-8]

Man's love toward God is a quality which manifests itself in the heart of the pious believer, in the form of veneration and magnification, so that he seeks to satisfy his Beloved and becomes impatient and restless in his desire for vision of Him, and cannot rest with anyone except Him, and grows familiar with the remembrance of Him, and abjures the remembrance of everything besides. Repose becomes unlawful to him and rest flees from him. He is cut off from all habits and associations, and renounces sensual passion and turns toward the court of love and submits to the law of love and knows God by His attributes of perfection. It is impossible that man's love of God should be similar in kind to the love of His creatures toward one another, for the former is desire to comprehend and attain the beloved object, while the latter is a property of bodies. The lovers of God are those who devote themselves to death in nearness to Him, not those who seek His nature because the seeker stands by himself, but he who devotes himself to death stands by his Beloved; and the truest lovers are they who would fain die thus, and are overpowered, because a phenomenal being has no means of approaching the Eternal save through the omnipotence of the Eternal. He who knows what is real love feels no more difficulties, and all his doubts depart.

Contemplation

[From Shaikh 'Alī Hujwiri, *Kashf ul-Mahjūb*, pp. 329-31]

The Apostle said: "Make your bellies hungry and your livers thirsty and leave the world alone, that perchance you may see God with your hearts";

and he also said: "Worship God as though thou sawest Him, for if thou dost not see Him, yet He sees thee." God said to David: "Dost thou know what is knowledge of Me? It is the life of the heart in contemplation of Me." By "contemplation" the Sufis mean spiritual vision of God in public and private, without asking how or in what manner. . . .

There are really two kinds of contemplation. The former is the result of perfect faith, the latter of rapturous love, for in the rapture of love a man attains to such a degree that his whole being is absorbed in the thought of his Beloved and he sees nothing else. Muhammad b. Wasi' says: "I never saw anything without seeing God therein," i.e., through perfect faith. This vision is from God to His creatures. Shibli says: "I never saw anything except God," i.e., in the rapture of love and the fervor of contemplation. One sees the act with his bodily eye and, as he looks, beholds the Agent from all things else, so that he sees only the Agent. The one method is demonstrative, the other is ecstatic. In the former case, a manifest proof is derived from the evidences of God; and in the latter case, the seer is enraptured and transported by desire; evidences and verities are a veil to him, because he who knows a thing does not reverence aught besides, and he who loves a thing does not regard aught besides, but renounces contention with God and interference with Him in His decrees and His acts. God hath said of the Apostle at the time of his Ascension: "His eyes did not swerve or transgress" (Qur'an 53.17), on account of the intensity of his longing for God. When the lover turns his eye away from created things, he will inevitably see the Creator with his heart. God hath said: "Tell the believers to close their eyes" (Qur'an 24.30), i.e., to close their bodily eyes to lusts and their spiritual eyes to created things. He who is most sincere in self-mortification is most firmly grounded in contemplation for inward contemplation is connected with outward mortification. Sahl b. 'Abdallāh of Tustar says: "If anyone shuts his eye to God for a single moment, he will never be rightly guided all his life long," because to regard other than God is to be handed over to other than God, and one who is left at the mercy of other than God is lost. Therefore the life of contemplatives is the time during which they enjoy contemplation: time spent in seeing ocularly they do not reckon as life, for that to them is really death. Thus, when Abū Yazīd was asked how old he was, he replied: "Four years." They said: "How can that be?" He answered: "I