

Sufism

Beyond Religion

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'SUFISM BEYOND RELIGION'

THE SUFIS

*'Look into the heart of a Sufi,
If you want to see the Reality,
You would find there nothing but,
The true reflection of the Almighty.'*

Sufism evokes considerable interest amongst people mainly because of the mysticism associated with it and also because not much is known about the secrets of their knowledge. Often, however, persons, who have symbolized Sufism to observing certain customs and rituals but who do not understand the true meaning of Sufism, mislead them. Sufism is not something, which could be explained theoretically; it could be understood only through participation and practice.

As far as the literal meaning of the word Sufi is concerned, the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English describes Sufi as a Muslim ascetic and mystic. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles elaborates it further as 'One of a sect of Moslem ascetic mystics who in later times embraced pantheistic views'. Other dictionaries also define the word similarly and the Encyclopedia Britannica defines 'Sufi' as 'a Muslim mystic, or any of several orders of Islamic mystics; the name derived from the Arabic word *Suf* ('wool'), which was used for clothing by religious persons even in pre-Islamic times.'

In regard to the origin of the word 'Sufi', there are different views amongst scholars. Majority of them, however, agree that the use of wool (*Suf* in Arabic) in clothing by them has characterized Sufis. Both Moses and Jesus used wool for their clothing and many of the Prophet Muhammad's companions also used wool, which was available easily and was cheap for them to afford. Use of coarse wool as clothing also reflected upon one's inclination towards austerity and renunciation of worldly pleasures.

Although Sufism has been greatly influenced by Islam, yet to take all the Sufis as Muslim mystics would be too myopic a view to understand Sufism in its true sense. Sufism is indefinable; it is a way of life. *Tasawwuf* (Sufism) is neither a religion nor a philosophy; nor it is a ritual or mere learning. If it was ritual, one could learn it by practice. If it was mere learning, one could acquire it by studying. To be a true human being, free from all bondage and honest with the Almighty is being a Sufi. Hakim Jami, a great scholar and Naqshbandi Sufi has said: 'Do not be proud of your intellect and learning, for in the Sufi way your intellect hampers your progress and learning is stupidity.' But this has to be understood in the right perspective; the real learning for the seeker is from the book of the heart of the Sufi.

Sufism is a matter of conduct. It concerns with one's conduct and is a matter of practice. In regard to Sufism being a matter of conduct, Hajrat Abu-Hafs said, 'Sufism is conduct; to each time it is conduct; to each station it is conduct; to each state it is conduct. One, who behaves according to the occasion, behaves like a man. One, who does not observe the rules of conduct, is far from the state of Nearness.'

About being a Sufi, Hajrat Abul Hasan Kharqani, a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, said that the Sufi is not the one who wears patched clothes or carries the prayer rug, nor the one who keeps certain customs and appearances, but the Sufi is one to whom everyone's focus is drawn, although he is hiding himself. He also said that the Sufi is one who in the daylight does not need the Sun and in the night does not need the Moon. The essence of Sufism is absolute non-existence that needs no existence besides the Almighty's Existence.

The Sufis do not crave for any recognition or special treatment for them. Hajrat Abul Hasan Kharqani refused for himself all titles and aspirations. He did not wish to be known as a follower of any science, even a spiritual science. He said, 'I am not a hermit; I am not an ascetic; I am not a speaker; I am not a Sufi. O *Allah*, you are One and I am one in Your Oneness'. He also said at one time, 'Today it will have been forty years that *Allah* has been looking in my heart and has seen nothing except Himself.' The idea of an intimate communion of the self with the Eternal Reality is central to being a Sufi.

Sufism is spiritual activation and evolution through participation, practice and one's own experience. It is a process of evolution of self in harmony with the others. Sufis believe in evolution of a man into a complete man by enlightenment through one's own experience and understanding. The spirituality of Sufis reflect in their every day action. It is not something external reserved for some special occasion, but a part and parcel of their being. Sufis make a conscious effort to evolve as a perfect man. The man is God's highest creation, having his own individuality, knowledge and bliss, yet he is not perfect. In him there is a reflection of all His Attributes. It is said that God has made human beings in His own image. The God is perfect, and, therefore, this desire to achieve perfection is reflected profoundly in the human beings. The man has evolved into human being after passing through various stages of evolution, which reflect into his being. All that is there in the universe is reflected in him. The man is a microcosm in himself; whatever is there in Him, its reflection is there on man as per his needs and suitability.

It is the characteristic quality of God's Grace that the man is not left alone, only he has to use his effort and will power to make progress. Even before his birth the God has blessed the man with these characteristic qualities in the most balanced state. Since they are not perfect He has bestowed upon the man the faculty of reasoning to distinguish between good and bad and to achieve perfection through practice. God has provided the man with all that is necessary to make progress; mind, wisdom, consciousness and so on; and His Divine energy, which is called 'Mercy'. One may choose the path of downfall by forgetting one's original nature and adopting worldly things, thus becoming a prey to

sufferings and pain or one may use his discretion to search for the right path. True repentance and a wholehearted prayer pave the way for one to reach the right path. The essence of Sufism lies in keeping to the right path and achieving the perfection.

In regard to spiritual evolution of a Sufi, Hajrat Abu Yazid al-Bistami (Bayazid), who was the Shaikh (Master) of Hajrat Abul Hasan Kharqani, said that progress could not be made by standing with the pious or with the warriors in the cause or with those who pray or fast excessively. The only way to the Almighty is to 'leave yourself and come', which meant to leave one's self interest in this world and the Hereafter, leaving everything other than the Almighty behind. That is the best and the easiest way to realize the Truth and the most perfect and the highest state of affirming Oneness; not to accept anything or anyone except the Almighty. Hajrat Bayazid is also stated to have said, 'I want not to want except what He wants.' Hajrat Abul Hasan Kharqani said, 'I want not to want' is exactly the wanting, which is the real desire of a Sufi. The Sufi, therefore, is one, who has emptied himself of everything, who has left everything behind, except what he really is. He has removed all the dust and the rusting from the mirror of his heart, which now shines with His Glory and reflects His Presence.

The Sufi is a complete man, with his essential personality reflecting from deep within. Sirajudin, a scholar from Kashmir has said, the Sufi is a rose among roses and a thorn among thorns. Khwaja Hasan Sani Nizami, *Sajjadanashin* of Hajrat Nizamuddin's Dargah has said: 'A Sufi is liberal like the ocean, kind like the Sun and humble like a river.' The Sufi is drunk without wine; he is lost in his Master's love. He is sated without food; shows opulence in poverty; joy in sorrow and loves even his enemies. *

(*Maulana Rumi)

Outwardly the Sufis may look to be any one, a peasant, a merchant, a soldier, a physician, a lawyer, a teacher or a housewife and according to the understanding of the viewer they may seem mystics, magicians, practitioners of occult sciences or just the ordinary people like anyone else. Some of them may talk, others may be silent, some may walk relentlessly, and others may sit and train disciples. They are the people from this world but still not of this world. Their ideal is to be free from ego manifested in various forms such as ambition or pride. They live for social harmony with equal respect for all religions, for they see the same quest for the Truth underlying all religious practices but at the same time not having blind obedience to customs and rituals. Sufis, therefore, lay stress on the unity of inner teachings of all religions rather than on their outer form. Conforming to the outer form of religion is important for Sufis only to the extent that it does not inhibit spiritual progress. The real objective being to grow beyond religion, to understand the real meaning of the religion and to realize the Truth by one's own experience.

If one looks upon them as saints, one would benefit from their sainthood. One would benefit from their company anyway even if one does not revere them as saints since their heart radiates the energy of love and induces the feeling of love in the hearts of others, resulting in the peace of their mind. For them the world is the place where the

mankind has to gain experience. Human beings have been given freedom of action, good or bad, according to their desires. The spiritual progress is based on knowledge, which in turn is based on movement. The capability to act lies in the soul. Contact of soul with the physical matter is, therefore, necessary so that on the basis of experience, it may acquire knowledge of the world and thereafter the knowledge of the Truth. A physical body is necessary for realisation. The soul needs an outer covering, the physical body, just as for a seed the outer shell is necessary. If a seed is sown without its outer covering, it will not sprout; it will not grow into a tree. Similarly, the soul also cannot realise the Truth without a physical body. The experience of pain and suffering enables one to understand pain and suffering of others and develop sympathy and kindness for them. It is a process of constant evolution and achieving perfection as a true human being.

According to Shamsuddin Habibullah-Mirza Mazhar Zanzana, a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, all physical creation arises from a combination of Almighty's Divine Qualities and the Void. The creation thus partakes of two different origins of opposite nature. The dense qualities of physical substance that produces darkness, ignorance and evil, result from the nature of the void of non-existence and nothingness. Light, knowledge and good result from the Divine Attributes. Sufi sees all that is good in himself as a light from the Divine that is reflected on him, but that is not of him. Conversely, he sees himself as a base substance, full of darkness and ignorance, with a nature worse than that of an animal. This dual perception helps him loosen his attachment and turn towards the Divine Source of all Good. With this turning, the Almighty fills his heart with love and yearning for the Divine Presence.

As Sufism is not a religion or philosophy, it cannot be explained theoretically but can only be understood. A lot of anecdotes and stories are related to Sufis about their supernatural powers; their capabilities of reading others' thoughts; their simultaneous presence at different places; their healing powers and so on. Stated in simple words, a Sufi is a complete man, who exists in total harmony with the Universal Consciousness; who has surrendered his will completely to the will of the God and has merged his identity with that of God. And because of this merger, at times his desire becomes the command for the nature and, therefore, miracles happen otherwise they live happily in whatever condition the Almighty wishes them to be.

Hajrat Sa'ad, who was a companion of Prophet Muhammad, became blind in his last years. He had settled in Mecca, where lots of people used to visit him seeking his blessings. Although he did not bless every one, but those who were fortunate to receive his blessings were benefited and their difficulties were removed. Abdullah ibn-Sa'ad, who visited him as a child and received his blessing, asked him out of curiosity, 'Your prayers for others always seem to be answered. Why, then, you do not pray for your blindness to be removed?' The reply of Hajrat Sa'ad was, 'Submission to the Will of God is far better than the personal pleasure of being able to see.'

The Sufis want to be nothing. It is their ideal to lose all their identity i.e. the complete sacrifice of the self, the ego. Abu Sa'id ibn Abul-Khayr, one of the greatest Sufi Masters of the tenth and eleventh centuries AD, once went to attend a religious conference. On his arrival, as was customary, the announcer wanted to introduce him to the gathering, but he was at a loss for want of proper words for the introduction of the great Master. He asked his disciples, but they were also equally helpless. Looking at the announcer's dilemma, Shaikh Abu Sa'id came forward himself and told him to announce, 'No one, son of No one, has arrived.' The announcer did so. People were highly impressed by the humility of Shaikh Abu Sa'id that he wanted nothing to be attributed to him.

An interesting anecdote concerning the famous Sufi saint Bulleh Shah is related. It is said that once in the month of Ramzan, Bulleh Shah was offering prayers sitting inside a hut and some of his followers were eating carrot in front of the hut. Some Muslims who were observing fast (*Roza*) and were passing by asked them why were they eating at the time of *Roza*. The followers told them that they were eating because they were feeling hungry and asked them to mind their business. The passengers thought that perhaps they were not Muslims. To confirm this they asked the followers, 'who they were'? The followers replied, 'we are Muslims. Do Muslims not feel hungry?' The passengers asked them not to eat at the time of *Roza*, but the followers did not stop. The passengers who were riding on horses got down, snatched away carrots from them and also gave them a few blows. It also occurred to them that their Master would also be like them. They went inside the hut and asked Bulleh Shah, 'who he was'? Bulleh Shah was sitting with his eyes closed. He did not say anything and waved his hands. They again asked him. Bulleh Shah again waved his hands. They thought him to be mad and left the hut. Immediately after they left that place Bulleh Shah's followers appeared before him and started complaining. Bulleh Shah asked them that they must have done something wrong. In reply the poor followers said that they had done nothing wrong. Bulleh Shah then enquired with them, 'what did they ask you'? His followers told him that they asked us 'who we are' and we replied that 'we are Muslims'. Bulleh Shah told them, 'Look, you said you were some body and got beaten up. I did not claim to be any body, and I was saved.'

Abdul Samad, a disciple of Shaikh Abu Sa'id ibn Abul-Khayr narrated that he once regrettingly mentioned to his Shaikh that as he had been travelling, he could not attend his sermons and be benefited by the lessons. Shaikh Sa'id told him not to regret even if he misses the sermons for years, because he always said only one thing: 'Sacrifice your ego, and nothing more.'

The Sufi is pledged to the service of humanity. There is no good or evil for the Creator. Only the human society makes it so. The Sufis are also beyond good and evil but they are the people of the highest morality. They are different from others in that they are absorbed somewhere all the time. They do not notice good or bad. Sufis do not say: I do this or that. They do it. It is the Sufi way. If one thinks that he did a great thing, then it

goes; it has no value. The Sufi thinks that he did it because it was his duty. For them duty has a permanent value.

Sufis are lovers. They are Beloved of God. Prophet Mohammed was buried without a shroud. Why? The answer came after 1200 years. Sarmad, a Sufi saint, provided the answer. The ruler Aurangzeb asked him, 'what sort of a man are you; you have nothing to put on, look at you, you are naked; But I am a King. I can dress the whole nation, if I wish; my own garments are rich and wonderful! Sarmad replied, 'Who made you a King and me a beggar, is the same God. Those who are defective, those who are sinners, are supplied with clothes and worldly possessions, but those who are Saints, do not need all this, for they are Beloved of God!

The Sufi lives only in the present. He does not think of yesterday or of tomorrow. The Sufi is linked to the present moment and he lives in the Eternal Now. The present moment is the nexus between him and the Eternal. He listens to his inner self and acts accordingly. For him the present moment is the moment to achieve his target. He does not wait for a better or an auspicious tomorrow. He evolves every moment. He is like a wave, which propagates every moment.

Sufism can be considered as something approaching a universal faith with liberal teachings and great tolerance as exhibited in the conduct of most of the Sufis. The most important attributes that have contributed to their wide acceptance are their love for the humanity, purity of mind and perfection in their conduct. Sufis distinguish spirituality from religion. For them the Almighty is not concerned with one's religion but with love. Spirituality does not need following of any particular religion. Customs and rituals are only the outer form of religion, which depend upon the place and social circumstances. Spirituality, however, is seeking the Truth and self-realization that are the matters of soul, which is same in everyone and above all these things.

People do not have understanding of the reality and, therefore, they keep on fighting. Different people call grapes by different names. Persians call them *angur*, Turks call them *uzum*, Arabs call them *inab*, the Greeks call them *stafil* and the Indians call them *draksh*. Although they call them by different names, they all want grapes. They do not know that all of them want the same thing, the thing that they are lacking. It is the inner desire, inner wanting and inner lacking of something that is required to be fulfilled. The calling of grapes by different names by different people is like seeking different religions, but their essence is the same, the juice of the grapes, that is spirituality. One who understands what the people really desire and provides them with that is the Sufi. *

(*Maulana Rumi)

The Sufis are people with an open heart. They do not have any prejudices i.e. their mind is not preoccupied with any bias towards any one. They have no complex; neither are they overawed by the presence of kings, nor do they boast in the company of poor. They take things as they come. They do not condemn any one, even a known sinner, for they consider that to hurt someone's feelings is the biggest sin. For them to hurt others'

feelings is the same as hurting one's own feelings. They may, therefore, suffer bodily, but would not hurt their feelings. No difference exists between their conduct and their feelings, as a result of which they do not suffer from any complex.

A story is related. Once a very old and weak man went to see a Sufi Master to take his help in some matter. Because of nervousness and his disability to see properly he put his walking stick on the foot of the Sufi Master with its pointed end piercing and hurting him badly. Due to the weight of the old man, who was leaning against the stick to support himself, blood started flushing out of the wound but the Sufi Master remained unmoved, although he appeared to be in terrible pain. A person who was present there was wondering as to why the Sufi Master did not ask the old man to remove the stick. After the old man had left, he asked the Master the reason for it, who replied, 'If I had made any sign of pain the old man would have withdrawn in confusion and might have left without explaining his problem and I could not have allowed the poor man to feel sorry for his inadvertent action.'

Sufis consider three things as the test for the strength of human character; charity in poverty, holding on to the truth in fear and control on sensuous desires in seclusion. It is said that Gautam Buddha did not care for the presents people offered to him, howsoever valuable they were. Once on a similar occasion seeing people giving away costly gifts to Gautam Buddha, an old lady, a beggar, who was chewing a mango, was so moved that she offered to Gautam Buddha a mango that she had already chewed partly. Gautam Buddha stood up with great respect and received it with both the hands. People were astonished at this strange behaviour and asked Gautam Buddha the reason for this peculiar behaviour of his. Gautam Buddha said that while the people, who had given away costly gifts, had parted with only a fraction of their wealth, the poor lady had given away all her belonging. She only had that half chewed mango with her, which was her entire possession. Her charity was, therefore, the most meritorious.

Sufis consider it inexplicable that one seeks mercy for oneself but has no pity for others. They, therefore, offer same prayers for others, as for themselves. If one meets such a person, his heart gets filled with joy. One, who has met such a person, has met the whole humanity. The entire humanity is a part of such a great soul.

The great Sufi Master Abu Sa'id ibn Abul-Khayr in *Maqamat-i arba'in* considers Sufism (*tasawwuf*) to be the fortieth i.e. the highest state of spiritual attainments and defines the Sufi as one, 'who has purified of all desires; his inner being has purified from all wretchedness; his words are free from inadvertency, thoughtlessness and calumny; his mind is radiant and his eyes are turned away from the world. He has become instructed with the Truth.'*

(*Sayed Hussain Nasr in 'Living Sufism')

ANCIENT WISDOM

Sufism is as old as humanity. Traditionally, however, Sufism has been associated with Islam. Although Sufi saints existed even before Prophet Muhammad, but before the Prophet they were not called Sufis. It was only after a few centuries that they were called Sufis. According to Qushayri (988 AD) and some other scholars like Shihabuddin Suhrawardi, the term 'Sufi' was first used at the end of second century Hijri i.e. in the early ninth century AD. The term Sufi did not find a mention either in the Sihah-i-Sittah compiled in the 9th and 10th century AD or in the Arabic dictionary, the Qamus compiled in the early 15th century AD.

It is said that earlier there was a sect called 'Kamal Posh' (the blanket wearers). They went to every prophet of their time. A tradition goes that they went also to Jesus. No one, however, could satisfy them completely and they were told to this or that. But when they went to Prophet Muhammad, they were completely satisfied and, therefore, they stayed with him. When the 'Kamal Posh' were with Prophet Muhammad, he only looked at them without saying anything to them. He created love in their hearts (transmitted the knowledge of the Truth from his heart to their hearts) and that is why they were completely satisfied.

Prophet Muhammad is said to have received a two-fold revelation. One, the knowledge of the Absolute Truth, in his heart and the other that is embodied in the content of holy Qur'an. While the Qur'an was conferred the status of the Holy Book to govern the conduct of the Muslims, the transmission of knowledge of the Absolute Truth in the heart of Prophet Muhammad was meant only for a few, from heart-to-heart, through the line of succession i.e. from the Master to the disciple and so on. All the Sufi *tariqats* (different Sufi Orders), therefore, trace their origin in Prophet Muhammad.

It is said that Prophet Muhammad had a lot of regard for the Sufis. He fed them and asked his companions to do the same. * Ali-el-Hujwiri is quoted saying that Prophet Muhammad himself said: 'He who hears the voice of the Sufi people and does not say 'amin', is recorded in God's presence as one of the heedless.' **

(*John A Subhan in 'Sufism-Its Saints and Shrines')

(**Idries Shah in 'The Sufis')

It is believed that a large number of prophets of God preceded Prophet Muhammad. In Islamic traditions, the number of prophets is put at 124,000 and that of messengers of God at 313. The Qur'an mentions twenty-seven of them excluding Prophet Muhammad. Names of twenty-two out of these twenty-seven prophets are found in the Old Testament (Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses being the four prominent names), and three in the New Testament (Zacharias, John the Baptist-son of Zacharias and Jesus). The other two being Dhul Karnayn and Lukman. ***

(***Benjamin Walker in 'Foundations of Islam')

Maulana Rumi has said quoting the Qur'an that 'Prophets tell the people that if all the seas are turned into ink to be consumed in writing the Qualities and Attributes of the

Lord, the seas would dry up but the praises of the God cannot be completely written down.' The whole of the Qur'an, however, is transcribed in ink worth a little money. So, the whole of the knowledge is not this alone, for, even before Prophet Muhammad and his Qur'an, there were prophets like Moses and Jesus Christ and others and the words (knowledge) of God existed.

The early prophets were monotheists and they brought the message of the one true God. They wished to reform the society and opposed idolatry. Some of these prophets, who all suffered persecution as a result of their effort to reform the society included Shoayb in the north-west Arabia, Hud in the Southern Arabia and Salih in the western Arabia. It is believed that the Arabian tribes, who refused to listen to these prophets, were also destroyed in natural calamities due to their opposition to the prophets and adamancy to follow the path of their forefathers. The tribe of Madyan in northwest Arabia, who rebuffed Shoayb perished in an earthquake. The tribe of Ad in the southern Arabia was punished by a drought for not listening to Hud and the tribe of Thamud in western Arabia is also said to have perished in an earthquake due to their rejection of Salih as a foolish imposter and as a man bewitched.

The pre-Islamic monotheists, commonly known as Hanifs, are believed to exist widely amongst Arab tribes from about the fifth century AD. They did not believe in idol worship and openly disapproved of idolatry and desired to restore the religion of Abraham. They were the seekers of Truth, who engaged themselves in the search of Truth and believed in the unity of the Supreme Being. They laid a lot of stress on one's own conduct; living a moral life; compassionate and sympathetic behaviour with others, especially with those in need; on taking care of widows and orphans and helping the poor and sick. These ideals had their influence on Islam and some of these basic concepts of Islam had already started finding acceptance by the learned and thoughtful people. Some of the Prophet's companions including his relatives were also deeply influenced by such thoughts.

Some of the religious groups that were most influenced by these thoughts in the Arabian Peninsula were Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians and Sabians. The Sabians included many groups of people including those who followed some of the ancient religions. The Jews and the Christians had a huge following in the Arabian Peninsula before the advent of Prophet Muhammad. As the tradition goes, the Jews first settled in the parts of northern Arabia in the time of Moses. Historically, however, they settled in Arab about three centuries before Prophet Muhammad. There are references of Arabs converting to Christianity from early periods, many of whom were well renowned. The spread of Christianity was witnessed across the whole of the Middle East. It was around the same time, that is around three centuries before the advent of Islam, that both the Jews and Christians took the Arabian Peninsula in their fold in a big way. They generally lived peacefully together, except that one Jewish king of Himyar invaded a neighboring flourishing Christian community and persecuted them, forcing them to adopt Judaism else threw them to a burning trench.

The Christians were divided in various sects due to dissension amongst them. One of the sects was Manichean. Their followers were endowed with the qualities of zeal, integrity, devotion and sincerity. They also possessed knowledge of astronomy, medicines and mathematics. Many Muslims employed them owing to these qualities. Another sect, the Nestorians carried their religious doctrines far and wide, setting their centers at various places. Many devout Christians spent their lives in the service of sick and poor and in helping the needy. They also opposed the custom of burying the girl child alive that was prevalent amongst the Arabs during those days.

Some of the Christian monks started living in small monastic communities dedicating their lives in search of the Truth. These monks were highly regarded by people as they devoted themselves to prayer and meditation. They provided the travellers a place to rest for a while on their long journeys and comforted them by providing shelter and hospitality. These monks generally offered prayers five times a day and at times they spent the entire night in offering prayers. While meditating, they generally covered their heads so as to avoid getting distracted by external disturbances such as noises and sights. Some of them also practised prostrations (*Sijda*) and put their heads on ground as a mark of salutation to the Supreme Being. The marks on the forehead so caused by salutation were generally regarded as proof of a monk's piety.

It is believed that Prophet Muhammad had interactions with several of such monks and he appreciated their way of life, their devotion and humility. This also had an influence on his ideology, although he did not approve of the monastic life. Many of the Sufis who favoured monastic life were of the view that monastic life was to please the God and was divinely ordained but the way it was practised had become corrupted.

Sufism, to its followers meant to acquire the inner knowledge, the enlightenment that could enable them to realise the Truth, which is also the underlying objective of all the religions. This being central to all religions, the Sufi fundamentals existed in all religions and, therefore, Sufism travelled beyond the borders of religion. The essential of Sufism found an expression in all societies trying to achieve perfection. Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji used to say that not all the occult knowledge is given out at one time. As the humanity progresses, more and more knowledge is received. It is also stated in the Qur'an (15:21), 'We possess the treasures of everything but We bring it down only in a known quantity.' It is also related to Prophet Muhammad that he said that the Qur'an contains in it the knowledge of the ancients and the moderns.

The effort of Prophet Mohammed was to unite the Arabian tribes, make them believe in one God, reform them and to give them a religion adapted to their own requirements. In order to evolve them as a perfect society, they were asked to follow the Qur'an. The essential ingredients of Sufism are, therefore, found in abundance in the Qur'an. The mystical tendencies exhibited by some of Prophet Muhammad's companions and friends also find justification and support from the Qur'an. The tendency of

renunciation of worldly pleasures and intense fear of God and His judgments was profoundly manifested in the Sufism of these early Muslims.

The very early period of Islam witnessed it as a religion of reconciliation and concord with people being gently persuaded rather than being coerced into it. However, the infidelity and impious rule of the Umayyad immediately following the first four caliphs, created such political and social conditions that many Muslims became disgusted and adopted to asceticism and a life of seclusion to seek peace of soul. Towards the end of the first century Hijri, there were many who moved beyond the life of ascetics and seclusion to contemplation, to vision and to ecstasy. The life of austerity and poverty, which was hitherto conceived essential for gaining access to paradise, came to be reconciled as an expression of devotion to God. Not only that, gradually the focus shifted from material wealth to the lack of desire for possession i.e. a true detachment from all worldly things. Most of them were, however, orthodox Muslims in their beliefs and practices. They had yet not distinguished spirituality from the religion and laid great emphasis on the teachings of Qur'an and Traditions.

The Sufis in the period immediately after Prophet Muhammad spent their lives in fasting and in observing the rules of *Sharia* (the Islamic code of conduct), giving up the worldly pleasures-wealth, fame, feasts and women-and spent their time in solitude away from the society, seeking anonymity, hunger and celibacy. They usually lived on scanty food and wore little clothes. They were more concerned with the punishments and rewards for the infidels and the believers. In the ninth century AD, however, the Sufis recognized that spiritual progress couldn't be achieved by following *Sharia* alone. It was necessary for guiding their conduct, but not enough. They started adopting various spiritual practices over and above *Sharia*, known as *Tariqat* (the path). They considered following *Shariat* and *Tariqat* essential to reach the *Haqiqat* (the Truth).

The early caliphs conquered large areas, accumulated lot of wealth and became supreme political powers of their time. This resulted in many ancient centers of learning and particularly the traditional schools of mystical teaching also falling under their stronghold. Buddhism by that time was firmly rooted in the Central Asia that had come under the empire of Islam together with Northwest India.

The external contacts had their impact on various Sufi practices. They adopted and evolved a variety of practices (apparently different from the ritual prayers) to enhance their spiritual experiences and to attain the state of ecstasy. Some of the people, while still remaining within the Islamic fold, started following an unorthodox way of life, as a result of which the orthodox Muslims considered them as being 'outside the law'. These people started to believe that for the realisation of the Truth, it was not necessary to conform to a strict religious discipline. They believed more in the internal practices than observing outer rituals of offering prayers, observing fasts etc. One could perform a pilgrimage without taking a step out of the house. It is said that the great Sufi Master Bayazid while about to proceed for the *hajj* pilgrimage met an old man who said to him,

‘Circumambulate around me seven times. It is the same as going around the Kaaba and will save you time and trouble’. Bayazid complied with it and returned home. For them the real idolatry was blind adherence to the rituals. Many of the Sufis, therefore, did not stick to the *Sharia* and adopted the radical rules of their own.

This evolution of Sufi thinking was greatly influenced by many factors including emergence of Mutazilis-a rationalist group within Islam, Batinis-an esoteric group, Bisheriyas-an antinomian group; christological sects like the Gnostics and Manicheans and the mystical groups like the Hermetics and Neoplatonists. Sufi mystics are reported to be visiting monasteries of Christian monks, studying their devotional literature and having discussions with them on spiritual aspects. Many Sufis claimed their teachings were known even before the advent of Islam. They believed that these were received and handed down from antiquity through various saints and prophets in the form of knowledge transmitted from heart-to-heart.

The Sufis have been assimilating in themselves the best of various practices and thoughts in order to achieve the perfection. It is the ancient wisdom. According to Dr. S.S.Radhakrishnan, ‘Wisdom is not to be confused with theoretical learning, or correct beliefs, for ignorance is not an intellectual error. It is spiritual blindness. To remove it we must cleanse the soul of its defilement and kindle the spiritual vision.’ For the revelation of wisdom one needs to purify his heart and sacrifice his ego.

Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji has said that, ‘the way of training of Sufis is not exclusive to them alone; in the Srimadbhagwadgita it is described in a similar way. Except that the Sufis developed a system of *tavajjoh* (transmission of spiritual energy from heart to heart by focusing one’s attention), which is the only difference.’*

(*Irina Tweedie in ‘Daughter of Fire’)

In this context it is important to mention that Lord Sri Krishna states in Chapter 4 (Shloka1 and 2) of the Srimadbhagwadgita that ‘this knowledge was given in the past to Vivaswan. From Vivaswan, it passed on to Manu and Manu passed it on to Ikshwaku. This knowledge thus passed on in succession from one to another, but was lost in oblivion with the passage of time.’ The great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, Hajrat Maulana Shah Fazl Ahmad Khan (19th–20th Century AD) has said that this occult science of Sufi Saints in fact belonged to the ancient Hindu saints, which was lost in oblivion by them and is being now reintroduced amongst them.’

This ancient wisdom is the wisdom of the men who have realised the Truth. In the Srimadbhagwadgita Lord Sri Krishna reveals this ancient wisdom in the form of Sankhyayoga, Buddhiyoga and Karmayoga, the essence of which is that every one who has been born will have to die one day but the soul is eternal. The changes in the body do not mean changes in the soul. For a wise man pain and pleasure, loss and gain, victory and defeat are the same. He remains unperplexed in these. One, however, should not neglect his duty, as not performing one’s duty is a sin. When there is a struggle between the right and the wrong, one who stands away out of false sentimentality or cowardice

commits a sin. The path of selfless action is the right path in which there is neither loss of effort nor any fear of adverse result. One has to engage in one's duty with steadiness of mind. Performance of rituals for fulfillment of desires does not lead one to the enlightenment. One needs to perform his duty without seeking its fruits, with the evenness of mind in success or failure. Such an action releases one from the bond of birth and leads him to the blissful supreme state. One, whose mind has crossed the mire of delusion, grows indifferent to theoretical knowledge and attains insight, the wisdom.

One, who has overcome attachment, who neither rejoices in meeting with the good nor recoils in meeting with the evil, is said to have attained stability of mind. Dwelling on objects of senses produces attachment; attachment springs desires and desires result in anger. Anger in turn causes loss of reason and thereby complete ruin. The mind, therefore, needs to be disciplined to attain the purity of spirit, which ends all sorrows. Cessation of all desires, sacrifice of ego and giving away attachments results in peace and tranquility of mind. With the purity of mind, the soul experiences self-realisation and attains the Divine bliss.

There are two ways of self-realisation-one through the path of knowledge (renunciation) and the other through the path of action. Abstaining from action, however, does not give freedom from action. Nor by mere renunciation can one attain perfection. Besides no being can live without action even for a moment, as compelled by the nature everyone is driven to action. One, who outwardly restrains the organ of senses and abstains from action but dwells in mind is a hypocrite and deludes himself. On the other hand, one, who controls the organs of senses and action by the mind and performs his duty with a detached mind, is a superior being. By desisting from duty one cannot even maintain his body. One, who does not perform his duty, lives his life in vain. However, one, who is absorbed in the Self and takes delight and is contented with the Self, has no duty left for him. He has no selfish interest in things done or in things left undone. By performing one's duty selflessly, one attains the Supreme.

The conduct of great persons sets an example for the others. If they do not perform their duties, the others would imitate them and this would result in the ruin of the world. Knowledge is covered by the insatiable fire in the form of desires, which is the eternal enemy of the wise. Desire is never satisfied by fulfillment. One, therefore, needs to control his mind by reason. The senses are greater than the body; mind is greater than the senses and intellect is greater than the mind. The Self is, however, beyond the intellect. One, who has realised the Self and controlled his ego becomes truly invincible. The one whose actions are free from desires attains freedom from action, as all his actions are burnt by the fire of wisdom.

One in quest of knowledge should receive it by humble reverence and service from the man of wisdom (the Master), who have realised the Truth. This real knowledge reduces all actions to ashes, as the blazing fire reduces the fuel to ashes. One attains the tranquility of mind gradually through practice and having established the mind in God,

one should restrain it from all other objects and should bring it back to the concentration on God. One, who so unites with the all-Pervading Consciousness, sees the God present in all beings and all beings existing in the God. Such a person is greater than the man of action, knowledge or austerities. He is truly a realised man.

It is important to mention that this wisdom is revealed not as a theoretical knowledge but was a transmission from Lord Sri Krishna to Arjun from heart-to-heart. This revelation took place in the battlefield, where undoubtedly there was no time at the disposal of both Lord Sri Krishna and Arjun to enter into any intellectual discourse at the physical plane. This wisdom is also not a sermon of book-knowledge for a man to sit in the comfort of his house and to contemplate on it and thereby achieve the understanding or the realisation. Lord Sri Krishna asks Arjun to act in one of the most difficult situations of fighting against one's own kith and kin, leaving his self behind and with perfection. This exactly is the Sufi way, to learn through practice and participation and through one's own experience.

The reference to loss of this knowledge in oblivion is not the loss of theoretical knowledge, but it is to be understood in its proper context i.e. the loss of chain of succession. Spirituality is not a theoretical knowledge or learning. It dawns as a realisation and only one, who himself is a realised person can pass on this knowledge to others. Although Sufism is ancient wisdom, its chain of succession was lost. It has been reintroduced from time to time by the prophets and saints of God.

The Sufis thus are ancient spiritual freemasons and Sufism is very much older than Islam and even Buddhism. It took on the terminology of Islam but this was due to the customs and religion of the country where it was allowed to flourish; that is in Arabia and later in Persia.

The Sufism as we see it today has evolved as a synthesis of various thoughts. The advent of Islam, with the proclamation of Prophet Muhammad of the unity of the Supreme Being i.e. there is no god but one God, had the greatest influence on the Sufis of post-Islamic period. Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji has said that the doctrines of Islam, not the religion, were the highest, the most perfect teaching, 'There is only one God and nothing else besides Him.' The way it was presented was so perfect. *

(*Irina Tweedie in 'Daughter of Fire')

As already mentioned, by the end of eighth century AD, Sufism had evolved to a great extent as an unorthodox way of realising the Truth. Some of the early great Sufis were Hasan of Basra (d 728 AD), Wasil ibn Ata (d 749 AD), Abdullah ibn Maymun (d 760 AD), Ibrahim ibn Adham (d 777 AD), Rabia of Basra (d 801 AD), Maruf Karkhi (d 815 AD), Khabit (820 AD), Abu Sulaiman Darani (d 830 AD), Ahmad ibn Harith al Muhasibi (d 857 AD), Dhul Nun Misri (d 859 AD), Abu Yazid Bistami (d 875 AD), Hussain Mansoor Hallaj (d 992 AD), Abu Sa'id (d 1049 AD), Omar Khayyam (d 1123 AD), Sanai (d 1131 AD), Ibn Arabi (d 1240 AD), Maulana Rumi (d 1273 AD) and Hafiz (d 1389 AD).

Many of the Sufis propagated the ideas of Sufism by their poetical eloquence, which cut across religious and political boundaries and rocked one's inner conscience. Maulana Rumi, Hafiz and Amir Khusro are some of the prominent names in this regard. Hasan of Basra is considered to be one of the most revered early Sufis who was at the spiritual head of the line of succession of the three most prominent Sufi orders, namely the Qadiria, the Chishtia and the Suhrawardia. He was an exponent of the esoteric teachings of Islam. A staunch believer in free will, he laid a lot of stress on learning. One of his disciples, Wasil ibn Ata formed a group of rationalists and free thinkers, known as Mutazilis. Similarly Abdulla ibn Maymun's followers formed the Batini (esoteric) sect, which allowed a liberal interpretation of the Qur'anic texts, ascribing to them much deeper meanings.

Rabia of Basra, the first and the most famous of the women Sufi saints, followed the path of *tawakkul* i.e. complete dependence on God. When asked if she loved Prophet Muhammad, she is said to have replied that the love of God in her heart has left no room for any one else. She also regarded all rituals as meaningless, including visitation to Kaaba. One of her greatest contributions to Sufism was her conception of prayer, which she considered as a free and intimate supplication to God.

Mamun son of Harun al-Rashid, an Abassid caliph, recognized importance of religious discussions in the early ninth century AD and encouraged such discussions by the representatives of various creeds. In the eighth-ninth century AD theosophical and Gnostic speculations started finding place in the thoughts of various Sufi Masters such as Maruf al-Kharkhi, Abu Sulayman al-Darani and Dhul Nun Misri. ** This was the period when works of Greek philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle and Periphrasy were translated and studied.

(**Professor Nicholson in 'A Literary History of Arabs')

This period witnessed a rationalistic movement, which influenced Sufism to take a new form and absorb in it the characteristic features of theosophy, Gnosticism and pantheism. Dhul Nun Misri (d 859 AD) was a learned person, who often experienced conditions of ecstasy. He considered devotional music to be a divine influence, which could help one attain unto the God. He was a free thinker. On suspicion of heresy he was imprisoned by the then caliph Mutawakkil but was later released and held in high esteem. He is credited by Jami in *Nafhatu'l Uns* to be the first person to profess the tenets of Sufism.

Abu Yazid al-Bistami (Bayazid, d 875 AD) was one of the greatest Sufi Masters of the ninth century AD, who was the first one to speak about the reality of *fana* i.e. annihilation or merger of one's identity completely with the God. He said that one could not reach the Almighty either through the renunciation of the world, as the value of the lower world to Him was like the wings of a mosquito, or through *tawakkul* (trust in God), as He never betrayed the trust of any one; one could, however, enter the Presence of the God only through God. He also spoke about his realisation that it was not true that he

remembers Him; he knows Him; he loves Him; and that he seeks Him. He said that His remembrance of me preceded my remembrance of Him; His knowledge about me preceded my knowledge about Him; His love towards me was more ancient than my love towards Him; and He sought me in order that I may begin to seek Him. According to him the only way to reach the God was to 'leave yourself and come' i.e. leave one's self interest, to leave everything else other than the God behind. The pantheistic features of Sufism are attributed to Bayazid.

Hussain ibn Mansoor Hallaj is held as one of the greatest early Sufis, who was imprisoned, mutilated and hanged and finally mutilated and burnt for his famous uttering '*Anal Haq*' (I am the Truth), considering that this was a claim to divinity and, as such blasphemy. Many of the Sufis of the time felt that Hallaj had breached the trust of God in revealing His secret and they did not support him. This is reflected in the couplet:

*'Saja sulī ki hi mansoor ko wajib thi,
Kisi ka raaj kyon khole kisi ka raajdan hokar'*

(The punishment of being hanged and beheaded was appropriate for Hallaj, as he had no right to disclose the secret of someone, who held him in trust.)

The later Sufis, however, praised him. Maulana Rumi went even to the extent of saying that Hallaj's utterance of '*Anal Haq*' was the height of humility. If one says, 'I am the slave', it means existence of two, the Master i.e. the God and the slave that is the self. But in saying 'I am the Truth' there is no other existence except that of God. The existence of self has vanished completely. This is the complete merger of the self in the God. This is the height of humility to be completely annihilated into the God. People, however, do not have this understanding and, therefore, they are not able to appreciate it. * The explanation of the utterance, '*Anal Haq*' (I am the Truth), in the state of *fana* is given by the example of the red-hot iron rod. In the fire, the iron was red hot. It said, 'Come on I will burn you. I am fire,' but when it got out of fire it was the same iron, hard and cold.

(*Dr. Bankey Bihari in 'Fiha Ma Fiha'-Table Talks of Maulana Rumi)

Sufism was also greatly influenced by the broad mindedness of the Kashmiris, a composite of Hindu-Muslim culture, especially in the 15th Century AD. The famous Sufi saint Sayyedali Hamadani from Hamadan in Central Asia had visited Kashmir around 1437 AD and spent about six years in Kashmir spreading the message of Islam amongst Kashmiris. He had interaction with Yogini Laleshwari, a famous saint and devotee of Lord Shiva. She was married in Kashmir. Her mother-in-law and later even her husband turned against her and started harassing her. As a result, she left her house and started wandering here and there, devoting herself completely to Lord Shiva. She got so engrossed in her love for Lord Shiva that she did not care even for clothing herself. People used to throw stones at her and ridicule her. In her eyes, however, no one was a man except Lord Shiva and she saw every human being as Lord Shiva's beloved. When she spotted Sayyedali Hamdani, she uttered, '*Purush*' (man), ran away and jumped into a

burning *Tandoor* (a large earthen oven). Sayyeddi Hamadani followed her and reached the spot. People thought that she would have burnt to ashes, but she came out of the *Tandoor*, dressed in green attire on calling by Sayyaddi Hamadani. Both of them were deeply impressed with each other, resulting in a synthesis of *Vedanta*, *bhakti* and Islam.

It is also reported that Mir Mohammed Hamadani (Son of Sayyeddi Hamadani), who was a determined protagonist of Orthodox religion had held a debate with Shaikh Nooruddin Wali, who was opposed to brutal bigotry. Dehat bibi, a disciple of Shaikh Nooruddin Wali brought about a final reconciliation between the two, blending the best of Islam and Vedanta. It is also said that Mir Mohammed Hamadani thereafter honoured Shaikh Nooruddin Wali with *Khat-e-Irshad* (letter of acceptance). This resulted in propagation of non-violence and respect for all faiths. The ideal of life was considered to purify the soul, have love, regard and trust in the humanity and to achieve a perfect harmony of co-existence. There appeared a close resemblance between the life styles of Sufis and Hindu saints as well as Buddhist monks. *

(*Firoz Bakht Ahmed)

SUFI PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

The Sufis are the men of the highest morality. They are the people who behave according to the need of the time. They are not bound by the shackles of rituals and customs. Religion for them is important only so long as it does not hinder spiritual progress. The greatest religion for them is the love for the humanity and not to hurt anyone's feelings. Their objective being to evolve as a complete man by improving one's character and conduct the principles and practices adopted by them revolve around these central ideas and are to be seen in this light.

A Sufi seeker has to complete his journey to self-realisation. He has to find his Beloved within himself, for He can be found only in a heart that has been purified by the fire of love. The distance, however, can be covered in a moment, the Truth can be realised in a moment, if one wants it as desperately as a drowning man wants the air. Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji has said, 'to make a Saint takes no time. But who is prepared to sacrifice everything? Then this world shall be nothing, non-existent for him anymore. Who is prepared to accept it?' The Master has to arouse this longing in the disciple and keep the fire burning. The principles and practices adopted by the Sufis are aimed at achieving this objective.

The story of thirty birds narrated by the great Sufi Master Farrauddin Attar in his book *Mantiqu't Tayr* (or *Birds' Conference*) is an allegory of the journey of a Sufi wayfarer to self-realisation. The story runs that a group of birds gather together to find their king. They ask a wise hoopoe to help them, who tells them the name of their king as Simurgh (which in Persian means thirty birds; si-thirty and murgh-birds) and that the king lives far off in hiding in the mountain of Kaf. Hoopoe also tells them how dangerous and difficult it is to reach that place. They will have to cross five valleys and two deserts before reaching the top of the mountain. On the insistence of the birds to guide and help them reach the king, the hoopoe starts training them. Some of the birds with weak wills start losing interest and find excuses to back out. One of the birds speaks of its love with roses and that it has found the secret of love. The hoopoe explains that the love of worldly things will vanish one day and, therefore, to give up his deluded attachment to the rose. The hoopoe encourages the other birds giving them examples of those who already had made this journey.

The birds set on their journey to the first valley. They realise that the journey was more difficult than what they had imagined. Some of them, therefore, again start making excuses. Some even start challenging hoopoe's wisdom and others start expressing their longing for comforts of a luxurious life. The hoopoe decides to tell the birds what lies ahead so that they could be better prepared for facing the difficulties of the path. The hoopoe tells them that they will have to pass through the five valleys of Search, Love, Knowledge, Detachment and Unity and the two deserts of Bewilderment and Annihilation.

He explains the first valley as the Valley of Quest where one restlessly seeks for the Truth. A dedicated seeker only can cross this valley safely for the next, which is the Valley of Love. In this valley the fire of love for the king grows so intense that it becomes all-consuming. Though this valley is more dangerous than the first one but the power of true love takes one through to the third valley, the Valley of Knowledge where on entering the valley one's heart is illuminated with the light of the Truth and with the knowledge of the Beloved. The next valley is the Valley of Detachment, where one is freed of all desires. The fifth valley is called the Valley of Unity, where one feels unity of all existence. Each new place is more dangerous than the previous one, putting the seeker to various trials and difficulties. After crossing the five valleys one enters the Desert of Bewilderment, where one forgets everything, about all existence. Finally the seeker enters the Desert of Annihilation, where remains nothing of the self, which merges completely in the Beloved. This is the end of the journey where one finds the king.

The excited birds resume their journey. Some of them die of heat, some are tired to continue their journey, some get distracted by the treasures they find on the way, so they are left behind. Only thirty birds are able to reach the door of the king at the top of the mountain of Kaf, where the doorkeeper confronts the birds with the record of their deeds. On recalling their deeds the birds feel ashamed but having travelled all the distance their bodies and souls were purified, as a result of annihilation of their self. Finally the King's personal servant ushers in the thirty birds to the King's Presence. The birds see there nothing, no Simurgh (thirty birds), but only themselves, the thirty birds. They realise that by looking at themselves, they have found the King and in the search of the King the birds have found themselves.

The essence of the story is that the Almighty can be known only by knowing the self. The only window open to realise Him is one's own heart. The mirror of the heart is to be purified and cleansed of all dust and rusting i.e. one has to get rid of all worldly desires and aspirations in order to see His reflection in this mirror. There is no other way, no other possibility of realising Him, except through the heart. No amount of austerities can help one unless the heart is softened; it is melted by the fire of love.

The book-knowledge more often results in the hardening of the heart, as it makes one feel that he knows everything, but on the contrary in practical terms he remains far away from the reality. Once a great Sufi Master saw a seeker carrying some books. He told him that the books were of no use to him because he would not understand them; and if he keeps the book for the future to read them when he has acquired the capacity to understand them, he would not need them then any way. This is, however, not to say that one should discard the books. The books help in explaining one's experiences, but they cannot substitute in place of the experience. One can read any number of books on swimming but he cannot have the experience of floating and cannot learn swimming unless he jumps into the water. Similarly one cannot learn to strike balance on a bicycle unless one rides on it. No amount of theoretical learning can teach anyone swimming or cycling. Similarly spirituality is an inner awakening achieved through and reflected in

one's conduct. Spirituality is a matter of soul and can be acquired only through the purification of the heart.

Some of the practices commonly prescribed by almost all the religions to purify one's heart include observation of silence, solitude and fast; giving away alms; spending on charity; and offering ritual prayers. Shah Naqshband, the great Sufi Master used to fast most of the days. If, however, a guest visited him and he had something to offer him, he would give him company, break his fast and eat with the guest. He followed Shaikh Abul Hassan Kharqani, who said in his book-The Principles of the Way and the Principles of Reaching Reality, 'Keep harmony with friends, but not in sinning'. This meant that if you were fasting and someone came to you as a friend, you must sit with him and eat with him in order to keep proper company with him. The reason behind the principle is that one should conceal his act of fasting, or worshipping etc. If one reveals it, for example by saying to the guest, 'I am fasting,' then pride may enter and ruin the fast.

One day Shah Naqshband was offered a cooked fish, which he gave to poor people with him. Among them was a very pious boy who was fasting. Shah Naqshband gave the fish to them and asked the boy also to sit and eat. The boy, however, refused in spite of repeatedly being told. Shah Naqshband offered to give him whole of his Ramzan, but the boy still refused. He then said, 'Bayazid al-Bistami was once burdened with a person similar to you.' The boy was thereafter seen running after the worldly life.

The incident referred to by Shah Naqshband concerned Bayazid's servant and Shaikh Abu Turab an-Naqshabi, who invited the servant to sit and eat with him. The servant said, 'No. I am fasting.' The servant refused to eat even for the reward of two years of fasting. Hajrat Bayazid then said, 'Leave him. He has been dropped from *Allah's* care.' Later his life degenerated and he became a thief.

People generally consider religion as a matter of devotion and faith where reason or argument has no role to play. This is not the right attitude. Faith can be considered as that state of mind where one considers the matter put before him to be right in all respects. It could be possible that one may not be able to comprehend all aspects of that matter but supported by conjecture or inference one believes in its truth. Faith, therefore, can be said to be based on reasoning and analysis. The objective of the religion is to enhance human experiences so that the principles they have been following to guide their lives should gradually lead them to realisation and their lives be based on the truth. The religion that asks its followers to close their eyes and not to use their intelligence or knowledge is not true religion. When even for ordinary worldly affairs one is asked to use his brain, how can one act blindly in the matter of religion and spirituality? Human beings have not been blessed with intelligence and the faculty of reasoning without any purpose.

The worldly knowledge is acquired through three means; through senses such as by seeing, listening, smelling, touching and tasting; through conjecture and inference, the

root of which also lies in the senses; and the third is the words of the great people, although they are also perceived by the senses. The foundation of all this knowledge lies in the mind and intellect. The intellect is the reservoir, the mind is the big channel and the five senses are the small channels, which join the mind. All this forms the basis of gathering knowledge. As regards conjecture and imagination, one often comes across examples of sensing the existence of fire by looking at smoke, or of occurrence of rains by looking at clouds. This knowledge may or may not be accurate, but the possibility of its being true cannot be denied. The words of great people carry a lot of weight as their words are based on the truth and they have risen above the selfish interest. One, therefore, needs to acquire the knowledge in order to know the truth. Looking at the limited period of life, it would not be possible for anyone to experiment with everything and base his knowledge only on self-experience. It will be foolishness not to benefit from others' experiences while at the same time making use of one's own intelligence and knowledge. If, however, one is not able to understand the truth of something at a particular moment, he should wait for him to grow to that truth in order to understand its reality and to benefit from it when the time arrives. Shah Baha'uddin Naqshband, the great Sufi Master said that 'if the follower is confused about something his Shaikh has said or done, he should be patient and should not become suspicious. While a beginner might ask, a *murid* (disciple or an adept seeker) has no reason to ask and should remain patient with what he doesn't yet understand'.

One should accept the things that he has understood and wait for the right time for others, which are yet not understood. For the Sufis the importance is not of what one knows, but that of what he has understood and, therefore, become a part of his existence. The progress of humanity is based on understanding.

Sufis consider that the knowledge of the Truth can be based only on self-experience. There is no other way to realise the Truth except through one's own experience. All the practices are aimed at gaining the capability and to enhance the completeness of this experience. If the religion helps one in this realisation it is worth it, otherwise it is of no use. The essence of all the religions of the world is this that the man should know his own real worth. He knows the worth of everything else but does not know his own worth and that is why he acts as a fool. The Master makes him know his real worth and leads him to the realisation of the Truth through his (seeker's) own understanding and experience. This is the task of the Master to lead the seeker to this understanding and to develop the capacity in the seeker to realise the Truth.

The basic principles of Sufism were given by Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujdawani, who was one of the greatest Sufi Masters of the Naqshbandi Sufi Order. Till about the 6th Century Hijri, the Sufis practised loud *dhikr* (*jikr*, *japa* or remembrance) i.e. they used to recite the name of the Almighty loudly by tongue. One day while reading the Qur'an, Shaikh Ghujdawani came across the *Ayat*: 'Call upon your Sustainer humbly, and in the secrecy of your hearts.' This prompted him to inquire about the silent *dhikr*. He was the first one in the Sufi orders to use silent *dhikr* and was later considered the master of silent

dhikr. He coined the following phrases to which three more principles were added later by Muhammad Baha'uddin Shah Naqshband after whom the Order acquired its name. In his book *Faslul-Kitab*, Shaikh Muhammad Parsa, a friend and biographer of Shah Naqshband, said that the method of Shaikh Khwaja Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujdawani in *dhikr* and the teachings enunciated in his Eight Principles were embraced and hailed by all the forty *tariqats* (Sufi Orders) as the way of Truth and loyalty.

(i) *Hosh dar Dam* (Conscious Breathing)-The true seeker should always be alert that he does not take any breath devoid of God's remembrance. He must remain in God's Presence with every breath. Every breath taken consciously is alive and every breath taken in heedlessness is to be considered to have been lost. One should ensure with every breath that he does not indulge in doing a wrong or a sin. Shah Naqshband said, 'This Order is built on breath. One, therefore, must safeguard his breath in the time of his inhalation and exhalation and in between.' Similarly, Ubaidullah al-Ahrar said, 'The most important mission for the seeker in this Order is to safeguard his breath.' In his book, *Fawatih al-Jamal*, Shaikh Abul Janab Najmuddin al-Kubra said, '*Dhikr* is flowing in the body of every single living creature by the necessity of their breath-even without will-as a sign of obedience, which is part of their creation.' It is, therefore, necessary to be in the Presence of the Almighty with every breath, in order to realise the Essence of the Creator. It is, however, difficult for seekers to secure breath from heedlessness. Therefore, they must safeguard it by seeking forgiveness, which will purify and sanctify it and prepare them for the Real Manifestation of the Almighty everywhere.

(ii) *Nazar bar Kadam* (Watch Your Step)-Each step moved forward should be taken consciously i.e. one should not do anything which may drag him down or which may obstruct his spiritual progress. It also means that one should avoid looking here and there aimlessly as the mind by seeing forms impression. This is why Sufi saints ask their followers to look at their feet while walking. As the mind becomes more and more purified by various practices, it becomes more and more prone to be afflicted; a spot on a spotless clean sheet is more likely to be visible and noticed than on a dirty sheet. The first glance is, however, harmless but a second look i.e. a deliberate look forms an impression on the mind. One should therefore, take each step forward in His remembrance.

Shamsuddin Habib *Allah*, a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, used to say that once when a man was coming to see his Master Shaikh Nur Muhammad, his eyes fell on a woman on the street. As soon as he reached before Shaikh Nur Muhammad, he told him that he saw the traces of adultery in him and asked him to protect his eyes next time. Similarly, once a man saw an alcoholic on the street. When he reached before Shaikh Nur Muhammad he told him, 'I am seeing in you the traces of alcohol.' A similar incidence is related to Thakur Ram Singhji, another great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order. A young person used to visit him. Once when this man was coming to see Thakur Ram Singhji his eyes fell on a girl. When she had crossed him, this man turned back and saw her again. When he met Thakur Ram Singhji, he remarked, 'Here come some people,

who turn back and see others' and then started talking something else. This remark had a deep impact on him.

It is said that Gautam Buddha used to walk slowly and that he took every step forward with full consciousness. Similarly Prophet Muhammad also while walking never looked left or right but towards his feet. Lowering the gaze i.e. looking at the ground is also a sign of humility. Those in authority, full of pride and arrogance do not look down. Keeping eyes on one's feet also helps one to concentrate and to reach his destination faster.

Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi, a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, in one of his letters has written that the gaze precedes the step and the step follows the gaze. When the step reaches that place, gaze is raised higher and then the step again follows the gaze. Spiritually perhaps it may mean that one must keep his objective constantly in view and if one does so one is bound to reach his destination.

(iii) *Safar dar Watan* (Journey Homeward)-This means that the seeker must move from the world of creation to the world of Creator. Moving away from worldly desires and human weaknesses and acquiring godly characteristics is known as '*Safar dar Watan*.'

The Naqshbandi Sufi Order divides this journey into two parts. The first is external in which the seeker desires and searches for the Master. The internal journey begins with the blessing and grace of the Master. The internal journey leads to the purification of his heart and makes him eligible to receive the Divine grace.

(iv) *Khilawat dar Anjuman* (Solitude in the Crowd)-'*Khilawat*' means seclusion, both external and internal. External seclusion requires the seeker to be away from people, staying by himself and spending his time in the remembrance of God. This helps in gaining control over sensual perceptions and reaching the state of internal seclusion. The internal seclusion means whether amidst a crowd, walking or doing anything else, one should constantly have his mind attuned to the Almighty. This is the state of Sufi adept that they remain constantly in the Presence of the Almighty. Worldly affairs do not disturb them, as Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi has said, 'Perfection is not in exhibition of miraculous powers, but perfection is to sit among people, sell and buy, marry and have children; and yet never leave the presence of *Allah* even for one moment.'

(v) *Yad Kard* (Essential Remembrance)-'*Yad*' means remembrance and '*kard*' means essence of remembrance. To keep oneself continuously engaged in reciting the '*japa*' (the internal practice as directed by the Master) and in such a manner that the seeker starts feeling the presence of the Master or the Almighty in his heart is the Essential Remembrance.

(vi) *Baj Gasht* (Returning)– The literal meaning of ‘Baj Gasht’ is to return back to the origin. In its true sense, however, it refers to developments during internal practice when the seeker may come across different experiences such as sighting of light, activation of the mystique centers, acquisition of miraculous powers etc. These experiences may often result in the downfall of the seeker due to arousal of the ego. The great Masters of this Order have, therefore, recommended the seekers to keep on praying the Almighty at intervals that He alone is the objective of the seeker; He may give strength to the seeker to be happy in whatever condition He keeps and beg Him for His love and knowledge.

(vii) *Nigah Dasht* (Attentiveness)-The seeker should always keep an eye on his internal condition so that no doubt or ill thought ever arises and he constantly keeps on remembering the Almighty. If ever such a thought arises, one should immediately check that thought, otherwise if it once stays in the mind, it may become difficult to clear it later. Sufism is to protect one’s heart from bad thoughts and from worldly inclinations.

(viii) *Yad Dasht* (Recollection)– It means continuous remembrance. When the seeker through practice becomes so apt that the remembrance continues in the heart effortlessly on its own, it is called *Yad dasht*.

The three principles added by Muhammad Baha’uddin Shah Naqshband are:

(ix) *Wakoof Zamani* (Awareness of Time)–The seeker must watch that the time at his command is spent in the remembrance of the Almighty and he must make all efforts to make progress on the path of spirituality. The seeker must recount his actions and deeds and seek His forgiveness for the wrong doings.

(x) *Wakoof Adadi* (Awareness of Numbers)– According to the principle of Wakoof Adadi, one should while holding the breath recite the name of the God, feeling His Presence in the heart, in odd number i.e. 5,7,9,11,21 etc. The real meaning of Wakoof Adadi, however, appears to be that the Almighty is One and He likes Oneness. It perhaps also means that one should remember the Almighty alone.

(xi) *Wakoof Kulbi* (Awareness of the Heart)–The seeker should always have an eye on his heart (*Kulb*) so that his attention is always towards the Divine Presence and it may not be diverted elsewhere.

Sufis consider their spiritual training as a journey and the seeker is addressed as a wayfarer, who travels the path, passing through various stages and experiences. Although different Sufi Orders (*tariqats*) state them differently but most of them agree on the basic tenets. The first step for the wayfarer to prepare himself for the higher stages of spirituality is ‘*tauba*’ (to repent) for the sins committed by him in the past knowingly or unknowingly. This is the awakening from unconsciousness. The wayfarer becomes alert and keeps an eye on his actions. He repents for his past sins and wrong doings and makes

a firm resolve not to indulge in them again. However, if he is not committed to refrain from such actions in future, he is not to be considered as a true repentant.

Repentance, however, does not vanish the outcome of action. Every person has an aura around him. The colours present in the aura keep on changing constantly depending upon one's deeds. With the *Satvik* (pure) actions, the aura turns very bright and golden, with *rajoguni* actions (indulgence in luxury and show off) it turns red and with *tamoguni* actions (bad) it becomes black. Thus with different intensities of thoughts and desires, the shades present in one's aura keep on changing. The colours present in the aura as a result of one's deeds do not vanish till one undergoes the outcome of one's actions. After bearing the brunt of one's deeds, one becomes purified and acquires capability to make spiritual progress, provided one does not indulge again in spoiling one's aura. The aura also helps in making spiritual progress since as the colours change in the aura they have their impact on the body, mind and thoughts. The aura not only indicates the fall or rise of the one to whom it belongs, but also influences one's friends and relatives. The peace one feels in the company of great persons and saints is not as a result of their teachings alone, but mainly because of the influence of their aura that cleanses the mind of the visitor. Similarly, bad people also have their influence on others. Until such people change their conduct, it is better to avoid them. But one should pray the Almighty for them. If one's thoughts are pure, there is no reason that they would not influence those coming in his contact. The spiritual progress depends upon the purity of thoughts.

The aura around saints happens to be very bright and golden in Colour, with that around head being more intense than the other parts of the body. With the progress in acquisition of the knowledge of Truth, first the aura becomes visible lightly and as the ego and desires vanish, the aura intensifies, and gradually a bright light alone is left.

According to the rule of action, if one begs for forgiveness and takes a vow not to indulge in bad deeds again, there is a possibility of being forgiven. Bad deeds result not only in suffering bodily or mentally but also in a mental unrest that blocks spiritual progress. A firm commitment not to indulge in wrong doings again, repentance in the heart and a vow to do good in the future, take away the darkness from the heart and cleanses it. As a result one undergoes the suffering with a steady mind and does not act like a weak person who considers even a little suffering to be too much and keeps on crying. There is a lot of difference between the two from the point of view of the strength to forbear the suffering. Going through the sufferings and vanishing of the unrest from the mind, which was an obstruction in making spiritual progress, in reality means being forgiven.

There is another way of being forgiven, but only for highly spiritual persons. The outcome of the deeds can neither be increased nor decreased, but there is a possibility of change. There are two components of suffering resulting from wrong doings. These are the intensity of suffering and the duration of the suffering. The product of the two i.e. the intensity and the duration determines the quantum of the suffering. Thus, by increasing

the intensity, the duration can be reduced, which brings about the desired change. One may also be made to undergo the suffering in the dream. All this, however, requires both knowledge and the strength to forbear the suffering and can be done only by a Master. Sufi Masters often help their disciples in this manner.

The next step after *tauba* is renunciation of worldly possessions i.e. living in poverty. The real meaning of poverty, however, is lack of desire for worldly possessions. It is the sense of possession that is to be given up. Everything originates from the God and He alone is the real owner of whatever that exists. If one possesses something, he thinks himself to be the caretaker of that thing which is to be used for the benefit of all. To live a life of simplicity and contentment is living a life of poverty.

Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji used to say, 'How does one swim? One throws water behind; and the more one throws water behind, more one propels ahead. It is the same in spiritual life. You keep throwing the world behind. This is the only way. You forget the world for something superior. If you have ten rupees, you remember it; but when you get ten thousand rupees, you forget the ten rupees you had, although the ten rupees may still be there with you. You do not think of them anymore.'

The physical desires arise due to lack of knowledge. With the knowledge of Truth, desires vanish. One always craves for peace, but follows the wrong path. One searches for the comfort in material things but it does not lie in them. One himself is the source of peace and happiness but searches them outside. In fact the happiness lies in the soul. Peace in mind gives happiness. When the desires are not fulfilled, one feels discontented and the feeling of happiness is suppressed. On fulfillment of desire, the feeling of happiness reappears. One feels that the happiness was in that thing, whereas that thing only had removed the feeling of discontentment, which had suppressed the feeling of happiness. Desires disturb a peaceful mind in the same way as a stone thrown into still water. Desires are endless and, therefore, can never be fulfilled completely. The cause of our miseries thus is desires, which obstruct us to realise the Truth. The only way to overcome desires is to feel contented i.e. one should neither feel attached with anything nor should one hate anything. One does not acquire peace by renouncing material things because the real peace can be acquired only by sacrificing one's ego and thereby removing the attachment towards material things. One should also not renounce relations with a view to attain spiritual advancement because by doing so the ego will not vanish, instead it will be inflated because of the pride taken in renunciation.

After renunciation comes abstinence i.e. to control one's mind and to restrain it from indulging in sensuous pleasures against the dictates of scriptures. To do so often people adopt practices like observing fast, silence and solitude. Sufis, however, lay stress on the evolution of the inner-self and consider it more important than physical restraints. True repentance, *Satsang* (company of one's Master) and receiving Master's grace (*tavajjoh*) are considered more helpful. In the company of the Master, the seeker starts

feeling that the knots of sensual pleasure hitherto tying his mind are loosening and their place is being taken over by the love for the Master or the God.

After this the wayfarer reaches the state of '*tawakkul*' (trust in the God), and then to '*raza*' (to live as He desires). Trust in God means complete dependence on God. It does not befit a devotee to look towards anyone else except God. One should have firm faith in Him. All that happens happens according to His desire. The seeker now learns to be thankful to the Almighty in whatever condition He keeps. He learns to live according to the desire of the Almighty. Both the sorrows and happiness are considered to be His blessings. The reactions become dull and one starts accepting things as they are. Fully content the seeker now sees His grace in everything. This leads him to the state of '*fana*' or merger with the Almighty.

'*Fana*' and '*baqa*' are two important concepts of Sufism, which are major milestones on the path of spiritual progress. '*Fana*' or annihilation is the state that precedes the state of 'subsistence' (or *baqa*). It is said that Bayazid al-Bistami was the first one to speak about the reality of '*fana*' i.e. merging ones identity completely with the Almighty, in which the essence, the attributes and actions of the seeker become the essence, attributes, and actions of the God. Ibn Taymiyya, one of the great scholars of 7th Century A.H. (13th Century A.D.), considered him to be one of his Masters and said about him that Bayazid experienced '*fana*' of the category for the perfect prophets and saints. Bayazid reached a state of complete renunciation of anything other than God. He accepted and worshipped none except the God and he asked from none except the God.

The great Sufi Master Abu Sa'id ibn Abu'l-Khayr in *Maqamat-i arba'in* describes the state of *fana* in the following words: 'They melt their carnal souls in the crucible of annihilation and become annihilated from all that is below Him. Their tongues do not speak of the things of this world. There is nothing upon their tongues save His Name. Their bodies do not move save to obey Him and their minds do not spring to action save for Him.' He describes *baqa* in the following words: 'If they look to the right they see the God and if they look to the left they see the God. They see Him in whatever condition they are. They subsist through His subsistence. They are satisfied with what He has ordained for them. They are joyous because of His grace and bounty.'*

(*Sayed Hussain Nasr in 'Living Sufism')

The Sufis believe that the purpose of human life is to attain the state of merger i.e. unity with the Almighty (*fana-fil-Allah*) and then to live in that state (*baqa*). When one approaches the stage of merger, it is called *Salokyata* and *Samipyata* (the state of Nearness). From here one moves to *Sarupyata* (*baqa*) and *Sayujyata* (the state of complete Unity-*baqa-dar-baqa* or *baqa-bil-baqa*).

Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi in one of his famous books '*Maktubat*' described the states of *fana*, *baqa* and beyond as under:

- Moving to *Allah* is a movement vertically upwards until the movement surpasses time and space and all the states dissolve into what is called the Necessary Knowledge Of *Allah*. This is also called Annihilation (*fana*).
- Moving in *Allah* is the stage beyond the state of Names and Attributes, where the seeker moves to a state, which neither word nor sign can describe. This is the State of Existence in *Allah* Called *baqa*.
- Moving from *Allah* is the stage in which the seeker returns from the heavenly world to the world of cause and effect, descending from the highest station of knowledge to the lowest that matches the understanding of human beings. Here he forgets *Allah* by *Allah*, and he knows *Allah* with *Allah*, and he returns from *Allah* to *Allah*. This is called the State of the Farthest and the Nearest.
- Moving in things is a movement within creation. This involves knowing intimately all elements and states in this world after the stage of *fana*. Here the seeker can achieve the State of Guidance, which is the state of the prophets and saints. It brings the Divine Knowledge into the world of creation in order to Establish Guidance.

He has also mentioned that the entire process is like threading a needle. The thread seeks the eye of the needle, passes through and then meets with its beginning. The two ends meet there, form a knot and secure the entire thread. They form a whole; thread, eye and needle, sewing in and any material they catch into the fabric of the unity.

To reach this state of merger where exists no name, no shape, nothing but Nothingness, the first step is to forget oneself, to become like a dead person. The difference between a dead person and this state, however, is that while in death everything is lost in oblivion but in the state of merger one remains in the state of Presence. Thus, while for everything else, one is like a dead person, yet one remains in the state of Presence, which is the real objective of merger. A person, who has reached such a state, even for one moment, is called '*Wali*' i.e. a person who has entered in the arena of the Nearness.

For Sufis the only real objective is realisation. They consider acquisition of miraculous powers as distraction, which may take one away from the path of realisation. If one focuses only on this real objective, one is sure to achieve it. However, it is not uncommon that one comes across many seekers who fall into the trap of miraculous powers and lose their way. Sufis, therefore, lay stress on keeping the real objective always before them and to use time and effort in realising the same.

Different people, however, have different characteristics and, therefore, depending upon their individual characters, the method of teaching or the practice to be

adopted by a seeker may vary. A thing that may impress and benefit one may not benefit another. For example, one having a better faculty of listening (sound) may be more benefited if asked to engage in *japa* (remembrance).

The path to spirituality essentially involves three steps. The first is to turn one's attention towards it, the second is to attend *Satsang* (i.e. to be in the Company of a realised soul i.e. one's Master), which is the easiest way to overcome one's ego, and the third is to develop a keen desire to realise the Absolute Truth. In fact, the first step gradually leads to the second and the second step leads to the third and if the seeker is committed to his resolve, he is bound to succeed. This is the Divine Law.

Sufis lay a lot of stress on the internal practices directed towards one's heart. All the practices are aimed at shedding of one's ego, which is the biggest hurdle in the realisation. The objective of all the Sufi practices is to attain a state of constant remembrance of God i.e. to continuously remain in the Presence of the God. Sufis consider *Jikr* (remembrance), *Fikr* (contemplation), *Muraqaba* (Meditation), *Mushahada* (Vision) and *Muhasaba* (Reckoning) as the practices that are most helpful in achieving this objective.

Innumerable forms of *jikr* are adopted by the seekers. Sufis, however, consider four main forms of *jikr*. The one, which is well known, is recital of the name of Almighty by tongue. The second form of *jikr* is mental known as *Jikr-e-Kulb*, which is very helpful in removing doubts or ill thoughts and takes one to the path of continuous remembrance. The third form of *jikr* is '*Jikr-e-Sirr*'. '*Sirr*' is one of the energy centers (spiritual *Chakra*), situated just above the spiritual center of the Heart (*Hriday Chakra*). By directing the *japa* at this center, one enters into the state of continuous bliss, which fills one's heart in such a manner that no other thought or danger can ever enter the heart. It thus appears that '*Jikr-e-Sirr*' occurs as a result of '*Jikr-e-Kulb*' (or mental remembrance). The effect of '*Jikr-e-Sirr*' is that one becomes extremely focused and forgets everything else except the target. Unless this center is activated and energized such a state cannot be acquired by any other means. The fourth form of *jikr* is '*Jikr-e-Rooh*' which produces such an effect that the doer forgets that he is doing it or that it is his duty to engage in it. '*Rooh*' again is one of the spiritual centers, situated on the right side opposite the spiritual center of the Heart. In *Jikr-e-Rooh* one forgets everything else except the Almighty and it appears that the Almighty Himself is remembering the seeker. In such a situation neither the *japa* remains nor the seeker nor any of the qualities associated with them. Sant Kabir has described this state in the following couplet:

*Japa mite ajapa mite, anahad bhi mit jaae,
Surati samani shabad mein, tahn kaal na khaae.*

As *jikr* can take various forms, *fikr* (contemplation) can also take various forms. One may contemplate on different matters, for example one may contemplate about one's conduct and actions; repenting and seeking forgiveness for the sins committed by one

knowingly or unknowingly; on the grace of God and one's own lack of gratitude; the universe created by the Creator and His greatness; and so on. Hajrat Abu Abdul Rahman has said that the difference between contemplation and *jikr* is that in contemplation one's companion is his mind, as one works at the level of mind, intellect and ego and, therefore, there is a possibility of getting distracted. In *jikr* one's companion is the Almighty, as the *Shabd* (the sound-the vibration) is related to the Almighty and there is no possibility of a doubt. The power of thought emanates from intellect but the *Shabd* emanates from the Creator.

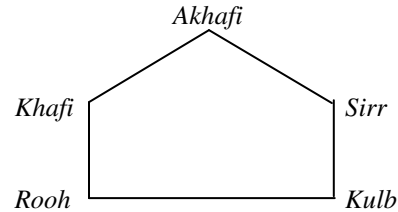
Sufis consider *jikr* superior to contemplation. In contemplation one focuses on various thoughts like repenting and seeking forgiveness of the Almighty but in *jikr* one engages in remembrance of the Almighty. It is said in the scriptures that the Almighty remembers one, who remembers Him, but there is no such mention about contemplation. A person who has risen above the state of meditation enters into the state of trance (*Samadhi*) i.e. the state where the seeker having withdrawn his attention from all other things focuses only on one idea and does not deviate from it till he wants to do so. In *Samadhi* (trance) if one is stuck up with an irrelevant thought, then that thought has its impact and being in the state of trance such a thought has a deeper impression, at times even obstructing one's spiritual progress. Since the mind would need something to be engaged in, it would bring forth all sorts of thoughts even in the state of trance. Sufis, therefore, prefer to engage themselves in discharging the duty enjoined upon them and mentally engaging in *jikr* or meditation.

Arif Rabbani Hajrat Abdul Kasim Gilani Zubedi has said that one who is blessed with *Jikr-e-Kulb* (i.e. remembrance by the heart) acquires the eligibility of listening to the reverberations of his *japa* (*Shabd*-vibrations) in all beings or depending upon his capability in certain beings. Such a person may feel the occurrence of *Shabd* (vibration) in the left side of his chest, at the place of physical heart; in the right side; in the center of the heart; in between the eyebrows; in the right or the left ear or in the whole of the head. One who is blessed with '*Jikr-e-Rooh*' acquires the eligibility to listen the vibrations in all the animals, trees and all other beings. To him all the sounds i.e. the ringing of a bell, the sound of a mill, the sound of the blowing air, every sound appears to be a reflection of the *Shabd*. The difference between the two, however, is that in *Jikr-e-Kulb*, all sounds appear to be the reflection of the particular *Shabd* i.e. *Ram*, *Om* or *Allah*; depending on what one practices, in the case of *Jikr-e-Rooh* one listens to all the different sounds, as they are, but to him all these sounds are that of the Almighty and that He alone is the real doer. In *Jikr-e-Kulb* one remains in the presence of both before the Almighty and the world but in *Jikr-e-Rooh*, presence before the Almighty is more prominent. In *Jikr-e-Sirr* one remains only in the Presence of the Almighty.

In other words, in *Jikr-e-Kulb*, whether one is engaged in worldly affairs or thinking about the God, one keeps on remembering the God i.e. one continues to feel the occurrence of the *Shabd* (vibrations). In *Jikr-e-Rooh* the thought of Almighty remains

more prominently focused, compared to worldly affairs. In *Jikr-e-Sirr*, the only thought that remains is that of the God and nothing else.

The position of these spiritual centers (*Lataif*) is as under:



Latifa Kulb i.e. *Kulb-Chakra* is situated under the ribs on the left side in the chest where one feels the sound of the beating of the heart. *Latifa Rooh* i.e. *Rooh-Chakra* is situated opposite *Latifa Kulb* on the right side. *Latifa Sirr* is situated a little above the *Latifa Kulb* and similarly *Latifa Khafi* is situated a little above *Latifa Rooh*. *Latifa Akhafi* is situated at the center of *Latifa Sirr* and *Latifa Khafi* but a little above these centers, as shown in the figure above. All these five *chakras* taken together are known as the *Hridaya chakra* (or the center of the Heart). Some Sufis associate these five *chakras* with emotions, consciousness, intuition, deep intuition and the deepest intuition. *

(*John A Subhan in ‘Sufism-Its Saints and Shrines’)

Heart being situated on the left side, one feels the intensity of vibrations more strongly at *Latifa Kulb*. On the right side, at *Latifa Rooh*, the feeling of vibrations is generally very weak, at times not even easily audible but one feels that the vibration does occur there. At *Latifa Sirr*, one feels vibrations only at times. In *Jikr-e-Khafi*, one’s own existence gets merged in the soul, as in *Jikr-e-Sirr*, the existence of the world gets merged into the soul. In *Jikr-e-Khafi* one does not hear the sound of vibrations, because one forgets the existence of oneself. Sufis consider *jikr* to be the best form of worship. They consider all such actions that lead to remembrance, awakening and knowledge as *jikr* or *japa*. As against this even the time spent in the state of trance (*Samadhi*) is considered as wasted if the focus of ones contemplation is anything other than the Truth.

Some, however, believe that there are many variations of *jikr* or *japa*. Recital by tongue can be loud or low and it can be focused at different centers. Recital by tongue is done by uttering the particular words (alphabets) in a certain manner. The utterance can even be silent. In the mental remembrance (*Jikr-e-Kulb*), one either focuses on the name or on the one to whom the name belongs i.e. the God. In *jikr-e-Rooh*, one forgets the name but remains in the presence of the holder of the name i.e. the God.

Since the natures of people differ, therefore, depending upon what would suit one best, the Master may ask the seeker to follow a particular *jikr* or *japa*. Besides, one may or may not feel the vibrations, or the intensity of feeling can be quite different. At times, one may not be able to feel the vibrations throughout one’s life but at the time of death

strong vibrations may erupt. However, one engaged in doing the *japa* knows about it and its essentiality. Sufis consider that state of *jikr* to be the highest in which one forgets about the *jaap* and the doer i.e. the self. Neither the feeling of bliss nor the existence of one, who feels the bliss remains. Only the One who is being remembered i.e. the God alone remains. This is the shortest route to Realisation.

- The following things help the seeker in getting ready for *japa* or *jikr*:
- (i) Repentance and seeking forgiveness and taking a vow not to indulge in sins or wrong doings any more.
 - (ii) To quieten the mind.
 - (iii) Ensuring physical cleanliness.
 - (iv) Seeking help of the Master, and
 - (v) To have faith in the Master and to consider his help as the Divine help.

- The following things are helpful while doing the *japa* or *jikr*:
- (i) To adopt a comfortable posture, as convenient to one self.
 - (ii) To ensure that the surrounding environment is serene and conducive.
 - (iii) To feel the presence of the Master or the Almighty in the heart.
 - (iv) Sitting quietly for some time after finishing the *japa* or *jikr*.

Some Sufis believe that recital by mouth gradually leads one to the remembrance by the heart. There is, however, no doubt that if the tongue and the heart unite in the remembrance of God, one would reach his target. Remembrance by heart on one's own is, however, difficult. The grace of the Master helps the disciple immensely. Masters of different Sufi Orders adopt various practices for transmitting their spiritual vitality to their disciples. In the Naqshbandi Sufi Order the seekers are asked to practice *Jikr-e-Kulb*. The Master through *tavajjoh* (transmission of spiritual energy by focusing ones attention) produces the eligibility in the disciple to feel the occurrence of the real eternal *Shabd* (the *Anahat Nad*) at *Latifa Kulb*. By practising *Jikr-e-Kulb*, the seekers, even the beginners, in the Naqshbandi Order acquire capability to reach the door of the Infinite. In all other Sufi Orders only the adept seekers are asked to practice *Jikr-e-Kulb*.

The *Shabd* cannot be explained theoretically it can only be experienced. It is such an entity that cannot be uttered by tongue, cannot be heard by ears, and cannot be described in words. The scriptures can only give an account of the existence of *Shabd* but not its true knowledge. It exists eternally and can be experienced, can be felt only by the grace of the Master. It is the grace of the Master that works through his will power and activates the *Shabd* existing in the disciple.

With regard to the *Anahat Nad* the twelfth Chapter of Srimadbhagwadmahapuran mentions that 'when Lord Brahmaji started meditating to acquire the knowledge of the Creation that existed in the past, a divine '*Anahat-Nad*' appeared in his ears which was not due to any friction in the throat or the palate. Similarly, when a *jeev* exercises check on his impulses, he also feels the occurrence of this '*Anahat-Nad*.' The great seers and

sages also practice to listen to this ‘*Anahat-Nad*’ and as a result of pursuing it they get over the cycle of rebirth and achieve salvation. From this ‘*Anahat-Nad*’ emanated the ‘*Om*’, through the power of which (*Om*) the nature takes a visible form from invisible form.’

Although *jikr* is considered to be more fundamental than contemplation or meditation, depending upon the spiritual state of the disciple some Masters may at times ask the seeker to sit in meditation in the first meeting itself. Even in *jikr* the Master has to see what kind of *japa* will help the seeker. Mostly the Sufis practice *La/ila/illillah* (there is nothing except the God, which is equivalent to *Aiko Brahm Dwitiyo Nasti*) with regulation of breathing and focusing attention at different parts of the body while reciting the particular alphabets etc.

A simple form of *japa* is to recite one of the Names of the Almighty (such as *Om* or *Allah*), initially by tongue but gradually reaching a state where one stops physical movement of the tongue, throat etc. but the Name or its vibrations are felt in the heart. With the grace of the Master it then converts into the *Ajapajaap* i.e. the *japa* occurring on its own.

One of the higher forms of *japa* is ‘*Nafi Asbar Char Jarabi*’. For this *japa* one should sit in a comfortable cross-legged posture in a small dark room. Keep the back straight, close eyes keeping both the hands on both the thighs and press right foot against the left inner thigh, which helps in warming up the heart. With the tongue and heart together one should start the *japa*. While doing the *japa*, one should keep in mind the image of his Master, the thought of the Almighty and His Qualities and Attributes. One should then attentively lift the word ‘*la*’ from under the navel (or from below) and take it upto the crest of the head, recite the word ‘*ila*’ on the right shoulder and then recite ‘*illillah*’ at the heart (on the left side of the chest where physical heart is located), exhaling the breath forcefully. While taking the word ‘*la*’ from under the navel to the head, one should think that nothing exists, neither anything that is seen nor the seeker himself. While reciting ‘*ila*’ on the right shoulder one should think that there is something and that some thing is the God in the heart. More appropriately this recital should be mental. It is, however, not necessary that one must recite ‘*la-ila-illillah*’ verbatim. Mahatma Ram Chandraji of Fatehgarh has said in his book ‘*Kamal Insani*’, that what is important is the essence of this *japa*, which one may recite in any language, Hindi, English, Persian or Bengali etc. depending upon the understanding of the seeker. Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji in this regard has said that ‘*la-ila-illillah*’ has been given by a living saint (Prophet Mohammed), a few centuries ago, and, therefore, is very effective. ‘*Eko Brahm Dwitiyo Nasti*’ is equivalent to it but that was given by sages in ancient time and has lost its chain of succession.

One could recite *Om-Tat-Sat* in place of *la-ila-illillah*. In reciting *Om-Tat-Sat*, one should lift *Om* from navel (or from below), holding the breath, take it up to the crest of the head, and recite *Tat* on the right shoulder and then *Sat*, exhaling the breath

forcefully directed towards the heart. While reciting *Om* one should think that the God is all pervading. While reciting *Tat* one should think that whatever seen is not real and that in place of everything including the seeker, there is Divine Light. While reciting *Sat* one should feel that the heart is filled with the essence of God.

A special four pronged *japa*, which descended as a divine revelation to Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan (a great Sufi saint and spiritual Master of Mahatma Ram Chandraji) is '*Ya Fataho*' (Brahma-the Creator), '*Ya Razzako*' (Vishnu-the Preserver), '*Ya Wahawo*' (the Almighty), '*Ya Allaho*' (the God). The method to recite it is that after inhaling the breath, the seeker recites mentally '*Ya Fataho*' at the right shoulder, holding the breath the seeker recites '*Ya Razzako*' on the left shoulder, '*Ya Wahawo*' at the crest of the head and then '*Ya Allaho*' directed towards the heart, exhaling the breath forcefully. Mahatma Ram Chandraji has stated that it is an extremely effective and spiritually powerful *japa*, which he practised throughout his life and received immense help and benefits from its recital. One, who wants to recite this in the Sanskrit language can recite *Hiim* in place of *Ya Fataho*, *Kriim* in place of *Ya Razzako*, *Mien* in place of *Ya Wahawo*, and *Om* in place of *Ya Allaho*, which are the *Beej Mantras* or the seed formulas.

A variation of *Nafi Asbar Char Jarabi* is '*jikr do Jarabi*' in which holding the breath one recites '*la-ila*' on the right shoulder and while exhaling breath forcefully one recites '*illillah*' at the heart. After completing this *japa* 3,5,7 or 9 times, one recites '*Muhammad Rasul Allah*' once. One could also recite *Om* in place of *la-ila*, *Tat-Sat* in place of *illillah* and *Hari Om* in place of *Muhammad Rasul Allah*.

Another very effective *japa* is '*jikr Akadam*', which is done while walking. If one is walking fast, *Om* is recited mentally with every step moved. If walking slowly, one may recite *Om* on moving the right foot and *Tat-Sat* on moving the left foot. One could also recite the *Beej Mantras* or *la-ila/illillah* or '*Om Naneyeti Tadekam Brahma*'.

Some of the other *japas* are '*jikr Laklaka*', in which one recites the name '*Allah*' in a very low tone. While some Sufis recommend holding of the breath, some others do not insist on it. In '*jikr Sahpaya*' there are three elements, first the name of the Almighty without any Qualities or Attributes, second, the name of the Almighty with the Qualities and Attributes and third the thought of the Master. In the Sattaria Order of Sufis, one recites the name of the Almighty by tongue or mentally and focuses attention on the name of the Almighty with Qualities and Attributes keeping at the same time the Master in one's thought.

'*Jikr Shish Jarabi*' is helpful in understanding the real meaning of the scriptures and knowledge of the souls. In this one recites the name of the Almighty in six directions e.g. North, South, East, West, Up (towards the Sky) and Down (towards the Ground).

Some Sufis consider breathing exercises as an important component of various practices for enhancing their spiritual experiences. For them to hold the breath for a while

helps in getting rid of thoughts. Chishtia, Kaabardia, Shutaria and Qadaria Orders consider breathing exercises as an essential component of the spiritual training. Naqshbandis neither consider it to be essential nor do they question the usefulness of breathing exercises. Suhrawardis, however, do not approve of breathing exercises.

The breathing exercises (*Pranayam*) condition the body by regulating the breathing. If, therefore, one practises remembrance with regulation of breathing, *Pranayam* may help in reaching the state of '*ajapajaap*' (remembrance without recital) and ultimately to the state of Presence. However, one has to be extremely careful in practising *Pranayam* under a competent teacher, but it is difficult to find a competent teacher now a days. The spiritual progress, however, is not at all dependent upon physical conditioning of the body. The breathing exercises are, therefore, of no particular importance from the spiritual point of view.

The real objective of the *jikr* or *japa* is to attain a state of constant remembrance i.e. to be in the Presence of the God. One may adopt any practice but one needs to excel in it in order to achieve his objective. The grace of the Master, however, is the most important thing for the disciple, as the Master by his will power can remove disciple's veils of ignorance and help him in training his mind to engage in constant remembrance.

In the language of Sufis, keeping a watch over the mind is known as meditation. Watching the mind, in fact means to ensure that no other thought except that of God enter the mind. Sufis consider irrelevant thoughts entirely undesirable. There are three causes of thoughts entering the mind. The first is the tendency of the mind to indulge in affirmation and negation; the second is the thoughts occurring on their own without any will or control of mind, known as danger (*Khatra*) in the language of Sufis; and the third is the thoughts occurring as a result of exercising various faculties such as seeing, listening, smelling, touching or tasting or as a result of acquiring their knowledge. Sufis consider *jikr* or *japa* extremely helpful in getting rid of thoughts. For getting rid of the thoughts occurring as a result of exercise of will, remembrance of God in the Absolute form (such as *Allah* or *Om*) is very helpful. For the thoughts occurring on their own without any will or control of mind, one should remember any of the Names of the God with His Qualities and Attributes and focus his attention on his Master.

The essence of meditation, however, is that one should keep his attention focused on the God, keeping an eye on the mind. When one remembers the God one should be able to think of His Qualities and Attributes as the Creator, the Preservation and the Dissoluter. Not everyone, however, has the capacity to focus one's attention like this. One may, therefore, think of the God as an ocean of light and himself absorbed and dispersed in that light; or one may think of Him as an absolute darkness and his ownself a shadow, since the shadow gets completely absorbed in the darkness.

In Buddhism also a lot of importance is attached to meditation. They meditate upon different ideas i.e. love and affection for all beings; seeking mercy for all; feeling

happy in the happiness of others; thinking on the result of sins committed, sickness and ill-feelings for others; and peace i.e. to live according to His desire.

Sufis, however, consider meditation as the practice to get absorbed in the Master or the God. Some Sufis, therefore, suggest that one should focus his attention on the image of his Master, and when one starts feeling the vibrations (which happens after some time), one should consider his subtle body to be the image of his Master, rather the Master himself. But to witness the presence of the subtle body is very difficult. An easier method is to focus one's attention at the place where physical heart is situated i.e. on the left side of the chest and do it so intensely that all faculties are absorbed in it. The physical heart and the spiritual heart are so connected as no other part of the body is. Focusing one's attention in this manner is sure to lead one to the state of self-oblivion and trance. Considering this state of self-oblivion as the straight path to the Infinite, which is never going to end, one should keep on moving ahead.

If during this practice one gets stuck to some thought, one should try to get rid of it. If, however, one is unable to do so, one should meditate on the subtle body of one's Master. Even if this does not help, one should try to empty out his mind, by exhaling forcefully, failing which one should focus his attention on the Name of the God with His Qualities and Attributes. Generally this proves to be extremely effective but if one is still unable to get rid of the thought then one should get hold of the thought and taking it to be in the form of a dense smoke lift it from the naval upto the crest of the head and then to right shoulder and from there throw it away towards one's back. While doing so the breath that was held so far should be forcefully exhaled and while exhaling one should recite *Allah* or *Om* in the heart. This process should be repeated a few times. If the thought is still stuck, one should become unmindful of its existence and let it be as it is, diverting one's attention to something else such as reading or listening to music and for the time being refrain from meditation. Mostly this results in a favourable outcome.

Seekers are advised to be extremely careful, at least during the early period of the spiritual training to refrain from getting influenced by irrelevant thoughts. An incidence is related. A person who was disciple of some saint used to meditate with great interest and regularity. However, he got sensually activated. He tried to control himself but could not succeed. So much so that he completely lost control over himself and was fully overpowered by passion. His relatives had to confine and lock him into a room. Perhaps his Master was then not alive or was unable to help him. His uncle, who used to serve with Mahatma Ram Chandraji mentioned about the condition of his nephew to him. Mahatma Ram Chandraji mentioned this to his Master Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan.

Next morning Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan accompanied Mahatma Ram Chandraji to visit him. Both of them sat on a cot and made that person sit in front of them. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan looked at that person for a while and then asked Mahatma Ram Chandraji to give *Tavajjoh* on that person's '*Hridaya Chakra*' (the mystique center of heart), move up to '*Agya Chakra*' (the mystique center situated in between the eye-

brows) and then to '*Brihmand chakra*' i.e. '*Trikuti Chakra*' (the highest center situated under the skull). Mahatma Ram Chandraji closed his eyes and started the meditation. A little later Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan also joined him in the meditation, which lasted for about an hour. At the end of the meditation, that person had regained his consciousness; he recognized and saluted both of them. As desired by Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan, Mahatma Ram Chandraji gave him sittings for a few more days. In 10-12 days he was completely all right. Subsequently, he requested Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan to accept him and got initiated.

In fact what had happened was that during his initial days when he started the meditation, he once visited some lady for listening to a song. When a person initially starts the internal practice of meditation and as he progresses in achieving concentration, the thoughts that cross the mind then have a deeper influence, and later take a prominent shape. With this person also that thought kept on gaining strength and overpowered him so badly. His condition was the result of those few moments.

When complete control of the mind is achieved, one can know which thoughts are his own and which have been picked up from the atmosphere around him. One can then keep the thoughts one wants to keep and throw out those one doesn't want. One then becomes the master of the mind and not the helpless plaything of it as most human beings are.

Whatever one feels through his faculties or through his conscience can be real or delusion. Some Sufis (belonging to the group of *Wahadat Wajoodiya*-or those believing in the unity of existence, i.e. every thing has the same Origin) consider both to be the part of the same Reality. According to Hajrat Muiuddin Junedi whatever one's soul experiences, one should treat it appropriately. If there is existence of anything positive, there is also a negative existence, such as light and darkness, good and bad. Knowledge and wisdom lies in knowing the true nature of things and in treating them accordingly depending upon the need of the occasion. The great Sufi Masters have, therefore, refused to enter into the argument of existence of the God as an Absolute Being (*Nirakar*) or with Qualities and Attributes (*Sakar*).

If, therefore, one gets a bad thought, one should consider that also to be originating from the same Source. One, however, needs to distinguish between the good and the bad; as to treat them alike is a sign of ignorance. If the thoughts were not to occur then how can one distinguish good thoughts from the bad ones. One should, therefore, not entangle himself in the duel of good or bad and waste his time and effort; rather one should try to see the light of the Truth in both the good and the bad thoughts. One need not be frightened of the bad thoughts, rather in accordance with the dictates of the scriptures one should accept the good and the real thoughts and reject the bad and illusionary thoughts. This would help one immensely in achieving the wonderful state of self-oblivion and revelation of the Divine Knowledge.

Still better than seeing the light of the Truth in everything is to think that whatever is seen, one does not see it. This means to forget both good and bad, and to move beyond the stage of discrimination to the state of complete self-oblivion. Sufis belonging to the school of *Wahadat Wajoodiya* do not consider it good to come out of this state of complete self-oblivion. They consider this state to be the beginning of the state of Astonishment and the last stage of spiritual attainments. Sufis in the state of *Wahadat Shahadi* (the complete unity) do not consider this state of complete self-oblivion as the last stage of spiritual attainments and take it as the intermediate stage of Pure Ego (*Shuddh Ahamkar*). The *Wahadat Wajoodi* saints belong to the school of *Aham Brahmaasmi*, who consider everything in the world to be *Brahma (Hama ost)* and are known as *Adwaitwadi*. The *Wahadat Shahadi* saints belong to the school of *Vishishtadwait* and consider everything to have originated from *Brahma (Hama-aj-ost)*. This is thus only a matter of difference in the point of view. The *Wahadat Wajoodi* saints are in the state of *Sushupti* (deep-sleep or complete self-oblivion), whereas *Wahadat Shahadi* saints are in the *Turiya Awastha* (fourth state of the soul in which the soul has become one with the Supreme Soul).

Some Sufis suggest that the seeker should try to see his subtle body through his heart and experience its existence. Gradually he would be able to see his subtle body present in everything and everything existing in him. He would start seeing reflection of his self in everything and it would appear to him that the universe is the body of which he is the soul. They describe this state as *Umi-ul-jama*. When one achieves perfection in it one starts acquiring knowledge of what good or bad is going to happen.

One of the methods adopted by some Sufis for meditation is to concentrate on the script *la-ila-illillah* or *Ism-Jalal-hu* written on a paper or in imagination and to reach the state of complete self-oblivion or unconsciousness, so much so that one forgets not only about this script he was meditating upon but also he forgets about forgetting. Some Sufis concentrate on any object without letting the eyelids drop, while meditating in the heart on the Absolute God and reach similar state of self-oblivion. Some others practise complete withdrawal of their attention from all faculties, knowledge or beliefs and focus their attention on the Absolute Truth. Meditating at the tip of the nose, at *Agya Chakra* i.e. at the center point between the eyebrows etc. are also suggested by different saints.

One of the methods of meditation for adept seekers as suggested by Shaikh Nasiruddin Chirag Delhavi (introduced by Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya) is that the seeker should sit in *Vajraasan*, *Siddhaasan* or *Sukhaasan* and considering that he is sitting in front of his Master he should focus his attention on the Qualities of the God that He knows everything (*Allah Alim*); He listens to everyone (*Allah Samia*); and that He sees everyone (*Allah Baseer*). On being firmly rooted in this state, the seeker should now mentally look towards his heart and try to feel the Presence of the God in his heart. Having steadied him in this state, the seeker should now, sitting in the same posture, mentally look towards the sky, feeling him like a dead body, and thinking that his soul crossing the Skies is seeing the God. If one achieves perfection at it, he would see a green

coloured cord extending from his heart across the Seven Skies. This is considered to be the best form of meditation. The great Masters, however, generally keep it as a secret. It helps immensely after the demise of one's Master, particularly as one does not have to focus his attention on the physical body of his Master. A reference of this method of meditation is also found in the Eleventh Chapter of Srimadbhagwadmahapuram, where Lord Sri Krishna revealed it to Uddhav.

In the State of Vision, inspirations from the Unseen come to the heart of the seeker and in the state of reckoning, which is the state of self-examination, the seeker evaluates whether he spent time in the complete Presence of the God or in the complete presence of the world.

Sufis consider the present moment to be the most important to make spiritual progress, now and here. A moment lost in oblivion is never going to come back. It is the greatest folly for them to lose time. The moment lost now is lost forever; at no price can it be regained. The Sufis, therefore, consider that they must spend their time in the complete Presence of the God and that they must keep on reckoning from time to time whether they have spent their time accordingly?

In the course of spiritual practices, seekers often see lights of different colours. Sighting of light at or above different parts of one's body may have different meaning. However, it is not a very important phenomenon, as this is an intermediate state and not the ultimate Truth. In this context, some people also argue whether a knower (*arif*) has continuous vision of the Almighty. While one group believes it to be so, the other group disputes it. It, however, appears that what one sees definitely exists, since there is an evidence of seeing but this light which is seen is only a veil and not the Reality, as the Absolute Truth has no shape, colour or appearance. Thus, this light also is a very fine veil of *maya* (illusion), although it has some reflection of the Reality in it.

The light of the soul or the light of the Absolute Truth is, however, beyond all perceptions and explanations. Therefore, what one sees has an element of *maya*. A true seeker goes beyond the state of seeing the light, although he experiences the Presence, but for him the Presence is seeing the light of the soul.

When the mind and the intellect lead to the right path and the mental practice (*jikr*) culminates in the energisation of *Latifa Sirr* and thereby to the Realisation, then one does not lose what one has achieved spiritually. However, one may at times see light and at times no light or one may have a lot of spiritual experiences or no feelings at all.

The state of forgetting one's own existence, oblivion of the physical body, the state of Presence and the state of '*fana*' (annihilation or the merger) are such states that cannot be explained. In these states there exists only the Truth and the one that realises the Truth i.e. the soul.

A question can be asked that knowledge of the soul cannot be gained as that is beyond the perception of the mind and intellect. Whatever can be perceived by the mind and intellect is worldly. Since the soul is eternal, it cannot be worldly and if it is not worldly, it cannot be perceived by the mind and the intellect.

While the question is valid, one has to understand that where there is existence of two i.e. the soul and the God, there is the existence of the third, called *Surat* (the attentive power of the soul) through which the soul realises the Absolute. In the state of '*fana*', it is the *Surat* that connects the seeker and the God. In such a state the seeker becomes incapacitated because *Surat* is focused on the merger of the self with the God.

The realisation of the Truth is not 'seeing' the Truth in the physical sense. The Truth is beyond perceptions and, therefore, cannot be perceived by the physical eyes. The Realisation means the complete faith in the Presence of the Truth. Although not seen as such, but such a complete faith that the seeker is in the Presence of the Truth, as if he is seeing the Truth, is Realisation of the Truth. Even if one cuts the body of such a person into pieces, he would still say that I am seeing the Truth as you are seeing me. Mansoor al-Hallaj is the proof, in regard to whom it is said that on being punished for uttering '*Anal Haq-I am the Truth*', every part of his body that was mutilated cried out 'I am the Truth', even when the ashes of his burnt body were blown into the river Tigris, the water caught fire and the words 'I am the Truth' could be heard.

The utility of knowledge and science is in recognizing the true nature of things, and to treat them accordingly. The Truth being eternal our endeavour is to establish that fact and to reach it. If the seeker runs after worldly things, he would be distracted from the real objective. The real purpose of acquiring knowledge is to prove what is true to be true and false to what is false. Consequently, the real knowledge reveals that the Truth exists and is Eternal although it cannot be known in the physical sense. The complete faith in the Existence of the Truth, results in withdrawal of attention from every thing else except the Reality.

Knowledge, however, can be acquired related only to God's Names, Qualities and Attributes but not of the Absolute Truth. One can know about a happening but why has it happened cannot be known. The door of the knowledge of the cause of happening is closed, since the God is the Cause of all causes and He is the Reality of all realities and it is not possible for any one to have the complete knowledge of the Reality. Thus, one cannot understand the reality of anything. This alone is the real knowledge; the perfect knowledge that one knows that he knows nothing. It is, therefore, said that the state of a beginner and that of a knower is the same. The beginner does not know of the Reality and the knower also knows that he knows nothing of the Reality, but there is a lot of difference between the actual understandings of the two. This feeling in the beginner arises out of his ignorance whereas in the case of a knower, he gets immersed in the ocean of knowledge and he realizes that the ocean of knowledge is Infinite. The more he goes deeper, more he realizes about the unending depth of this ocean of knowledge. He,

therefore, realizes that whatever he knows is nothing in comparison to what still remains to be known.

All the above explanation, however, is theoretical and is only for the sake of understanding the path by the wayfarer. Will power is a different thing altogether. A disciple seeks the company of his Master for the sake of benefiting from this will power and it is the will power of the Master that helps the disciple, whether he is near or far away. The will power of the Master and his *tavajjoh* opens the gate of grace for the disciple. *Satsang* (company of the Master) is the best, the simplest and, the most effective way for the seeker to reach the Truth. It is said:

*'Rahe sulook ishq mein riyazat nahi jaroor,
Sau sau mukam hote hain tay ek nazar mein.'*

(Followers of the Path of Love do not have to indulge in observing rituals. One gaze of the Beloved takes them to their destination).

Sufis consider the shelter of a competent master as the most important step for the spiritual training of the seeker. On the path of spirituality the seeker has to pass through various stages, i.e. he has to move from this station of death upto the station of the Truth. He is required to cross all the stages. One way could be that the seeker crosses through each stage successively and in the process passes through all the experiences associated with that stage. This is like starting from one's residence and to halt at the place where the night falls and in the process visit all buildings, rivers, townships etc. that fall on the way and to acquire knowledge about them. There could be another person who although passes through the same route but travels in a motorcar, looking at things only if they happen to fall before his eyes, but does not make any deliberate attempt on his own to look at them or to acquire knowledge about them. Now take a third person who leaves the first few stations and rides a fast moving vehicle to reach his destination quickly.

In the above example the method of training (journey) adopted for the first seeker is called 'the training in accordance with *sulook*', and in the second and the third it is called training by '*jajb*'. In the second and the third methods the seeker is pulled upwards. '*Jajb*' means getting attracted or being pulled. The motorcar in the above example is the shelter of the Master. One, who is made to leave the first few stations, cannot do so on his own. Only a competent Master can pull his disciple through any stations he desires.

In *Jajb* (attraction) there are two possibilities. The first is that the seeker (lover) himself through his effort reaches such a stage where the Supreme Being holds him and pulls him up. This is the path of devotion and love for the God. The second is that the God (Beloved) by His grace pulls him up without any effort on the part of the seeker. In both the situations, however, it is the grace of the God, which works. In the first case the seeker passes through all the lower stages whereas in the second case the seeker does not

have to pass through some of the lower stages and a few of the intermediary stages. No one, however, on his own can acquire such a capability to jump through these stages, it is only possible through the God's Attraction. The seekers in the first case start with *Sulook* and reach the state of Attraction but in the second they start with the state of Attraction and reach the state of Truth.

In the Naqshbandi Order, from the time of Khwaja Shah Baha'uddin Naqshband, after whom the Order acquired its name, the seekers are initiated by awakening the spiritual center of the heart through *tavajjoh* and *Shaktipat*, leaving aside the spiritual centers lying below the heart. Their first halt is in the state of *fana*. It is because of this that the Naqshbandi Order is held in the highest esteem amongst the Sufi Orders.

People, however, try to find a way where they may not need a Master. Sufis believe that one, who has no Master, has *Shaitan* (devil) as his Master. The seeker, therefore, must look out for a competent Master. But it is difficult to find whether one is a competent Master or not. Besides, one may not have his share of spiritual knowledge with a particular Master and, therefore, he may not benefit from him. There is, however, no such time when a competent Master does not exist. When a disciple is ready, a competent Master according to his need always is there, who finds the disciple and comes forward to help and guide him. This is a spiritual law and operates at all time. If one were thirsty enough, one would not wait to dig his own well but would drink the water offered by some one. In other words it is the Master, who offers the nectar in the form of his spiritual energy flowing to the disciple that helps him reaching his goal faster, rather than travelling all the distance on one's own by the disciple.

The ways of teaching by various teachers may differ, the practices and methods taught by them may also differ; they may provide different explanations and may tell their experiences in different words; but the purpose behind all this is to arouse the longing for the Truth in the heart of the disciple and to guide him to the Truth.

Some people respectfully presented a cup of a deadly poison to Hajrat Umar. On asking, they explained the qualities of the poison that a few drops of it will dispose of the enemy who cannot be killed even by swords. Hajrat Umar looked at the cup and saying that inside him lived a deadly invincible enemy, his '*nafs*' (ego), drank the whole of the poison. This immensely impressed those who were present there and re-affirmed their faith but Hajrat Umar said that the heretic within him (*nafs*) had not died i.e. it had not yet turned into a faithful one.

Hajrat Umar was a Khalifa of Prophet Muhammad and he had already attained a state of higher faith but what he meant was still a higher state of faith that is of saints and prophets which grows into a stern belief. A story is related. In a forest lived a great lion. Many people felt interested to see the lion. They were told that the lion is so docile that if one approaches and touches him without fear, he would not harm. But if one is afraid of the lion and tries to hide himself from the lion, it would attack. But most of the people

were afraid to go near the lion. They did not have that courage and lacked the faith. The most difficult thing was to have this firm faith, this stern belief that may enable one to approach the lion and caress him. Only the saints and prophets possess this faith, this belief. The essence of all the practices is to arouse this firm faith.

Some Sufis consider that music and dancing act as a catalyst to produce in them the state of ecstasy. They consider that music rock their hearts by echoing the reverberations and reminding them of their relationship with the God. The effect produced by music, however, depends upon the nature and state of evolution of the listener (and also of the musician). If the seeker has not yet overcome his worldly passions, it may even harm him. But for a Sufi adept, music may stir up in his heart greater love towards the God. It may also lead him into spiritual vision and ecstasies. It is said by them that music produces such purity in their heart that is not possible by other practices. The states of ecstasy may, however, vary according to the emotions predominating in the seeker i.e. love, repentance, fear etcetera.

Fondness for devotional music is a characteristic feature of the Chishti Order. Devotional music in the form of *Quawwali* helps them to enter into a state of ecstasy. Qutbuddin Kaki, a famous Sufi saint of the Chishti Order started holding musical festivals in India.

It is reported that the Order of Whirling Dervishes (the dancing Sufis), known as the Mevlevi Order started taking shape in the time of Maulana Rumi, who hosted regular *Sama* gatherings in the memory of his Master Shams Tabriz. They believe that the dance of the Whirling Dervishes symbolizes the dance of the soul out of love for God. The Mevlevi Sufis dance around their Master in a circular motion, while at the same time spinning around their own axes.

It may be mentioned that God has blessed all living beings with His eternal music, the music of the beating of the heart (also known as the *Anahat Nad*), which occurs in all living beings as a sign of their obedience and a part of their creation. The external music can be considered as an attempt to imitate it and produce the resonance, which may remind one of this eternal music within him and take him back to the source of this eternal music i.e. the God.

Although Islam did not approve of music and dancing as religious practices, but with the passage of time these have found a firm footing in some of the Sufi Orders. These Sufis consider that any practice that arouses in the seeker the remembrance of God is an act of devotion and music and dancing are such acts that stir up in their hearts greater love towards the God. Shaikh Saadi has said that beauty pleases mind and the music pleases soul. Music relates to sound and sound (*Shabd*) has the power of attraction. Beauty relates to form and form (light) also has the power of attraction. Both the sound and the light attract one's attention and take the soul to a higher level. If, however, the focus of one's soul is on the lower level i.e. mind, intellect and ego, then both the beauty

and the music will not have any spiritual influence on the viewer or the listener. Mind is the station of *Maya* (illusion) and, therefore, what it experiences is carnal pleasure. If the seeker has made spiritual progress and has risen to higher spiritual levels i.e. above the spiritual center of heart then he would be able to derive spiritual benefit from them. Even if he listens to worldly music, such a seeker would be benefited spiritually, though temporarily, as it cannot influence one's inner being for long and on a permanent basis. For the adept seekers due to the effect of their inner light and *shabd*, even worldly music rocks their heart and for some time they experience its spiritual impact. For the worldly people there is always the danger that such music can have pernicious influence on them and may ruin them. Some Sufi Masters, therefore, feel that people may emulate them in listening to music and instead of benefiting from it they may cause harm to themselves. They, therefore, discouraged people from listening to music.

Naqshbandi Sufis, however, consider music to be bondage. Ceremonials, worship, when done collectively, can also be bondage. They go to the Absolute Truth in Silence, for they consider that it can be found only in silence and it is Silence. On the other hand Chishtias are very magnetic, as they do many things through the physical body. The body, therefore, becomes very magnetic. It is the body which attracts the body, and through it the Soul. In the Naqshbandi *Silsila* it is the Soul, which attracts the Soul, and the Soul speaks to the Soul.

The Naqshbandi Sufis in India, especially from the time of Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan (d. 1907 AD) have introduced some simple practices having immense potentiality of leading one to reach the highest stage of spirituality. One of these is remembrance while eating. This is the first and the foremost step for attaining the state of constant remembrance. Usually one keeps on talking about cinema, politics, business or family matters while eating. These are the subjects of common discussion on the dining table. This habit is required to be changed. Food is the source of energy for all living beings. We live on the food we eat. It provides the necessary nourishment for the maintenance of the body. It is undisputed that the kind of food one eats has a tremendous influence not only on his body but also on his mind. Similarly the thoughts occurring at the time of eating also have their influence on the body and mind and in fact this influence is far stronger. If, therefore, one eats in His remembrance, one is sure to be filled with divinity.

One should consider that every grain of the food is filled with divine-light and should eat it in the remembrance of his Master or the God. Still better is to think that it is the Master or the God sitting and taking food in his place. After finishing the food one should thank Him. The Srimadbhagwadgita also exhorts that whatever one does, whatever one eats or drinks, one should do it as an offering to God. Not only eating but also if the cooking is done in His remembrance, the benefit is multiplied manifolds and one can soon acquire the divine characteristics. The food, however, needs to be obtained from honest earnings. Shah Naqshband took all kinds of precautions in regard to his food. He would grow barley himself for his food, harvest it, grind it, make the dough, knead it and bake it himself. Scholars and seekers of his time considered themselves to be

fortunate to eat from his table. He cooked for the poor and invited them to his table, serving them with his own holy hands and urging them to take the food in the remembrance of the Almighty. He said that one of the foremost way to the Presence of *Allah* is to eat with awareness. The food gives strength to the body, and to eat with consciousness gives purity to the mind. He loved the poor and the needy and urged his followers to earn money through lawful means and to spend that money on the poor. Similarly Shaikh Nur Muhammad al-Badawani, another great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, never used to eat from the food of a proud person. He used to say that the food of proud rich people contains darkness.

The next step is remembrance while sleeping. For this the seeker just before going to sleep should concentrate on his Master or the God and should thank Him for all the good work during the day considering them to be a result of His grace. He should seek His pardon for any wrongdoings, and should resolve firmly not to indulge in them again. He should then sleep in His remembrance thinking that he is lying in the lap of his Master or the God and that the Divine-light is engulfing him from all around.

In the Srimadbhagwadgita also it is said that wise people remain awake when it is night for other creatures; and they sleep when the other people are awake. The true meaning is explained by remembrance while sleeping, which is like remaining awake in the night and similarly selfless action dedicated to God is truly the inaction i.e. sleeping when the others are engaged in selfish action.

If one goes to sleep like this, the remembrance continues throughout the night and also one gets up in His remembrance. Sahajo Bai, a great saint in this regard has said:

*Jagat mein sumiran kare, sovat mein lou lay,
Sahajo ek ras ho rahe, tar toot nahi pay.*

This is an effortless method and accelerates one's spiritual progress in an unimaginable manner. Thakur Ram Singhji used to say that one who has learnt to remember Him while eating and while sleeping has surely found the easiest way to reach Him.

The next step is to keep remembering Him while attending to one's job. It may look difficult on the face of it, particularly for the beginners but once one practises it for a little while it looks easy. For this one should start his work with the thought that it is He who is doing his work. If one begins his work with this in mind and gets engrossed in his work, it is the same as entering into meditation, since the occurrence of irrelevant thoughts is restricted in this process. In the time of recess one should again resume His remembrance. Gradually by doing so one would enter into the state of constant remembrance. The remembrance should similarly be continued even while walking or doing anything else. It should become a habit, a part of one's very being. There is no objection to remembrance in any condition or in any situation whatsoever. In fact

remembrance saves one from forming impressions (*Sanskars*) and in achieving the steadiness of mind.

The method of meditation has also been made a lot simpler for the present day generation. In this method, the Master (or a person who has been authorized to give sittings to others) asks the person to close his eyes and focus his attention on *Hriday Chakra* and try to listen to the heartbeat. The Master through *tavajjoh* bestows the eligibility upon the disciple to listen to this sound of heartbeat. One can think the name of the Almighty to be resounding in place of the heartbeat or the heartbeat itself to be the name of the Almighty. The beating of the heart is an involuntary action occurring constantly in all living beings and reverberating in each of the cells of the body. It is also known as the '*Anahat Nad*' because of two reasons, firstly it is not produced as a result of any friction or voluntary action and secondly it occurs continuously without any restriction in each of the cells of all the living beings throughout their life. During the meditation one tries to listen to the heartbeat in the form of the name of the Almighty. Gradually through practice one starts listening to the sound of the heartbeat even while he is engaged in the daily routine, which keeps him reminding of one's Master or the Almighty, which is the objective of meditation.

In the Naqshbandi Order, the *Hriday Chakra* is used mainly, which is the center of love and when it is activated, such force, such power flows through it, that one forgets everything. By activating the *Hriday Chakra*, Love is created by the Master with his spiritual power. The result is that the whole work of awakening, activating is done by one *Chakra*, which gradually opens up all the other *Chakras*. The *Hriday Chakra* is the leader and the leader does everything.

The tenth Chapter of *Srimad Bahgwat Mahapurana* mentions thus in this regard: 'The *Riches* (Seers) have agreed upon many methods to realise the Truth. Out of them those who are materialistic, worship You in the form of fire at the *Manipurak Chakra* (one of the lower mystique centers). The Seers belonging to the lineage of the Sun (*Arunvanshi*) worship Your absolute subtle form at the heart (the mystique center of the heart) which is the origin, of all nerves and arteries. From the heart originates the *Sushumana* nerve (one of the three major nerves) and goes up to the *Brahmarandhra* (the thousand petalled lotus), which is the path to realise 'You.' One who gets an access to this lighted path and moves forward on it, does not then fall into the trap of life and death.'

Ordinarily, one may take thousands of years through penance etc. to acquire the eligibility to listen to this '*Anahat-Nad*', but in the Naqshbandi Order, through the grace of the Master, one acquires this eligibility very soon. This happens due to the *tavajjoh* by the Master to the disciple, through the link, which is established between them through love. By activating the *Hriday Chakra*, Love is created by the Master with his spiritual power. In fact, it is the love of the Master, which because of its intensity induces love in the heart of the disciple and attracts the disciple towards the Master.

The Naqshbandi Sufis consider that the best and the simplest method of meditation is to consider that it is the Master who is meditating in place of the disciple (i.e. the body, mind and even the soul is that of Master), it is the Master who is being meditated upon and that it is the grace of the Master which is flowing in the meditation. The merger of the three '*dhyata*' (one who meditates), '*dhyey*' (the object of meditation) and the '*dhyana*' (the meditation itself) into the one being i.e. the Master is the real objective of the meditation. There is no difference between this state of meditation and love as in the true love there exists only one, the Beloved and none else.

PRAYER

Prayer for Sufis means to be in the Presence of the Almighty. As Prophet Muhammad remarked, 'Thou shouldst worship thy Lord, as if thou seest Him; and if not, He indeed sees thee.' An incident from the life of Maulana Bahauddin Wald (son of the great Sufi Master Maulana Rumi) is related. One day he was lost completely in the remembrance of the Almighty. The hour of offering prayers (*Namaz*) arrived. Some of his disciples mentioned it to him but as Maulana Bahauddin was deeply engrossed in the remembrance of God, he did not pay any attention to it. All his disciples, except two, also got up to offer prayers. Maulana Bahauddin and the two disciples kept on sitting in the remembrance of God. One of the disciples who got up to offer prayers was blessed with insight. He noticed that all of those disciples who had stood up to offer prayers, their prayers were not accepted and their faces appeared to be turned away from the Kaaba, whereas Maulana Wald and his two disciples who had not got up and were sitting with him were facing the Kaaba, as is usual in the prayers. This was so because at that moment Maulana Bahauddin Wald was deeply immersed in the divine thoughts and had completely merged himself with the Almighty, which is the real offering of prayer.

Some one once asked Maulana Rumi that as he remained busy in his duties and worldly affairs, he is not able to offer prayers faithfully, although he always wished to do so. Maulana Rumi answered that the worldly duties are also ordained by the God and, therefore, they are also the work of God. However the worldly duties should not be motivated by self-interest. If the worldly duties are performed for the benefit of others, as a service and considering them to be a duty enjoined upon him that enables and help others also in offering prayers then they are like offering prayer to God. If the intention is pious, all the acts are spiritual acts. God chooses them to perform such duties to whom He is extremely kind and merciful. *

(*Dr. Bankey Bihari in 'Fiha Ma Fiha'-Table Talks of Maulana Rumi)

Maulana Rumi also said that a prayer is not merely words. Prayer is not something simply uttered by mouth signifying belief. What can be conveyed and confined by words has a beginning and an end. It starts with the words and ends with the words. Such a prayer is nothing but a hollow thing. The essence of prayer is to forget oneself in His remembrance and get absorbed in His thoughts. One does not have to stick to any external form in offering prayer. The real prayer is to get merged; all the formalities then disappear. Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji also used to say, 'what is the use of repeating a prayer mechanically? One has to overcome the language barrier.'

Thakur Ram Singhji used to narrate an anecdote. A lady, mad in the love of her husband was running blindly to see him. On the way a man was offering prayers (*Namaz*). The lady, however, did not see him and crossed him putting her feet on his back. When she returned, this man stopped her and asked her whether she had turned so blind that she could not spot him offering prayers. The lady asked him in return 'were you offering prayers to the Almighty or thinking of the world. I had become so mad in the love of my husband that I could not see anything else. You say that you were offering

prayers to God, but you appear to be putting blame on His love. If you were really offering prayer to Him then how could have you known anything else happening around while offering prayers?’

In this regard, he also used to narrate an anecdote. An Emperor went to the mosque to offer prayers (*Namaz*). On learning that a Sufi had not attended the prayers, he got very angry. He asked the Sufi why he had not participated in the prayers and told him that he will have to undergo punishment. The Sufi was a great saint. He replied, ‘there is a difference in your prayers and my prayers. You are an Emperor, so you offer prayers like an Emperor. I am a Sufi and, therefore, I offer prayers as a Sufi. I keep away from the royal prayers so that I am saved from the kick of your Arabic horse. Even in the prayers you remain an Emperor and offer your prayers imagining yourself to be riding your horse.’ The Emperor was in fact riding on his Arabic horse in his thoughts while praying. The prayer was only a show. He understood his mistake and fell at the feet of the Sufi.

An interesting incidence concerning Hasan of Basra in this context is mentioned in *Kashf u'l-Mahjub*, an authentic book on Sufism written by Ali el-Hujwiri (Data Ganj Bakhsh). Habib Ajami was a disciple of Hasan of Basra. He was a moneylender. When he saw the suffering of his debtors, he was so moved by their pathetic condition that he decided to release them from their debts. Thereafter he renounced his profession and devoted himself to the cause of the God. Once at the time of offering prayers, Hasan was passing by the door of his cell. Habib Ajami’s mother tongue was Persian and, therefore, he was not able to recite the Qur’an correctly. Although Hasan of Basra joined Habib Ajami for prayer but he did not repeat the prayer after Habib. In the night Hasan had a dream in which he had a glimpse of the Almighty. On enquiring whether the Almighty had accepted Habib’s prayer, the Almighty told him that His pleasure consisted in the right intention rather than in the correctness of the pronunciation. Prayer without faith is a mere ritual. Faith is something of the heart, which cannot be expressed in words.

In regard to the concept of prayer the biggest contribution has been made by Rabia of Basra, one of the greatest women Sufi saints. Rabia was born in a poor family. She became orphan at a very young age. Her family was scattered by a famine and she was sold as a slave for a sum of only six-dirhams. Her master had put her on to the job of looking after the household affairs, which kept her busy throughout the day. She performed her duties with utmost sincerity and in the night when she retired to her room, she used to engage in offering prayers to her Lord. One night her master happened to see her absorbed in prayers through a window of his house. He saw Rabia grossly engrossed in prayer and a beam of divine light engulfing her. Deeply impressed by it and a little bit frightened, her master set her free the next morning. Rabia then devoted herself to the love of God, living a life of extreme poverty.

Prayer for Rabia was a free and intimate communion with the God. For her the ritual of offering the prescribed prayers (*Namaz*) and other religious observances were of

no merit. The true prayer for her was to be in the presence of God. She did not offer prayer in expectation of any reward or for avoiding punishment. She used to pray: ‘O my Lord, if I worship You from fear of Hell, burn me in the Hell, and if I worship You with the hope of paradise, exclude me from it; but if I worship You for Your own sake then withhold not from me Your Eternal Beauty.’

Rabia’s dependence on God was complete. She is considered to be a great exponent of complete trust (*tawakkul*) in God. She refused to accept any assistance or help from any one. She considered it to be a shame to ask for worldly things from the God to whom this world belongs. There was, therefore, no question for her to ask for anything from them to whom it did not belong. She had the firm faith that how He, who provides for those who envy him, could be expected not to take care of those who love Him? He does not refuse sustenance to one who abuses Him. How then shall He refuse sustenance to one whose heart is overflowing with Love for Him? She had, therefore, had turned her attention completely away from the world. Rabia also did not allow people to visit her as she considered that they might relate to her what she did not say or do. She did not approve of any miracles to be related to her. People used to say that she finds money at her place of worship and that she cooks her food without fire and so on. She, however, refuted all such attributions made to her and said that she felt happy in living in the condition in which the Almighty kept her. Thus her existence itself had become a living prayer to the Almighty.

Prayer is the easiest way to attain to Him. Some one asked Maulana Rumi whether there was any other way easier than prayer to reach the God? Maulana Rumi answered that if there was any such method, it would also be called prayer.

Maulana Rumi has described how those who are mad in love of God offer their prayers. He said: ‘When the hour of prayers is reached, I offer my prayers with sorrows, sighs and agony to my Beloved. I offer abulation with tears. The mosque of my heart is set on fire with love. This is the way, we, who are mad in love offer prayers without regard to time and occasion.’ He also said, ‘the only true mosque is in the hearts of the saints. It is the place of worship of all, for God dwells there.’ *

(*Dr. Bankey Bihari in ‘Fiha Ma Fiha’-Table Talks of Maulana Rumi)

A king once requested a saint to remember him in his prayer. The saint replied, ‘When I am in prayer, I do not even remember myself, how can you expect me to remember you?’ But when the Lord is pleased with somebody, He fulfills his wishes even without asking. A story is related: A King had a servant who was close to him and was his favourite. People, who knew about it, often presented their applications to him to be submitted to the King for his favourable orders. The servant, however, was so faithful to the King that whenever he entered the royal presence, nothing except the King will remain in his thoughts and he will forget about everything else including his own self.. The King, therefore, himself used to take care of his comfort and needs and on looking into his belongings and finding the applications, the King would record his favourable orders, granting much more rewards than prayed for or expected. The other servants of

the King, who always tried to impress the King with their loyalty and smartness behaved cleverly and cunningly in the King's presence. They had no courage to speak out their real intentions and could hardly dare to make any petition to the King. Even if they did so, the King would rarely consider any of their petitions favourably. The essence of the story is that the Almighty looks at the hearts of His saints and if He will see your name engraved in their hearts He will shower His grace on you. He looks only for a shining heart in which He can see His reflection.

The Almighty cannot be persuaded by cleverness. One, who considers oneself to be frail and prays the Almighty in distress, receives His grace immediately. There is lot of strength in prayers. When the devotee cries for His help, the ocean of His mercy gets stormed. He is moved by the tears of repentance and He rushes to help His devotee. He mercifully takes away the will and strength of the body to indulge in wrongdoings again. There is no sin so heinous that it cannot be forgiven, provided one repents truly and firmly resolves not to commit it again.

*'Mein to gunahgar hoon, magar tu bakhsh de,
Kya khata bhi koi cheej hai, teri ata ke saamne'*

(I am indeed a sinner, but kindly forgive me. Can there be anything unpardonable, looking at Your Mercy?)

God has no scarcity. He wants nothing. He is the Lord of the Universe with everything under His command. He is competent to do anything and has everything under His control. The only thing that He does not have is humility, which His devotee alone has. The Almighty likes humbleness the most and in return He gives His boundless love. But in the humbleness also lies some ego, which is difficult to identify. This is known as the pure or the subtle layer of '*Maya*.' To get over this one should completely surrender to Him and should remember Him with a pure heart. One day His grace will definitely be received.

In regard to the real prayer to the Almighty, Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji Sahab once said, 'Be always a friend of the Almighty and you will never die. Prayer should be done always, even ordinary prayer should be done, but of course, the only real prayer is merging oneself with the God, which alone is the true prayer.'

The prayer which Thakur Ram Singhji used to offer was 'O God, give me the strength to worship You; make me act as You wish and give me Your true love.' If one feels distracted, one should pray, 'O God, let Your desire be fulfilled' and keep on repeating the prayer until the mind rests in peace. When a mother's heart tears apart seeing her child crying, why should not the Almighty, who is mother of all mothers, be moved and rush to help His devotee. One's life itself should become a prayer and offering prayer should become the duty. One should fulfill his duty and leave the rest on the Almighty.

Whether one offers prayers or not, it does not matter to the God. If a doctor prescribes medicines to an ailing person, it does not affect the doctor whether the patient takes the medicine or not, but the patient certainly benefits from taking the medicine. Similar is the case with the prayers. Prayer is the food for the soul; it strengthens one's soul.

Prayers are not answered at times, or so it looks. A person wrote an application to the King but did not receive any answer. He repeated his application three times and when he did not receive any answer from the King, he complained about it to the King. The King wrote on the back of the complaint: 'Silence is the best answer to the prayers of fools'

Once a *Sadhu* (an ascetic) incidentally reached at the hutment of a Sufi. The Sufi requested him to stay in the hutment for the night and told him that he was going to the nearby village to arrange for some food. In the hutment the *Sadhu* saw a slab of stone with some marks engraved on it. On inquiring someone told him that the Sufi uses the slab for offering prayers (*Namaz*) and the marks on the slab were those of his hands, feet and knees. This made the *Sadhu* to think about himself who had spent his time wandering here and there, whereas the Sufi had spent so much time in prayers that its marks had become visible even on the stone. The *Sadhu* also thought that the Sufi was very fortunate and he must be highly accomplished unlike him who had achieved nothing so far. While the *Sadhu* was engrossed in these thoughts, he heard a divine-voice saying: 'O *Sadhu*, do not worry. So far not even a single prayer of the Sufi has been accepted.' The *Sadhu* was stunned. In the meantime the Sufi returned and seeing the *Sadhu* pondering over something enquired about the matter. The *Sadhu* started telling him what had happened, but before he could finish, the Sufi got into such a divine ecstasy that had its impact on the *Sadhu* also. Both of them entered into a deep trance. On coming out of the trance the next morning the *Sadhu* asked the Sufi the reason for his ecstasy, the Sufi told him, 'You were saying that not even one of my prayers has been accepted. I have, however, received the answer to all my prayers today. What you have heard has made me firmly believe that the Almighty knows that a humble servant like me offers prayers to Him. What can be more pleasing than this that I am in His sight? I am now not worried whether my prayers are accepted or not. I have to do my duty and the rest is on Him.'

LOVE

*The Path of Love
Is like a Bridge of Hair
Across a Chasm of Fire
-A Christian mystic*

Love is the fundamental force of attraction existing in all the living and non-living beings. While the love of the gross matter is expressed as the force of attraction and is governed by the Gravitational law, the love of the soul is reflected as spirituality and it is governed by the Divine law. This force constantly exerts its pressure on the things to move towards and merge with the beloved i.e. the mass (gross matter) is continuously attracted towards other mass and the soul has its inherent urge to meet the Supreme Soul. We know through the modern science that even the tiniest particles existing in the atom attract each other and so also the celestial bodies are attracted towards each other. Big or small, living or non-living, this fundamental force of love exists universally.

This force of love would have had its way if there were no movement. The universe would have collapsed because of the Gravitational force if the tiny particles and the celestial bodies were not revolving in their own orbits. Perhaps it is the desire to exist that is expressed in the continuous movement. Similarly the soul also would have merged with the Supreme Soul, if it were not for the fulfillment of Almighty's desire that the soul through movement should gain experience and thereby realise the Truth. The universe exists as a consequence of His desire. It is His festival in which every living creature is rejoicing, oblivious of the true nature of things and the real purpose of life. It is only a few to whom He reveals the secret of His love and takes them to their Original State of Love.

Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji has said, 'Love is quenching the thirst on the physical plane, but thirst is not love. The human being is love, and Love loves the human being. To realize Love is to realize the God. If one sits before the open fire, it warms him. There is no effort on his part. Those who have realized the God are like this fire and their company ignites the warmth of love in the hearts of seekers. God realized Himself in the heart of Hearts of the human being. It is like the ocean and waves; they disappear and are here. When we realize, Love disappears. We cannot give shape or name to Love. The deeper one goes, the more it disappears. It radiates from every part of the body.'

Love can be expressed as the desire to become perfect, to remove all imperfection. This is true of the love at the physical plane as well as at the spiritual plane. At the physical plane, the eyes love to see a beautiful thing, the ears love to listen melodious songs, the nose loves to smell fragrant flowers and so on. It is this lacking in the sensual perceptions, which is desired to be fulfilled and is called love for that thing.

At the spiritual plane, one desires to remove imperfection of his conduct. The love for the saints of God is explained because of their perfection in conduct. The love for God is also explained similarly, as the God is the most Perfect One. He has created the universe and He runs it perfectly. One, who does not understand it lives in the world with anguish, pain, suffering and sorrow; he lives miserably. One, who has this knowledge, also lives like an ordinary person in the world, but he lives with the understanding that the world has been created by the God, the Lord of the universe, who is running it perfectly. This understanding makes him live happily in the world in accordance with His desire and it results in love for God, reflecting in a universal love.

All the religions lay stress on love of God, but it is difficult to understand what is really meant by love of God. For most religions the love of God is expressed in obedience and worship. The true nature of love, however, needs to be understood. One loves oneself the most; it is a fact of life experienced by everyone some time or the other. One loves oneself the most because of his identification with one's own self. If one loves some body else, it is because of the reason that he starts identifying himself with that other person. For example, the mother loves her child because she identifies herself with the child, so much so that the child becomes a part of her own existence. On the contrary, the child has no identity of his own, for his ego has not yet grown up; he knows nothing except the mother, he is completely dependant on her, which explains his love for her. As they both grow, the child starts acquiring his individuality and the mother also starts recognizing his independent existence. The degree of love starts getting affected.

When one talks of the love of God the sequence is reversed. One could consider God as the mother of all mothers and the seeker as the child, who has to traverse the path from a state of grown up ego to the state of complete dependence on God i.e. surrender unto Him. With the complete surrender of the ego one acquires the spiritual knowledge that his essence is the essence of God i.e. cessation of the duality and that his reality is nothing but the Reflection of God. With this realisation one reaches the state of Unity i.e. the state of Oneness. In this state there is no difference between the love, faith and enlightenment. This is the true knowledge. When this realisation dawns one's self exists no more.

The love for God has, therefore, to be understood as the complete Unity with the God. But then the God is Absolute and for most people it is difficult to surrender, to love something so abstract. Most people, therefore, need the help of a spiritual Master. The Master has a physical body and is like them. The disciple can perceive Master's existence through his own senses. It is easy for him to surrender his ego at the feet of his Master. The love for the Master gradually leads the disciple to the realisation that there is no duality between the Master and the God. The face of the Master is only a mask under which lies the Reality.

One can consider the Master like the river that is continuously flowing towards and merging in the ocean. At the point of merger there is no difference between the river

and the ocean. On merger with the ocean the river loses its identity, its independent existence. It becomes one with the ocean. The disciples who are like small watercourses by merging themselves with this river i.e. the Master can reach the ocean i.e. the God. On their own it is not only difficult but almost impossible for the small watercourses to travel through all this distance without the fear of being lost on the way. Their merger with the river paves the way for them to merge with the ocean. This is the easiest and the nearest path for the seekers to reach their destination. It is for this reason that the Sufis lay stress on the love for their Master.

In unity with the God what exists is only the Reality of the God and one sees the existence of the God alone in all beings. His love takes the form of Divine love for all beings. The love for God does not mean hatred towards the world; rather it results in the understanding that the others need to be treated in the same manner as one would himself like to be treated. One cannot be saying that he loves God by neglecting his duty towards the others. The mother cannot be justified in neglecting her child for the sake of performing her *pooja* and similarly a king cannot be said to love God if he spends all his time in worship and refuses to protect his people from the enemy. The real love for God is to do one's duty with utmost care and attention, while at the same time remaining in His Presence i.e. taking it to be a Divine order to discharge his obligations most faithfully.

The great Sufi Master Bayazid established supremacy of love by saying that 'the Almighty can be approached only through love.' The love for the beloved reveals his secrets in the heart of the lover and conversely the knowledge of the beloved produces in his heart the love for the beloved. The knowledge of the true beloved i.e. the God is a source of tremendous happiness. As in the case of worldly knowledge, the more complicated an issue is, the more pleasure one gets in understanding and resolving it. Similarly in the spiritual world, the knowledge of the God being the highest, one, who seeks to acquire His knowledge moves on the path of bliss.

In regard to supremacy of love, the great Sufi Master Mahatma Ramchandraji has also said that 'love is such a thing which can cross the limits of the Seven Skies.' His dear disciple Thakur Ram Singhji also used to say, 'Love is all encompassing. The Almighty can be realized only through love. The illiterate Gopis had won the love of Lord Sri Krishna only due to their unfettered love.' The true love brings in enlightenment. In fact there is no difference between Love and Enlightenment. Love is God and the purpose of acquiring knowledge is to know the God. Love is the culmination of knowledge and the height of enlightenment.

The true meaning of love thus is 'ekatmata' (oneness) i.e. complete merger with the beloved and cessation of the duality. There is no scope in love for the separate existence of the lover and the beloved. As soon as the feeling of duality between the Master and the disciple vanishes, one starts seeing His manifestation everywhere in the entire universe. Selfless love gradually turns into devotion, which makes one identical to

one's beloved. The disciple (the lover), however, is imperfect, and, therefore, it is the Master (the beloved), who being perfect, merges with the disciple and takes him on the path of love. We have references in the mystic literature:

*'Jab mein tha tab Hari nahi, abHari hai mein nay
Prem gali ati saankri, ya mein do na samay'*

(Till I existed, God was not there. Now only He exists and I am not there. The path of love is so narrow that it has no place for the two.)

The great Sufi Master Bayazid also said that 'love for the friends of *Allah* results in their love for you. The Almighty looks at the hearts of His saints and if He will see your name engraved in their hearts, He will forgive you.' It is for this reason that the Sufis love their Master the most. Their love for the Master lifts them to a state of bliss and presence in the heart of their beloved. Muhammad az-Zahid, a great Naqshbandi Sufi Master narrated an incidence concerning his Master Shaikh Ubaidullah al-Ahrar. Once his Shaikh fell sick and asked him to get a doctor from Herat. One of his co-disciples Maulana Qassim requested him to fetch the doctor fast, as he could not withstand the suffering of his Shaikh. It took him thirty-five days to return with a doctor. On return, however, he found that his Shaikh was well and Maulana Qassim had died. He asked his Shaikh about the sudden demise of Maulana Qassim, who was so young. Ubaidullah al-Ahrar said, 'When you left, Maulana Qassim came to me and said, 'I am giving my life for your life.' I asked him not to do that but he said, 'O my Shaikh I didn't come here to consult you. I have made the decision and *Allah* has accepted it from me.' Ubaidullah al-Ahrar said that he couldn't change his mind. The next day he became sick with the ailment of his Master, which was reflected on him. He died and Ubaidullah al-Ahrar got well without the help of a doctor.

Similarly Maulvi Wilayat Hussain Khan, younger brother of Maulvi Fazl Ahmad Khan, once mentioned an incidence regarding Hajrat Baqi Billah's submission to his Master. In the spiritual assemblies (*Satsang*) of Hajrat Baqi Billah, Masters of other *Silsila* (Sufi Orders) together with their followers also used to participate. Once when all of them were engrossed in deep meditation, all of a sudden Hajrat Baqi Billah stood up. His body was trembling and it appeared that he might fall. One of the persons got up and gave him support. After a little while when he was somewhat composed, one of the Masters present in the assembly very politely enquired 'Hajrat Kiblah (your honour) – what blessing have you received from the Almighty today that you are prepared even to sacrifice your life for it.' Hajrat Baqi Billah replied, 'Brother, what can I say. When all were deeply engrossed in remembering the Almighty, my eyes opened for a while. I saw a dog passing in front of the door. This dog resembled the one, which used to visit the abode of this slave's Master. My Master used to feed the dog with the food left over from his own dish. This slave used to feel jealous of that dog and used to think that dog to be more fortunate than him. Seeing this dog, I was reminded of my Master and that dog and I was overpowered by the flux of love. I, therefore, could not control myself.' On

listening to this explanation, the Master who had asked this question himself got into such a state of ecstasy that he remarked, 'Hajrat Khwaja Sahab, only you can be a Shaikh (Master).' He then loudly uttered '*Allah-o-Akbar*' and abandoned his life in that state of ecstasy.

The story of Shaikh Sanan in the book *Mantiqu't Taysr* (or Birds' Conference) written by the great Sufi Master Fariduddin Attar, of whom Maulana Rumi said; 'Attar traversed the seven worlds of Love while we are standing only at the corner of one street', reflects the idea of the supremacy of love in a very touching manner.

Shaikh Sanan had devoted his life to serving God and His creation. He had four hundred faithful disciples living with him. One night, Sanan had a dream in which he saw himself bowing to an idol in the city of Rum. He ignored the dream initially but when it recurred, he decided to visit Rum. His disciples also insisted on accompanying him. All of them left for Rum and after some days they arrived at the outskirts of Rum, near a temple. At the temple Shaikh Sanan heard a heart-touching female voice singing a sad love song. On following the voice, Shaikh Sanan saw a young beautiful Christian girl singing that sad song. Her charming beauty overpowered Shaikh Sanan's heart. In a moment his heart slipped away from his hands. He was dumbfounded and felt as if he had no existence of his own left any more. He could stand on his feet no longer. He sat down with tremors rocking his body. The fire of love made him forget all about himself.

The fire of love incapacitated Shaikh Sanan so much that he forgot that he was a Shaikh of so many disciples, who were witnessing his strange condition. Nothing was important to him anymore except seeing the face of that young girl again. The young girl had left the temple without noticing the Shaikh but Shaikh Sanan decided to stay there through the night in the hope of seeing her again the next morning. His disciples tried to persuade him to go to the city with them but it was of no avail. The pain of love was growing stronger and stronger in Sanan's heart. He was crying in this agony. His disciples were confused, unable to understand how their Shaikh could behave like that.

Shaikh Sanan was possessed by the love for the Christian girl. Nothing existed for him except his beloved. The next day came and then the night, the Shaikh could not have a glimpse of the girl again. He became exceedingly restless. His disciples tried to take him out of this obsession. They asked him to perform ablution for clearing his soul, offer prayers (*Namaz*), and to repent for his sin. The Shaikh answered that they knew nothing of his condition and that he had done his ablution with the blood of his heart for his beloved. He was repentant not of his love but of his Shaikhood. He regretted that he did not fall in love earlier and said that his prayer now was only for her.

Not understanding what their Shaikh had said the disciples requested him to forget everything that had happened and to go back with them to Mecca and its Kaaba. Sanan replied that his Mecca now was that temple where he found his love and its Kaaba was his beloved, the Christian girl. His disciples asked him whether he had no shame

uttering these words and what face would he show to the God? The Shaikh replied, 'The God himself has made me to fall in love. How can I act against His will?'

The helpless disciples left their Shaikh at the temple in the hope that time will heal the heart of their Shaikh and they found a nearby place for themselves. They thought that perhaps their Master might change his mind and return back to Mecca with them. Days passed in waiting both for the Shaikh and the disciples. Sanan started living on the path opposite the temple from where he could see the girl crossing him in the hope that one day she would notice him. He started addressing her with an imaginary name in his poetry, which he started composing as a result of pain of love in his heart and he would sing the same in sad melodies.

At last, one day the girl noticed him and asked him why was he living there on a street, without home, in the company of dogs. Sanan replied that he had fallen in love with her and would stay there until she responded. The girl was astonished looking to his old age enough to be her grandfather and asked him retortingly whether he was not ashamed of himself to fall in love with a young girl.

Shaikh Sanan was unperturbed. He replied eloquently that love knows no age. Whether young or old, love pierces the heart of the lover the same way. Not knowing what to say, the girl asked him to abandon his Shakhhood, convert to Christianity, drink wine and renounce his faith in his holy book and all obligations hereunder to be eligible to deserve her favour.

For Sanan, his only faith was his love. He did what the girl had demanded of him gladly. He sang and danced with rejoice proclaiming that he had become nothing for love; he had lost his honour in love and asked the young girl what more he could do for her? She was more than amused. She asked him to buy her gold and jewellery and if he had no money, not to waste his time on her. The Shaikh replied that he had nothing left with him except his heart that too he had already given away to her. He could not live in separation and would do anything she desired of him. The girl put her condition to be his wife that he should look after her pigs for one year. If he tends the pigs to her satisfaction, she would be ready to become his wife on completion of one year. The Shaikh gladly accepted her wish and took up his residence in the pigsty and started tending the pigs with love and care.

Shaikh Sanan's disciples were utterly disappointed. Their faith in their Shaikh was completely shattered and their hearts were broken. They were confused and they did not know what should they do now? Should they stay in Rum or should they return to Mecca. They asked Shaikh Sanan what should they do? Did he want them also to convert to Christianity as well? They will stay with him, if he asked them to do so. Shaikh Sanan, however, told them to do whatever they wanted and that he wanted nothing from them. If any one asked them about him, they should tell the truth.

The disciples returned to Mecca. They had no courage to tell anything about their Shaikh to anyone. However, one of their colleagues who could not go to Rum, being on journey, on return to Mecca and not seeing their Master, asked his colleagues about him. They told him the entire story from the beginning to the end.

On listening to what had transpired, he asked his colleagues how dare they judge their Shaikh as having done something wrong? He cried for his Shaikh from the depth of his heart. He told his colleagues that they did not know the etiquettes of the path of love. If they truly loved their Shaikh, they should have remained with him and followed him. If the Shaikh had torn off his Sufi robe and put on a cincture, they should have done the same. They should have stayed with him in the pigsty. He said this is what the true love demands.

This faithful disciple remembered and cried inconsolably for his Shaikh day and night. On the fortieth day he had a vision. He saw his Master Shaikh Sanan standing in the presence of God with a dark cloud of dust from the temple hanging between Shaikh Sanan and God. Suddenly, the dust blew off and the Divine Light embraced the Shaikh. Then he heard an eternal voice saying: 'When the fire of Love burns one of all his possessions, only then he becomes worthy of seeing the Eternal Beloved. Nothing has any value in the creed of Love except the selfless love. Until the mirror of the soul is cleared of the dust of existence one can not see the reflection of the True Beloved in it.'

When he told of his vision to his colleagues, all of them decided to proceed to Rum, where they found their Shaikh with his forehead on the ground in salutation to the God. Shaikh Sanan had travelled beyond religion and was liberated from all bondage. He had truly become nothing in the love of his True Beloved. The Shaikh had become one with his true Beloved. He was silent but filled with bliss. The disciples gathered around him and all of them started back for Mecca.

Meanwhile, the young girl also had a dream. She saw a glimpse of the Almighty in her dream. She had realised that it was He who was the true Lover. It aroused an intense desire in her heart to be united with that Eternal Beauty. The pain of love and separation had also captured her heart. It was now revealed to her that it was only the Shaikh, who could show her the way to the Eternal Beloved.

She rushed to meet the Shaikh and on learning that he had left for Mecca, ran into the desert in order to catch up with the Master. The pain of love had melted her heart, which was pouring down in the form of tears from her eyes. For days together she ran barefooted in the desert, calling to her Master with love and devotion. The fire of love had reduced everything in her to ashes leaving nothing behind.

Shaikh Sanan had known in his heart that she was running in the desert to see him. He sent his disciples to look for her. On seeing the great Master, the young woman threw herself at his feet. Holding his feet firmly, she said, 'My Master, I am burning with

love. I am dying to see my Beloved, who has disappeared after showing a glimpse and arousing this fire of love in my heart. I cannot see Him anymore. Help me to see my Beloved again.’ The Shaikh took her hands gently and looked into her eyes deeply as if he was peeping into her soul, conducting it to her Beloved through his own soul. The young girl met her destiny. She screamed, ‘O Beloved, I cannot bear Your separation any more’ and with these words she united with her Beloved leaving her mortal remains behind.

Shaikh Sanan stood still for a while and then said, ‘They are fortunate, who reach their destiny and meet with their Beloved. They live eternally in union with Him.’ He then paused for a moment and added, ‘But those who are left behind to guide others to their goal must sacrifice their bliss of communion for the sake of His pleasure!’

A disciple on whom this secret is revealed that the God loves his Master is definitely the recipient of God’s grace. A story is related. A King had ten wives who wanted to know whom did the King love the most. They asked the King. The King showed them a ring and said that next day, whoever of them has the ring, is his most beloved wife. In the night the King got ten similar rings made and sent one each to each of his wives. Now, if someone else other than the wives of the King knows this secret definitely he is the dearest to the King. So is the disciple to whom it is revealed that the God loves his Master.

Love of God is given to all since it is He who has given birth to all. The very fact that something exists is a manifestation of His love. The Sufis consider human beings to be the best creation of the God and that the man has the highest place in His creation. But the perfection of human beings lies in becoming a ‘complete man’ (*Insanu’l-kamil*). The Qualities and Attributes of the Almighty reflect in a complete man. All creatures endeavour to evolve as complete man, as one could realise the Supreme Being only after that. The journey of all creatures started from the Supreme Being and will end with reaching back to Him. The period spent in the process is the ‘period of being’ (*Dauran-e-Wajood*). It is, therefore, not possible that His highest creation, the man is devoid of love. This love, however, does not surface till the heart is cleaned and it reflects that love like a mirror reflects the light of the sun.

Initially the Sufi wayfarers considered it necessary to live a life of ascetics and hermits, with immense fear of God. They, therefore, spent their time in meditation and in the remembrance of God to overcome their ego. Gradually, however, they realised that ego could be sacrificed only through love. Without love one cannot stand firmly for long. History is full of such examples where ascetics have fallen to their ego. Famous Sufi Jami has said, ‘You can adopt any method to shelve your ego but love is the only way which definitely protects you from ego.’ Sufis believe that Love is God. It is the gift of the God. It cannot be learnt from the human beings. It can be acquired only through His grace. For the Sufis love is the only way to realise the God. They consider the entire creation to be His manifestation and, therefore, unless one loves all the creatures, one cannot claim true

love for God. Someone has said, 'there can be as many ways to realise the God as are there the number of atoms. But the simplest and the fastest way to realise Him is to serve His creation.' Thus, the Sufi, on the one hand endeavours to clear his inner-self, and on the other he renders selfless service and derives happiness in comforting others.

Sufis consider *Uns* (selfless love) for God as the shortest way to reach Him. The mother loves her son with no self-interest; she does not look at his vices or his goodness, nor does she live on any hopes from him. Even if she has any expectations, which are belied, her love for the son does not become any less. It is possible that at times the mother may get annoyed with the son but it does not mean that her heart would not melt seeing him in any difficulty. If one loves God in the same manner then there is no veil left in between. The only veil is that of self-interest, if that is not there, all the distance is travelled and one reaches his destiny immediately. Mahatma Ram Chandraji has stated in his book 'Mazhab Aur Tahqiqat' on the basis of his personal experience that there have been such great persons, who in their lives never engaged themselves in any spiritual practices, no *jikr*, no meditation, no contemplation, no worry of crossing spiritual stages, no desire of achieving salvation, peace or any such thing nor even to realise the Truth, but because of their intense love for their Master in their hearts and following his order to the hilt without caring for the result or their own interest in it, they have become one with their Master. Mahatma Ram Chandraji has further stated that he would not have believed it if in his own case his experience was not something similar. He, however, has cautioned against exhibition of superficial love to cover up for ones lethargy, which would lead him, nowhere.

Prophet Mohammed was asked once to which religion did he belong and it is said that Jesus Christ was also asked the same question. The fact is that all saints, all prophets belong to the same Religion, the Religion of the Lovers of God.

MASTER-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

*'Sat guru mhare surma, vaar kare bharpur,
Bahar kuch dikhe nahi, bhitar chaknachur.'*

The most distinguishing feature of Sufism is the Master-disciple relationship. Sufis regard the place of their *Pir-o-Murshid* (the Guide or the Master) to be the highest. Sahajo Bai, a great saint, has affirmed this in her *Bhajan* (devotional song):

*'Ram tajaan mein, guru ko na bisaaroon,
Guru ke sum Hari ko na niharu'*

(I can leave the God but not my Master; I consider the God not equal to my Master)

Similarly Sant Kabir has said:

*'Guru Gobind dou khade, kake lagoon pay,
Balihari guru aapne, jin Gobind diya milay'*

(Between my Master and the God, I choose my Master to bow before him first, as it is he who has led me to the Truth)

A seeker in order to attain his goal must follow the directions of his Master, who may lay down for him certain rules and practices, and guide him in every detail of his life. The teacher knows that the requirements of individuals vary. Not everyone is at the same stage of evolution, nor is the nature of everyone alike. No two disciples are, therefore, treated in the same manner. Human beings are unique. The Master knows his job. He will treat them according to their possibilities, their character and their past conditioning. The teaching is given according to the time, the place and the state of the evolution of the disciple. The Master, however, does not go against any religion, all religions for him are alike, they are only different roads to the One Truth.

The Master knows what is in the best interest of the disciple and how his character can be moulded, quickly and without undue strain. A story is related. Once a man took his wife to a doctor for treatment of sterility. She was a fat lady and could not conceive because of her obesity. The doctor examined her and said that he could not treat her for sterility but in any case she would die in forty days. The lady lost all her interest in the life and she also lost her appetite in fear of death. The period of forty days passed in great agony for her but at the end of the forty days she did not die. The husband took his wife again to the doctor and told him about the survival of his wife. The doctor said he knew it and that now his wife will be fertile. She had lost her weight drastically, which was not allowing her to conceive.

There is another anecdote related to Shah Baha'uddin Naqshband. Once a man visited him and sought his help and guidance for making spiritual progress. Shah

Naqshband asked him to abandon all spiritual studies and to leave his place at once. Another visitor, who happened to witness this strange behaviour of Shah Naqshband, started to remonstrate with him. Shah Naqshband wished to demonstrate to that visitor why he had acted in that particular manner. Immediately a bird happened to fly inside that room. The bird was confused and flying here and there not knowing the way to escape out of the room. Shah Naqshband waited till the bird settled near the only open window in the room. Then suddenly he clapped his hands making a big noise that caused the bird fly straight through the window out in the open sky. Shah Naqshband then remarked, 'That sound must have shocked the bird, even offended it, leading it to freedom. Don't you agree?'

In fact the whole exercise relates to surrender of ego. A seeker by taking the shelter of the Master surrenders his ego at the feet of his Master. This is the easiest and quickest way to surrender one's ego. A person who attempts to traverse the path of spirituality without the aid of the Master is said to have *Shaitan* for his guide and is compared to a tree that for want of a gardener's care brings forth none or bitter fruit. The *Shaitan* is a symbolical representation of one's ego. Scriptures are full of examples where individuals even after reaching very high spiritual states fell down because of their ego. The Master having already traversed the path knows the intricacies of the path and helps the disciple achieve his objective. Besides, the Master also helps the disciple to keep his ultimate objective constantly in mind and in not getting distracted by *Siddhis* (miraculous powers) that might be acquired by the seeker in the process.

The term used by Sufis when a disciple's responsibility is taken over by the Master is '*bayat*' (initiation), which literally means one who has been sold i.e. pledged to the Master. One may test the Master; satisfy himself in whatever manner he wants. Use of intellect and discretion is important only upto the stage of seeking the Master. Only that much intellect which may lead one to the door of the real Master is sought and is enough. Having reached the door of the Master, the intellect is of no more use; rather it could prove to be an obstruction in the path of spiritual progress. For example, if one wants a gown to be stitched out of a cloth, he looks for a tailor. If one fell ill, he would look for a doctor. But his intellect is needed only as long as he has found a tailor or a doctor. If one keeps on giving his suggestions to them or keep on questioning their wisdom in their jobs, it is of no use, rather it may result in a bad gown being stitched or in a prolonged or wrong treatment. They know their job best and it needs to be left to them. Similarly, the spiritual Master knows the best how to mould his disciple's character, how to pierce his heart.

The teacher, however, can benefit a disciple only if two conditions are met with; there is compatibility between their old impressions (*Sanskars*) i.e. harmony in their natures, and there is a link or connection between them. Without these the teacher, howsoever accomplished he may be would not be able to help the disciple. For example if the teacher does not have the inclination towards worshipping in him then it will be extremely difficult for him to help his disciple in doing worship. Similarly if the disciple

has the inclination in him to engage in worship but if the teacher has lesser inclination towards it, the benefit flowing to the disciple would also be proportionately less. The greatness and accomplishments of the teacher cannot help the disciple but if there were better harmony between them the benefit also would be equally greater. If a seeker feels that his teacher is very knowledgeable, it indicates that the seeker has more inclination towards acquiring knowledge since the teacher has all the qualities in him but the disciple has the hidden *sansakar* of knowledge and, therefore, a better appreciation for the knowledge.

The great Sufi saints are termed *Wali* (those who have established connection with the Universal Consciousness). Their *Wilayat* (effect of spirituality) can either be *Wilayat Awwal* or *Wilayat Doyam*. The saints possessing *Wilayat Awwal* are close to God i.e. their attention is focused entirely upon the God; they may be blessed with strange and divine attributes e.g. capability to fly in air, simultaneous presence at a number of places etc.; and they have the capability of transmitting power (*Shaktipat*). The saints possessing *Wilayat Doyam* are close both to the God as well as the world i.e. their attention is focused on both. They have a connection with and control over the world, i.e. they are the worldly people who have realised the Truth. This means that they are ordained to serve the people and to benefit them from their presence. It is not that the saints with *Wilayat Awwal* are not at all concerned with the world but their main focus remains on the God. They may or may not pay any attention to the world at all.

People connected with saints are able to benefit spiritually from them on account of the effect of *Wilayat Awwal*. It may, however, happen that a saint may have the effect of both *Wilayat Awwal* and *Wilayat Doyam* in him or only one of them or the effect of one may be more than the other. The *tavajjoh* of saints benefits people only due to the effect of *Wilayat Awwal*.

When the great Sufi saints depart from this world, they take away with them their *Wilayat Doyam* but bestow *Wilayat Awwal* to one or more of their disciples. If they have a son, who is connected with their Sufi way, he inherits *Wilayat Awwal*. Generally *Wilayat Awwal* once bestowed is not taken away unless the disciple commits a serious wrong.

Saints belong to three categories: *Abid*, *Sufia* and *Malamita*. *Abid* are those, who are concerned only with the outer form of the religion i.e. they engage themselves in worship, fasting, prayer, charity and paying visit to holy places etc. They are not concerned with the internal practices like *jikr* or meditation and generally do not feel any bliss in these activities. They have not yet entered into the world of love and unity. Those of them, who get an entry into the world of love and unity, are called *Sufiya*. They do not hide their spiritual state from the world. They remain tuned to the God and consider the world to be His Reflection. They engage themselves in various internal practices such as *jikr*, meditation, and contemplation and experience the bliss. They are also known as the saints, *Wali*, *Hans* and *Paramhans* etc. Some of them may take on to the particular attires

and may exhibit the miraculous powers acquired by them. They, therefore, distinguish themselves from others. A fine veil of ego thus remains present in them.

Malamita are those saints, *Wali*, *Hans* and *Paramhans* (Sufis), who do not reveal their spiritual state and live like ordinary worldly people. They live like ordinary persons and attend to normal worldly affairs like anyone else and may engage themselves in worship, fasting, prayer and charity but at the same time keep themselves engaged in internal practices and remembrance of God. Although they possess spiritual powers but do not exhibit them. No difference, however, exists in their feelings and behaviour i.e. they have no duplicity. They do what they say. For them although the Almighty is Omnipresent but He does not show His Presence, similarly they do not consider it appropriate to exhibit to the world their spiritual accomplishments. They do not behave in any manner that can be said to be violating the norms or the etiquettes.

Some *Malamita* Sufis at times, however, deliberately say or do something that is apparently not in accordance with the dictates of the religion, although on a thoughtful consideration it may not be so. This they do to shun people away from them. Such saints do so as they still have a concern for the world, which still exists for them. They are considered as having duplicity in their behaviour. Their status, therefore, is considered to be lower than that of *Malamita* Sufis, who do not distinguish themselves from others in any manner and thus have no veil of ego left over them.

Sufis attach a lot of importance to the proper *adab* (respect) for one's Master. Sheikh Abu Ali Farmadi said, 'if you are true in your love for your Master, you have to keep respect with him.' However, a disciple must know how to obey. There is an interesting story concerning how a disciple must obey. It is not enough that the disciple merely obeys his Master. The anecdote is that of a young person, who visited a Sufi Master to be taken as a disciple. The Sufi master told the young man that he was not yet ready to be taken as a disciple but the young man was insistent. The Sufi master ultimately took the young man with him on a pilgrimage to Mecca. As both of them were travelling together, the Master asked him to be either a leader or a follower so that they may complete their journey in an orderly manner. The young man chose to follow the Master. In the night it started raining. The Master got up and held a cover over the disciple. When the disciple protested saying that it is what that he should be doing, the Master told the young man that as the leader he commands him (the young man) to be protected. When it was day, the young man requested the Master to change roles, as it was a new day. The Master agreed. The young man then told the Master that he would go and collect some wood to make fire. The master, however, said him that he may do no such thing. When the young man argued that he was the leader commanding the Master to let him collect the wood, the Sufi Master asked him not to do anything like that for he (the Sufi master) was now a follower who could not allow himself to be served by the leader.

Sufis regard the place of their Master to be the highest. Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi in this context has said that the disciple must observe proper etiquettes in the company of his Master. The couplet given below explains that observance of proper etiquettes is the first requirement to be followed on the path of love.

*‘Khamosh e dil bhari mahfil mein chillana nahi achcha,
Adab pahla karina hai muhabbat ke karino mein.’*

Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi in this context has also said that when the disciple is in the presence of his Master, he should withdraw his attention from all other things and turn his mind totally towards him. He should not start offering prayer (*Namaz*) if the time arrives, nor should he engage in performing *jikr*, except on the order of the Master. None of his actions should show even slightest disrespect for the Master. If he receives some blessings from any saint he must know that it is only his Master’s grace, which although appears to be flowing from that other saint but in fact is received by him due to his allegiance to his Master. For example a wife receives love and respect from the relatives of her husband but all that she receives is due to her relationship with her husband. If she were not faithful to her husband no one would care for her.

Shaikh Ubaidulla al-Ahrar, a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order once narrated an incidence concerning a disciple of Shaikh Qutbuddin Haider. This disciple of Shaikh Qutbuddin Haider once visited the *Khanqah* (resort) of the great Sufi Master Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi. When he felt very hungry he turned his face towards Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi and said, ‘Ya Qutbuddin, I am hungry.’ Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi asked some one to feed him. After having the food, the disciple turned his face in the direction of his Master’s village and said, ‘Thanks God! Ya Qutbuddin Haider you do not forget me anywhere.’ The man who was attending on to that disciple of Qutbuddin Haider told Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi that this man is strange. He had been fed on your food but he conveys thanks to Qutbuddin Haider. On hearing this Shaikh Shahabuddin Suhrawardi said, ‘One should learn from him how to behave like a disciple. Whether worldly or spiritual, whatever benefit he receives, he considers that to be flowing from his Master.’

Sufis consider not only the Master but his family also equally respectable. In this context Mahatma Raghubar Dayalji, a great Naqshbandi Sufi saint once narrated an incidence concerning Hajrat Mohammed Umar Faruqi, who was the second Khalifa of Prophet Muhammad. The fourth khalifa of Prophet Muhammad was Hajrat Ali who also was his son-in-law. Once their sons were playing together. While playing, Hajrat Ali’s son taunted at Hajrat Umar Faruqi’s son saying, ‘Although you are a slave of a slave but talk of being equal to me.’ His son felt very upset and complained to his father. Hajrat Umar Faruqi was the then caliph. He asked his son to get this in writing from Hajrat Ali’s son so that there was no doubt in what was said. Hajrat Umar Faruqi’s son again went to Hajrat Ali’s son and said, ‘If you dare repeat those insulting words, give it to me in

writing.’ Hajrat Ali’s son without any hesitation wrote what he had uttered on a piece of paper and handed it over to Hajrat Umar Faruqi’s son.

When Hajrat Umar Faruqi’s son brought that paper to his father, he was so excited as if he had found a treasure and started kissing and putting that paper on his head. He embraced his son and prayed the Almighty to bless every one with such a son. Then he said to his son, ‘O my son, Hajrat Ali’s son is the son of my Master’s daughter. He, therefore, is our Master and I am a slave of that family. I make the will that when I die, this paper be kept on my chest so that if the angels make any inquiry, they may know that I am a slave of my Master and let me rest in peace at the feet of my Master.’

Even the most insignificant word of the Master is the absolute law to his disciple. The Master’s wishes, even though they contravene the letter of the *Shariat* (i.e. scriptures) must be fulfilled. As one of the great Sufi Masters has said, ‘If the tavern-keeper (your Master) orders you to soak your prayer-mat with wine, do it; for you are still not aware of the etiquettes to be observed in the path of love.’

An incidence concerning Darwish Muhammad as-Samarqandi, who was the nephew and disciple of Shaikh Muhammad az-Zahid, a great Naqshbandi Sufi is related. Once Shaikh Muhammad az-Zahid asked Darwish Muhammad as-Samarqandi to go up a certain hill at some distance and wait for him there. Shaikh Muhammad az-Zahid told him that he would be coming later. Darwish Muhammad was so obedient to his Shaikh that he moved immediately without using his mind to ask how would he go there, what shall he do when he get there, etc. He had surrendered his will to his Shaikh completely. His conduct was perfect. He went and waited for his Shaikh to come. The time for afternoon prayers had arrived but his Shaikh did not show up. Then set the Sun. His ego was telling him, ‘Your Shaikh isn’t coming; you have to go back. May be the Shaikh has forgotten.’ His truthful belief, however, told him to believe in his Shaikh and believe that he is certainly coming, as he had said. He only had to wait.

Darwish Muhammad’s heart did not believe his ego. He was being lifted up on the path of spirituality. He braced up and waited. It was very cold on the hill in the night. He was freezing. He spent all night awake. His only source of warmth was his remembrance of the Almighty. Dawn came but the Shaikh had still not shown up. He was hungry and started looking for something to eat. He found some fruit trees, ate, and kept waiting for the Shaikh. The day went, and then the next day. He was again fighting with his ego, but he kept thinking: ‘My Shaikh is a real Shaikh, he knows what he is doing.’

Time went on, a week and then a month. The Shaikh did not arrive. Darwish Muhammad kept on waiting spending his time in *jikr* and his daily prayers. He kept on waiting. The power of his *jikr* made the animals come and sit around him. It dawned on him this miraculous power had come to him from his Shaikh.

It began to snow in the winter but his Shaikh didn't come. It was extremely cold and there was no more food. He fed himself with the moisture inside the bark of the trees, roots and whatever green leaves he could find. Deer came to him and he began to milk the ewes. This was another miracle, which appeared to him. The ewes did not move when he milked them in turn. His Master was sending him spiritual knowledge through these miracles and visions. He was being lifted up to higher and higher spiritual levels.

Year after year passed on like this. The Shaikh did not come, and Darwish Muhammad was ascending to a higher and higher state of patience. He kept thinking, 'My Shaikh knows.' All these years he was in continuous remembrance of his Shaikh and his heart was being filled with the love for his Shaikh. At the end of the seventh year he started smelling the fragrance of his Shaikh in the air around him.

Shaikh Muhammad az-Zahid arrived at the end of the seventh year. When Darwish Muhammad saw him, he felt a rapture of bliss in his heart, and immense love for his Shaikh. He ran to receive him completely covered with hair, accompanied by all his wild animal friends.

His Shaikh asked him what was he doing there and why did not he come down? Shaikh Muhammad az-Zahid replied that he waited there for him as ordered by him. The Shaikh asked what if he died, or perhaps he forgot? Darwish Muhammad answered, how his Shaikh could forget when he is the representative of the Prophet? His Shaikh asked what if something had happened to him? Darwish Muhammad said, 'O my Shaikh, if I had not stayed here and waited for you and obeyed, you would have never come to me by the permission of the Prophet!' It had been revealed to Darwish Muhammad that his Shaikh was coming by the order of the Prophet.

His Shaikh laughed and said: 'Come with me' and in that moment he filled his heart with all the spiritual knowledge and bestowed upon him all the accomplishments of the Naqshbandi Order that he had in his heart. He then ordered him to be the Shaikh of the followers.

Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to say that until the disciple becomes completely attuned to his Master, shedding his own-will, he is not able to acquire the Divine knowledge. In this context, he once narrated the story of Maharaja Janak and Maharshi Ashtawrak:

Maharaja Janak was one of the most renowned scholars of his time, who had risen above the materialistic desires. He, however, felt that he had traces of his ego still left in him, which could be over come only by taking shelter of a competent Master. He, therefore, made up his mind and announced that one who can lead him to realisation within the duration in which he mounts the horse shall be his Master, and if he fails he will be awarded death.

On the destined day Maharaja Janak was ready with a well-decorated horse to mount on and many wise people from all around had gathered to witness the scene. No one, however, dared to come forward. The time was passing away and every one was wondering what was going to happen, as the vow taken by Maharaja Janak was very difficult to be fulfilled.

When no one came forward, a little before the Sunset, Maharshi Ashtawrak's mother told him to go to Maharaja Janak, fulfill his desire and to rescue all those present from this difficult situation. Maharshi Ashtawrak was then about nine or ten years old. His body was bent at eight places and, therefore, he was known Ashtawrak i.e. bent at eight places. Spiritually it can also mean that he by birth had mastered all the eight mystique centers of energy and that he was a great Master by birth.

As desired by his mother Maharshi Ashtawrak reached the Court of Maharaja Janak. His brilliance shadowed every one including Maharaja Janak. He asked Maharaja Janak to mount the horse. Maharaja Janak, although deeply impressed by him, told him very politely about his vow and that he would not like to subject a child, woman, old or disabled persons to be subjected to death penalty as announced by him.

Maharshi Ashtawrak on listening to this warning of Maharaja Janak challenged him saying, 'O Janak, you are surely falling from your position. You are unnecessarily wasting time of every one by showing your cowardice and incapability, besides incurring the risk of not fulfilling your vow. I had heard that Maharaja Janak is a learned person but today in this Court full of wise persons you are backing out from your vow. If in the mean time the Sun sets you would not be able to fulfill your vow.'

Maharaja Janak was astonished and bewildered. He proceeded to mount the horse but as he was about to put his foot in the stirrup, Maharshi Ashtawrak told him, 'O Janak, you have taken such a harsh vow which has put the lives of saints at risk, but you have not announced the *Gurudakshina* (a reward presented to the Master as a mark of respect). You should, therefore, first commit the *Gurudakshina*, which should be matching your vow and also meet with the aspirations of the Master.'

Maharaja Janak felt embarrassed and said, 'Kindly tell me what do you desire as *Gurudakshina*. I shall immediately fulfill it.' Maharshi Ashtawrak replied, 'Whatever you claim is yours, you can promise as *Gurudakshina*. I do not want any thing else.'

Maharaja Janak accepted this and immediately offered his kingdom, all belongings and even his family members at the feet of Maharshi Ashtawrak. Maharshi Ashtawrak laughed at it and said, 'O Janak, you are perhaps joking with me. Are really all these things belonging to you? The kingdom, property and wealth, which you claim to be yours, were these not belonging to somebody else before you and would not pass to some one else after you. Your family members, whom you consider to be related to you,

are they not related to others. Is it proper for you to deny them of their rights? Do you want to deceive your Master'?

Maharaja Janak was stunned. He started gazing at the feet of Maharshi Ashtawrak and it looked as if he was pondering over something very deeply. Maharshi Ashtawrak looking at the condition of Maharaja Janak took pity at him and asked him, 'Why are you feeling so helpless over this trifle matter. Do not get perturbed. Tell me how and what makes you think that all these things belong to you.' Maharaja Janak felt something igniting inside by the grace of the Master. He said, 'It is the mind of this humble servant of yours through which it accepts and thinks anything belonging to it. O Master! if this mind belongs to your humble servant, it offers it at your pious feet.'

Maharshi Ashtawrak said, 'Although this mind also does not fully belong to you, but I accept it. Now it is my order that you should not do anything through this mind which is now mine, without or against my order.' Maharaja Janak although was a great person and had travelled far on the path of spirituality, his mind was not completely free from *sankalp* and *vikalp* (affirmation and negation). It took some time for him to completely empty out his mind. During this period Maharshi Ashtawrak kept a watch on his mind and reminded him, if he strayed. The moment Maharaja Janak reached the state of complete emptiness of mind i.e. the state of perfection, he forgot about himself, his vow and that he was about to mount the horse. Maharaja Janak was about to fall that Maharshi Ashtawrak supported him. In a moment his heart was filled with the Divine Light. His vow had been fulfilled.

Maharshi Ashtawrak then told him to ask whatever he wanted to know. Maharaja Janak put his head at the pious feet of his Master Maharshi Ashtawrak and said, 'O my lord, I had taken this difficult vow only to acquire this knowledge. Now there is nothing more to know.' Maharshi Ashtawrak then told Maharaja Janak that it is only when the disciple completely surrenders his mind to the Master, shedding his own-will, that he is able to acquire the Divine knowledge.

Effort on the part of the disciple does not lead him to perfection. A *Guru* (Master) is needed. By oneself alone, one can never go beyond the level of the mind. Mind cannot empty itself of itself. How can one empty out the mind, if one is constantly working through the mind. One must be able to leave it, to forget everything. One cannot do this oneself, as the mind cannot transcend itself.

In the Naqshbandi Order of Sufis, declared Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji, no effort on the part of the disciple is needed. The Master through his grace does everything for the disciple. A real *Guru*, a *Satguru* knows how to mould the disciple from deep within, just by a mere sight. The Master does not impose conditions. He is like a loving mother. The child can be angry, can run away but the mother does not take it very seriously. She cares for the child just the same. Similarly, the disciples can and do sometimes leave the Master, but the Master is never supposed to do so since the Master

disciple relationship is forever. The disciple cannot go anywhere if he is pledged to the Master. The Master is like an experienced rider who makes the horse go where he wants. But disciples are not slaves. They are free. Even when the personality wants to run-away it is difficult for it to do so, the Higher Self knows better. This is a system of liberation, of freedom but most people fail to understand or appreciate it as they are asked to do nothing, no discipline, no bondage and no enchanting of *mantras*. We live in the epoch of the mind. Mind is the ruler. Most of the people are not satisfied; they will not accept anything till at least some kind of explanation is given. This system, therefore, is never widespread; it is for the few and it is from the heart-to-heart. The goal is to be achieved in the present life itself. *

(*Irina Tweedie in 'Daughter of Fire')

Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji also said that the Sufi is a friend, a spiritual guide; but not a teacher, for he has nothing to teach. The Sufi teaches by being what he is. He does not belong to any country or any civilisation. He works always according to the need of the people of the time. He also said that to make a Saint takes no time. But who is prepared to sacrifice everything? Then this world shall be nothing, non-existent for him anymore. Who is prepared to accept it? The Master ascertains by his power whether the disciple has reached the stage of complete surrender, whether he has annihilated himself in the Master? If that is so, the Master passes on the disciple to his Master and so on. In course of time, the consciousness of the disciple gets so absorbed in the Masters of the chain that he possesses their spiritual powers. He is then passed still higher up the chain until he merges completely in the Universal Consciousness.

Although the way of training of Sufis is not exclusive to them alone they developed a system of *Tavajjoh*, which is the only difference. The Sufi Saints through *tavajjoh* (focusing their attention on to the disciple) produce great spiritual changes in disciples. Through *tavajjoh* they transmit their spiritual energy to their *murid* (disciple). An incidence concerning Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan is related. Once the chief police inspector sent his son to Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan for study. He wrote to the father: 'take your son back; he is not very intelligent; I cannot teach him anything'. One day the police officer and his son were sitting there. Somebody asked a question: 'How long does it take to learn Urdu and Persian?' 'About a year,' Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan replied. 'Oh, so long?' asked the questioner. Then he said: 'Oh, about nine months.' And as the discussion went on, it became six months, three months – it was less and less until it reached the stage that to know Urdu and Persian will take half an hour. Then the police officer got up and said: 'Here is your slave and here is the son of a slave!' 'Ah?' asked Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan, 'don't you see that this talk was going on for your sake? Come here!' he said to the boy. And he covered his head so that the ears were covered with a small piece of cloth. It is done like this, if the *Guru* wants to give something, and for ten minutes he explained the meaning of *Alif* – why *Alif* is *Alif* and the First and not 'B' and so on. After that the boy fell unconscious. He was unconscious for three days and then it took him another three days to recover. And after that whatever difficult words in Urdu or Persian were put before him, he could read and explain them. It was the most perfect example of a powerful *tavajjoh*.

The methods of *tavajjoh* varied in different *tariqats* (different Sufi Orders). There are about forty Sufis *tariqats*, the main four being Naqshbandia, Chishtia, Qadaria and Suhrawadia. These orders are marked by distinguishing features in their teachings and practices, which are supposed to have been handed down through more or less continuous chains of succession originating with their founders. The center of every order at any given time is a *murshid* (Master), who is considered to be a spiritual heir of the original founder and as such received his authority through his immediate predecessor.

Every Master, however, has only a few 'Seed ideas', which represent the fundamental note or chord of his teachings. These ideas, which he has absorbed in himself, become a part of his existence, and lead him to the realisation of the Truth. His teachings, therefore, revolve around these ideas. He sees the Truth through this window opened to him. The teacher, in turn gives only what he has assimilated in him. He may not convey the whole amount of his teaching. Some times the teacher may ask his disciple to go to another teacher for him to acquire some knowledge, which he may not possess. If the teacher considers it necessary he would ask the disciple himself but the disciple is never expected to do so on his own.

No knowledge, however, can be transmitted to the disciple until he is able to comprehend it and is prepared to receive it. One has to grow to the Truth and only then it is communicable. The task of the Master is to arouse the desire in the disciple to seek the Truth and to keep this flame burning. The knowledge transmits efficiently when the consciousness of the disciple gets absorbed in the consciousness of the Master. The path for this merger is complete surrender.

A real *Satguru* (Master) will leave no desire with the disciple at the time of death. The desire only leads to another birth. The Master serves as a focus of attention for the mind. The mind needs something to hold on to and it takes the form of the thing it thinks about. If, therefore, the disciple focuses his attention on the Master, he becomes like the Master. A story from the scriptures is related: A man was walking down a path and suddenly he noticed that the earth where he was just standing had a wonderful fragrance. 'Oh dust.' He exclaimed, 'Why is it that you smell so nice! Are you special?' 'No'. Answered the dust. 'I am just an ordinary dust but once a tree stood here and its flowers used to fall to the ground. I was permeated with their fragrance. It is not mine. I am just the same as any other dust.'

The spiritual knowledge cannot be conveyed through words. The real knowledge can be transmitted only from heart-to-heart. The Sufis, therefore, insist on the necessity of getting in touch with a living Master. One must meet a living Master at least once. It is only then that the difference between the name and the holder of the name ceases to exist. Till one has not met the holder of the name, the name is a hollow thing. One can imagine about the qualities and attributes of the holder of the name, but that is only an imagination. It is not the firm faith. The Absolute Truth being beyond perception, it is

only His representative, the Master, who can lead the disciple to the Truth. The Master is like a door, the one side of which faces the closet and the other side to the open i.e. the Master is the doorway to lead the disciple to the God. But for this fact, there is no difference between the Master and the God who is linked both to the finite and the Infinite. It is the Master who by his grace gives faith to the disciple. The Master being like the disciple, i.e. both being human, it assures the disciple that it is possible for him, with all his human weaknesses to overcome them and to become one like his Master. In fact like the child who sucks the milk of its mother and becomes strong and grows, so the disciple absorbs from the *Guru*. The disciple is nourished with the essence of the *Guru*.

It is said in the scriptures that a father re-lives his life as his son. It is equally true of the Master that the Master re-lives his life as the disciple. If, therefore, the Master is a competent Master, he is sure to take the disciple with him, the only condition being the commitment of the disciple to the Master. In fact, even the question of commitment is relevant only upto a certain level, for it is the Master, who knows how to guide his disciple, how to produce the charge in him. The Sufis take great care to avoid hurting feeling of others. Therefore, even to their disciples, they do not frankly say anything directly but indicate that in hint. But a hint is given always. If the disciple does not take the hint, the Master may give him another opportunity. But it all depends upon the will of the God. The Master can fill the heart of the disciple with Divine love in a moment but it depends upon the faith and courage of the disciple. It depends upon the capacity of the disciple. The Master gives him as much as he can bear.

The Master knows how to help his disciple or to protect him from undesired effects. An incidence concerning Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan is related. Once during his early days, Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan had gone to Badayun. He had heard that a Muslim *Avdhut* (a saint in trance and totally absorbed) who was aged over hundred years resided there. He searched for him but could not find him. Ultimately, he found him in an old building. He bought some sweets and very politely offered it to the *Avdhut* after saluting him. When Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan saw that the *Avdhut* was not responding at all, he turned his *tavajjoh* at him. As a result the *Avdhut* opened his eyes, which were so glowing that an ordinary person could not even dare to look at them. The *Avdhut* turned his face towards Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan and started enchanting something. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan felt as if some power was dragging him with great force towards the *Avdhut*. He could not control himself and got frightened. He then remembered his Master Shaikh Ahmad Ali and immediately felt as if he has taken his place. The *Avdhut* was now not able to have any impact on Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan. When he got tired, he said, 'You are very fortunate. Often one comes across *Fanafil-Shaikh* but rarely a *Fanafil-Murid*. A disciple should be like you and a Master like your Master. You will enlighten the world.'

In the evening when Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan appeared before Shaikh Ahmad Ali, he enquired of the incident. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan told everything to his Master. He asked Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan not to repeat it ever in the future, as it was

not proper to disturb a *Fakir*. He then explained that there are two categories of *Avdhuts*. One category is called *Avdhut* and the others '*Kalandar*.' A person turns to be an *Avdhut* as a result of receiving a strong flux of love and divine light beyond the capacity of that person. His mind loses control and he forgets about himself or about his ultimate objective. *Kalandars* are above *Avdhuts*. *Kalandars* are those who have reached the stage of '*Hans*' or '*Paramhans*.' They even in that condition remain like a child in the lap of the Almighty and have the knowledge of that love and bliss. While *Avdhuts* are not able to proceed further on their own, *Kalandars* keep on making progress. In the company of both *Avdhuts* and *Kalandars*, a person becomes one like them or at times his entire spiritual energy is absorbed by them. The reason behind this is that such *Avdhuts* transmit their boundless energy of love, which is beyond the capacity of the other person, which turns him into a state of inertia or a sort of madness. Company of such *Avdhuts*, therefore, often results in a harm rather than benefit. One should try to keep away from them or if that is not possible, one should not look into their eyes or should not sit closely or in front of them. However, a *Fanafil-Shaikh* is saved from such dangers as in his case the Master takes his place.

He then said to Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan, 'You had also come across such a *Kalandar* who started transmitting such an energy of love and so suddenly that you could not withstand it. It was quite possible that he could have swayed you away with him in his flow, but right then that energy which you have embedded in yourself as your Master, blocked that effort. However, that energy of love transmitted by the *Kalandar* is lying with me, which will be transmitted to you gradually in due course.'

Another incidence concerning Mahatma Ram Chandraji and Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan is also related. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan once fell sick. As he did not get relief in Farukhabad, he moved to Kanpur for treatment. Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to go to Kanpur on every Saturday night and come back by night train on Sunday for attending to his office next day i.e. Monday morning. On the road leading to Farukhabad railway station a Muslim Sufi Shah Sahab who had many followers used to live. He had acquired some *Siddhis*. One of the powers he had acquired was that by shaking hands with someone, he used to absorb and deprive that person of his spiritual-link (*Nisbat*) with his Master and then used to harass him. Another power that he had acquired was to cover a long distance in a short time without using any transport. Often he used to meet Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan and seeing his affection for Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to advise him not to impart his spiritual knowledge to Hindu *Kafirs* as in his eyes they were not eligible for the same. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan did not pay any heed to his advice. Once Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan was travelling for Kanpur in the train. He saw Shah Sahab at Farukhabad railway station. The train started rolling but Shah Sahab kept on strolling at the platform. When the train reached Fatehgarh, Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan saw Shah Sahab there at the platform. Shah Sahab came to Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan and started talking with him as if he wanted to tell Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan that I possess this power. The train next reached Kamal Ganj. Shah Sahab was present there also at the platform. Shah Sahab came to Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan and started talking

to him. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan remarked, 'Shah Sahab, what game are you playing. Such things do not look good for saints. Now please come to the next station.' Shah Sahab this time could not reach the next station and lost that power forever.

Because of this incidence Shah Sahab felt annoyed with Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan but did not express it and waited for an appropriate opportunity to settle the score. Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to have regards for Shah Sahab. One Saturday while going to railway station he saw Shah Sahab coming from the opposite direction with his followers accompanying him. Indicating towards Mahatma Ram Chandraji, Shah Sahab told his followers that he is the person who is very dear to Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan. Uttering these words Shah Sahab embraced Mahatma Ram Chandraji. His real intention, however, was to absorb and deprive Mahatma Ram Chandraji of his *nisbat* with Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan. Mahatma Ram Chandraji was unaware of this intention and remembering his Master embraced Shah Sahab, and then left for Kanpur. On the other hand, Shah Sahab developed pain in his chest and became restless. The local *Hakims* and doctors were called for treatment but Shah Sahab did not get relief. Next day also his condition remained the same. Shah Sahab was then compelled to tell his relatives and disciples that neither this was an ailment nor could doctors cure it. He told them to take him to Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan at Kanpur; otherwise he would not be cured.

He was, therefore, taken to Kanpur. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan very kindly received him. Mahatma Ram Chandraji had gone out to market. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan enquired of Shah Sahab the reason for his visit to Kanpur. Shah Sahab did not state the truth and told Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan, 'I embraced your son (Mahatma Ram Chandraji) with affection but he has taken away my *nisbat*. From that time I am having pain in my chest.' Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan expressed astonishment at this and told Shah Sahab that he did not expect him (Mahatma Ram Chandraji) to have misbehaved like this. He requested Shah Sahab to be comfortable and wait for his arrival. By then Mahatma Ram Chandraji returned from the market. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan asked him, 'Dear Puttulal, why have you taken away his *nisbat*.' Mahatma Ram Chandraji very politely mentioned to Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan, 'I do not know anything about this. Neither I have this power nor can I be expected to misbehave in this manner.' Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan then addressed Shah Sahab, 'Your *nisbat* has been taken away by me as you wanted to take away his *nisbat*, and not by my son. He is innocent. I am your offender. Your *nisbat* is lying under my pillow.' Shah Sahab felt ashamed and begged to be pardoned. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan took a promise from him that in future he would never do such a thing. Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan then asked Mahatma Ram Chandraji to meditate and give *tavajjoh* on his (Shah Sahab's) *Hriday Chakra*, and joined himself in the process. After some time he (Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan) told Shah Sahab that now your *nisbat* is with you. Shah Sahab was cured and his pain was gone. Shah Sahab returned gladly to Farukhabad and thereafter started behaving respectfully with Mahatma Ram Chandraji.

The Master is always benevolent and merciful. Even his rebuking has the shower of hidden love in it. It is meant for the benefit and progress of the disciple. To clean the carpet of the dust, it needs to be struck with a stick. It may appear to be a cruelty to the carpet but in fact it is not cruelty, it is necessary to clean it, to remove the dust. Similarly to drain away the pus from a septic boil the doctor has to operate it but it is not cruelty on the part of the doctor. Even if a disciple is thrown away from the door of the Master, as it happened with many Sufi saints, it is for his benefit as the pain of separation arouses the fire of longing and continuous remembrance of the beloved, that is the Master, which purifies the heart of the disciple.

An incidence concerning Shah Naqshband is related. Once he was in a state of Attraction and absent-mindedness, moving here and there, not knowing what he was doing. In that condition he got an inspiration to go to the house of his Shaikh, Sayyid Amir Kulal. His feet were torn and bleeding from thorns when darkness fell. It was a pitch-dark night with no moon or stars showing. When he reached his Shaikh's house, he was sitting with his friends. On seeing him there, his Shaikh asked his followers to take him out, as he did not want him in his house. They put him out. The air was very cold and Shah Naqshband had nothing on but an old leather cloak. He felt that his ego was revolting, trying to betray his trust in his Shaikh. Shah Naqshband, however, overcame his ego with Almighty's Divine care and His Mercy, which were his only support in carrying this humiliation in the Cause of *Allah* and the Cause of his Shaikh. Shah Naqshband felt so tired and so depressed that he put the state of humbleness at the door of pride, placed his head on the threshold of the door of his Master with a firm resolve that he would not remove it until his Shaikh took him back under his kind care. Snow and the chilled air froze Shah Naqshband. His heart, however, was filled with the warmth of the love for the Divine and the love for the door of the Divine, his Shaikh. In the early morning Shaikh, Sayyid Amir Kulal stepped out of his door and without seeing him physically put his foot on Shah Naqshband's head, which was still on his threshold. His heart was filled with pity. He immediately withdrew his foot, took Shah Naqshband inside his house and blessed him to be dressed with the dress of Happiness. He said, 'You have been dressed with the dress of Divine Love. You have been dressed with a dress that neither my Shaikh nor myself has been dressed with. *Allah* is happy with you. The Prophet is happy with you. All the Shaikhs of the *Silsila* are happy with you...' Then with great care and delicacy he pulled the thorns from Shah Naqshband's feet and washed his wounds, filling his heart with divine knowledge and bestowing upon him the most valuable spiritual treasure.

A similar incidence is associated with Bulleh Shah, one of the great Sufi Masters of Punjab in the Order of Hajrat Abdul Qadir Jilani. Bulleh Shah's Master was Hajrat Inayat Shah. Bulleh Shah belonged to a family that was descendant of Prophet Muhammad, but his Master was from a lower caste. Bulleh Shah's family was not able to live with this fact. Bulleh Shah, however, was firm in his devotion to his Master. Bulleh Shah once invited his Master to attend a marriage function in his family. Hajrat Inayat Shah, however, did not come himself but sent one of his disciples as his representative,

who also belonged to the same cast as his Master. Bulleh Shah's family did not take care to pay proper attention to him. Bulleh Shah also did not pay proper respect to the representative of his Master under the influence of his family, owing to his lower caste. This annoyed Hajrat Inayat Shah and he discarded Bulleh Shah.

Bulleh Shah's world changed with the annoyance of his Master. He tried to seek forgiveness of his Master but did not succeed. Bulleh Shah knew that his Master liked music. He, therefore, started learning the art of singing and dancing from a lady, whom he took as his mother. Soon Bulleh Shah became apt at it. His Master used to participate in the annual *Urs* (a religious function). Bulleh Shah reached there along with his teacher. He had covered his face under a veil and asked his teacher not to reveal his identity and that if his Master Hajrat Inayat Shah is pleased with his singing and dancing and asks her to remove his veil, she should agree to do so only when Hajrat Inayat Shah pardons all his wrong doings.

Bulleh Shah danced and sang to his heart. Hajrat Inayat Shah was pleased. He did not know who he or she was. He desired to see the face of the singer, but Bulleh Shah kept on singing and dancing. Hajrat Inayat Shah asked thrice. At that moment the lady asked Hajrat Inayat Shah to first pardon all the sins and wrong doings of the singer as a pre-condition to lift the veil. Hajrat Inayat Shah agreed and when he saw Bulleh Shah, he embraced him and accepted him again. Hajrat Inayat Shah bestowed upon Bulleh Shah his entire spiritual treasure, making him a Master instantly.

The Master shows the disciple his real self. Sant Sunder Das narrates a story in this context: A lioness gave birth to a cub, which fell in the hands of a 'shepherd' who brought up the cub as one of the sheep. One day a lion passed by and spotted the cub. The lion wondered how the cub was behaving like a sheep and was feeding on grass, forgetting his own true self. The lion roared and asked the cub to do the same. The cub also roared imitating the lion. The sheep and the shepherd ran away. The lion took the cub with him and showed him his face in a pond of water. The cub then realised that it was not a sheep but a lion.

The real meaning of this story is that our soul is the cub, which lives under the control of the mind, which is the shepherd and the senses are the sheep. The soul has come from the Infinite. The mind has mixed up the soul with the senses and body. The mind now rules us and feed us on worldly things, which are like grass. The Master, is like the lion, roars about the Truth and shows us our reality i.e. the real form of our soul.

SUFISM IN INDIA

India has always been a land of great saints and free thinkers, which has been assimilating in its fold various cultures and thoughts from time to time. It is the land of ancient wisdom, where Sufism in its true spirit has flourished from time immemorial. However, in the current context of Sufism, it could be worthwhile to mention that Islam entered into India through the Sea route, through the land route from Persia into Sind and through the Khyber Pass. It is believed that the Sufis must have also used these routes, which were used by the Arab traders and military commanders.

The first great Sufi saint to visit India (undivided) was Ali el-Hujwiri popularly known in India as Data Ganj Bakhsh. He was a disciple of Mohammed al-Hasan al Khuttali who was connected with Junayad of Baghdad. He came to be known as Data Ganj Bakhsh after being addressed so at his tomb by Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti, the great Sufi saint of the Chishti order. Ali el-Hujwiri is considered to be the first authoritative Sufi writer who wrote several books on Sufism. His most famous book is *Kashfu'l Mahjub*, the first book on mysticism in the Persian language. Born in Ghazna in Afghanistan, around 1000 AD, he travelled from Syria to Turkistan and from the Indus to the Caspian Sea. During his journeys, he came across many saints and had deliberations with them. He received knowledge both from Abul Qasim Gurgani, a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order and Khwaja Muzaffar.

His Shaikh asked him to go and settle in Lahore. According to the description in *Fuwaidu'l-Fuwad* (a compilation of the sayings of great Sufi Master Khwaja Nizamuddin-Auliya of the Chishti Order) he was initially reluctant to go to Lahore as one of his co-disciples Shaikh Hasan Zanjani was already there. On insistence by his Master, he proceeded to Lahore. On entering the city of Lahore he witnessed the burial of Shaikh Hasan Zanjani, who had just passed away. He settled near Bhati Gate in Lahore, where his tomb is situated.

Ali el-Hujwiri continued to be greatly revered by all the saints of India, even after his death. Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti is believed to have paid a visit and offered prayers at his tomb on his arrival to India. It was during this visit that he paid respects to Ali el-Hujwiri by addressing him as 'Ganj Baksh' i.e. the munificent one which also meant 'Data' (giver) in Hindi, thus he came to be popularly known thereafter as 'Data Ganj Baksh'.

Ali el-Hujwiri spoke of '*fana*' for the first time in India. Hajrat Bayazid (Abu Yazid Bistami a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order) was the first person to speak about '*fana*' (Annihilation or the complete merger of one-self with the Almighty) and Abul Qasim Gurgani, who was one of the teachers of Ali el-Hujwiri, was a successor in line of Bayazid. He, however, compared annihilation (*fana*) to transmutation of the qualities of all things by burning fire to its own qualities, yet leaving their essence

unchanged. He laid stress on following the *Sharia* but advocated observing sobriety and caution. In his view the true meaning of Islam could be found in the essence of Sufism.

The Chishti Order of Sufis, which is now indigenous to India, was the first of the four main Sufi Orders, namely Chishtia, Qadiria, Suhurawadia and Naqshbandia, to be established in India. Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti introduced the Chishti Order in India, sometime in the middle of the 12th century AD. He was eighth in the line of succession from the founder of the Chishti Order, Khwaja Abu Ishq Shami Chishti. The devotees of this order practise *chilla* i.e. they observe seclusion for forty days during which they refrain from talking beyond what is absolutely necessary, eat little and spend most of their time in prayers and meditation. Another Characteristic of the followers of this order is their fondness for devotional music. They hold musical festival, and enter into ecstasy while listening to singing.

It is said that once when Khwaja Muinuddin was watering the plants in his garden he saw Shaikh Ibrahim Qandozi. The very sight of Shaikh Ibrahim Qandozi deeply impressed Muinuddin. He ran out of the garden to receive Shaikh Ibrahim Qandozi and with great respect conducted him into his garden and presented to him some of the best fruits of the garden. Shaikh Ibrahim Qandozi was pleased with Muinuddin's warm hospitality and his mannerism. He found him to be an eligible candidate to receive his grace and, therefore, transmitted to him his spiritual energy. This sacramental act of 'transmission' of spiritual energy was symbolized by an outward act of handing over a piece of bread, which Shaikh Ibrahim first chewed it himself and then gave it to Muinuddin for him to eat. This caused in one moment, a complete and lasting transformation in Muinuddin's life. Khwaja Muinuddin thereafter sold all that belonged to him and distributed the money so realized among the poor and needy.

After receiving the spiritual transmission from Shaikh Ibrahim Qandozi and disposing off his worldly possessions, Khwaja Muinuddin took upon the life of a wandering hermit in search of a spiritual guide. Initially, he spent a few years in Samarqand in learning religion and then he moved to Bukhara where he studied the Qur'an under the guidance of Maulana Hisamuddin Bukhari, a mystic and scholarly person. Khwaja Uthman Haruni, a famous Sufi Saint of the Chishti Order, however, initiated him, in the Chishti Order of Sufis in Harun. After receiving his authorization from his Master to train others in the Order, he was asked to go to India.

It is believed that during his journey to India Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti met many of the renowned saints of his time including Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (the founder of the Qadri Order), Abu Najib Suhrawardi and his son and successor Shihabuddin, the most renowned Sufi Saint of the Suhurawardi Order, Shaikh Abu Yusuf Hamadani a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, Shaikh Shamsuddin Tabrizi, who was the spiritual master of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi and Shaikh Nasiruddin, a famous saint.

Khwaja Muinuddin first entered in Lahore where he visited the tomb of Shaikh Ali el- Hujwiri (Data Ganj Bakhsh) and then from there he proceeded to Ajmer in 1165-66 AD where he finally spent the rest of his life.

Many miracles are associated with Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti. It is said that annoyed with the king of Ajmer, Prithvi Raj Chauhan, he uttered, 'I hand over Prithvi Raj alive in the hands of King Shihabuddin.' A few days later in 1192 AD, Sultan Shihabuddin Mohammed Ghori conquered Ajmer and captured Prithvi Raj Chauhan alive. Sultan Mohammed Ghori attributed his victory to the blessing of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti and in his honour constructed a building in the brief period of two-and-a-half days, which is famous as '*Dhai Din Ka Jhopra*'.

It is also related that Emperor Akbar was blessed with a son in answer to the prayer of a Chishti Sufi, Shaikh Salim, a descendant of the famous Saint Baba Farid. This resulted in Akbar's devotion to Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti and he started visiting the Dargah of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti in Ajmer every year and distributing lots of gifts in his honour. He also named his son 'Salim' after the saint.

Right from the beginning, Sufi saints were being highly regarded by the rulers. Mohammed Ghori had appointed Qutbuddin, one of his slaves (founder of the slave dynasty), as the Viceroy in Delhi. His successor was King Altamash, who professed his allegiance to the Chishti Order and gave it his royal patronage. He took Shaikh Qutbuddin Kaki, more popularly known as Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki as his spiritual master.

Shaikh Qutbuddin Kaki was born in 1186 AD at Farghana in Isfahan, where he had the fortune of meeting his master Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti who was on his way to India, in the mosque of Abu al-Layth. He also had the fortune of receiving knowledge from Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi. He followed his master Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti to India. His reputation as a great saint, however, travelled faster than him. It is believed that he was a saint by birth and many miraculous events are associated with him. He acquired his name 'Kaki' (a man of cakes) when on demand from his friends, he put his hands in a tank of water and produced from there hot cakes to feed his friends. The name Bakhtiyar was given to him by his Master Shaikh Muinuddin, which means 'a fortunate person'.

When the news of arrival of Shaikh Qutbuddin Kaki's to Delhi reached the King, he along with his populace received him with great respect. They requested him to reside in Delhi. Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti also asked him to stay in Delhi and appointed him as his vicegerent. King Altamash offered him the Office of the Chief Qazi, which he refused and, therefore, Nazmuddin Sughra another disciple of Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti was appointed to that Office.

It was around this time that the saints of Suhrawardi Order also started making inroads into India. Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya of the Suhrawardi Order was the foremost of them, who was a contemporary of Shaikh Qutbuddin Kaki. He was born in Multan in 1182 AD and was a grandson of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, the founder of the Qadri Order, through his mother. Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya was, however, initiated in the Suhrawardi Order by Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi and later asked to go to India. It is said that he was a highly accomplished saint. Many miraculous events are associated with him. However, some of his disciples, who were initiated in the Suhrawardi Order were deeply influenced by the Shaikh Qutbuddin Kaki.

His eldest son, Sadruddin succeeded him in the Order. It is related to him that he married the divorced wife of the then Governor of Multan, who in a state of intoxication had divorced his beloved wife thrice. In order to regain her, as per the Islamic law, she was to be married to someone and again to be divorced similarly for her previous husband to be eligible to remarry her. Owing to Shaikh Sadruddin's high repute, his Qazi suggested name of Sadruddin to the Governor of Multan. Saddruddin married the lady but on her insistence to live as his wife, he refused to divorce her. Annoyed with Shaikh Sadruddin's refusal to divorce his wife, the Governor announced death sentence for him but it so happened that on that night itself the Mongols killed the Governor and captured the city of Multan.

It was in the time of Qutbuddin Kaki that devotional music was introduced in the Chishti Order, as a means of achieving the state of ecstasy. It was considered by him that the harmony of sounds stirs the heart of the listener and arouses in him the love for God. When these musical functions became very popular, the orthodox Muslims took up the matter with King Altamash to put a stop to it, as it was against the *Shariat*. King Altamash, however, found it very embarrassing for him to do anything in the matter on account of his loyalty to Shaikh Qutbuddin Kaki on the one hand and the disapproval of Islamic laws for such functions on the other. He, therefore, did not intervene in the matter and such musical functions started gaining more and more popularity and acceptance by the common people.

Shaikh Fariduddin popularly known in India as Baba Farid succeeded Shaikh Qutbuddin Kaki. Although he received his formal education and knowledge from Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya Suhrawardi, he was initiated in the Chishti Order by Shaikh Qutbuddin Kaki. Baba Farid lived a life of severe austerity and piety. He was very popular amongst the masses, who thronged him to seek his blessings. It is related to him that in his childhood, his mother used to hide some sweets under his prayer rug in order to induce him to offer prayers. One day she forgot to keep the sweets under the prayer rug but when Fariduddin, as usual looked for the sweets under the prayer rug he found plenty of sweets by the grace of God. Through this incidence he acquired the nickname Shakarganj.

He is said to have married in old age to Princess Huzaira, the daughter of Balban, King of Delhi. Although she received a lot of wealth from her father in the marriage, she chose to follow the life style of her husband and donated her entire wealth to the poor. Baba Farid lived till about 1265-6 AD and died at the age of 93 years.

One of the most renowned and revered Sufi saints, Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya was a disciple and chief successor of Baba Farid. Credit to a great extent goes to Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya and his disciple Amir Khusro to take Sufism to every nook and corner of India.

Nizamuddin was born in Badaun in 1236 AD. At a very early age of five years he lost his father. His mother, who was a very pious lady, therefore, brought him up. It is said that at times they did not have any food to eat in the house. On such occasions she used to say to her son that 'today we are the guests of the God'. Her trust in God was extraordinary. The young Nizamuddin was greatly influenced by this saintly character of his mother.

At the age of twenty years, Nizamuddin heard from some one about Baba Farid, who had then taken Ayodhya as his abode. So impressed was Nizamuddin that he immediately set for Ayodhya and on reaching there he surrendered himself at the pious feet of Baba Farid, who took Nizamuddin immediately as his disciple. In due course, Baba Farid appointed Shaikh Nizamuddin as his Vicegerent and asked him to go Delhi.

On coming back to Delhi the fame of Hajrat Nizamuddin started reaching far and wide. Lots of people started visiting him to seek his blessings. This made the King Mubarak Khilji somewhat apprehensive of his influence over the people and especially so as Hajrat Nizamuddin made it a point not to pay ceremonial visits to the King.

King Mubarak Khilji used to hold a special court on the appearance of new moon when all the leading personalities of the city used to pay courtesy visit to him. Hajrat Nizamuddin, however, never visited the King even on these occasions. Once King Mubarak Khilji threatened to severely punish Hajrat Nizamuddin, if he failed to visit him on the next new moon. Hajrat Nizamuddin who used to frequently visit his mother's tomb, prayed before her for the death of the King before the appearance of the next new moon.

It so happened that at the appearance of the next new moon, a person named Khusru Khan killed King Mubarak Khilji. Later, Giyasuddin Tuglak in turn killed Khusru Khan. The new King also was apprehensive of Hajrat Nizamuddin, like his predecessor. He ordered Hajrat Nizamuddin to leave Delhi. It is reported that in 1325 AD, Giyasuddin Tuglak on returning from a successful expedition in Bengal, sent word to Hajrat Nizamuddin to quit Delhi. When the royal command was announced to Hajrat Nizamuddin he uttered, '*Hanoz Dilli Dur Ast*' meaning Delhi is still far off. Giyasuddin

Tughlak could not make to Delhi. At Tughlakabad, a pavilion erected in his honour fell over him and he was killed in this accident.

Amir Khusro was a devoted disciple of Hajrat Nizamuddin. He was a poet who used Urdu for the first time to compose songs, riddles, rhymes and enigmas in common man's language to reach their hearts. An incidence is related to Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya and Amir Khusro. Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya, knowing his end was nearing had gifted away all his belongings to the poor. When he was left with nothing, an old Brahmin came to him and begged for help for the marriage of his daughter. Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya had already given away everything he had with him. He said to the Brahmin that he was late in coming to him. Nevertheless, Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya gave him his shoes, which he was wearing. The Brahmin was very upset, but he could not say anything to Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya. He was going on the way with a heavy heart. From the other side was coming Amir Khusro. He had gone on a business trip and had earned lot of wealth, which was laden on forty mules. Amir Khusro started smelling the fragrance of his Master Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya and he started looking for him. Soon he spotted the Brahmin as the source of that fragrance. He asked him whether he had met Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya. The Brahmin narrated the entire incidence to him saying that he could not get any monetary help from Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya and instead has received his shoes. Amir Khusro requested the Brahmin to give those shoes to him and in return to take all the forty mules laden with wealth. The Brahmin was more than pleased, so was Amir Khusro. Amir Khusro put the shoes with great reverence on his head and marched towards the abode of his Master. In the meanwhile Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya had left this mortal world for his heavenly abode. He had instructed his disciples not to let Amir Khusro enter that premise where his body was cremated, lest Amir Khusro will also sacrifice his life at his grave. Amir Khusro was, therefore, stopped from entering that premise. He obeyed his Master's orders and did not go inside. However, he sacrificed his life in the grief of his Master outside the premises.

Shaikh Nasiruddin, more popularly known as 'Chiragh-e-Dilhi', succeeded Hajrat Nizamuddin Auliya. He was also persecuted by the then King because of King's fear arising out of Nasiruddin's popularity. He died of stabbing by a person to whom he pardoned and arranged for his escape from the city. His tomb in Delhi is popularly known as 'Chiragh-e-Delhi'. Mohammed Gesu Daraz, also popularly known as 'Banda Nawaz', in turn, succeeded him. Though born in Delhi, his father took Mohammed Gesu Daraz to Daulatabad. Later he came back to Delhi and was initiated by Shaikh Nasiruddin. In 1398 AD, he moved to Deccan, where Sultan Firoz Shah Bahmani received him with great respect. Mohammed Gesu Daraz died in 1422 AD in Gulbarga, where his tomb is situated. During his lifetime he wrote a number of books on Sufism and on Islam. One of his famous books is *Sharah Tabsiratu'l-e-Stilihatul-Sufiya*.

It was around this time that the saints of Qadri Order of Sufis also took India as their abode. Sayyed Mohammed Ghawth, tenth in the line of succession from Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, the founder of the Qadri Order, settled in Uchh, which was also an

abode of Sufi saints of Suhrawardi Order. The fame of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani had already reached India. Sayyed Mohammed Ghawth was, therefore, received well and the then Ruler of Delhi, Sultan Sikandar Lodi not only became his disciple but also gave his daughter in marriage to him. It is said that this he did on the orders of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, who appeared in Sultan's dream and asked him to marry his daughter to Sayyed Mohammed Ghawth. Hajrat Miya Mir (1550-1635) also acquired great fame in Punjab. It is well known that the Sikh saint *Guru* Ramdas had requested Hajrat Miya Mir to lay the foundation stone of Hari-Mandir Sahib in Amritsar.

The Naqshbandi Sufis were the last to enter India. This Order of Sufism was introduced in India by Hajrat Muhammad al-Baqi Billah. The Order got its name after Muhammad Baha'uddin Shah Naqshband, a renowned Sufi Master. Baqi Billah was seventh in the line of succession from Shah Naqshband.

Muhammad al-Baqi Billah was born in 972 H (1562 AD) in the city of Kabul in the land of Ajam, which was then a colony of the Sultanate of India. His father was a judge. From his early childhood Muhammad al-Baqi Billah exhibited signs of a great ascetic. He was a divine soul filled with love for the Almighty. He came to India in the first instance on personal business. Here he got interested in spirituality and, therefore, gave up his worldly life in the quest of spiritual knowledge. One day when he was reading a book on Sufism, his heart got illuminated with the divine-light. It is said that the soul of great Naqshbandi Sufi Master Shah Baha'uddin Naqshband sowed the seed of divine love in his heart and blessed him with the capacity to do *jikr*. This also aroused in him a strong desire to seek the shelter of a Master. He was so restless in the search of a Master that his holy mother was not able to bear with his desperation and she used to pray for him to the Almighty for fulfilling his desire. Her prayers were answered soon when one day Holy Master Muhammad Khwaja al-Amkanaki appeared in his dream and invited Baqi Billah to visit him.

Muhammad al-Baqi Billah travelled continuously until he reached the city of Samarqand. There he came in the contact with the Master of his time, Muhammad Khwaja al-Amkanaki. He stayed with him for three days. Muhammad Khwaja al-Amkanaki initiated him in the Naqshbandi Order, authorized him to take followers and asked him to go back to India to introduce the Naqshbandi Sufi Order there.

On way back to India Muhammad al-Baqi Billah stayed in Lahore for about a year. Saints and scholars of Lahore were deeply impressed by him. In India he settled in the city of Delhi. Through him the Naqshbandi Order spread with great swiftness throughout the Indian Subcontinent. People in the subcontinent were attracted to his knowledge, his Heavenly Power and his Prophetic Characteristics. True seekers by merely looking into his eyes, or by sitting in his company doing *jikr*, used to enter in a state of self-effacement, through which they could reach the state of *fana* (Annihilation), in a single sitting.

His heart used to remain always filled with divine-love. If he focused his attention on some one even once, that person used to get deeply influenced. Many people turned to be 'avdhut' (a fakir in trance-totally absorbed) by merely seeing his face. Once in the month of *Ramzan* his dear disciple and successor in the Order, Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi sent his servant to Hajrat Baqi Billah to hand over some *Faluda*. He happened to go straight at the door of Hajrat Baqi Billah, who in order not to disturb anyone else himself came out and asked him his name. On knowing that he was a servant of Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi, he remarked that 'a servant of Miya Mujaddid Alifsani (Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi) is my servant as well'. As that person started going back, he started feeling the impact of those words uttered by Hajrat Baqi Billah. He felt that divine-light was engulfing all beings, stones, trees, the earth, the sky, everything. When the servant reached before Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi and stated about his strange condition, Shaikh Ahmad Faruqi remarked, 'This man has happened to face the Shining Sun (Hajrat Baqi Billah) as a result of which he is dazzling.'

Baqi Billah was very kind hearted. If he saw some old person walking on foot, he would offer him his own conveyance and will himself walk on foot till they were about to reach the town. However, before they reached the destination he will mount himself on the conveyance so that no one would know that he had offered his own conveyance to some one else and thus hide it from them. Once when in midnight he came to sleep after offering prayers (*Namaz*), he saw a cat lying under his quilt. Baqi Billah did not disturb the cat. Instead he himself suffered the cold till morning. If any of his disciples did anything wrong or committed any mistake, he took it to be a result of his own shortcoming, for if this shortcoming was not there in him, it would not have been reflected in the disciple.

Baqi Billah died at the age of forty years. A little before his death a Maulvi asked him to explain the meaning of his name 'Baqi Billah'. He told the Maulvi that the meaning of his name would be explained to him after his death. A few days later, Baqi Billah fell ill. When the Maulvi came to see him, he repeated his question. Baqi Billah told him that the person who will offer the last prayer at his dead body would give him the answer.

On his death while the people were waiting for the *Imam* to arrive for offering the last prayer, they saw a person, fully covered in a sheet, coming from far off. He completed the ritual of offering the last prayer at the dead body and started proceeding back from where he had come. The Maulvi followed him and asked him to explain the meaning of Baqi Billah. That person removed the sheet and showed his face to the Maulvi. He was Baqi Billah himself. Thus, he explained the meaning of Baqi Billah, as the one who lives eternally in the God.

Baqi Billah was succeeded in the Order by Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi, who was born in the year 971 H., in the village of Sihar Nidbasin (Sarhind in India). He received his knowledge and education through his father and through many other Shaikhs of his

time. At the young age of seventeen years, he had been authorized to train followers in all the three *tariqats*: Suhrawardia, Qadiria, and Chishtia. Although he was guiding his followers, yet he felt that something was missing in him, which he was continuously searching for. He felt an interest in the Naqshbandi Sufi Order. His spiritual progress eventually brought him to the presence of Shaikh Muhammad al-Baqi Billah, who had come for this purpose to India from Samarqand by the order of his Shaikh, Muhammad al-Amkanaki. He took the Naqshbandi Order from Baqi Billah and stayed with him for a little over two months, until Baqi Billah bestowed on him the divine knowledge he had in his heart and gave him authorization to train his disciples in the Order.

It is said that the Prophet predicted his advent in one of his hadith. Shaikh Mir Hisamuddin said, 'I saw the Prophet in one of my dreams praising Shaikh Ahmad as-Sarhindi'. Amongst the saints who predicted his advent was Shaikh Amad al-Jami. He said, 'After me will appear seventeen men of the People of God, all of whom are named Amad and the last one among them will be at the head of the millennium. He is going to be the highest of them and he is going to receive the state of Unveiling. He is going to revive this religion.'

Another to predict his advent was Maulana Khwaja al-Amkanaki, who asked his Khalifa Muhammad al-Baqi Billah to move to India in order to train him. Muhammad al-Baqi Billah said, 'That is why I moved from Bukhara to India.' When they met he told him, 'You are the one whose appearance the Shaikh Muhammad Khwaja al-Amkanaki predicted. When I saw you I knew you were the Qutub of your time. When I entered the region of Sarhind in India, I found a lamp, which was so big and so bright that its light reached up to the heavens. Everyone took from that lamp's light. You are that lamp.'

It is said that the Shaikh of his father, Shaikh Abdul Aad, who was a Shaikh of the Qadiri Order, had been given a jubba (cloak) from his Shaikh, which had been passed down from the great Sufi Master Abdul Qadir al-Jilani. Sayyed Abdul Qadir had said about it to his successors, 'Keep it for that one who is going to appear at the end of the first millennium. His name is Amad.'

Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi has described one of his great experiences in his book and has named it as 'Dayra Gazab Ilahi' or the vision of the 'God in All Encompassing Form' (Viraat Roop Darshan). In this he has described at length various appearances of the Almighty, including the furious and the alluring ones, similar to that described in the Srimadbhagvadgita by Arjun when he in the battlefield sees the divine universal appearance of the Lord Sri Krishna. Thereafter Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi has described in detail the journey further up from this vision and has mentioned, 'I travelled to the highest destination, which is beyond description, for which I am profoundly thankful to the God.'

Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi mentioned that the Heavenly Guardians facilitated for him passage through time and space. He realised the God to be the Essence of all matter

and God in all matter without incarnation. Then he realised God together with all matter, God ahead of everything and thereafter following everything. Finally he reached a state where he saw God and nothing else. This is what he said to be Witnessing the Oneness, which is also the state of Annihilation (*fana*). Then he was lifted to the state of Subsistence (*'baqa'*), which is the second step in Sainthood after *fana*. Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi described that in the state of Subsistence he realised that the essence of all creations is the God and His essence is the 'Essence of Myself'. He was lifted to the state of Annihilation, and then to the state of Existence, then he was brought back to be with people, in the Station of the common people. This he described to be the highest state in guiding people to the Presence of God, as it matches the understanding of human beings.

Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi said that with the grace of his Master Shaikh Muhammad al-Baqi Billah he received incredible blessings, and by his blessing he was granted a power of attraction that allowed him to reach every human being that the Almighty had created. He mentioned of attaining a state that combines the state of the Ending with the state of the Beginning and of achieving all the states of Seeding and the Ending. With the support of the great Masters he was raised further up to the state of the Throne, then to the state of Beauty and to the state of the Greatest Spiritual Poles (al-qutubiyati-l-cuzma). Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi said that the Almighty's Heavenly Care then attracted him to ascend to a State that is beyond that of the Qutubs, the Special Original State. Here the support of great Master Abdul Qadir Jilani pushed him up to the State of the Origin of Origins. Then he was ordered to come back down, and as he descended he passed by all the Sufi *tariqats* other than the Naqshbandia and the Qadiria. The Shaikhs of these Orders threw on him all their treasures of divine knowledge, which unveiled to him realities, which had never been unveiled to any person in his time.

A lot of miracles are associated with him. It is said that once in the month of Ramzan, he was invited by ten of his followers. He accepted the invitation of each of them. At the time of breaking the fast, he was present at each of their houses simultaneously breaking fast with them.

Many of the courtiers of emperor Jahangir were his disciples. He was opposed to heretical teachings that had crept in the then Muslim society and endeavoured to restore Sunny Islam to its pristine condition. The Shia Muslims prejudiced emperor Jahangir against him and persuaded him till he put Shaikh Ahmad in jail. Shaikh Ahmad remained in prison for three years. His son, Shaikh Sayyid, used to say that although Shaikh Ahmad was put under very strict security in the jail, yet on every Friday he was seen in the mosque. In spite of reinforcing the security, he would disappear from prison and appear in the mosque. His disciples were enraged on his imprisonment and wanted to revolt against the emperor but Shaikh Ahmad asked them to refrain from doing so. The conduct of Shaikh Ahmad convinced emperor Jahangir of his saintly character, so much so that the emperor himself became a disciple of Shaikh Ahmad.

Shaikh Ahmad al-Faruqi lived till 1624 AD. His son Muhammad al-Masum, who was a born saint, succeeded him. He never accepted to nurse during the period of Ramzan. At the age of three years, he expressed Oneness by saying, 'I am the earth, I am the heavens, and I am God... I am this, I am that.' He memorized the Qur'an in three months at the age of six, as his learning was through his heart and he reached the highest state of the knowledge of *Sharacat* and *Aqaqat*.

Once he said to his father that he was seeing himself as a life that is moving in every atom of these universes, which are taking light from it as the earth takes light from the sun. His father realised that Muhammad al-Masum (Masum Raza) was going to be the Qutub (Spiritual Pole) of his time. In one of the letters his father wrote about him that he is unable to find words for the attainments of his son, who is suitable for this spiritual wealth and is accomplished with the '*Khas Vilayat Muhamadiya*.'

Emperor Aurangzeb was his disciple. He used to come to attend his spiritual assemblies (*Satsang*) and used to sit wherever he found a place. Besides, it is said that Aurangzeb used to put his requests in writing before Muhammad Masum.

Muhammad al-Masum once revealed that when he was in Hajj, he saw the Kaaba hugging and kissing him with great compassion and emotion. He saw lights and blessings coming out of himself, which increased so much that it filled up all the universes and they entered every atom of these universes. Then all these atoms were drawn back to the love of the Essence of the Kaaba. Muhammad al-Masum said, 'I saw many spiritual beings, among them angels and saints, all of them standing in my presence as if I was their Sultan. Then I received a written letter delivered to me by an angel, and written on it was 'from the God of Heavens, Universes and all Creation, I am accepting your pilgrimage.'

Muhammad al-Masum said that he continued his journey to visit the Madinat'il-Munawwarah, the City of the Prophet. When he went to visit him at his tomb and directed his face towards him, he saw the Prophet coming out of his grave, and he hugged and kissed him. In Hajrat Muhammad al-Masum's words, 'Then I saw myself in a state, where my heart was as if combining with his heart, my tongue with his tongue, my ears with his ears, until I was not seeing myself, I was seeing the Prophet and when I looked at the Prophet I was seeing myself.'

Shaikh Muhammad al-Masum died in 1668 AD. His son Shaikh Saifuddin succeeded him in the Order. At the age of eleven years, his father bestowed upon him the status of '*fana-e-Kulb*' and in view of the spiritual capabilities of his son, kept a special watch on his progress. Once emperor Aurangzeb requested Shaikh Muhammad al-Masum to send one of his disciples for his spiritual guidance. Shaikh Muhammad al-Masum sent his son Shaikh Saifuddin from Sarhind to Delhi to guide the emperor.

Shaikh Saifuddin was succeeded by Nur Muhammad al-Badawani, who was a descendant of Prophet Muhammad. He was born in 1075H/1664AD in a blessed house. He received the blessings of his Shaikhs, who were proud of his progress. He began his life in a state of self-effacement and remained continuously in that state for fifteen years except during the ritual prayers. When he prayed he would return to self-awareness and offer the prayers. He was careful to eat only from earnings made by the sweat of his brow. He ate only self-baked bread, and he ate it only in very small pieces. When the bread was finished, he would return to prepare more, and then he would return to contemplation and meditation. His back was bent as a result of excessive contemplation.

He never ate from the food of a proud person. He said, 'The food of proud rich people contains darkness.' If he borrowed a book he would read it after three days, because he said, 'The reflection of the darkness and ignorance of the owner of the book reflects on the reader.' He was very careful in such matters. His Khalifa (spiritual successor), Sayyidina Habibullah (Shamsuddin Habib *Allah*), used to cry when he remembered him. He used to say to his followers, 'You did not see that holy person. If you had been in his time it would have renewed your faith in *Allah's* power that He had created such a person.'

Shaikh Habibullah narrated an incident concerning his Master. One day a lady came to him and urged before him that, a spiritual being (jinn) had kidnapped her daughter. She tried every means to get her back, but it was of no avail. Shaikh Nur Muhammad al-Badawani meditated on that matter for a little while and then said that her daughter would come next day around the time of afternoon prayers. At the exact time Shaikh Nur Muhammad al-Badawani had mentioned, the lady heard a knock at the door, and in-walked her daughter. On enquiry the girl said, 'I had been kidnapped and taken to the desert by a jinn. I was there in the desert and just now a Shaikh came and took me by the hand and brought me here.'

Towards the later part of seventeenth century AD, another great Sufi saint Bulleh Shah spread the message of love and spirituality beyond the barriers of caste, creed and religion. He was born around 1680 AD in Uchh Galaniyan. One of his forefathers was Sayyed Jalaluddin Bukhari, who was born in Multan but later settled in Uchh in undivided India. He was a disciple of the famous Sufi saint Bahauddin Zakariya of the Suhrawardi Order. Sayyed Jalaluddin Bukhari Shah Mir Surkh Posh of Bukhara (1192-1291 AD) was a vicegerent of Bahauddin Zakariya. The Jalali Section of the Suhrawardi Order is named after him. Some of his successors in the line went to Gujrat and became very famous there. This includes Jalal b. Ahmad Kabir, popularly known as Makhdum-e-Jahaniyan (d. 1384 AD), who made thirty-six visits to Mecca; Abu Muhammad Abdullah, popularly known as Burhanuddin Qutb-e-Alam (d. 1453 AD) and Sayyed Muhammad Shah Alam (d. 1475 AD).

Bulleh Shah's father Shah Muhammad Dervesh was a knowledgeable person, who had acquired good knowledge of Arabic and Persian languages and a good

understanding of Qur'an. Bulleh Shah also was given good education by competent teachers. Study of available literature on Islam and Sufism had aroused in him the desire to seek a *pir* (spiritual Master), who could guide him to the God.

His search for a *Pir* led him to Hajrat Inayat Shah, who was a Sufi saint of the Qadri Order. Hajrat Inayat Shah used to earn his livelihood from farming. It is said that Bulleh Shah had already acquired some miraculous powers. One day when he reached near Hajrat Inayat Shah's farm in Lahore, he saw mango trees laden with fruits. He through his miraculous power caused the fruits to fall down. When Hajrat Inayat Shah saw this, he asked Bulleh Shah why had he plucked the mangoes. Bulleh Shah wanted to invite Hajrat Inayat Shah's attention towards himself. He answered, I have neither climbed up the trees nor have I thrown any stone at them; how then have I plucked the mangoes? Hajrat Inayat Shah smiled and said not only a thief but clever too! If you have not plucked the fruits, who else has done it? And as he looked at Bulleh Shah, Bulleh Shah fell at his feet. Hajrat Inayat Shah asked him what is his name and what does he want? Bulleh Shah answered, I want the God. Hajrat Inayat Shah lifted him up saying, 'why do you bow down; get up and look at me.' Bulleh Shah looked at Hajrat Inayat Shah, who filled his heart with love and said, '*Bullaya, Rab da ki pana; aidharon putna te audhar lana*' (Bulleh, it is not difficult to realize the God; just turn your attention from the world to Him).

Hajrat Inayat Shah then initiated Bulleh Shah in the Qadri Order. Soon Bulleh Shah got immersed in the divine bliss flowing to him from his Master. He forgot about everything else. It is said that Bulleh Shah once saw a bride getting ready for marriage with her hair tied. Bulleh Shah also copied her, got his hair tied and like a bride went to his Master Hajrat Inayat Shah. This showed the intensity of his love and submission to his Master.

It is said that to distract people from him, Bulleh Shah started living with donkeys. During this time it is related that a Muslim Officer took by force the wife of a poor man. When no one helped him, he went to Bulleh Shah. He asked that man to find where in the town a *tabla* (a small drum) and *sarangi* (violin) were being played together. The man went and found that some eunuchs were singing at a place. He informed Bulleh Shah, who went there and started dancing. When Bulleh Shah got into a trance he sang a couplet asking that man's wife to leave the house of that Officer and to come back to her husband. The lady immediately got out from there and joined back her husband. While Bulleh Shah was singing and dancing someone informed his father that Bulleh Shah now not only lives with donkeys but also sings and dances with eunuchs. His father reached the spot with a *mala* (string of beads-rosary) in one hand and a stick in the other. When Bulleh Shah saw his father, he sang for his father too. By God's grace the veil of ordinary consciousness was lifted from his father. His heart got filled with divine love. He threw away the *mala* from his hand and started dancing with Bulleh Shah.

Bulleh Shah through his poetical eloquence reached the heart of the common people. He is considered to be one of the most famous and revered Sufis of India, who realized the Truth through the love for his Master.

Another great Sufi saint having a liberal attitude towards various religions was Shamsuddin Habib *Allah* (Mirza Zanzana), who was successor of Nur Muhammad al-Badawani of the Naqshbandi Order and was a contemporary of Bulleh Shah. He was born in 1701 AD. His father was in the service of emperor Aurangzeb, but later he joined the Qadri Order. He was a poet and used pen name 'Mazhar'. He heard of Shaikh Nur Muhammad through someone and got so impatient that immediately he reached to meet him. Shaikh Nur Muhammad also adopted him at once and in the first meeting itself all of his spiritual chakras (energy centers- the loci of the Naqshbandi way of practice) were energized and activated. When he reached back home and saw in the mirror, he saw the face of his Master Shaikh Nur Muhammad in place of his own face. In four years he was fully accomplished and was conferred the status of *Satguru*.

Mirza Zanzana's father was a senior officer but he was detached from worldly affairs. Mirza Zanzana was taught arts, science, warfare and other branches of learning in his early age and he had acquired competence in all these branches. He was very polite and patient and a great swordsman too who could fight a number of persons simultaneously.

He used to say that sheer constant remembrance of the Master fills up one's heart fully with divine light and spirituality. He stood fast in serving his Shaikh with complete truthfulness. He continued to progress by entering into seclusions in the desert and in the jungle on the orders of his Shaikh. His only food used to be grass and leaves of trees. He used to wear only what would cover his nakedness. One day, after many of these seclusions when he looked in the mirror, he saw his Shaikh in place of himself.

When his Master passed away, he continued to visit his grave until his Shaikh directed him to visit some of the other Saints of his time, Shaikh Muhammad Afzal, Shaikh Safi Sacdullah, and Shaikh Muhammad Abid. He used to attend the sessions of Shaikh Muhammad Afzal, one of the Khalifas of Shaikh Saifuddin. He also benefited from the company of Shaikh Shah Kalshan and Shaikh Muhammad az-Zubair. He accompanied these Shaikhs for twenty years. He progressed further and further until he became an Ocean of Knowledge, Qutub of his time, shining like the Sun at high noon. Shaikh Muhammad Afzal said about him that Shaikh Mazhar Habibullah was given the state of Qutub and he is the central pivot of this *tariqat* in this time.

Mirza Zanzana was a Master of four *tariqats*: Naqshbandia, Qadiria, Suhrawardia and Chishtia Orders. He said that he received the secrets and knowledge of these orders from his Shaikh, Sayyid Nur Muhammad Badawani, who lifted him from the Ibrahimic Stage to the Muhammadan Stage. He also said that he saw the Prophet sitting in his place, while he was sitting in place of the Prophet. He then disappeared and saw the Prophet

sitting in the two places. Then he saw the Prophet disappearing and himself sitting in both places.’

Many miracles are associated with him. It is reported that once he travelled with some of his followers without any food or provision. When they needed food he would call them and say, ‘ this food is for you,’ and tables of food would appear in front of them. One day during the trip there was terrible storm. It was freezing making everyone shiver because of the cold. Their situation worsened until it appeared that they were going to die in that frozen desert. Mirza Zanzana then raised his hands in prayer to the Almighty. Immediately the clouds lifted from around them, and though the freezing rain continued to fall a little away, the temperature around them rose to a comfortable level.

Mirza Zanzana said, ‘Existence is an Attribute of the Almighty alone. This world is a mere shadow of realities existing in the Divine Presence. The reality of all possible creations results from the action of the Divine Attributes and Qualities on the Void. The Real Existence of all that manifests in physical creation is confirmed as a light in the Divine Presence.’

Mirza Zanzana is reported to have acknowledged in one of his letters addressed to a disciple the existence of the *Vedas* as Divine creation and that there were prophets in the country of Hindus also. It is apparent that they had attained high and perfect position and that the Divine Mercy did not leave out, for the good of His Creatures, even this vast country.

A man once narrated his dream to Haji Muhammad Afzal that he saw Krishna (Lord Sri Krishna) in a field full of fire and Ramchandra (Lord Ramchandra) standing at the brink of the fire. Someone standing there opined this to be the punishment for the leaders of infidels. Mirza Zanzana, who was present there, gave another interpretation. He said that the Book and *Sunnat* (the Qur’an and Islamic Law) did not say anything of these two persons. It is probable that they were saints or prophets, as every community was blessed with *bashir* and *nadhir* (warners and givers of good news). Ramchandra appeared much earlier and taught the people the doctrine of the right path (*Nisbet-e-Suluk*). Krishna appeared when compared with the past men’s age was much shorter, and he preached the advanced doctrine of love (*Nisbet-e-Jadhabi*). His music and dance is a symbol of his Divine love and ecstasy. The fire represented this love and ecstasy in which Krishna was fully immersed and Ramchandra, who was in the path of *Suluk* was seen at its brink. Shaikh Afjal very much liked this interpretation and was greatly impressed by it.

During his last days, thousands and thousand of seekers entered into the Sufi way. He had predicted his death and shortly before his death he was in a state of great emotion and intense love of God. He said that the Almighty had fulfilled all his desires and had accomplished him fully. He was so desperate to meet his beloved, the Almighty, and to be in His Presence continuously that he wanted ‘to go to Him today, before tomorrow’.

He, however, wanted to go to Him not as an ordinary person but as a martyr, who is always alive as *Allah* described in the Holy Qur'an.

On the fateful day of the seventh of Muharram, of the year 1195H/1781AD his servant came to him and informed him of three visitors seeking to meet him. He asked them to be brought in. One of them took a knife out of his pocket and stabbed him in the back, piercing his kidney. He fell to the ground. The King sent him a doctor but he sent him back saying, 'I do not need him. As for the men who stabbed me, I forgive them, because I am glad to die as a martyr and they came as an answer to my prayer.'

His mausoleum is situated near Jama Masjid in old Delhi and is known as 'Shahid Sahab ki Mazar' or the mausoleum of the Martyr.

The most revolutionary Sufi saint, however, was Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan (Hujur Maharaj), sixth from Mirza Zanzana, in the line of succession of the Naqshbandi Order. He through his boundless spiritual awareness and liberal approach made the practice of Sufi way extremely simple and bestowed the priceless spiritual knowledge of Naqshbandi Order to all, including non-Muslims, without conversion i.e. without accepting Islam. He distinguished the religion (the outer or the material form of religion) from spirituality and held that for gaining spirituality religion is no bar.

Hujur Maharaj was born in 1857 at Raipur in district Farukhabad, Uttar Pradesh. His father was Shaikh Gulam Hussain, who himself was a Master in the Order of great Sufi Saint Maulana Waliuddin of Kashmir. Maulana Afjal Shah, who was a disciple and Khalifa of Shaikh Abul Hasan, initiated his mother in the Naqshbandi Order. He used to say about Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan's mother, 'My daughter has the capability of changing the destiny.' She was a very loving person who believed that the whole world was her own family.

Hujur Maharaj's parents thus were great saints and true human beings. It is, therefore, no wonder that a person like Maulana Fazl Ahmad Khan took birth in their family, which ushered in a new era of religious and communal harmony and brought about a spiritual revolution.

Hujur Maharaj spent most of his time in Raipur except for a few years when he served in Farukhabad. He lived a very simple and pious life. He was very kind hearted and had no prejudice against any religion or caste. Persons from all classes and belonging to all religions including Hindu, Muslim and Christians used to visit him. He used to say to Hindus, 'You have come to me to seek spiritual knowledge, do that and live in accordance with the requirements of your religion. Your relation with me is not worldly but spiritual.'

He was the first person in the Sufi Orders, who without any discrimination spread this method of spiritual practice amongst the Hindus. He was completely free from

religious prejudices and never participated in any religious debates or disputes, nor did he ever criticise any religion. If someone criticized any religion in front of him, he would leave that place. He pronounced that religions are many but their essence is one i.e. to gain spirituality. One should follow the dictates of one's religion but should not be guided by religious prejudices. The social or religious rituals do not bind spiritual life. If any Hindu suggested that he would convert and adopt Islam, he used to feel very upset. He disapproved of conversion, rejecting it outright. He used to admonish the person concerned, 'Now you are not worth visiting me. I shall not allow anyone to put a spot on me. You should continue to abide by the dictates of the religion which you belong to and acquire spirituality.' Once one of his Hindu disciples adopted Islamic traditions. When he reached before him, Hujur Maharaj told him that he was no longer fit to come to him. Hujur Maharaj asked him to readopt the Hindu traditions, the religion in which he was born.

Hujur Maharaj did not touch even the dried chilli meant for the consumption of his Hindu followers. Separate food used to be cooked for them. When he visited Mahatma Ram Chandraji's (his disciple and successor) house or if food came from his house, Hujur Maharaj used his separate utensils or ate in a Pattal (a plate made up by tagging broad tree leaves). At times he used to take the food straight in hand and drank water similarly. When *Prasad* used to be distributed he will ask some Hindu to bring *Prasad* and to distribute. He used to say that everyone must observe the discipline of one's religion. Though he had accepted many as his disciples, but he declared Mahatma Ram Chandraji to be his successor. This is a unique example of a Muslim Sufi giving away his entire spiritual treasure to a Hindu without conversion.

Hujur Maharaj had stated that this Sufi way of spiritual practice was prevalent amongst ancient Hindu saints, which is now being reintroduced amongst Hindus. Dr. Chandra Gupta, a Sufi of the Naqshbandi Order, also used to say that this method of spiritual practice was prevalent amongst Hindus in the past. He related it to Lord Sri Krishna, who was known as the 'Yogeshwar', being the greatest Master of the '*Anahat Nad*'. His flute in reality represented the '*Anahat Nad*', which echoed in the form of heartbeat in the hearts of thousands of *Gopis* and *Gwalas*, who were devotees and were fortunate to receive His grace.

Hujur Maharaj did not accept offerings or did not allow anyone to touch his feet. Instead he himself often comforted his disciples by looking after their requirements so much so that many a times he would press the legs of his tired disciples. Often for days together his family lived on scanty food or with no food at all. Even then if he received some money from someone, he would distribute it to others. He spent most of his time in meditation. Once he started a dispensary and got some bottles filled up with water from a well. This water cured even those who were suffering for long. Whatever money he earned from this, 1/40th of that he kept for himself and the rest he gave to others. As the dispensary became very popular, he closed it after sometime.

Hujur Maharaj used to teach Persian. A young boy, son of a rich person, used to visit him to learn Persian. One day Hujur Maharaj asked him of his intention, as the boy did not seem interested in learning Persian. The boy did not say anything initially, but after sometime told Hujur Maharaj that he wanted to marry a lady and wanted some 'Mantra', which could make her agree to marry him. Hujur Maharaj kept quiet. Later, one night he was sitting on the roof and the light of the Moon was falling on him. This boy along with many others also was sitting in the *Satsang*. Hujur Maharaj was wearing dazzling white clothes and he had also applied some perfume. Some flowers were also lying there. Suddenly, he turned towards this boy and asked him, 'My son, look towards me. Is that lady even more beautiful than I am?' Hujur Maharaj was looking very enchanting. The boy looked towards Hujur Maharaj and got stunned as if he was a statue. From then onwards things changed for him. In place of the desire for that lady the boy's heart got filled with divine love. In one moment, his destiny had been changed.

Similarly a relative of Nawab Shamsabad was attracted towards a lady and wanted to marry her but she was not agreeing to the marriage. He came to seek help of Hujur Maharaj. Hujur Maharaj told him a *Mantra* and asked him to practise it. After some days, in place of the attraction for that lady, he found himself attracted towards Hujur Maharaj. He visited Hujur Maharaj, who very kindly accepted and initiated him.

Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to offer his salary to Hujur Maharaj and Hujur Maharaj used to send it back to his residence through someone. Once Hujur Maharaj was without food for some days, as there was nothing to cook in the house. He got a money order of fifteen rupees from somewhere, out of which he sent ten rupees to Mahatma Ram Chandraji's house and five rupees he sent to his mother to enable her to arrange for the food. In the evening, when he reached home and saw no signs of food being ready, he enquired about it. His holy mother informed him that she had sent the money to Mahatma Ram Chandraji's house, thinking that money was required there (not knowing that Hujur Maharaj had already sent some money there). Hujur Maharaj laughed at it and remarked, 'Well done, mother'.

In the beginning, four persons used to visit Hujur Maharaj for *Satsang*. One of them, a young person, used to visit a lady in a brothel. Some friends brought this to the notice of Hujur Maharaj. He told them to inform him next time when this young man visits that lady. Next time when the young man went to visit the lady, Hujur Maharaj was informed of it. Hujur Maharaj took bath, changed his dress, applied some perfume and proceeded along with others to the brothel. It was a small place and the lady also knew Hujur Maharaj. She was surprised to see Hujur Maharaj, who asked her to sing some song. She sang some songs, which to her understanding could be of interest to Hujur Maharaj. After hearing the songs Hujur Maharaj enquired about her charges for the night and paid her the fees. Hujur Maharaj was then around sixty. The lady and everyone else were taken aback that such a saint would stay in the brothel for the night. Hujur Maharaj, however, asked all others to go back. After everyone else left, Hujur Maharaj told the lady, 'for tonight you are in my service and you will have to obey my order. I do not like

your jewelry, remove them first and then take bath.’ Hujur Maharaj had carried with him a pair of his wife’s clothes, which he asked the lady to wear after the bath. The lady complied with it. After that Hujur Maharaj asked her to offer five prayers with him (five *Namaz*). The lady thought for a moment what a trouble she had invited for herself by accepting the fees and then told Hujur Maharaj that she did not know how to offer prayers. Hujur Maharaj told her, ‘You are in my service for tonight and you shall have to do what I say. It does not matter that you do not know how to offer prayers. Repeat what I do.’ She started imitating Hujur Maharaj. When Hujur Maharaj put his head on the ground (in *Sijda*), she also did the same. At that moment Hujur Maharaj prayed, ‘O Almighty, with Your kind grace I have brought this lady up to this point. Now it is You and she.’ Hujur Maharaj then left that place and came back to his house but that lady was frozen in that posture. Through out the night she lied like that. In the morning her mother woke her up. On opening her eyes, she was baffled. She looked around and told her mother, ‘Whatever I could earn for you, I have already handed it over to you. Your jewelry is lying there. These clothes are not yours and now I am going away.’

There was a neem tree in front of Hujur Maharaj’s house. At around eleven in the morning she came there and sat under the tree. Hujur Maharaj spotted her and told his wife to bring her inside and to give her some food. After she had finished with the food, Hujur Maharaj enquired with her whether she wanted to come out of that life and spend a pious life in future. She immediately agreed to it. Hujur Maharaj then asked her to pray the Almighty to forgive her for her past life and called that young man and asked him if he liked that lady and wished to marry her. Hujur Maharaj then got them married and initiated both of them. They spent a pious life thereafter.

A Hindu goldsmith used to visit Hujur Maharaj sometimes. He used to discuss with him about the existence of God. He thought that there was nothing like God. The power that emerges as a result of combination of various elements is what is known as the God. When the body decays and physical elements get separated, this power also ceases to exist and disappears. Otherwise neither there is soul, nor the God and this world is the only existence. There was nothing before this, nor there would be anything after it. All other things are imaginary. Hujur Maharaj used to explain him, but he did not change his views. One day he requested Hujur Maharaj through someone to visit him. Hujur Maharaj saw that he was in a bad shape and his end was near. He (the Goldsmith) told Hujur Maharaj, ‘Now I feel that definitely there is some power. I shall now be punished severely.’ Hujur Maharaj felt that he was caught in a dilemma, which was not good for him. Hujur Maharaj told him to be firm on his views and then he asked him to look towards him and within a moment through his will power restored his belief. A little later the Goldsmith passed away peacefully.

Hujur Maharaj has mentioned an incidence concerning himself in his book ‘Jamima Halat Mashayakh Naqshbandia’ as follows: ‘Once I was unemployed. It was 10th of December. My Master enquired as to how much money do I require for my living. I requested him to pray for five rupees per month, besides food. My Master thought for a

little while and then said, 'You are employed from the First on this emolument.' I did not believe it. My Master made it out and asked me that I did not believe it. I mentioned that it will be true but it is strange that I am not aware of my employment till the Tenth of the month. On hearing this from me Hajrat Sahab ordained me, 'Secrets revealed to you, as a result of your spiritual progress, should not be made known to others. When a dedicated disciple like you does not believe, what can be expected of others.' When I left my Master's premises, I came to know that Munshi Badri Prasad had arranged a job for me in Jarad. I joined the job. After twenty days when I was paid the salary, it was for the whole month i.e. from 1st to 31st of December.'

Hujur Maharaj had a strange habit. Even when he had some money with him, he used to take loan from others. One of the *Satsangis* asked him the reason for his doing so. Hujur Maharaj answered, 'By doing so I not only remain grateful to the person from whom I have taken the loan but it also helps me in not having a feeling of pride of not being a debtor.'

Shaikh Ahmad Ali Khan once asked Hujur Maharaj to go and beg alms. For many days Hujur Maharaj kept on begging alms without any hesitation or feeling ashamed of doing so. One day his Master asked him to stop begging and told him, 'I am very pleased with you. You have come successful through this test'.

Hujur Maharaj proceeded on his heavenly abode on 30 November 1907. His mausoleum is situated in Raipur.

The Naqshbandi Sufi way has reached far and wide, in every nook and corner of India and also abroad through the grace of Mahatma Ram Chandraji and efforts made by his disciples, especially Mahatma Chaturbhuj Sahayji and Mahatma Ram Chandraji of Sahajahanpur (founder of Shri Ram Chandra Mission) and his disciple Shri Rajagopalachari. It was mentioned by Maulvi Ahmad Ali Khan (the spiritual Master of Hujur Maharaj) that his Master (Shaikh Abul Hasan) had told him, 'A Hindu boy will come to you, who will spread this spiritual practice amongst many, but no such Hindu boy came to me. Perhaps he would have seen you in me. Now you must obey this order strictly.' This Hindu boy was Mahatma Ram Chandraji, who succeeded Hujur Maharaj in the Naqshbandi Order of Sufis.

Mahatma Ram Chandraji was the first giaour saint of the Naqshbandi Order. His father Chaudhary Harbaksh Rai was one of the descendants of a highly respected Kayasth family of District Mainpuri. Emperor Akbar had gifted Babu Vrindavan, one of the renowned ancestors of this family, with the title 'Chowdhary' and 555 villages amongst many other things. Babu Vrindavan named one of these villages as 'Bhoom-gram' and started living there. With the passage of time this village developed into a small town and its name got distorted to 'Bhogaon.'

Ch. Harbaksh Rai initially lived in Bhogaon but later after the mutiny in 1857 moved to Farukhabad. He was appointed as Superintendent-Octroi. His wife was a very pious and religious lady, who spent most of her time in prayers etc. She was fond of helping the needy, poor and orphan girls and spent lot of money in arranging their marriages. No beggar ever returned empty handed from her door. She was gifted with a good voice and she used to sing well. When she used to recite the 'Ramayana' people used to forget their surroundings and used to get absorbed in the divine thoughts. Often she used to visit saints and sometimes they also used to stay at Ch. Sahab's house.

Once a Muslim *Fakir* (*Avdhut*) happened to pass through the street where Ch. Harbaksh Rai used to live. He stopped in front of his house and asked for some food. Ch. Harbaksh Rai's wife, with great respect and devotion offered him some food and sweets. The *Fakir*, however, told her that he desired to eat some fish. As she was a vegetarian, she started thinking how to arrange for some fish for the *Fakir*. Suddenly it occurred to her that for her husband who used to take non-vegetarian food fish might have been cooked. As the non-vegetarian food was cooked separately for him she enquired about it and learnt that two fishes, which were specially sent by Nawab Sahab, had been cooked for her husband. She immediately got both the fishes and offered them to the *Fakir*. He gladly consumed both the fishes. An old maid, who was very much attached to the family, was present there. She very politely mentioned to the *Fakir* that there was everything in the house with the grace of God except that Chowdhary Sahab had not been blessed with any child. She requested the *Fakir* to pray to the Almighty for the same. The *Fakir* laughed loudly and uttering 'Allah-o-Akbar' raised his hands in prayer. He then uttered 'one-two' and went away. The blessings of the *Fakir* materialized and after about a year on 2nd February, 1873, on the day of Basant Panchami (the day of spring festival considered very auspicious) a divine soul descended in Chowdhary Sahab's house, who was later on known all over as Mahatma Shri Ram Chandra ji alias Janab Lalaji Maharaj. After about two and a half years, on 7th October 1875 his younger brother, another divine soul arrived in Chowdhary Sahab's house, who was known as Mahatma Munshi Raghubar Dayal ji alias Chachchaji Sahab.

Mahatma Ram Chandraji was brought up with great care and affection. A number of servants were always in attendance to look after his needs. A transport also was provided to him separately. In his childhood he used to sit near his mother and listen to *Ramayana*. As a result, like his mother, he also developed a good melodious voice and religious bent of mind. At the age of seven years, however, he lost his mother. Thereafter a Muslim lady looked after and brought him up. Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to respect her as his mother and looked after her throughout her life. Whenever she came to visit Mahatma Ram Chandraji he used to offer her gifts. A Maulvi (Muslim teacher) taught him Urdu and Persian and also to compose poetry. Thereafter he was admitted to the Mission School in Farukhabad.

During his education in Farukhabad, when he was in the Eighth standard, he had hired a room for his studies in Mufti Sahab's Madarsa. In the adjoining room used to live

Hujur Maharaj, who used to teach students privately for his livelihood. At times, Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to seek Hujur Maharaj's guidance to solve his difficulties and Hujur Maharaj used to gladly help him. He used to treat Mahatma Ram Chandraji very affectionately, as the manner of his living and his religious bent of mind had impressed him. Mahatma Ram Chandraji also used to like him and he used to get special pleasure in his company. He, however, did not know that Hujur Maharaj was a great Sufi saint. Once Mahatma Ram Chandraji was very upset, as he could not do his Geometry paper well. On enquiry when he mentioned this to Hujur Maharaj, he told him not to worry and have faith in the Almighty. When the result was declared, he had passed the exams.

Mahatma Ram Chandraji was later married in a decent family. Soon thereafter he lost his father and his stepbrother. He also had to part away with his property in discharge of a decree passed against him in a dispute over property with the King of Mainpuri. The financial position of the family, therefore, deteriorated and became very weak. The Distt. Collector of Fatehgarh, however, knew Ch. Harbaksh Rai and was very helpful to Mahatma Ram Chandraji. He called Mahatma Ram Chandraji and appointed him as a paid apprentice for a remuneration of ten rupees per month. Fatehgarh and Farukhabad are at a distance of about four miles, which Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to cover on foot, thus walking about 8-10 miles daily. The house was running entirely on this meager salary of ten rupees.

Once Mahatma Ram Chandraji's daughter fell seriously ill. Her condition was critical. Mahatma Ram Chandraji went out to look for a doctor. Incidentally, Hujur Maharaj was coming from the opposite direction. Mahatma Ram Chandraji saluted him and on enquiry told him about his daughter's condition. Hujur Maharaj mentioned to him that he had some knowledge of medicines and wished to see his daughter. Mahatma Ram Chandraji took him home. Hujur Maharaj examined the girl and told Mahatma Ram Chandraji that she will be cured soon. There was no need to worry. He gave her some medicine to be given with mother's milk and enquired about her condition after five minutes or so. The girl had started recovering. By then it was time for lunch. No food, however, had been cooked in Mahatma Ram Chandraji's house for some days as there was nothing to cook at home. Mahatma Ram Chandraji wanted to go out to buy some thing on credit but Hujur Maharaj stopped him. He then told to bring him whatever was there in the house. There was, however, nothing to eat in the house. Hujur Maharaj understood the matter and told Mahatma Ram Chandraji, 'the other day when my daughter (Mahatma Ram Chandraji's wife) had cooked food, she had put aside a piece of dough which had been burnt on one side. It will still be lying there. Go and bring that with some pickle.' Mahatma Ram Chandraji found the piece of dough lying on the *Culha* (stove) and offered the same to Hujur Maharaj. While Hujur Maharaj was eating that piece, Mahatma Ram Chandraji somehow arranged one rupee and offered it to Hujur Maharaj as his fees. Hujur Maharaj, however, refused saying that he did not require it and that medicine was not his profession. Mahatma Ram Chandraji then wished him to offer a transport, but Hujur Maharaj declined that also. Till then Mahatma Ram Chandraji

had known of Hujur Maharaj as a great scholar of Urdu, Arabic and Persian languages but after this incidence, he started believing that Hujur Maharaj was a great saint too. He thereafter developed a lot of respect and devotion towards him.

The spiritual beginning of Mahatma Ram Chandraji had taken place in the lap of his holy mother. Later Mahatma Ram Chandraji with his friends often used to visit Swami Brahmanandji who used to live on the bank of the holy river Ganges. Swamiji was a great saint, who was supposed to be about 150 years then. Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to try to follow Swamiji's teachings.

Swamiji and Hujur Maharaj used to have meetings with each other. Often Swamiji made mention of Hujur Maharaj stating that he is the crown of saints in Farukhabad but Mahatma Ram Chandraji did not know that the Sufi saint about whom Swamiji used to mention is the Maulvi Sahab living next door to the room he had taken for his studies in Mufti Sahab's Madarsa.

A few months after he had joined the service in Fatehgarh, Mahatma Ram Chandraji returned from his workplace late in the evening. It was a dark winter night with thundering clouds and heavy rains. With his clothes completely drenched, Mahatma Ram Chandraji was shivering. He was in a very pathetic condition. When he was going towards his room, Hujur Maharaj happened to spot him. Hujur Maharaj had pity on him and said, 'You have come at this time in this thunderstorm.' Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to say that these words were filled with lot of love. He very politely greeted Hujur Maharaj who blessed him and told him, 'Go, change your clothes and come to me. Warm up yourself before the fire and then go to your home.' These words were charismatic and were pulling Mahatma Ram Chandraji towards Hujur Maharaj. Mahatma Ram Chandraji after changing his clothes came to Hujur Maharaj. By then Hujur Maharaj had lighted up an *Angithi* (an earthen stove). Mahatma Ram Chandraji saluted him. Hujur Maharaj raised his eyes and looked at him. As both of them saw in to each other's eyes, a current passed through Mahatma Ram Chandraji's body from head to toe and he was stunned. Hujur Maharaj very kindly asked him to sit in his bed and covered him with his quilt. Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to say that he felt very light as if he was flying in the sky and the entire body was sparkling with light. For about two hours, he set in this state, which was full of bliss. By that time it stopped raining. With the permission of Hujur Maharaj, he returned to his room. While entering in his room, he felt light was spread in front of the room which was engulfing everything and in which trees, animals, walls, everything was dancing. '*Anahat Nad*' (*Om*) was reverberating in each of the cells of his body. All his spiritual *chakras* were activated and energized and he felt as if Hujur Maharaj had taken his place.

When he returned home, he did not wish to eat anything and slept without having dinner. In the dream he saw a group of saints, Hujur Maharaj and himself. A throne descended from the Skies on which a great saint was sitting. All the saints stood up in his

honour. Hujur Maharaj presented Mahatma Ram Chandraji before him. He looked at him attentively and said, 'From his childhood his inclination is towards the God.'

Next day Mahatma Ram Chandraji mentioned about his dream to Hujur Maharaj. Hujur Maharaj was very glad to hear about it. He closed his eyes and meditated for a little while. He then opened his eyes and told Mahatma Ram Chandraji, 'What you saw was not a dream but was the truth. Your inclination right from the birth is towards the God. You are very fortunate, as the great Masters of this line have accepted you. You have taken birth to show the path to others. Such souls descend on this earth after centuries. The experience you had in the first sitting itself, one can seldom achieve after practising for decades. Whenever you passed through me, and greeted me, I used to feel an attraction and lot of love for you. Thus, you were continuously getting my attention (*Tavajjoh*). God-willing very soon you will not only be *Fanafil-Shaikh* (merger of the disciple with the Master) but *Fanafil-Murid* (merger of the Master with the disciple). If you do not have any objection, and if you so wish, keep on visiting this *Fakir* (Hujur Maharaj) also.' After this Mahatma Ram Chandraji started visiting Hujur Maharaj regularly.

Once Mahatma Ram Chandraji's colleagues took him for a picnic near Swami Brahmanandaji's *Ashram* on the bank of river Ganges. After food etc. they prepared *Bhang* (the intoxicating hemp—cannabis Indica) and all of them consumed the same. Mahatma Ram Chandraji, however, refused politely and requested them not to force him as he had promised his Master not to take any intoxicating substance. His friends did not pay any heed to this and per force made him lie down. Some of them caught hold of him and one of them (Pundit Mata Prasad) mounted on his chest and wished to pour the *Bhang* down his throat. Mahatma Ram Chandraji first told them not to force him but when he saw his friends were not ready to listen to him, he stopped resisting and started thinking of his Master. Suddenly his face started glowing and looked changed as if he sported moustache and beard. Seeing this, Pundit Mata Prasad got frightened. He got off his chest and told others also not to force him any more. A little later Swami Brahmanandaji came there. When he came to know what had happened, he scolded all of them saying, 'The boy, to whom you want to give this false inebriant, shall one day provide the real nectar (devotion) to the thirsty souls of this world.' In the evening when all of them were returning for home, they saw Hujur Maharaj coming from the other side. Pundit Mata Prasad immediately recognized him as the person whose appearance he had seen on Mahatma Ram Chandraji's face. Mahatma Ram Chandraji very politely saluted Hujur Maharaj and went with him. On the way he mentioned the incident to Hujur Maharaj who remarked, 'Those who have faith on the Almighty, He always helps them.' Next day Pundit Mata Prasad requested Mahatma Ram Chandraji to take him also to Hujur Maharaj. Both of them visited Hujur Maharaj, who very kindly accepted Pundit Mata Prasad and took him also in his shelter.

Mahatma Ram Chandraji has written down an incidence concerning his wife. It took place when his youngest daughter was about one year. His wife used to get up in the

morning at about four and then both of them used to spend some time in *Pooja* and *Satsang*. One morning he found his wife still lying in the bed, pale and lifeless. He was extremely worried and felt as if his world had become barren. Then after a little while she rose alive and said that she had a dream. She narrated that a person shining like the sun was standing before her with a rope in his hand. On asking he said that he was the *Yamraj*, the lord of the death, and that he had come to take her soul with him. He had come himself, instead of one of his messengers, as she was a very chaste lady full of virtues. Thereafter he took away her subtle soul with him. She was taken to a place where there was light and nothing else with tremendous peace prevailing over there.

In her own words, “My consciousness heard a Divine voice saying: ‘Your life is certainly over but you still have your work to finish. You are a righteous person and hence you will be blessed with eternal coverture. Your husband is a blessed person and he is a *Satpurush*. May you help him in his mission and be his companion. You are blessed with divinity and your veil of passion is removed. Go back and live as long as you want; be like a dead-body free from attachments. You can leave the mortal world when you desire.’ Then a round red sign was stamped on the upper portion of my waist.” She showed this sign to Mahatma Ram Chandraji, which was still visible there.

In regard to his Master, Hujur Maharaj, Mahatma Ram Chandraji has written that ‘Hujur Maharaj Sahab is my *Satguru*, my guide and everything for me and that my heart is immersed in love for him yet there was one untruth in it. I felt all his practice; all his life was a waste because of this one untruth. I felt as if some one mocked at me, laughed at my plight, felt elated seeing me hurt. I felt as if I was the weakest one in the world and the only person who could help me, save me from this was none other than my wife.’

He mentions further: ‘I felt that the thief within me was nothing but my own inferiority complex, which I know not how, had crept into me as a pseudo sect consciousness. I felt in my mind that my Master, to whom I had entrusted my life, my entire being, was a Muslim. I considered that great personality, who was in fact free from all bondage of religion or communal feelings, just a Muslim. Till then I had not understood Islam in its true sense. I understood neither Hinduism nor Islam. It was none other than my wife who unraveled this entire untrue behaviour of mine. I was fortunate that it was she who made me realise my folly. It was my illusion, the biggest untruth, and the biggest sin of my life. I was afraid that when my wife who is a strict Hindu, born and brought up in the Hindu culture, comes to know of it that her husband is at the feet of a Muslim what will she think of me? I was in a dilemma, having no solution and my wisdom failing me.

I was the worst coward of the world but some how I gathered courage to share my secret with my wife. When I faced her I felt like a thief, ready for self-surrender. With child like innocence I told her the entire story and the feelings I had been nurturing and my fear. She listened to it all quietly, not knowing what was going through within me and then she like a judge gave her verdict: ‘What you have done is really good.’ And like an

eternal follower of me, her husband, she made a request to take her also to that great saint, to make her life also meaningful, saying that 'A Woman's duty is to follow her husband. Without me, your wish will not fructify. The scriptures say so.'

I forgot what was in my mind and was happy that she was happy. Not only did she save me from sinking but also she showed me the path. Her words that 'saints do not belong to any caste or any race, they are free from all bondage' sank deep within my heart. When I took her to my *Satguru* the next morning, he was very happy. The whole day we were given royal treatment. He was telling *Gurumata* (his wife), 'Look who has come! Our daughter in law has come. Children have come. We are fortunate that our children have come with their children. God has filled our house with happiness. Bring bangles for them. Make *puris* (rich food) for them. They should remember how the mother-in-law's house was.' He was full of love. I was immersing in that ocean of Love and Mercy. Both of us surrendered ourselves at his feet. Till now I was alone. This was the gift that life granted me. My *Hajrat Kibla* gave her initiation. The purpose of our life was fulfilled.'

On 23rd January 1896 Hujur Maharaj had taken Mahatma Ram Chandraji completely in his shelter i.e. initiated him and accepted him as his disciple. Soon thereafter on 11th October, 1896 Hujur Maharaj bestowed '*Kully Izazat*' i.e. Master hood on Mahatma Ram Chandraji stating, 'My Master (Maulvi Ahmad Ali Khan Sahab) had mentioned that people will benefit spiritually from me, but unfortunately I could not prove myself able to discharge this duty fully. Now my end is nearing but I am hopeful that after me you shall discharge this duty satisfactorily and will make my Master's forecast come true. If you will do my work, you will be happy in this world and also in the Heavens and if you fall short in discharging this duty I shall hold you responsible in the Heavens.' He (Hujur Maharaj) then read the letter of his Master, which he had kept safely with him.

After some time Hujur Maharaj called a meeting in which great saints of all religions and from various sects were invited including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Nanak-Panthis, Kabir-Panthis (followers of *Guru Nanak* and *Sant Kabir*, respectively) etc. Mahatma Munshi Raghubar Dayal ji, who was present in this assembly used to say that beginners were not allowed to sit in this assembly. Different topics were discussed. Hujur Maharaj then presented Mahatma Ram Chandraji mentioning, 'In my entire life, I have prepared only one person. Now these are my last days. It appears to me to be the order of the great Masters that I should give dear Puttulal (Hujur Maharaj used to address Mahatma Ram Chandraji by this name) the full authorization (*Izazat Ta-amma*) and appoint him my successor. All of you, the great persons, who have assembled here are kindly requested to test him and to concur in my decision or to reject it.' All those present there then sat in meditation. Hujur Maharaj asked Mahatma Ram Chandraji to give *Tavajjoh* to them and to answer questions that may be asked by them.

Mahatma Raghobar Dayal ji used to say that this session of meditation was an extra-ordinary one. That experience was never again repeated. Initially there was a feeling of happiness. Then the thoughts started disappearing and then there was thoughtlessness. There was nothing except the remembrance of God. All the Great Masters of this Order appeared to be kindly present. Gradually light started appearing and then light alone was visible, nothing else was visible not even one's own body. It appeared as if there is no earth and no sky but light alone everywhere, which had such an attraction that everyone was totally absorbed in it. This light appeared to be the real Master and the dearest one, a reverberation, which was very blissful and with which one desired to be completely united. Eyes were full of tears with the heart totally melted. After a little while the light disappeared and there was no reverberation either. There was a feeling of sense as well as unawareness, bliss as well as neutrality. It was like a mild inebriation. One did not desire to come out of this feeling or to open eyes. The feeling was beyond expression. This condition remained for long till Hujur Maharaj asked to stop the meditation. Slowly all of them opened their eyes and praised Mahatma Ram Chandraji stating, 'He has not only achieved access up to the *Sat-pad* (station of the Truth-the highest destination) but he has merged himself completely in it. You (Hujur Maharaj) have prepared a replica of yourself, a wonder created by you.' Thereafter one of the persons asked Mahatma Ram Chandraji to explain the true meaning of 'Thanks.' Mahatma Ram Chandraji explained that 'to use things given by the God in an appropriate manner, in accordance with the Scriptures, is to pay 'thanks' to the Almighty.' All those present in the assembly expressed satisfaction over this answer and approved of the decision of Hujur Maharaj to fully authorise and appoint Mahatma Ram Chandraji to be his successor.

Once Mahatma Ram Chandraji urged before Hujur Maharaj, 'I am yours. If you permit me, I may adopt Islam.' Hujur Maharaj outright rejected this idea remarking, 'You should never think of such an absurd idea. Spiritualism does not need following of any particular religion. Customs and rituals are only the outer form of religion, which depend upon the place and social circumstances. Spirituality, however, is seeking the Truth and self-realisation that are the matters of soul, which is same in every one and above all these things. It is the duty of everyone to follow the customs and rituals of the country and the religion in which one is born. You are Hindu and, therefore you should follow the Hindu religion; I am a Muslim and, therefore, I should follow Islam. You should rise above these trivialities. Spirituality teaches large heartedness and not narrow mindedness. If you convert into a Muslim, you should consider yourself to be deprived of all relation with me.'

Mahatma Ram Chandraji was given the job of making copies of documents in the office of the Distt. Collector (Photocopying machines were not available in those days and documents were required to be copied manually). He was to make a copy of a court order comprising of 58 pages. He was mentally engaged in the internal practice that Hujur Maharaj had told him to do, and physically was copying the order. When he had completed 50 pages, he suddenly thought that as he was mentally engaged somewhere

else, he must have committed lots of mistakes in copying those pages. He was afraid if it were so who would bear the cost of the papers. The later pages he copied with great attention and care. He used to say that when this copy was compared with the original, he was astonished to find that in the first 50 pages there were no mistakes at all but in the remaining pages he had committed many mistakes.

One day Mahatma Ram Chandraji continuously felt an urge to cane anyone who fell before him. For the whole day he felt this urge and was very upset. In the evening he mentioned this to Hujur Maharaj. Hujur Maharaj told him that the whole day he was annoyed with the students and kept on punishing them. As Mahatma Ram Chandraji remembered him (Hujur Maharaj) throughout, he was also affected. Similarly, once Hujur Maharaj was sitting alone near a water tank and playing with water. Mahatma Ram Chandraji came to visit him, saluted him and within two minutes sought his permission to leave. Hujur Maharaj was very pleased and said, ‘ My son, you always act according to my wish. I just wanted you to return and immediately you have sought permission to go back. I always wondered that not even once you have given me an occasion to be annoyed with you.’

Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to say that a Tehsildar (a revenue officer) came on transfer to Distt. Kaimgunj. Somehow he got annoyed with Mahatma Ram Chandraji. He tried to explain the matter, but it did not help. Mahatma Ram Chandraji mentioned this to Hujur Maharaj who consoled him and told him, ‘Whenever you get an opportunity to sit in front of the officer, match your breathing with his and think that the air he is inhaling is filled with your love and that he is exhaling is taking out his hatred towards you. If you do not get an opportunity to sit in front of him, then presume that he is sitting in front of you and practise it. God willing you will get the result.’ Mahatma Ram Chandraji did this for some days. After sometime, the annoyance and hatred of Tehsildar Sahab towards Mahatma Ram Chandraji got converted into appreciation and affection for him.

Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to visit Hujur Maharaj regularly. He walked on foot from Kaimganj to Raipur which are at about 4 miles. He used to return at about 10 PM. This was his routine. One evening it was about to rain with clouds and darkness all around. Mahatma Ram Chandraji with his younger brother Mahatma Shri Raghubar Dayal ji was on the way when it started raining very heavily. It became impossible to proceed further. Perforce they halted under a tree, which hardly had any leaves to protect them from the downpour. Mahatma Ram Chandraji told his younger brother ‘Nanhe (he used to address him by this name) close your eyes and start meditation. Think that it is not raining.’ Both of them sat with this thought and in a little while they were in deep meditation. After sometime when they opened their eyes, they found water all around but the place where both of them were meditating was completely dry as if it had not rained around there. When they reached Raipur, the first question Hujur Maharaj asked was, ‘Whether you were drenched?’ Mahatma Ram Chandraji mentioned everything to Hujur Maharaj who remarked, ‘One who is fortunate to receive the grace of the Almighty, all the powers of the nature also become kind to him.’ Then he said, ‘Even this thunderstorm

could not stop you from visiting me. Your faith and love is very deep. I am very pleased with you. The Almighty may always be kind and graceful to you.’

Similarly, once while Mahatma Ram Chandraji was going to Raipur, a herd of cows that were grazing quietly, all of a sudden attacked him from all-around. There was no person to help him out. He had only an umbrella in his hand. Death was certain. Seeing that his end was near, Mahatma Ram Chandraji closed his eyes and started remembering Hujur Maharaj. The umbrella in his hand unfolded. When he opened his eyes the umbrella was in his hand and the cows were running away. He thanked the God and reached Raipur where he narrated the entire incidence to Hujur Maharaj. Hujur Maharaj told him that he should thank the Almighty, as it was His grace.

Once Hujur Maharaj and Mahatma Ram Chandraji went for a walk on Farukhabad-Fatehgarh Road. Mahatma Ram Chandraji was mentioning to Hujur Maharaj about his day-to-day problems etc. and Hujur Maharaj was listening to it very carefully. On the way there was a small culvert. Both of them sat on the parapet. Suddenly Hujur Maharaj was filled with emotions and divine love. He put his right hand on Mahatma Ram Chandraji’s shoulder and remarked, ‘You are very fortunate and dear to the God. You have very easily got this invaluable gift.’ Then he asked him to look towards the trees. Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to say that these words were very charismatic. He saw a divine light engulfing everything, which was blissful and attracting towards it. The entire creation, trees, walls, animals, men, everything seemed to be dancing in that light. It appeared that this light was the real life and the soul of everyone. It was the real objective and everything else was false. On being asked, Mahatma Ram Chandraji narrated this to Hujur Maharaj, who uttered, ‘ Thanks God. The path has not proved wrong. This light is your reality and your ultimate objective. Now I shall be in the background to help you. To lead you now will be unpardonable.’ Mahatma Ram Chandraji used to say that when I was going for walk the world was with me and when I was returning the world had been left behind forever. The worries and worldly desires were over forever and their place had been taken by the divine-love.

It is an incidence of 1929. Mahatma Ram Chandraji was working as Record Keeper in the office of Distt. Collector, Fatehgarh. An important file was misplaced and could not be located in spite of all efforts. Being the Record Keeper in-charge of the records, it was his responsibility to trace the file. In the evening at home he was thinking about the file that the face of a frightened clerk appeared before him. Mahatma Ram Chandraji understood the matter, went to that clerk’s residence and asked for the file. In fact that clerk had taken the file home for some work and had forgotten about it thereafter. Now he was afraid that the Collector would not pardon him. Mahatma Ram Chandraji promised him that he would not reveal his name to any one. The clerk then handed over the file to Mahatma Ram Chandraji, who produced it before the Collector but did not reveal the name of that clerk to him in spite of Collector’s insistence.

Around those days some *Satsangis* came to visit him. He got busy with them and in the process forgot to go to the Collectorate. By chance on that day the Commissioner was to inspect the office of the Collector. In the afternoon when it struck to him, he almost went running to the office. He enquired one of the staff members whether the inspection was over. That person was surprised and said, 'Are you joking with me. You were yourself presenting all the files immediately on asking.' Mahatma Ram Chandraji understood the matter that in his place his Master had attended to his duty. Mahatma Ram Chandraji was in tears. He submitted his resignation to the Collector and left the service for fully devoting himself to the mission of his Master.

Mahatma Ram Chandraji proceeded on his heavenly abode on 14 August 1931. His *Samadhi* is situated in Fatehgarh, UP.

A special mention needs to be made of two great Sufi Masters of the twentieth century AD, Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji and Thakur Ram Singhji, both belonging to the chain of Naqshbandi Sufis.

Dr. Chandra Gupta, who was one of Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji's disciples, used to say that he was a '*Badshah-fakir*' who was both a *Jalali* saint (full of splendour), as well as a *Jamali* saint (full of elegance). Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji discovered new centers of spiritual energy in human body. He used to say that the Scriptures do not mention all the *chakras* and not all the occult knowledge is given out at one time. As the humanity progresses, more and more knowledge is revealed. The whole of one's Life may not be long enough to activate all the centers of energy. However, in this Order, all the *chakras* are activated in this very life through meditation. With the approval of his father (Mahatma Raghubar Dayal Ji) and his Master (Maulana Abdul Gani Khan) Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji made much improvement in the method of meditation.

In regard to Sufism Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji, a great Sufi Master of the Naqshbandi Order, used to say, 'Sufism is a way of life. It is neither a religion, nor a philosophy. There are Hindu Sufis, Muslim Sufis, and Christian Sufis. My revered *Guru Maharaj* was a Muslim.' He also said that the true meaning of spirituality must be understood; but it cannot be understood completely but only partly. The greater part is beyond understanding. As far as we live in this world and as far as this world is with us, we understand it. Beyond that there is no understanding anymore but Realisation.

Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji has said that in the Naqshbandi Order, the *Hriday Chakra* (the mystique center of Heart) is used mainly, which is the center of love and when it is activated, such force, such power flows through it, that one forgets everything. Sanyasis mainly work through *Agya Chakra* (the energy center lying in between the eyebrows) but there is not much love in Sanyasis. By activating the *Hriday Chakra*, Love is created by the Master with his spiritual power. The result is that the whole work of awakening, activating is done by one *Chakra*, which gradually opens up all the other *Chakras*. The *Hriday Chakra* is the leader and the leader does everything.

Ms. Irina Tweedie, who came to India to get instructions in Yoga, had the fortune of spending a few years in the company of Mahatma Radha Mohan Lalji. She was asked to maintain a diary, which has been published in the form of a book titled 'Daughter of Fire'. She returned to London, where she introduced the Naqshbandi Sufi way. Later, a center by the name 'Golden Sufi Center' was formed with the objective of making the teachings of the Naqshbandi Sufi way available to the seekers.

In her book 'Daughter of Fire', she has mentioned, 'I hoped to get instructions in Yoga, expected wonderful teachings, but what the teacher did was mainly to force me to face the darkness within myself, and it almost killed me.'

In other words he made me 'descend into hell', the cosmic drama enacted in every soul as soon as it dares to lift its face to the Light.

It was done very simply, by using violent reproof and even aggression. My mind was kept in a state of confusion to the extent of being 'switched off.' I was beaten down in every sense till I had to come to terms with that in me, which I kept rejecting all my life. It is surprising how classical method of training, devised perhaps thousands of years ago, is similar to the modern psychological techniques; even dream analysis has a place in it.'

Thakur Ram Singhji established the ideals of Sufi conduct and devotion by setting his example. He was born on 3rd September 1898 in the village Manoharpura in a Raulot Bhati family of Rajputs. His father Thakur Mangal Singh ji was a religious and devoted person. He served the Jaipur state in the capacity of the 'Guardian of the Fort' (*Kiledar*). The then King, Maharaj Madho Singh ji had a lot of regards for him. Thakur Ram Singhji's mother also was a very religious and pious lady.

The religious bent of the mind of parents had its influence on the son-Thakur Ram Singhji. Thakur Mangal Singh ji used to obtain glimpse of the Couple Lord Ram and Sita in meditation. He once mentioned this to his son, which aroused a desire in his son also to obtain a glimpse of Lord Ram. He, thus, right from the childhood got deeply interested in religion.

Thakur Ram Singhji was admitted to the Nobles School in Jaipur, where he learnt Urdu, Persian and English besides Hindi. Later he was employed in the Police Deptt. of Jaipur State. He joined as a constable and through his honesty, sincerity and hard work rose to the post of '*Thanedar*' (Station In charge or Sub-Inspector of Police) before retiring from the police service in the year 1944 at the age of 46 years to devote himself completely for the mission of his Master.

The Police Department those days was known for its atrocities with hunters and shoes decorating the walls of Police Stations. Thakur Ram Singhji, however, was an

exception, who treated all, including those locked up in his Station, with all humility and dignity. He would cook his food himself and would offer the same first to those in the lock-up, before eating himself. On tours often he spent his own money for the food for his subordinates. He would not allow them to use any unfair means or to ask any one to arrange for their needs. He did not even hesitate in cleaning the work place. He had developed a habit of refraining from accepting any service from others but he himself always served others with no expectation what so ever.

Bribe was unknown to him and he would not let any of his colleagues to indulge in any corrupt practices. He never indulged in beating or applying force against any accused. His cordial behaviour had made his personality so impressive that even the cruel criminals were not left unmoved and accepted their guilt voluntarily. He had such a firm faith in the divine order that even in the toughest situation he never lost his cool, nor he ever got disappointed. He always followed the path of his duty with utmost simplicity and self-confidence. He did not allow his subordinates or any one else to carry even his luggage. If any one offered him lift, he would insist on payment of the fare or otherwise not to take lift. If someone refused to accept the fare, he will insist on being dropped back from the point from where he was given the lift and thus compelled one to accept the payment.

Thakur Ram Singhji never used any force or coercion or induced any accused. He was a man of integrity and courage, always standing for truth and honesty. Often he had to come to Jaipur for appearing in the Court. On the days, when he used to go to his residence in Sanganer, he did not claim the Dearness Allowance. He always spent money with great care and the money thus saved was spent for helping others. If any counterfeit coin came to his hand, he used to bury that under the ground. He never used any improper method for any purpose. Until he was fully convinced, he never took anyone as guilty and produced a guilty in the Court only after he had gathered all evidence.

When he was posted in Navalgarh, a thief was caught and locked up in the Police Station. The thief was frightened that now he will be beaten up. Instead, in the evening Thakur Ram Singhji himself took the food to the accused and affectionately offered him the same. Next day also he got the same affectionate treatment. When he was eating, Thakur Ram Singhji asked him to take some more food. This unearthly and affectionate behaviour had such an impact on the accused that he started weeping. Voluntarily, he accepted his guilt and told where the stolen ornaments were hidden and got them recovered. After that he gave up stealing and came into the shelter of Thakur Ram Singhji. He often visited him in the Police Station for *Satsang*.

A thief once ran away from Thakur Ram Singhji's custody. He was to be produced before the court next day. On reaching back to his village the thief narrated how he had escaped from the custody to his Chief. Instead of appreciating him, the Chief asked him to go back immediately and report himself in the Court, otherwise he himself will take him to the Court. The Chief had great regard for Thakur Ram Singhji as an

honest police officer. When Thakur Ram Singhji reached the court and was about to mention of the incidence to the Court, he was pleasantly surprised to see the accused present in the Court.

He had become a legendary figure during his tenure in the Police Department. No one ever expected such a person to be serving in the Police Department. The influence of his personality was also visible on his camel, which, it is said, also did not eat anything offered by others. It had become famous for him that he would not drink water, even from a well, unless he had paid for it and had left some money there.

Thakur Ram Singhji had a heart full of compassion. He took a lot of interest in growing trees and in feeding birds. He turned his village green. Even in the compounds of Police Station where he was posted, he grew lots of trees and looked after them. If anyone damaged trees, he used to feel pained. Feeding birds was his daily routine. In Sawai-Madhapur, birds even used to pick up raisins from his hands. A part of his income was regularly given for the use of poor and this was done so secretly that no one would know of this.

Police in Jaipur State those days used camels for riding. The Sepoy in-charge of a camel was known as 'Shutur Sawar' (or camel-rider). He used to get a separate allowance for the maintenance of the camel. Thakur Ram Singhji, however, used not only to feed the Shutur Sawar but also the camel from his own pocket. One of such Shutur Sawar who had the fortune of working with Thakur Ram Singhji mentioned this about him: 'What do you talk of Ram Singh ji Bhati. He was a noble *Thanedar*, a living god. On tours he used to eat only after all were fed. Not only human beings but until the camel also had been fed, he did not take food himself.'

One Shri Kishan Chandra Bhargava who was PWI in the Railways gave him a photograph of Mahatma Ram Chandraji. He was posted in Palsana those days. He started meditating on that photograph and started receiving spiritual radiations. He wrote a letter to Mahatma Ram Chandraji expressing his inability to personally visit him. Quick came the reply. Mahatma Ram Chandraji wrote back to him that he himself was coming to Jaipur and would meet him then. A few days later Mahatma Ram Chandraji arrived and when he saw Thakur Ram Singh, he remarked, 'Ram Singh, you are exactly the same as I had seen you', though they had never met before. Mahatma Ram Chandraji stayed in Jaipur for three days and during this stay he also visited Manoharpura. Thakur Ram Singhji used to say that his condition after his first meeting with Mahatma Ram Chandraji was explained by a couplet sang by the tongawala on his return in a tonga:

*'Ajab tere ishq ka yeh asar dekhtan hoon,
Ki tarakki pe darde jigar dekhtan hoon,
Samaya hai jabse tu meri nazar mein,
Jidhar dekhtan hoon tujhe dekhtan hoon.'*

(I see a strange effect of your love that the pain of love in my heart is ever growing. Ever since I have seen you, wherever I see, I see you alone.)

Thakur Ram Singhji used to say that this couplet exactly described his condition. In the first meeting itself he had become 'one with his Master.' When after three days Mahatma Ram Chandraji Maharaj was returning back, Thakur Ram Singhji presented him a bouquet of roses. Mahatma Ram Chandraji blessed him to be a '*Fanaqil-Murid*' i.e. 'a disciple with whom his Master has merged' and that his fame would spread like the smell of roses.

His devotion and his merger with his Master were such that many a times he forgot his own existence. At times he could not even recall his name. Once he was to give evidence in the Court. When asked for his name, he could not recollect his name. The Advocate for the Police reminded him of his name. The Judge also was surprised to see such a person.

He was a man of few words and did never speak a lie. Only once did he speak a lie in his life, in Sawai Madhopur to save a Police Constable and he used to say that his Master turned this lie too into the truth. Whatever he had said thinking it to be a lie, had turned out to be the truth.

The saintly behaviour of Thakur Ram Singh left an unforgettable impression on every one who came in his contact. Many officers from the Police Department were deeply impressed by him, some of whom changed their way of living. These included Dy. Supdt. of Police Kushal Singh ji and Supdt. of Police Mool Singh ji.

Dy. SP Kushal Singh Rajawat was a colleague of Thakur Ram Singhji. They used to study in the same school in their childhood. They also had their Police training together in the Police Lines, Fateh Tiba, Jaipur. Kushal Singh ji was the first person who had the opportunity of having the benefit of *Satsang* with Thakur Ram Singhji. Shri Rajawat was an honest and straightforward officer. As both Thakur Ram Singhji and Shri Rajawat had lot in common, their friendship grew day-by-day. Shri Rajawat however, had only one bad habit of drinking. He was born in a royal family of Mahalan and it was common in that environment to gather friends and relatives and start drinking right from the evening through night. Thakur Ram Singhji one day saw him doing so. He politely told him not to drink. Shri Rajawat, however, laughed it away and in the evening started drinking. After some time Thakur Ram Singhji once again told him not to drink. Shri Rajawat retorted, 'You are not aware of the fun of drinking, as you have never taken it. Drink one day, the sky will come down to the earth.' Thakur Ram Singhji replied, 'I do drink, but without spending any money and it is much more inebriating.' Shri Rajawat was surprised and enquired whether there was any such drink. Thakur Ram Singhji invited him to come in the evening to taste the same.

The same evening Shri Rajawat visited Thakur Ram Singhji who asked him to wash his hands and feet. He did so and then sat before Thakur Ram Singhji. They started talking and Shri Rajawat started getting inebriated. His eyes closed and voice silenced. He forgot about himself. A divine light engulfed him deep within. Such bliss encompassed him that his life changed. When his eyes opened, he saw Thakur Ram Singhji smiling. Shri Rajawat caught hold of his feet. It is said that Shri Rajawat continuously for seven days–seven nights had this feeling. His friends started asking him whether he was drinking even during the day. Shri Rajawat was the first person to receive the grace of Thakur Ram Singhji. He never drank thereafter. With the passage of time his fame also travelled far and wide and reached the ears of Young Sahab, IGP, Jaipur, who started calling him the second Ram Singh.

Shri Mool Singh Shaikhawat was the Supdt. of Police for Jaipur city for long. Whenever Thakur Ram Singhji used to visit Jaipur, he generally stayed with him, which brought both of them quite closer. Mool Singh ji was a cheerful person and used to think Police Service to be a ‘tree full of fruits’ that could be shaken any time to fill the pockets. Often he used to tell Thakur Ram Singh, ‘What kind of an officer are you. You have not made any money even in police service.’

Mool Singh ji was a strongly built person and a daring officer. He had earned a name for himself in the Jaipur State as a brave officer. Thieves and dacoits used to shiver listening to his name. Once a dreaded dacoit was surrounded by a Police party but no one dared to catch hold of him fearing for one’s life as the dacoit could have attacked the Policeman not caring for his own life. Mool Singh ji, all by himself came forward, challenged the dacoit and caught hold of him from behind. Such a brave person, however, fell a victim to drinking which had overpowered him. Mool Singh ji used to feel sorry and helpless, as he could not restrain himself from drinking.

Once he mentioned about his inability to get rid of this habit to Thakur Ram Singh. Thakur Ram Singhji told him, ‘Kotwal Sahab (SP Sahab), there is one more inebriation, which is more powerful than liquor. The inebriation of liquor has ups and downs but this inebriation once on would never be down.’ Mool Singh ji requested him ‘Thanedar Sahab, if an affectionate and kind person like you cannot take care of me, who else would do it for me. Kindly give me also a bit of the inebriant that keeps you on.’

The arrow had hit the target. The same evening both of them set facing each other on a wooden *Deewan*. The meditation started. After about one hour when Shri Mool Singh ji’s eyes opened, he said with folded hands ‘Today you have given me that nectar which has made me forget myself.’

SP Mool Singh ji later used to describe his experience in these words, ‘I felt as if waves of bliss were rocking me. I had no sense of time and was totally engulfed by that bliss. When (after meditation) I started moving, I was trembling, which had never happened to me before even after consuming a bottle of liquor. I do not know what that

godly man had done to me in a day that changed my life. The habit of drinking was over for ever and I started passing my time in remembering the Almighty.’

Thakur Ram Singhji had become a living legend in the Police Department. His reputation as an honest and sincere officer with absolute integrity had reached far and wide in the entire Jaipur State. Even the Courts were not left untouched from it. The Nazim-Ikram Hussain of Shaikhawati was also impressed by him and to such an extent that if Thakur Ram Singhji presented any inquiry report before him, he would deliver his judgment based on that report without any further investigation. He would not even call many witnesses. Those days, the Nazim of a Nizamat was considered to be a very senior officer for both civil and criminal matters. In one such case the Nazim Ikram Hussain of Jhunjhunu, announced a sentence against a thief only on the basis of the statement of Thakur Ram Singhji. An appeal was filed against this order in the Chief Court of Jaipur State. The famous Chief Justice Shri Sheetla Prasad Bajpai of Jaipur State heard this matter. After hearing both the sides, Chief Justice Bajpai maintained the sentence, disagreeing with the defense argument that a person cannot be punished on the basis of a statement of a Police Officer alone and that there was no provision for such an action in the Criminal law. He discarded this argument stating, ‘Thakur Ram Singh in this case has made The statement. Those who made Criminal Procedure Code had not imagined of such a Thanedar whose statement carries more weight than the provisions of the CrPC.’

Once Thakur Ram Singhji was proceeding for Reengus from Jaipur. He had hardly reached the Railway Station that the train started moving. Somehow he could manage to board the train but could not purchase the ticket. At Chomu-Samod Railway Station, he met the TTI, explained him the matter and requested him to issue a ticket, and if thought fit charge him double the fare, as per the Railway rules. The TTI, however, told him to be comfortable and that he would do the needful. At Reengus Station again Thakur Ram Singhji requested the TTI to issue the ticket. The TTI knew him well and used to respect him as an ideal person. He somehow managed not to issue the ticket in spite of his insistence. Seeing no other way out, Thakur Ram Singhji came to Khatu Shyamji where he was posted. After sometime, he was to go to Jaipur. He came to Reengus Railway Station and asked his camel-rider to buy two tickets for Jaipur. The Camel-rider was confused and could not understand why was he asking for two tickets. However, he bought the tickets and handed them over to Thakur Ram Singhji, who kept one ticket carefully in his pocket and torn away the other ticket then and there. A person knowing him was standing near-by. He asked him about it. Thakur Ram Singhji smiled and said, ‘I have paid the money due to the Railways.’

Thakur Ram Singhji did not accept food from anyone even on tour. He used to cook food for himself and if anyone insisted, he used to tell him that he would take only self-cooked food. He used to say, ‘Except for Dy. SP Kushal Singh ji and SP Mool Singh ji, I did not take food from any other Police man. Shri Kushal Singh ji was an honest officer and Mool Singh ji had changed completely after entering into the *Satsang*. Not only me but there were many others in the Police Department who lived on honest

earnings. Kotwal Ashraf Ali Sahab did not accept food from his real brother as his brother accepted bribes.’ When this conversation was on in the City Palace, someone asked Thakur Ram Singhji that he had heard that he (Thakur Ram Singhji) did not even use anyone’s light. Thakur Ram Singhji, however, replied, ‘No this is not true, but once such an incidence did happen. I had gone for an investigation. It was night and, therefore, I summoned a lantern from someone’s house. I recorded the statements in that light and paid one *Ana* for the oil burnt to the person who had brought the lantern.’

A young man from Shaikhawati used to visit Thakur Ram Singhji at City Palace, Jaipur. Once when he reached City Palace, he was not available. Whenever Thakur Ram Singhji used to go out of Jaipur, he used to indicate this on a slate. The young man noticed that Thakur Ram Singhji had written on the slate that he is going to his village, but it was not mentioned when will he return. The young man was upset. When he was going back, he came across an acquaintance, a Police Officer. He also did not know the address of the village of Thakur Ram Singhji but he recalled that opposite Jaipur Railway Station and near the Old Powerhouse, Shri Har Narayan Saxena resides, who may perhaps know the address of Thakur Ram Singhji’s village. Next morning the young man reached Saxena Sahab’s house where *Satsang* was about to start. The young man also participated and sat for the meditation. When he opened his eyes after the meditation was over, he found to his surprise Thakur Ram Singhji sitting over there. Saxena Sahab also noticed him, welcomed him and requested him to bless all those present. The *Satsang* continued for some more time in the presence of Thakur Ram Singhji. When he was about to leave, he called the young man, took him to a corner and told him, ‘I have come here because you remembered me.’

One *Satsangi* mentioned an incidence concerning Thakur Ram Singhji in his diary as under: In the diary he has referred Thakur Ram Singhji as ‘Ram-Mahashay.’

“11 June, 1963. It is evening; Ram Mahashay is sitting quietly on the floor with a pacifying expression on his face. *Satsangis* are enjoying his company. One by one all of them left.

Today is Tuesday. *Satsang* takes place on Tuesdays at Judge Sahab’s residence. Ram Mahashay is reminded of Tuesday. He says ‘Come on, we shall go to Judge Sahab’s place.’ From City Palace, walked on foot to Subhash Chowk at Judge Sahab’s residence.

It is summers. The *Satsang* is being held at the open roof on second floor. The entire roof is occupied by *Satsangis*. Ram Mahashay climbed up the stairs and as he was about to sit in the rear that Judge Sahab spotted him. Judge Sahab stood up with folded hands and with him all other *Satsangis* also stood up. Seeing this Ram Mahashay very politely requested ‘Please take your place. There is no need to get up in His court.’

Judge Sahab smilingly replied, ‘If a courtier of His court comes, one has to stand up.’ By then Judge Sahab had reached near Ram Mahashay, who for some time with

folded hands looked at Judge Sahab. This was a rare scene to be witnessed. He was humility personified, which filled the heart with an unexplainable joy. A couplet of Saint Kabir occurred in the mind:

*'Kabir chera sant ka, dasan ka pardas,
Kabir aise ho raha, jyo paon tale ghas.'*

Judge Sahab requested Ram Mahashay to sit in the front but he did not agree and sat in the rear behind all Satsangis. Judge Sahab also sat down there and requested all Satsangis to turn towards Ram Mahashay. There was silence for some time. These moments of silence were more valuable than any spiritual discourse. Every one was quiet and Ram Mahashay was getting absorbed deep within. The *Satsang* went on like this for sometime.

Ram Mahashay participates like this only at times. His arrival had suddenly sparkled everything. A little later Judge Sahab requested him to say something for the benefit of those present.

Ram Mahashay told a story and then mentioned that one should try and bring about his wife to think alike and make her a companion. Then there was a silence for sometime. Thereafter he said, 'The One we are searching is inside us. One has to develop love for Him. If we move two steps towards Him, He moves four steps towards us, as He is the *Param-Pita* (creator of all). One has to look within and develop love for Him. His remembrance should be continuous.'