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Editorial

We are very pleased to see that the inaugural issue of *Darul Irfan Research Journal* is finally being published. Thanks to Almighty Allah that the long cherished dream of publishing a research journal on Sufism has come true on a very special occasion named *Akheri Chahar Shombah* marking the recovery of the Prophet (pbuh) from illness on the last Wednesday of the month of *Safar* in 11 *Hijri*.

Darul Irfan Research Institute (DIRI) has put its mark on academic arena very recently but from the very beginning of its journey it has successfully been striving to offer a global platform for the academics and researchers on Sufism. DIRI is also trying to provide a transformative space to the scholars and young researchers to create and disseminate knowledge on Sufism, interfaith dialogue and communal harmony.

We would like to thank the members of the editorial board and the learned reviewers for their continuous support and contribution to the publication of this inaugural issue of *Darul Irfan Research Journal*. We, especially, would like to thank and congratulate the contributors of inaugural issue of the journal.

We have been fortunate enough to have the guidance and support of our honorable patron and the incumbent *Pir* (Sajjadah Nasheen) of Maizbhandar Darbar Sharif, Syed Emdadul Hoque Maizbhandari, without whose blessings and guidance this venture would not have been possible.

We apologize and seek your kind note of any kind of unintentional mistakes.

Shajada Syed Irfanul Hoque

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Between the Lover and the Beloved: An Inter-Cosmic Love Story

Sezin Buyukmenekse¹

Abstract

In the Sufi tradition, the love story between the Lover and the Beloved, narrated by countless Sufis as a metaphor of the divine love between God and humans, alludes to a deep ontological structure that the whole creation is based upon known as the Divine Presences (al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyya) through which God discloses Himself starting from the Muḥammadan (pbuh) Reality to the corporeal world and the perfect human (insān al-kāmil) namely the all-comprehensive entity that unites all the Divine Presences and the realizer of the union with the Beloved. As a result of God's love to be known, He created the creatures as the manifestations of His beautiful names and attributes to worship, recognize, and eventually love Him. This divine love of God leads humans to search for the ways of union with the Eternal Beloved. Prophets (pbuh), scriptures, and the perfect humans following prophets' footsteps are those that God has sent to guide people along the path to the Beloved. According to their understanding of this guidance, some people tend to develop an intimate divine love relationship with God which can be named as the religion of love. In this paper, it's aimed at approaching the inter-cosmic love relationship between the Lover ('āshiq) and the Beloved (ma'shūq) as an explanation of the Divine Presences between God and humans, as well as emphasizing the importance of the guidance of God results in living the religion of love, along with the passages from the members of the School of Love throughout the history of Sufism.

Keywords

Divine Love, Divine Presences, Perfect Human, School of Love, Religion of Love.

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1. Ontology of Love: Divine Presences between the Lover and the Beloved

In the year 1182 in Cordoba, young Ibn ‘Arabī, who recently came out of spiritual retreat (*khalwa*), has a momentous encounter with the great philosopher and chief justice Ibn Rushd. Ibn Rushd -known as Averroes in the west- asked him whether the unveiling and divine effusion he gained in the retreat is identical to the understanding that the rational consideration (*al-naẓar*) gives to the philosophers. Ibn ‘Arabī first says:

“Yes.” Then adds: “No. And between these two, spirits fly from their matter and heads from their bodies” (Chittick, *The Sufi Path* xiii). There were countless interpretations of this encounter in the history of Sufism and Sufi studies one of which is that its indication to Ibn ‘Arabī’s well-known He/not He (*Huwa/lā Huwa*) concept that underlies in the heart of the Islamic understanding of the cosmos and the creation situated between the incomparability (*tanzīh*) and similarity (*tashbīh*), unity and separation, spiritual and corporeal, intelligible and sensory, meaning and form that shows itself in the narration of the inter-cosmic love story between the Lover and the Beloved which is an excellent illustration of the Divine Presences and the most beautiful and poetic way of explaining the relationship between Divine and humans. This relationship usually takes its Quranic root from the two clauses of the 54th verse of the Surah *al-Mā’ida* on the mutual love relationship of the Divine and humans: “He loves them, and they love Him.”² On the other hand, in this relationship, the roles of the Lover and the Beloved are inter-changeable as God’s name *Al-wadūd* means both the Lover and the Beloved (Chittick, *The Pivotal* 262-267). One of the great Sufis from the School of Love. Ahmad Ghazālī states these indefinite roles in his *Sawānīḥ* as such:

In the place of our Heart- taker’s beauty and loveliness,
We are not suited for Him— He is suited for us (Ghazālī 316).

² Quran, 5:54: “O you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion - Allah will bring forth [in place of them] a people He will love and who will love Him [who are] humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic. That is the favor of Allah; He bestows it upon whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.”

But I do not know which is lover and which beloved. This is a great mystery, for it may be that at first it was His pull, and then this result. Here the realities are reversed. ‘You will not will unless God wills’ [76:30]. Inescapably, He loves them comes before they love Him. Abu Yazid said,

For a long time I fancied that I wanted Him. In fact, He first wanted me” (Ghazâlî 316).

According to Ibn ‘Arabî, this relationship between the Lover and the Beloved is considered the root cause of the creation. God starts loving the reality of His Beloved, namely the Muḥammadan Reality as the Lover from which the other creatures’ realities were created. From this point of view, “He loves them” corresponds to the engendering command (*al-amr al-takwīnī*), which means he created them out of His love in order for them to be (Chittick, Themes of Love 165). This reality continues to descend to manifest itself in other Presences until the manifestation in the noble heart of Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh), namely the most perfect human (*akmal*) and the other perfect humans’ hearts following his steps. At this point, the perfect human becomes the Lover who is in love with the everlasting beauty of God as the Beloved where the prescriptive command (*al-amr al-taklīfī*) shows itself as the Lover’s eternal desire to be reunited with the Beloved. So, the reality inside the human attracted by his homeland and longs for union with the Beloved and the ocean of love that once he had separated from. By fulfilling the states and stations along the way, it’s hoped that the realities of ending up where they had descended from, annihilated in the Beloved’s love and beauty.

The Divine Presences are the most possible places of manifestation in the creation where God’s self-disclosure can be realized. It’s also the scene for this inter-cosmic love story between the Lover and the Beloved. The narration of the story starts with the famous ḥadīth qudsī of the hidden treasure (*kanz makhfī*). In the conversation that is attributed to happen between Prophet David and God, God says:

I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be recognized, so I created the creatures so that they might recognize Me (‘Arabî, *Futūḥāt*, II 399.28).

Here, the hidden treasure alludes to the Essence of God that no one can know or even think about where there is no self-disclosure, no stations, no determination, no separation, or form of any kind. Anṣārī beautifully describes this pre-entification (*lā ta'ayyun*) state in his treatise on love, *Maḥabbat-nāma*:

In those days, there was neither father nor mother; in those times, the children were missing. In what preceded all precedents, before the togetherness and difference that were hidden and not yet apparent, there was neither before nor after, neither wretchedness nor felicity. There were no way stations or stations in love, no travelers on the road, no disparity in footsteps, none of the darkness of blight and distance, none of the clouds of presences and absence, no ascending traces or descending imagination. The bazaar of union was stagnant, and the edict of separation was void, for there was no trace of the images of creation. The beauty of he loves them had no use for the mole they love Him.³

When the hidden treasure namely God loved to be known, the very first thing that He had created from his Essence is His Beloved's Reality as a manifestation of love within the Essence which is the Muḥammadan Reality, in other words, the Pen, or the Universal Intellect which later will be named as the first entification (*ta'ayyun al-awwal*) or Exclusive Unity (*aḥadiyya*) that is the first Divine Presences God's self-disclosure had manifested (Chittick, *The Five Divine Presences* 116). After the creation of the Muḥammadan Reality, other creatures' realities created from the Muḥammadan Reality as manifestations of names and attributes named as the second entification (*ta'ayyun al-thānī*) or Inclusive Unity (*waḥdāniyya*), or the Preserved Tablet (*Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz*). At this Presences, the unified realities at the first Presences are separated from each other and enlightened by the divine light of Muḥammad (pbuh). This is also named as the Presences of the immutable entities (*al-'ayān al-thābita*) where each entity's reality and destiny had been written upon the Preserved Tablet by the Pen. Anṣārī's beautiful descriptions on the creation in *Maḥabbat-nāma* continues as follows:

³ Anṣārī, *Maḥabbat-nāma*, 337-339; tr. Chittick, *Divine Love*, p. 310.

He wanted to make apparent the hidden pearls of love's oyster and to pick out some of the gems. Thus it was that He made everyone's hard cash apparent and separated the elect from the commoners. The divine desire and glorious solicitude decreed that the sun of He loves them would shine and that the rose of they love Him would bloom. All beings would then seek refuge in the sun's brightness, and each would find the road to its own destination.⁴

Here the hidden pearl alludes to the Hidden Treasure and the gems to the creatures' realities namely God's names and attributes. As mentioned above, God's first manifestation is the Muḥammadan Reality and the Muḥammadan Light, the radiant and enlightening nature of the Muḥammadan Reality. He created the reality of His beloved's Muḥammad (pbuh) to love Him back, and the divine light of this love gives other creatures light, consciousness, and being.

After this divine Presences, the realities of the creatures descended to the world of the spirits ('*ālam al-arwāh*) where the famous gathering of Alast (*bazm al-Alast*) had taken place in which the children of Adam were asked:

Am I not your Lord?" and they answered: "Yes, indeed, we bear witness.

In the history of Sufism, Junayd Baghdādī is the one who first mentioned to the allusion of the covenant of Alast concept, which is rooted in the 172nd verse of the Surah al-A'raf.⁵ He interprets this gathering as the first circle of remembrance (*ḥalaqa al-dhikr*) in which the spirits were intoxicated by the taste of their Lord's addressing them⁶ while they had circled the center in rows. The last part of the narration on the creation of Anṣārī in Maḥabbat-nāma tells us about the spiritual world coming just before the world of imagination:

⁴ Anṣārī, *Maḥabbat-nāma*, 337-339; Chittick, *Divine Love*, p. 310.

⁵ Qur'an, Araf, 172; And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] - lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware."

⁶ cf. Attar, *Tadhkirāt al-awliyā*, p. 446.

From the sphere of love, the sun of unification shone on the world of the realities and meanings. In conjunction with the sun, they saw the seeable. The folk of the attributes gazed at the sun with the eye of imagination. The sun's felicity had raised the banner of brightness and left nothing concealed. This was at the time when He said, "And We made covenant with Adam before" [20:115].

It was not yet the moment for the masters of allusion, nor yet the days for the lords of expression.

When the spirit became spirits and the individual individuals, some were commoners and some elect. The folk of the realities and meanings, who had the edict of friendship from that sun's effusion, were placed under the sun's guardianship. They took up residence in the field of face- to- face vision, far from union and separation."⁷

After the world of the spirits, the reality descends to the world of imagination (*'ālam mithāl*). This realm is where all the dreams and the creative works of the corporeal world are inspired and all the beautiful allusions, poetry, and tales of love spring from as *Anṣārī* stated in the earlier quotation, which is also the isthmus (*barzakh*) between the corporeal world and the higher worlds and realities.

Imagery, poetry, allusions, and story-telling are the tools that Sufis commonly use to explain the most complex ontological issues in a smooth, coherent, and narrative way which directly connects the human with the higher worlds and realities as stated in the famous saying: "The metaphor is the bridge to the reality (*al-majāz qantar al-haqīqa*)". Ahmad Ghazālī in *Apparitions (Sawānih)* explains the function of allusion and imagination and how every feature of the Beloved indicates a state of the love relationship between the Lover and the Beloved.

The reality of love will mount only on the steed of the spirit. The heart is the locus of its attributes, but love itself stays inaccessible in the veils of exaltedness. What does anyone know of its essence and attributes? One of its fine points may show its face to the eye

⁷ *Anṣārī, Maḥabbat-nāma*, 337-339; tr. Chittick, *Divine Love*, p. 311.

of knowledge, but no more explanation or mark of it can be given to the tablet of the heart. When it does show its face in the World of Imagination, sometimes it has a specific mark, and sometimes it does not. [...] In the same way, the path of love's perspicacity finds in each of these marks the explanation of a spiritual or corporeal seeking in the lover, or a defect, or a fault. This is because love has a mark in every one of the inner curtains, and these meanings are its marks on the curtain of imagination. Hence, its marks explain the level of love (Ghazâlî 318).

Finally, after the world of imagination, the divine reality descends to the world of the corporeal bodies where the perfect human, namely the all-comprehensive being of all the other Presences lives. It's understood that inwardly the perfect human carries all the divine Presences while bodily living in this corporeal world as an embodiment of the Divine. As God said to his Beloved Prophet Muḥammad:

But for thee, I wouldn't have created the celestial spheres.⁸

Being one of the greatest Anatolian members of the School of Love, Yûnus Emre (d. 1320) beautifully poeticized this notion in one couplet of his countless divine poems:

The Real created the universes for the love of Muḥammad
Created the Moon and the Sun for the yearning of Muḥammad
(Kaçar 52).

From the universes to the planets, particularly the planet Earth, had been created for the sake of the manifestation of Prophet Muḥammad's (pbuh) noble body carrying the Muḥammadan Reality as a secret core which is the first thing that God had created from His love. From this point of view, the noble heart of the most perfect human Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) and the hearts of the other perfect humans, namely the Muḥammadan inheritors, are the places where the gap between the Lover and the Beloved dissolves and the union (*wiṣāl*) occurs. God says in a *ḥadīth qudsī*: "My heavens and my earth embrace me not, but the heart of my faithful servant

⁸ Hakīm, al Mustadrāk, II: 615.

does.” Ken‘ān Rifā‘ī⁹ (d.1950) also expresses the importance of the heart of a perfect human in one of his divine poems:

It’s the heart of a perfect human where the Sun of the Muḥammad rises

Locus of manifestation of the essence and attributes is the heart of a perfect human

The coy divine love of God is in his/her pure heart

Everyone's hope is just the heart of a perfect human

I’m content with being close to this earth rather than being in the heavens

In this ground; being the place for the manifestation of the evident divine love

For Ken‘ān, better than the blessings and beauty of the paradise

Being safe and full of joy here, in the heart of a perfect human (Rifā‘ī 124).

2. Epistemology of Love: Prophets, Quran, and Guidance

Starting from Prophet Adam, each prophet represents a specific name and attribute of God as Ibn ‘Arabī wonderfully manifested throughout his monumental work *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. As being the most perfect human and the one who is given the all-comprehensive words (*jawāmi‘ al-kalim*), Prophet Muḥammad unites all the names and attributes of God in his annihilated being and manifests the wisdom of the oddness (*farḍiyya*).

⁹ Ken‘ān Rifā‘ī is a ṣūfī master in the early 20th century, born in Thessaloniki in 1867. He witnessed the transition period from the Ottoman Empire to the newly born Republic of Turkey in 1925; closed his dervish lodge and continued working as an educator, saying that: “Now, under the sky is my lodge and my heart is my station (maqam)”. Along with his great biographical work on Sayyīd Ahmad al- Rifā‘ī’s life and teachings, he has a commentary on Rūmī’s *Mathnawī* called *Listen: Commentary on the Spiritual Couplets of Mawlānā Rūmī* which was translated into English by Victoria Holbrook and published in 2011. His insight suggesting: “One day, sufism will be taught academically” was realized by the initiatives of Meşkūre and Cemālnūr Sargut via four professorships around the world: The Kenan Rifai Distinguished Professorship of Islamic Studies at the University of North Carolina in 2009, again with the same name at Peking University in 2010, Institute for Sufi Studies at Uskudar University, Istanbul in 2014, and Kenan Rifai Center for Sufi Studies at ASAFAS, Kyoto University, Japan in 2016.

Rūmī expresses Prophet Muḥammad's (pbuh) guidance through the path in his *Fīhi mā Fīh*:

The road to the Real was horrifying, closed and covered with snow. He did the first chevalierance. Ride his horse and paved the way. Anyone who follows this path is because of his guidance and grace. As he revealed the way. He marked near and far, set the pillars, and said “This way, don't go to the other way. If you go to the other way you will perish. (Rūmī)

Other human beings as being the potential representatives of God and the carriers of the Trust on earth, should follow the path that the prophets had suggested and the books revealed to them. As God says in the Quran:

Say [O Muḥammad!]: “If you love God, follow me; God will love you” (3:31).

As rising upon the states and stations, it's expected from the follower of the Muḥammadan path to reach the Muḥammadan station of no station that unites all the states and stations along the way without attaching to any specific one of them.

After Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh), the perfect humans following his footsteps (*‘alā qadam Muḥammad*) -and in certain situations upon the heart of Muḥammad (*‘alā qalb Muḥammad*)- continue this function of being the perfect living representatives of God's names and attributes on Earth. As being one of the greatest of them, Shaykh al-Akbar Muhī al-dīn Ibn ‘Arabī says:

...So I learned that I'm the totality of the prophets that's being mentioned to me. With this good news, I understand that I'm on the heart of the Muḥammad and the inheritor of all-comprehensiveness of Haḍrat Muḥammad. Because he is the last prophet and the last person that is sent the revelation. God gave him the property of the all-comprehensive word (Al-Ḥakīm 270).

According to Ibn ‘Arabī, the all-comprehensive word that is given to Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) is the Quran (Chittick, *The Sufī Path* 239). The Quran is the last of the books that God had sent down to guide the ones He had created out of His love in order to recognize themselves,

transform their souls, and eventually recognize their Lord. God does not just create and leave the ones He created alone, but He guides them with His Speech, namely His words embodied through the prophets and the scriptures revealed to them as a result of His love for His creatures. Being one of the outstanding realizers of this love, Shams Tabrīzī remarks on the importance of reading the Quran as if it's a love letter from God while gazing upon Him with love. He says:

For the travelers and the wayfarers, each verse of the Koran is like a message and a love-letter (*'ishq-nama*) they know the Koran. He presents and discloses the beauty of the Koran to them (Chittick, *The Koran* 67).

Therefore, the prophets, scriptures, and perfect humans are the guides reminding human beings of the union once they had been in, where their realities belong, to whom their longings and love for. Being separated from the Real Self, living in this metaphorical realm with this guidance, souls start to search for the way back home and long for the time of union with the Beloved as Rūmī poetized beautifully in the opening of his *Mathnawī*:

Listen to the reed as it complains
telling the tales of separation
Saying, “Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed,
my lament has caused man and woman to moan.
I want a bosom torn by severance,
that I may unfold the pain of love-desire.
Everyone who is left far from his source
wishes back the time when he was united with it. (Nicholson 40)

3. Religion of Love: On the Way to Union

Up to this point, the aim was to cover “He loves them” part of the phrase, the engendering command and the descending arc (*qaws al-nuzūl*), and how God guides His creatures through the prophets, the scriptures, and the perfect humans. As a result of this guidance, creatures are encouraged to reach union with God and taught the ways of this union,

namely the ascending arc (*qaws al-‘urūj*), the prescriptive command, and ‘They love him’ part of the phrase.

In the Quran, God shows the way of being loved by Him as following His beloved Prophet by the verse: “Say [O Muḥammad!]: “If you love God, follow me; God will love you (3:31).” Like every other verse and concept, following the Prophet can be understood and realized at different levels like the stages of the journey to God, all of which should be achieved to reach a complete union with the Beloved. The first level is following the Prophet by affirming the law (Shariah) revealed to him from God through Gabriel namely the Quran, as well as the actions and life-style of the Prophet (*Sunnah*) in order to learn the embodiment of the Quranic verses.

In another context and leveling, in the hadith of Gabriel, Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) explains the three dimensions of the religion, first of which is submission (*Islam*), namely the practice of the five pillars. As the body, soul, and spirit are the integral parts of a human, it's expected that these practices would carry people to the deeper levels of their existence and understanding. The second dimension of the religion is faith (*Īmān*), which includes three principles: unity (*tawḥīd*), prophecy (nabuwwa), and the return (*ma‘ād*). At this point, the sincere belief of “There is no god but God and Muḥammad is His servant and His Messenger,” should be achieved besides acceptance of the prophets, scriptures, angels, predestination, and the last day as a return to God. This return can be a compulsory return when the death comes or a voluntary return if one's longing for the Beloved becomes evident in this realm. Lastly, the third dimension of the religion is beautiful doing (*Iḥsān*) which Maybudī explains in the *Kashf al-asrār* as such by quoting the *Iḥsān* part of the hadith of Gabriel¹⁰:

And do what is beautiful! Surely God loves the beautiful- doers [2:195]. Mustafa said, “Doing the beautiful is that you worship God as if you see Him, for if you do not see Him, surely He sees you.

¹⁰ Muslim, Iman 1; Bukhari, Iman 37.

Doing the beautiful is that you worship God in wakefulness and awareness as if you are gazing upon Him, and you serve Him as if you are seeing Him.

This hadith is an allusion to the heart's encounter with the Real, the secret core's convergence with the Unseen, and the spirit's contemplation of the Protector. It is an incitement to sincerity in acts, letting go of wishes, and loyalty to what was accepted on the First Day.

What was accepted on the First Day? Hearing Am I not your Lord and saying Yes indeed [7:172]. What is loyalty to what was accepted? Serving the Protector. How does one let go of wishes? In "As if you see Him." Where is sincerity in acts? In "He sees you."

When an eye has seen Him, how can it busy itself with glancing at others? When a spirit has found companionship with Him, how will it make do with water and dust? The word "Return!" [89:28] is addressed to the pure spirit. How will it make its home in the frame of water and dust? When someone has become accustomed to that Presences, how long will he put up with the abasement of the veil? How can the ruler of a city pass his life in exile?

The attribute of the spirit is subsistence, and water and dust undergo annihilation. He who lives in the Real is not like him who lives in this world. The realizer is aware of the secret of the Real: the Real is seeable. "As if you see Him" in the report bears witness to this."¹¹

Along with the countless important insights that can be gained from the explanation of *Iḥsān*, two of them are aimed to be mentioned in this paper. The first one is the channeling aspect of this statement of humans with the imaginative power of their soul, the world of imagination ('Arabī, *Futūḥāt* II 320.31) and eventually to see the whole creation as images of the Real. Because, as being the different levels of the isthmus (*barzakh*); human soul (*naḥs*), the world of imagination, and the whole creation are important doors for humans to reach the higher realms of their selves and the

¹¹ Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 1:522; tr. Chittick, *Divine Love*, p. 214

Existence (*waujūd*). Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Irāqī (d.1289) indicates the in-betweenness of the whole creation with a beautiful image in his *Lam‘aāt*:

“Suppose that lover and Beloved are a circle cut in half by a line, the circle becoming manifest as two arcs. If this line that appears to be, but is not, should be discarded from the midst at the time of a Mutual Descent, the circle will appear one as it is. The secret of Two Arcs’ Length will come forth.

The world appears to be though it’s nothing more
than a line between light and darkness.

If you read this imaginary line
you will distinguish new arrival from eternity.

Anyone who reads this line as it is will know for certain that

All are nothing, nothing—it is He that is He.”(Irāqī 14th flash)

The second insight is “He is seeing you anyway,” half of the expression emphasizing God's seeing the creation of each renewed moment by giving it existence, light, and consciousness, which also has moral and ontological aspects. From the moral aspect, the realization of God's seeing His creatures in every act, state, and moment leads Sufis to develop a lifestyle based on this awareness in which they try to act beautifully in all of their encounters with the creatures, namely being characterized by the beautiful character traits of the Prophet Muḥammad (pbuh) as the most perfect embodiment of the beautiful names of God. Since God mentions in the Quran the types of people and the acts He likes, Sufis try to live up to those criteria to be honored by God's love. Some of these acts and qualities, that God loves, prescribed in the Quran are following the Prophet (3:31), being repentant and purified (2:222), patience (3:146), thankfulness (2:158), doing good deeds (2:195), struggling in the path of God (61:4) and beauty of any kind as God is beautiful and He loves beauty.¹²

If we return to the first leveling of the stages of the journey to God, the dimension of *iḥsān* leads one to the level of the *ṭarīqa* in which the

¹² Muslim, Īmān 147; Ibn Māja, Du‘ā 10.

wayfarer begins to follow a spiritual discipline and path with the guidance of a *shaykh* (*murshid*) who passed the same way before. The *ḥaqīqah* is the third level where the wayfarer reached the reality of his being and ultimately to the Real. And the fourth level is the *ma'rifah*¹³ which is the return to the creatures with the recognition of the Real while giving each, their rightful due and respect them for the sake of the Creator as well as the complete inner union with the Beloved. Maybudī summarizes these levels in the *Kashf al-asrār* as follows:

The brightness of submission is found in the light of sincerity, the brightness of faith in the light of truthfulness, and the brightness of beautiful-doing in the light of certainty. These are the way stations of the *shariah*'s road and the stations of the common people among the faithful. Then the folk of the *ḥaqīqah* and the chevaliers of the *tariqah* have another light and another state. They have the light of perspicacity and, along with it, the light of unveiling; the light of straightness and, along with it, the light of contemplation; and the light of *tawhid* and, along with it, the light of proximity in the Presences of At-ness.¹⁴

In realizing the *ḥaqīqah*, Sufis talk about three levels of certainty (*yaqīn*). The first one is the knowledge of certainty (*'ilm al-yaqīn*) in which the wayfarer learns about God and religion by hearsay and trying to imitate (*taqlīd*) what is learned. The second one is the eye of certainty (*'ayn al-yaqīn*), which is the direct seeing of what is learned by firsthand. The third one is the reality of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*) which is being the embodiment of that knowledge through the union with the Real (Chittick, *The Sword* 15).

If we return to the ontological aspect, as God created the universe by the longing breath of His love towards to be known, this knowledge leads Sufis to a state that they see nothing other than God's love in His creation and they start to live a relationship based on the divine love with the Beloved that can be named as the religion of love. As being stated by Ibn

¹³ This level is sometimes included in the level of *Haqīqa* and sometimes evaluated as an independent level.

¹⁴ Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 6:542-43; tr. Chittick, *Divine Love*, p. 202.

‘Arabī ‘practicing the religion of love’ means nothing but following the footstep of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as God declared him as His lover and beloved (*ḥabīb*) (Chittick, The Religion of Love 53-54). “I practice the religion of love, wherever its camels turn their faces. This religion is my religion and my faith” (Chittick, The Religion of Love 53).

In the history of Sufism, we see the earliest example of this kind of intimate love relationship with God in Rābi‘a al-‘Adawīyya (d. 800); the great Sufi who lived her life based on the extreme love (*‘ishq*) of God in which she had seen nothing other than God from the time without beginning (*azal*) to the endless (*abad*).

The famous illustration showing her carrying a pot of water to extinguish the fire of hell and a torch to set the paradise on fire provides great insights into her understanding of the religion, which can be summarized as worshiping sincerely to God, not for the bounties of paradise or out of the fear of hell but worshiping just for the sake of God out of the divine love. This denotes a station beyond all the dualities of the created things and attributes, including paradise and hell, in which Sufis focus only on the Eternal Beloved. ‘Irāqī points out this state in his Lam‘aāt:

Light does not burn light but it is included within it, so the folk of unity have neither fear nor hope, bliss nor hellfire.

Abū Yazīd was asked, “How was your morning?”

He said, “For me there is no morning or evening.”

Here where I am there’s no morning or evening,

no fear, no hope, no state, no station.

“Morning and evening pertain to those who become delimited by attributes, but I have no attributes.

Having no essence how can I have attributes?” (Irāqī 10th flash) Likewise, Rābi‘a gives some money to a man to buy a piece of cloth. After a few steps, man turns and asks: “What color you prefer?” Rābi‘a answers:

Give the money back for asking a question on the color.” And she throws the money into the river. (Smith 131)

“He who painted the world a thousand colors—

how can my color and yours take us to Him, O poor man!

All these colors are folly and fancy.

He has no color—that's the color we must have. (Irāqī 10th flash)

“Once they ask Rābi‘a:

Are you in love?” She says: “Yes.” “Do you see Satan as an enemy?” She says: “No. My love for God leaves no room for me to hate Satan.” Seeing nothing other than God, the realizers do not differentiate among the names, recognize and respect them all. They even don't see the creation, namely the names and attributes at all, because they are completely concerned with the Beloved with a direct connection from their hearts that can be felt in each renewing moment. She continues: “Once I saw the Prophet in my dream. He asked me: “Rābi‘a, do you love me?” I said: “Oh, Messenger of God, who does not love you? But God's love invaded me so much that there is no room left for friendship or hostility. (Smith 131)

Here, one can remember the hadith of the Prophet (pbuh): “I have a moment with God embraced by no proximate angel or sent prophet,”¹⁵ along with another hadith: “I am not like any of you— I spend the night with my Lord, and He gives me to eat and drink,”¹⁶ both of which show the direct nourishment and intimacy (*uns*) with God without gazing anything else like the Prophet's state in the ascension (*mi‘rāj*) narrated in the Surah al-Najm: “The eyesight did not swerve, nor did it trespass (53:17).”

The Beloved's jealousy demands the lover not to love anyone or need anything other than Him. (Irāqī 4th flash) In the *Futūḥāt*, Ibn ‘Arabī regards Beloved's jealousy as an attribute of love. He states that love rules so much over its owner that it makes the lover deaf to any voice other than his Beloved's speech, blind to any sight other than his Beloved's face, and dumb to any speech, other than the remembrance of his Beloved and the one who loves his Beloved. Then He seals his heart, and nothing other

¹⁵ Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār*, 1:269, 683; 2:328.

¹⁶ Ibid, 7:397-98.

than his Beloved's love enters in it. He throws its lock to His treasury of imagination that he does not imagine other than his Beloved's image. Ibn 'Arabī tells about his own experience in the *Futūḥāt* as such:

The power of imagination carried me to the point that, my love visualized my Beloved's image for me in a tangible form like Gabriel's embodiment for the Prophet (pbuh). I couldn't look at Him. He was addressing me, and I was listening and understanding Him. Sometimes He was abandoning me for days, I couldn't eat. Whenever a table came, my Beloved was coming to the edge of it, looking at me and speak to me with a language that I could hear with my ears: 'Will you eat while witnessing Me.' And I was turning away from eating and wasn't feel any hunger, feeling full. Such that I got fat and gained weight by looking at Him. This was like nourishment for me. (Arabī, *Futūḥāt* II 399.28)

In the beginning of his Banquets of Recognition (*Mawā'id al-'irfān*), Niyāzī Mīsrī¹⁷ (d. 1694) explains how he started to write this book by asking God to reveal these banquets of knowledge to his heart as a feast for anyone who reads to nourish, with an allusion to the 114th verse of Surah *al-Mā'ida*¹⁸. He alludes to a state in which Sufis gain direct knowledge and inspiration into their purified and enlightened hearts from God. Just as Ibn 'Arabī opens his magnum opus *Fuṣūṣ al-Hikam* with a great praise to God:

...who sends down wisdom upon the hearts of the Words in a unique and directed way from the Station of Eternity. (Al-Qaysarī 96)

Ibn 'Arabī points out the importance of reading the Quran as if it's revealing to the reciter at the time of the reading. He says, otherwise, it does not go beyond the reciter's throat, and that person is veiled from the meaning of the words that he is reciting. And Ibn 'Arabī adds, in this case:

¹⁷ Niyāzī Mīsrī is an Ottoman Turkish Sufi who lived in the 17th century and a member of the School of Love and a follower of the School of Ibn 'Arabī.

¹⁸ Quran, 5:114; "Said Jesus, the son of Mary, "O Allah, our Lord, send down to us a table [spread with food] from the heaven to be for us a festival for the first of us and the last of us and a sign from You. And provide for us, and You are the best of providers."

May God have mercy on him.”(Chodkiewicz 27) Moreover, Rūmī says: “Quran is like a bride, and to see her beautiful face, one should stop pulling at her veil, seek her good pleasure, serve and try to please her. Only after that, she will show her face (Rūmī 229).

In the middle of the night, Rābi‘a falls asleep; her friend Hayyūna wakes her up and says:

Wake up, groom of the ones guided to the straight path came. The ornament of the brides is the divine light of the night prayer (Smith 63).

In one of her prayers, Rābi‘a says:

My Lord. Stars are shining. People's eyes are asleep, sultans have closed their doors. Every lover is alone with his beloved. I'm here alone with You.” Also, she says: “Oh, God! I wish that the days would be the nights for me to be close to You (Smith 61).

What pleases the Beloved is to annihilate one's self to reach the complete union with the Beloved. If a person dies before the natural death for the sake of uniting with the Beloved, then God manifests through that person. It is also stated in the *ḥadīth qudsī* that explains the state of the person who draws near to God with voluntary servanthood and the nearness of supererogatory works (*qurb al-nawāfil*) and wins God's love and affection as such:

My servant draws near to Me through nothing I love more than that which I have made obligatory for him. My servant never ceases drawing near to Me through supererogatory works until I love him. Then, when I love him, I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand through which he grasps, and his foot through which he walks (Chittick, *The Sufi Path* 325)

So, when the lover completely annihilated from the self, Beloved's image reflects perfectly in this purified heart and nothing left from the created attributes but the Beloved's manifestation acting through that person. In the Divine Flashes (*Lam‘aāt*), ‘Irāqī points out this oneness as such:

When you see a lover seeing the Beloved's form in the mirror of his own essence, that is the Beloved seeing His form in his mirror. For the lover witnesses with eyesight— and his eyesight, in keeping with “I am his hearing, his eyesight, his hand, and his tongue”—is identical with the Beloved. All that the lover sees, knows, says, and hears along with all through which he sees, knows, says, and hears are identical with the Beloved. (Irāqī 7th flash)

So in terms of manifestation the lover and the Beloved, the seeker and the Sought, are one. But not everyone's understanding reaches and perceives this place.

As the lover is annihilated (*fanā'*) from attributes of self, she gains subsistence (*baqā'*) in the Beloved and realizes the station of no station which is the manifestation of the following verse: “Truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed, is falsehood, ever bound to depart (17:81).” At this point, the all-comprehensive heart of the Lover becomes a mirror where the beauty of the face of God can be seen from all directions, which is the state that Ibn ‘Arabī alludes in his poem:

My heart has become the receptacle for every form,
a pasture for gazelles, a monastery for monks,
A house of idols, a Ka'ba for the circumambulator,
tablets for the Torah, a volume for the Quran (Chittick, The Religion of Love 57).

Then the difference between the Lover and the Beloved disappears, everything becomes One, and the secret of “Wherever you look, there is the face of God” (2:11) manifests. “He looks in himself and finds all of himself to be He. He says, I am the one I love, the one I love is I”.

At whatever he looks, he sees the face of the Friend. He comes to know the sense of “Everything is perishing but His face” [28:88] and why it is appropriate that “His face” be read “its face” in reference to the thing, for each thing perishes in terms of form but subsists in terms of meaning; and in what sense the meaning of the face is the manifestation of the Real. “And the face of thy Lord subsists” [55:27]. O friend, since you have come

to know that the meaning and reality of things is His face, say “O Lord, show us things as they are!” Then you will see face-to-face that,

In everything there is a sign
signifying that He is one”(Irāqī 28th flash)

4. Conclusion

God says: “I was a Hidden Treasure, I loved to be recognized, so I created the creatures so they might recognize...” (Arabī, *Futūḥāt* II 399.28) As one can see from this *ḥadīth qudsī*, the underlying force of creation is God's love to be recognized by His creatures. “He loves them” in order to create them as the manifestations of His names and attributes, namely nothing other than Him as His lovers. So, the Lover and the Beloved is God alone manifesting Himself, simultaneously in different Divine Presences. He separated his names and attributes from the ocean of His unity like the fish out of water, so with the pain and longing of the separation, they started to search for their homeland and the reality of their ambiguous beings. Then He guided them to His path with His prophets, scriptures, and perfect humans, each showing them their way back home. Thus, they remember where they were coming from, who they are longing for, and where they are headed to. “They love Him” so much that they annihilated themselves for the Beloved to manifest perfectly in them, separation to end, and the union to occur. They return the ocean of love with full recognition, where there is no other but the joy of love.

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The Heteroglossic Rumi on New Media vis-à-vis Sufism

Gopashis Biswas G.Son¹

Abstract

Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rumi, a thirteenth century Persian Sufi mystic and refugee poet, has become the internet's 'Wiseman' after long 800 years since he had last trodden the earth in minstrel promenades. Many a time, Rumi's quotes in its ambiguous translations inundate the algorithmic social media feeds as it has found global sensation and greater consumerist appeal. As the new media enable its netizens to put voices over voices by re/sharing or exploiting any form of codes (image, text, gif etc.) on social media platforms, constant shifts of purposes and meanings of the codes have become crucial to understand how the new media have been shaping this mode of communication which in this case are translated quotes of Rumi. This paper, thus, leverages netnographic observations and content analysis to shed light on the sum of possibly produced meanings and the essence of Rumi that is understood and consumed globally on social media today. The paper contends that on this modern digital public sphere, i.e., the social media, Rumi's quotes delve into the Bakhtinian heteroglossic tension and Barthesian mythology that helps his poetry become liberated from the centripetal force for meaning (e.g. solitude, retreat, frugality, communion etc.) and provide with divergent netizens manifested voices and interpretations.

Key words

Rumi, New Media, Heteroglossia, Roland Barthes, Mikhail Bakhtin, Sufism.

Introduction

This age of web 2.0 has seen an unprecedented growth in the active participation of users of social media. It not only enables people to get connected to each other but also enables literatures, contents, information, perceptions, and opinions to be disseminated to a greater audience than ever before. Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rumi (1207-1273) is perhaps the

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most popular Sufi poet on the internet today and he is revered as the internet's 'Wiseman' for his words that have been widely spread through their arguably ambiguous translations. Starting from Rabia Basri (714/717/718-801) to Fariduddin Attar (1145-1221), Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rumi, Shamsuddin Muhammad Hafiiz (1315-1390), Omar Khayyam (1048-1131) - all have written extensively on the theme of love which has monolithically been interpreted as devotional love - a kind of love that is solely meant for God (Ahmed 96). However, it is Rumi's quotes and verses (in translation) that inundate today's algorithmic social media feeds more than the other Sufi poets which might have been initiated by Coleman Barks' interpretive translation of Rumi's poetry *The Essential Rumi* (1995) (Ciabattari <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20140414-americas-best-selling-poet>). On Facebook, different pages sharing contents on and of Rumi have engaged over 400,000 fans while on Twitter, several accounts doing the same have drawn over 300,000 followers (Rumi Quotes; The Rumi; @Rumi Quote). This not only marks Rumi's immense popularity on new media but also unravels a complex situation where the Barthesian *signified* gets refracted through the *signifiers* – which, in this case, are the widely spread Rumi's verses.

While in primary speculation, people can find that many of these verses of Rumi which run on the social media delineate love between two entities - where the nature of the allegories and metaphors involved in the verses make it valid for both *human and human* as lovers and *human and God* as lovers. This duality of senses leads to an ambiguity which gets further convoluted when the verses (sometimes with an image/text added to the post) shared on the social media pages get shared/reshared, tweeted/retweeted by netizens - sometimes with captions (texts and emojis) as per their choice. The process thus provides voices over the given voices and the meanings, i.e., the *signifieds* get mis/dis-placed in the process. Again, based on culture and dialogic relations, the voices (verses) may get applied divergently by the netizens. Thus, a very basic question may strike to the mind of the virtual dwellers - do Rumi's Sufi verses only signify the love between human and God or do they encompass the environ and holistic love experiences of humanity. Do they surpass the frontiers of religion or are they confined? And secondly, do new media

and its netizens somehow contribute to the meaning making/liberating process of the shared verses?

In this paper, I disentangle the arrived complex situation of divergent impressions that Rumi's poetry provides dwelling to a netizen as a reader on the internet and consuming online contents that appear algorithmically to him/her. The focus of this essay is to analyze how Rumi's voice gets refracted multi-culturally on the social media and excels in the essential theme of religious borders through the process. As contents of the social media pages about Rumi are open for accessing by any netizen regardless of his/her gender, caste, creed or religion, it is needless to say that these platforms democratize the dissemination, motion and intent of the shared verses that we can find on these platforms. It, thus, liberates the verses of Rumi to readers from all religious backgrounds. Even though, these poetry might have been composed keeping in mind only specific audience, i.e., the Muslims that adhere to the beliefs of Sufism; through their continuous refraction and negotiation on the democratic virtual platforms, the verses achieve broader reach, greater appeal and wider array of 'unintended' audience with continuously shifting meanings. The process, thus, paves path for the verses to get liberated from the shackles of author-intended *centripetal force*.

The paper is divided into three parts - in the first part, I analyze the expressions of devotional love and experience that can be found in Rumi's quotes existent on the social media pages; in the second part, I analyze and explore how new media in a Bakhtinian way has liberated the quotes or verses and how the manifold aspects of the *voices of the verses* and *voices over the voices of the verses* are engendered that spatio-temporally resonate with a contextual humane appeal and significance. Finally, I argue that the essence of Rumi's verses, even in its ambiguous translations, when projected on social media platforms, are perceived, interpreted and negotiated simultaneously that it evades any monolithic *centripetal* meaning and becomes immensely universal in the process.

Theoretical Framework

In his 1935 essay titled "Discourse in the novel," Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) introduced the concepts of dialogic relation, polyphony, and

heteroglossia. Here he differentiates between epic and novel and defines the genre of novel which incorporates multiple, distinctive forms of language and dialects within its artistic parameter. Bakhtin comes up with his idea of polyphon and heteroglossia by posing a stark difference between novel and its predecessor genre epic that is able to incorporate only one voice or linguistic form. From the divergence of unitary voice and its multiplicity under different contexts, Bakhtin contends novel as a democratic form where the characters of the novel are able to participate in dialogues and, therefore, a dialogic tension is seen to prevail throughout this form. For such, it sets up a platform – a mass culture where manifold voices along with the marginalized ones can be heard with their dominant ones. Similarly, when contents such as, texts, images, gifs etc. are shared on the social media platforms, it too acts as a space that enables divergent and sidelined voices to be heard in the presence of the stronger one namely, the *centripetal force* in Bakhtinian diction.

The initial notion of this paper comes from the Bakhtinian theory of heteroglossia and Barthesian idea of *mythology*. Heteroglossia can be defined as the concurrent coexistence of different variations of ‘languages’ within a single ‘language’. Here this different variation of languages is different from the general conception of languages; such as, English, Spanish, or Bengali. According to Bakhtin, the ‘language’ gets reoriented whenever people change their way, mode, or nature of speech due to their socio-cultural circumstances. As a result, divergent languages are manifested from just a single one. To unravel the notion of heteroglossia, it can be said that it occurs in under multiple terms and shifts the voice correspondingly. For instance, when a voice is uttered by a character which is originally the voice of the author of the text, the voice gets refracted. Due to the refractions, the meanings too get shifted continuously. Moreover, the voices or the languages of the characters become different based on their socio-cultural contexts. As a result, the voices or languages fall under the Bakhtinian dialogic tension and the same language or voice also provides multiple voices simultaneously in the process. As per Bakhtin, any language (or voice) may get diverged into many languages or voices based on

social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions” (262-63). In his words, heteroglossia is “another’s speech in another’s language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way (263).

In his 1957 book *Mythologies*, the French theorist Roland Barthes observes the shift of the meanings in language. He inspects the socio-cultural importance in order to construct modern *myth*, also known as Barthesian *myth*. Making advancement to Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1857-1913) system of sign, Barthes develops a secondary layer on top of the idea of sign that the other Frenchmen, linguists and precursors of semiotics had come up with. Hence, the modern academia landed on the notion of Barthesian myth.

1. <i>signifier</i>	2. <i>signified</i>		
3. <i>sign</i> I SIGNIFIER		II SIGNIFIED	langue
III SIGN			myth

Figure 1: Semiological model of myth in Barthes’s *Mythologies* adapted from: Barthes, Ronald. *Mythologies*. Hill and Wang, 1972.

In the Saussurean semiotic structure of sign-signifier-signified, the sign refers to the object assigned with a meaning of some sort. The meaning which it homes might have landed there in a most arbitrary way but will obviously denote a meaning that has an acceptance for at least a certain group or platform. Thus, we get meaningful signs that derive from the unison of signifier and signified. Signifier refers to the word or image or icon that gives the meaning that gives a physical shape to the mental concept which as per the Sassurean framework is noted as the signified. Barthes decided to add one more layer to this seminal framework by

Saussure which indicts that the sign in the first layer can turn into a signifier in a second layer. This next layer of meaning is evolved in a societal context. In the present paper's case, this second layer proves out to be intensely interesting and critically crucial due to the continuous interactions of those in the social media homes each second. The netizens constantly engage with signifiers that stand for certain signs which also get interpreted and dyed with newer meanings continuously and distinct connotations are engendered within this cycle. It can be compared to the classroom fun game called the *telephone game* where the same codes or messages are being passed from one student to another told by hushing to the ears. Each time it passes one student a newer understanding, a newer perspective is gained, understood and interpreted. As the social media allow us to add images, texts, emojis as per our choices and feelings towards any authored signifiers circulating on the algorithmic feeds, it provides the next person to interpret the signifiers in a distinctive manner (G. Son, Migration Memes & Social Gaze).

Methodology

Focusing on the active communication process that takes place on the new media, this paper aims to investigate the shift of perceptions, meanings, and purposes of Rumi's Sufi verses on the online platforms while providing a range of semiotic escape from the monolithic *centripetal* value that it is primarily believed to have. With a view to comprehending and interpreting how these verses become Barthesian myths and fall under heteroglossic tension, the primary data, i.e., the select verses as online contents are gleaned from Facebook and Twitter - two of the most popular social media platforms on the internet today. This paper takes two sample quotes from the two most liked pages on Facebook titled "Rumi" (406k+ followers), "Rumi Quotes" (420k+ followers) sharing quotes, verses and contents on/of Rumi. Adding to these, this paper also analyzes a meme on the monolithic perception of certain community that has been viral in recent times. The meme has been shared from multiple pages but for this study, it considers the meme as a posted content of the Twitter account named "@saadabdulhai." As the meme shared from this account has received a huge public engagement, this is more feasible for the argument of the paper. Through a short netnography, I choose 3 trending contents

from the abovementioned Facebook and Twitter pages and provide both textual and content analysis of them. To understand the implications of netnography, we must look at Robert V. Kozinet's seminal work titled *Netnography: Redefined* (2015). As "online communities form or manifest cultures, the learned beliefs, values and custom that serve to order, guide and direct the behavior of a particular society or group" this methodology is significant for this paper in order to explore the dynamics and reception of the verses of Rumi (in translation) (Kozinet 19). It helps us to understand "technologically mediated interactions" of the netizens towards these contents (Kozinet 24).

By incorporating the methodology of content analysis, this paper seeks to explore the entanglements of liberated multiplicity of meanings and an existing heteroglossic tension within the contextual parameters of these contents. With the help of the theoretical frameworks of Barthesian *mythology* and Bakhtinian heteroglossia, this paper executes the content analysis.

Exploration of Love in Rumi's "The King and the Handmaiden and the Doctor"

In Rumi's significant book *Mathnawi* (trans.), we find an ecstatic poem titled "The King and the Handmaiden and the Doctor" (trans.) that delineates how the prevailing and colossal fell in love with a beautiful handmaiden and by vigor made her his own. But sadly, this handmaiden was in love with a goldsmith. Thus when taken to his palace, the maiden fell sick. The king called doctors and asks, "You have both our lives in your hands. Her life is my life. Whoever heals her will receive the finest treasure I have, the coral inlaid with pearls—anything" (Rumi). Each doctor who claimed their profound knowledge to successfully cure the maiden ignoring the Power of God's will, utterly failed. With each attempt, the situation of the maiden got nothing but worse and pale. Upon the letdown of all the proud physicians, the king pleaded for a divine interference. God then granted him with a mystical healer. The healer identified that the maiden had been suffering from the ailment of soul, i.e., the sickness of love. The king then commanded to execute the goldsmith in order to make the maiden realize that her love was indeed superficial.

There is a part of this long poem where the mystical healer came up with a potion which is compared to the divine order given to Abraham to sacrifice his son to the Lord. These affairs are not to be understood on the surface but to be realized deeply in the light of the divine unity.

There are some overlapping themes that often have been encountered by the readers or consumers while interpreting Rumi's poetry. It is quite usual to find an ambiguous and sometimes even controversial nature of love in his poetry; such as, "love between unconventional partners, contravening the societal norms, religious norms, traditions, cultures and code of conduct" (Mizan 150). Among the themes based on love, the distant love, the excruciating pain of the lover are commonly communicated. While talking about love, Rumi hardly makes direct reference to God which makes Rumi's language subtly ambiguous which can get interpreted and refracted in the manifold of meanings. This characteristic, thus, enables Rumi's verses and quotes easily to become the Barthesian modern *myth*. Upon the dissemination of the verses on the social media platforms, the *signifieds* engages in a constant shift and modification and unravels distinctive notion to each individual on the internet who engages with that particular content.

The Heteroglossic Rumi on New Media

Originally coined as 'ranorechie' in Russian by Mikhail Bakhtin, the translated term heteroglossia refers to the simultaneous presence of multiple voices or viewpoints in a single discourse or language or code, as it becomes "another's speech in another's language" (Bakhtin 276). He contends that the living utterances are unable to evade the "brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness" that transforms it into "an active participant in social dialogue" (276-77).

Jannis Androutsopoulos (1967-), a modern linguist further develops this notion of heteroglossia by including the concept of "social actors who have woven voices of society into their discourses" that "contrast[s] these voices and social viewpoints they stand for" in the former place (Androutsopoulos 282). He puts emphasis on the concurrent deviating ideas that are channeled by the language of the speech or voice, and the

social reactors that it is complemented with. Androutsopoulos explicates that “heteroglossia invites us to examine contemporary new media environments as sites of tension and contrast between linguistic resources, social identities, and ideologies” (Androutsopoulos 283).

Now firstly, I would like to present the internet meme that led to this research. Shared on Twitter on August 7, 2020, the meme has already got 3.4K retweets, 241 Quote tweets and 7.4K likes.



Figure 2: The viral internet meme posing a monolithic attitude towards Rumi’s poetry from: @saadabdulhai (Haram Police). “My poetry is about Allah.” *Twitter*. 7 Aug. 2020, 7.04 p.m., <https://twitter.com/saadabdulhai/status/1291721932816121857/photo/1>. Accessed 14 November 2020.

Ceasar in her 2020 essay “From Meme to ‘Myth’: A Journey Through Heteroglossic Tension” shows how internet meme has become a prevailing medium to express one’s opinion while evading the modern panopticons. Perhaps the monolithic application of Rumi’s poetry, i.e., his poetry is written solely to express devotional love in a religious way

obstructs any sort of literary interpretations. But when they become contents on the algorithmic social media platforms they are read and interpreted in manifold ways which as they become Barthesian myths. Added to it, the content also pursues a journey within the heteroglossic tension where it has got the centripetal force that is the authorial monolithic fixed meaning while the refracted voices when the content is reshared or retweeted becomes the centrifugal forces. Apart from 3.4K retweets, the content has got 241 quote tweets where the refracted voice gets further modified with added discourse and attitude and when it reaches the third person, the third person receives a different language from it. Thus a series of negotiation is ongoing even in this case. While surveying the reshared contents, many of the added discourses adhere the notion and some ridicule it while others made different purposes of the notion. But it is a common phenomenon that Rumi's quotes in their ambiguous translations are often applied in common life, humane love and affairs. This meme, thus, centripetally ridicules those applications. Stemming my working thesis from this meme, I have studied more contents and come up with the notion of universal application of the Rumi's verses in their ambiguous translations. Two of the case studies and their content analysis will help us to comprehend the argument that this paper makes.



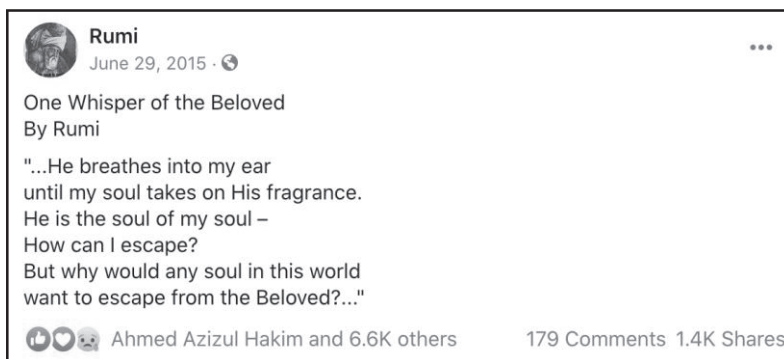


Figure 3 & 4: Rumi's verses from "The King and the Handmaiden and the Doctor" (trans.) from: Rumi Quotes. "Love sickness is different."

Facebook. 22 Sep. 2020,

<https://www.facebook.com/rumiquotesofficial/photos/a.1671611759530847/4846213498737308>. Accessed 21 Nov. 2020; "One Whisper of the

Beloved" (trans.) from: Rumi. "One Whisper of the Beloved." *Facebook*. 29 Jun. 2015,

<https://www.facebook.com/rumiworld/posts/10153053332118877>.

Accessed 21 Nov. 2020.

When these contents are shared on the social media platforms, primarily, two sites of struggle in the meaning making process can be noticed. We can either consider Rumi as the author (the original author of the verses) or the page-holder as the author (creator of the post on the page) of the verse. In case of the first scenario, the voices (verses of Rumi) get refracted when the page-holder puts it as an online content. Then, this refraction can again be refracted when a netizen reshapes the content from that page to his/her contextual parameter. In the second scenario, by considering the content creator as the author of the content (not the text), when netizen shares to disseminate it to his/her contextual parameter, then it gets refracted. Thus, a continuous multiplicity of voices is present in the single language, i.e., in this case the verses of Rumi. Now, each of the refracted voices shifts based on the social, cultural, political and ideological conditions and preferences of the sharer. Whenever the contextual parameters consist of humane affair, love, religiosity, literary criticism or anything else, the verses provide an umbrella for each purpose accordingly and become a site of dialogic tension. Thus, based on the contextual parameter, i.e., the sharers' and viewers' socio-cultural and ideological contexts, the singular code (verses) gets manifold manifestations of meanings and can evade any intended fixed state or

purpose of the codes. The intended purpose which is the devotional love in this case is the centripetal force and any other application of this love then becomes the centrifugal force.

Again under Barthesian conception, under distinctive circumstances, the sign gets openly interpreted based on the choice or experience of the individual. Thus, a form of devotional love can be interpreted by a netizen reader and further applied as either of any 8 types of love: *philia*, *storage*, *ludus*, *mania*, *pragma*, *eros*, *philautia*, *agape*. To triangulate this, the netnographic analysis shows the refracted usage of the verses (83 and 1.4k shares in Fig. 2 & 3). It shows that the netizen has shared the post considering their own parameter and further engages in a dialogic configuration with the other netizens. Sometimes, the verses are shared adding personal feelings, emotions and emojis based on their choice of mind. The verses are also applied in a manifold circumstance within different social/contextual relations. Although Rumi's love verses or even *Mathnawi* are fundamentally commentaries on the esoteric meanings of the Holy Quran, it is possible for a netizen to re/read it without keeping in mind its centripetal intentions.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of Sufi literature was to aid the spread of Islam, to help the Muslims restore or find their faith, to aid the comprehension of the Quran ("Sufi Literature" <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Sufism/Sufi-literature>. Accessed 24 April 2021.). But Rumi's verses in translation carry the essence of ambiguity and universality. Being such when these verses are unfolded on the complex communication system of the new media they essentially become liberated from their monolithic intents. Thus Rumi's verses become literature of love regardless of gender, caste, creed, sects, or any form of distinctive identity and beyond. Through the Barthesian-Bakhtinian spectacles, the paper indicts that the verses of Rumi have their own nature and power that entitles them to going beyond their fixed native narratives of the religio-spiritual confinements when projected on the surface of internet. Even though stemming from and being purely Islamic, the ambiguity of the Rumi's Sufi quintessence makes it universal and secular, therefore, a heteroglossic Rumi roams around on the new media.

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Genealogies of Maizbhandari Thoughts: Syed Delawor Hossain and his Paradigm of Sufi Perception

Muhammad Muhiuddin¹

Abstract

Syed Delawor Hossain is a key person to decipher the genealogies of Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa, a relatively new, often gnostic and a fast growing Sufi Order in modern Bangladesh. Its founder, Syed Ahmad Ullah, did not leave any written instructions outlining its ideologies and practices. Hossain, being his vicegerent, has been identified as the primary source for the seekers and researchers alike to understand and to travel the path of Maizbhandari Divinity. His contributions speak volumes of his genius especially when speaking of his standardization of the practice of a new ṭarīqa. However, there is still little specific or detailed study about the spiritual ethnography of this Sufi order. Drawing on his extensive contributions, this study asks: how and to what extent the Maizbhandari thoughts and practices are shaped by his very personality and writings. It further aims to explore his own Sufi epistemology, ethical ideas, his treatment of wilāyat, his quest for perfected humanity and Divine communion, his adaptation of the concept of tawḥīd-ul-adyān, waḥdatul wajūd and Sufi physiology, and his approach to the issue of sharī'ah compliance that is always at the centre of intense discourse of this ṭarīqa, both externally and internally.

Key words

Syed Delawor Hossain, Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa, Sufism, Wilāyat, Spirituality, Sufi Order.

Introduction

Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa is one of the most popular and influential Sufi orders in contemporary Bangladesh. Since its inception, it managed to attract, within a short period of time, myriad of devotees and followers

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from all walks of life, additionally, it is also gaining followers in different parts of the world, mostly through Bangladeshi migrants. This Sufi order is considered as a key contributor and a symbol of an ongoing socio-religious transformation in modern Bangladesh.

This Sufi order took its name from the name of the village ‘*Maizbhandar*’ where the founder grew up and lived his spiritual life. However, it is also known with the name ‘*Qāderia Maizbhandaria*’ and ‘*Qāderia Malāmia Ṭarīqa*’. (Hossain, *Mul Totto 1; Wilāyat 1*) Syed Delawor Hossain (1893-1982) is regarded, chronologically, as the third saint of this Sufi order. However, because of his intellectual contributions and spiritual lineage to the founder Syed Ahmad Ullah (1826-1906), his thoughts are being acknowledged as one of the most invoked manuals in the studies of this Sufi order.

Contributions and activities of a Sufi saint can be understood and analyzed from two parallel view points; temporal and spiritual, where the apparentness of the former is blurred by the abstractness of the later, making it perplexing for many to comprehend. Syed Delawor Hossain might have been qualified to be excluded from such a list, as he profoundly deliberated his thoughts and ideologies in his writings, outlining both exoteric and esoteric structures of this Sufi order he inherited from his master, and translated them into his temporal activities, thus presenting himself as a substantial precedence of this Sufi order.

In addition to his own treatise, there are two biographies by Selim Jahangir and Khairul Boshor, both of which maintained their devotional focus mainly on his temporal activities and contributions. Hans Harder dedicated some parts of his extensive field works of Maizbhandari Sufi Order to discuss about his position, contribution and, to some extent, his thoughts. Peter J. Bertocci’s article ‘A Sufi movement in Bangladesh: The *Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa* and its followers’ also allows us to have some glimpses on his personality. Sarwar Alam’s article ‘*In Search of God, In Search of Humanity: Vilayet-e-Mutlaka of Hazrat Delawor Husayn Maizbhandari*’ sketched an overview of his book ‘*Wilāyat-e-Muṭlaqa*’. Selim Jahangir’s work *Ghawthul A’zam: Shoto Borsher Aloke (Gausul*

Azam: In the Light of Hundred Years) puts him in a central position to understand Maizbhandari cosmology.

However, a lack of thorough research in his Sufi thoughts is apparent. While a primary focus of the paper is a comprehensive description of the Sufi ideologies and thoughts of Syed Delawor Hossain, a further intent is to demonstrate how his contributions reshaped the intellectual perception and projection of this Sufi order. Moreover, this article also sheds light on some elements of this Sufi order that attracted controversies and polemic engagements, and a re-examination of how he engineered its defence.

Maizbhandari Sufi Saints, Culture and the Issue of Indigenouness

Syed Ahmad Ullah was the initiator of *Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa*. He originally took initiation with Syed Abu Shahama in *Qāderiya Ṭarīqa* and later, in the course of his spiritual venture, he received *khilāfa* (deputyship) from his master. After returning to his home village 'Maizbhandar', he continued his spiritual rigor and charismatic mentorship, which, gradually, gave birth to a new *ṭarīqa*. Soon after, his spirituality attracted myriad of followers and disciples some of whom were also endowed with his deputyship.

Syed Golam Rahman (1865-1937) is considered as the second most influential saint of this Sufi order. He was said to be always absorbed into the divine attraction. There are accounts of him performing numerous miracles. Due to his spiritual absorbance he would usually not speak to anyone.

Since *Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa* is frequently discussed as the only *ṭarīqa* that originated in Bangladesh, the issue of indigenouness has always occupied a space in its discourse. Bangladesh has a rich history of Sufi culture. This Sufi order, through its message of universal love, inclusion and morality, added a renewed flavour and force to the contribution of the ancient Bengali saints, and consequently became the pilgrim centre for the people of different religion, race, creed, ethnicity and profession. Some researchers (Jahangir, *Shoto Borsher* 340) argued that *Maizbhandar*, despite being a religious platform, rose above religiosity

and presented itself as a multi-lateral platform for religious and social pluralism.

It introduced the practice of *samāʿ* in Bengali language. The founding saint did not compose any songs. But songs written by the devotees won the hearts of the populace who found spiritual shelter and religious refuge in those songs in addition to them being an alternative to conventional folklore which often consist of obscenity and carnal love. Moreover, almost all of its annual events such as ‘*urs*’ are celebrated according to local Bengali calendar unlike other Sufi orders which follow traditional *hijrī* calendar.

This *ṭarīqa* represents an excellent indigenous tradition of religious tolerance, social cohesion and communal harmony in Bangladesh. The *pīrs* and their disciples demonstrated a consistent model of religious inclusion and cohesion. Many non-Muslims regularly visit the mausoleums at Maizbhandar and the living *pīrs*.. They are usually welcomed and received with the same manner and respect without any discrimination. Ramesh Shil and Monmohon are some of the non-Muslims devotees of this *ṭarīqa* who rose to prominence. However, such unorthodox openness and inclusion did not go unchallenged. There were uproars, *fatwas* and mockery on the other side of the religious spectrum.

Maizbhandari culture is an unorthodox combination of a universal faith and local tradition, which includes traditional Sufi practices, a passionate master-disciple relationship, regular visit to the *darbar*, unique way of celebrating ‘*urs*, *samāʿ*’, *Maizbhandari* songs, the seven principles and an informal but sincere inclusion for all. The aspirants always seek permission (*ijāzat*) and blessing (*meherbani*) from their respective *pīrs* before they plan for anything—literarily anything. This culture is so naturally embedded into the lifestyle of the Maizbhandari aspirants; its presence often seems elusive.

Sufism is widely acknowledged for its openness to accommodate indigenous cultures and practices, which has been a catalyst for its rapid propagation in various regions of the world. It is, therefore, expected that *Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa* should inherently accommodate indigenous elements within its fold; nevertheless, its universal appeal and

characteristic must remain intact, should it retain its authenticity and universal applicability and acceptability. A parochial approach in its studies with an exaggerated focus on the issue of indigenouness in Bengali culture may potentially deflect its universal appeal.

Syed Delawor Hossain and Formation of His Humanist Sufi Personality

Syed Delawor Hossain was the grandson of Syed Ahmad Ullah. He lost his father in his childhood and was raised by his grandparents. At the beginning of his spiritual venture, his grandfather ordered him, along with some of his family members to take *bay'at* with Syed Aminul Hoque known as *wāṣil* (medium), a deputy and nephew of Syed Ahmad Ullah. Later, he renewed his *bay'at* with his grandfather, the original sheikh of the *ṭarīqa*.

His grandfather passed him the mantle of spiritual and temporal succession before his demise in 1906. At the age of 23, he married Syeda Sajeda Khatun, daughter of Syed Golam Rahman, chronologically the second spiritual figure of this *ṭarīqa*. The devotees portrayed this marriage as a great merger of two spiritual streams. In 1974, he bestowed *khilāfa* upon his third son Syed Emdadul Hoque and nominated him as his spiritual successor to his *gadī*. He passed away at the age of 89 on January 16th 1982. He was buried in *Bāg-e-Hossaynī* -The Garden of Hossain.

He led a very simple life, an embodiment of *uṣūl-e-sab'a* or the *seven principles*. The devotees and the aspirants used to see him as a reflection of his master. (Jahangir, *Maizbhandari Tariqar* 29) He used to introduce himself as '*khādemul fuqarā*'- the servant of the *faqirs*. As a competent organizer, he also actively engaged in various social activities. His life profoundly substantiates that it is possible for a Sufi to influence the temporal course of the society in addition to his spiritual venture.

His thirst for knowledge and study was well reported (Boshor 33). He is considered as 'the most intellectual of the Maizbhandari *pīrs*, he is remembered for his scholarly bent and known especially for his written works developing Syed Ahmad Ullah's ideas and expounding the

movement's theosophy'(Bertocci 9); thus instigating himself as the architect of the Maizbhandari Sufism.

It can be observed from his treatise that his Sufi perception was greatly influenced, if not shaped, by Rumi (1207-1273), Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) and Imam Ghazali (1058-1111). He used to frequently recite '*Mathnawī of Rumi*' and explain it to the devotees (Boshor 33).

He was born and grew up in the British colonial period of Bengal. He witnessed the struggle, poverty, conflicts and division Muslim society faced during the course of their religious, social and economic life. He witnessed the fall of the last Islamic *khilāfat* (Ottoman Caliphate). He experienced the bitterness of two World Wars. This period is also notable for constant riot between two faith groups of Indian sub-continent: Hindu and Muslim. Muslim society of this sub-continent also witnessed a rise of reformist *Wahhabī* movements that permanently changed the dialect and discourse of Islamic theology in this area. There was a systemic scheme in some fractions of this *ṭarīqa* to deprive him of his spiritual and temporal authority bequeathed from his grandfather and spiritual master Syed Ahmad Ullah. His vocal opposition to religious exploitation incurred enmity both inside and outside, and he faced many challenges including provocations, lawsuits and mockery.

A simple glimpse into his life suggests that the struggle and challenges he faced in the early days of his life played a crucial role into making him what he became known for in later days, and into formation of his humanist Sufi personality that manifested in his works. In a devotee's eulogy (Boshor 27), 'as if his master was training him since his childhood as the future leader and reformer of this *ṭarīqa*'.

Syed Delawor Hossain's Methodology and Contribution in Sufi Studies

Syed Delawor Hossain approaches Sufism as an interdisciplinary subject using diverse theories and methods. His analysis of the subject contextualizes the theme from a perspective that can be shared and understood by all. In his study, he employs different modes of investigation to study Sufism and Maizbhandari Sufi order in terms of

their theological, methodological, literary, historical, cultural, sociological, and anthropological background.

At the early phase of this *ṭarīqa*, the need for an elaborate discourse of its philosophical foundations or codification of its methodological aspects was not realized. However, a rapid proliferation of its adherents from diverse background and regions, along with the presentation of intra-contradictory images of this Sufi order by some internal fractions made it necessary to investigate those unexplored areas.

He took the initiatives and wrote at least ten books outlining its temporal, theological, spiritual, philosophical, methodological vicinity. He championed, through his treatise, the creation of an intellectual infrastructure to support it, ensuring that his demise will not fundamentally alter the course and discourse of this Sufi order. Much of what he left behind became the basis for future intellectual progress for later generations. He managed to instate himself through his extensive research works as a primary source at the centre of Maizbhandari discourse among the devotees and critics alike. It was his idea and literacy that changed forever the landscape of Maizbhandari thoughts.

He always grounded his thoughts and arguments by Quran and Ḥadīth, with taking into consideration about their duality (*ẓāhir*-apparent and *bāṭin*-concealed) in terms of meaning and application. The influence of Rumi's eclectic love, Ibn Arabi's subtlety and Ghazali's methodological counter argument is apparent throughout his writings, which indeed render his works more interesting and versatile.

The main objective of his research centred at introducing and outlining the philosophy and methodology of the *ṭarīqa* and establishing its correlation with other concurrent spiritual flows, with an apparent subjectivity of glorifying his master as the great helper (*Gawthul A'ẓam*). In this regard, He established his master as a historical figure through employing different modes of instruments such as his miracles, spiritual tenure, teachings, ethics and prophecies of ancient saints; and thus 'constructed the sainthood of the saint Ahmad Ullah a living memory and a collective representation' (Alam 21).

Authenticity and legitimacy play a crucial role for a Sufi master to be venerated both for spiritual leadership and its interpretation. He established his own authority and legitimacy as the only successor and trustee (*waṣī*) of the main and founding saint to interpret this spirituality (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 73). His biography mentioned an occasion when Syed Ahmad Ullah dismissed the plea of the devotees to nominate his elder grandson Mir Hasan as his heir. Instead, he nominated Hossain as his heir to his *gadī* (throne-symbolizes his spiritual and temporal authority). Mir Hasan died 40 days after the demise of Syed Ahmad Ullah, marking another of his miracles (Bhuiya 198).

Most of the miracles and anecdotes of Syed Ahmad Ullah were preserved through oral traditions. As such, these narrations were susceptible to fabrication and distortion. Hossain accepts oral traditions as a source of his investigation. Nevertheless, his utmost effort to authenticate them is observable. He mentions the narrators with their addresses, time and place of incidents as well as name of any witnesses for the particular situation.

He also explored different issues from comparative religious perspective. He compared, for instance, ‘the seven principles of Maizbhandari Sufi order with ‘*noble eightfold path*’ of Buddhism, concluding that the former is easier than the later.

When dealing with any controversies or conflicts, he usually employed the methodology of analyzing the issue from the full range of disciplines and perspectives, and then attempting to reconcile the conflicts through arriving at a comprehensive synthesized principle with underlying diverse phenomena. His analysis of the concepts of *waḥdatul wajūd*, *waḥdatul shuhūd*, *ittiḥād* and *wilāyat* is an example of such synthetic overview.

Hossain is not an apologist. He engaged in a critical, and yet constructive, discussion with various fractions of the Muslim society and Sufis. He often excuses the commoners for their misconceptions and criticism about this Sufi order as it is being too Gnostic. On the other hand, his intellectual brutality is apparent in his methodical criticism for the religious extremists, Sufi imposters and spirituality traders who

‘cause division in the society’ and ‘exploit people’s veneration for the saints’ (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 70 & 127).

As a general observation, he seeks, throughout his Sufi studies, to provide an elaborated discourse about Sufism, comprehensible for all, and underlines how Sufism needs to be interpreted in humanistic terms that incorporate the bond between a human being and his Lord.

Origins of Sufism and Maizbhandari Tariqa in the View of Syed Delawor Hossain

Since the term ‘*taṣawwuf*’ was not used during the time of the Prophet (pbuh), its origin and adherence to Islam have remained a subject of contentious debate among the Muslim and non-Muslim scholars. However, Muslim Sufi theologians (Ahmad Zarruq, *Principles of Sufism*), (Muhammad Siddiq Al Ghumari, *Al Intiṣār li ṭarīq as Sūfiyya*), (*Kashf al Ḥunūn*) strongly maintained that the essence of Sufism was present during the time of the Prophet (pbuh).

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) devoted a long section of his monumental work, *Al-Muqaddimah*, to discuss the science of Sufism, in which he emphasized the originality of Sufism in Islam, and confirmed its presence during the time of the Prophet (pbuh). ‘These things (Sufi practice) were general among the men around Muhammad (pbuh) and the early Muslims and then when worldly aspirations increased, the special name of ‘Sufis’ was given to those who aspired to Divine worship’ (Ibn Khaldun 611). Following the tradition of early Sufi theologians, Hossain reiterated the existence of Sufi essence and practice during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) and that it is a naturally integrated part of the creation. He argued that ‘the discourse whether Sufism is Islamic or non-Islamic is irrelevant. Because, ‘Islam’ literary means submission and obedience. It refers to the obedience of Allah. Every single creation is obliged to obey Him. They habitually follow the Divine instructions and wills’ (Hossain, *Manob* 14).

By the passage of time, the Muslim society witnessed the emergence of Sufi orders or *ṭarīqa*, every one of which had their own exclusive spiritual practices and doctrines. A Sufi order must have a ‘*silsila*’ or a ‘chain of transmission’ through which the spiritual teachings and

practices are transmitted from master to disciple, and a strong and unbroken lineage have to be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), as he is believed to be the main source of all spirituality and devotion.

Mirroring the conventional discourse about the formation of *ṭarīqa* and *silsila*, he traced *Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa* back to the Prophet (pbuh), but, in an elaborative way. He explains that during the time of the Prophet (pbuh), people used to receive his spiritual effulgence in any of the three ways. (1) *Ṭarīqa-e-Abrār-e-Mujāhidīn*, (the path of holy fighters) who fought with him (pbuh) for his cause. (2) *Ṭarīqa-e-Akhyār-e-Ṣālihīn*, (the path of the best pious) who followed him (pbuh) in his good cause. (3) *Ṭarīqa-e-Shuhadā-e-‘Ashiqīn*, (the path of the sacrificed lovers) who sacrificed themselves for his (pbuh) love.

Although the companions received this effulgence, He (pbuh) authorised Ali (r) to pass it to the later generation. Ali (r.) was considered among the Sufis as the source of concealed knowledge. He passed the mantle of ‘*Ṭarīqa-e-Abrār-e-Mujāhidīn*’ to his son Imam Hasan (r), the mantle of ‘*Ṭarīqa-e-Akhyār-e-Ṣālihīn*’ to Hasan Basri and the mantle of *Ṭarīqa-e-Shuhadā-e-‘Ashiqīn*’ to Wais al Qarni.

These three spiritual streams spread across the globe through saints and sages. Many sub-branches known as *ṭarīqa* sprang from their growth including specific orders for individual region or nation. All Sufi orders belong to one of these three spiritual streams. During the era of *Wilāyat-e-Aḥmadī*, these three spiritual streams accumulated in the personality of Syed Ahmad Ullah. This *wilāyat* or the unrestricted spiritual stream became known as *Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa* in the society. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 114-115)

He also noted that *Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa* originated in these three spiritual streams, coupled with the teaching of *nabuwwat*. It is a combination of *sharī‘a* -jurisprudence, *ṭarīqa*-path, *haqiqat*-reality and *ma‘rifat*--divine knowledge. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 119)

The founder, Syed Ahmad Ullah, liberally drew elements of other Sufi orders and integrated them into his order, making it a melting pot for others. Hossain describes it as a spiritual ocean and a confluence of

other Sufi orders, which manifested as an essential reformation to the conventional Sufism (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 119).

Syed Delawor Hossain's Theory of Sainthood and Its Classification

Understanding *wilāyat* or sainthood is a gateway for the discourse of spiritual personification. Syed Delawor Hossain started his masterpiece '*Wilāyat-e-Muṭlaqa*' with the discussion of *nabuwwat*- prophethood and *wilayat*- sainthood. While discussing the correlation between sainthood and prophethood, and related classifications, he deduced that the disposition of *nūr-e-muḥammadī* (the light of Muhammad -pbuh) as the pinnacle and main source of all spirituality and perfection. The nature of prophethood and sainthood diversifies according to the various state and exposure of this primordial *nūr* (light) symbolized into two names of the Prophet (pbuh); '*Muhammad*' and '*Ahmad*'.

Although Ibn Arabi is credited for formulizing the concept of *nūr-e-muḥammadī*, it has its ground in the Quran and Hadith of the Prophet (pbuh). In three verses, the holy Quran explicitly referred to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as 'the light',

'the lamp inside a niche' and 'a lamp spreading light'. 'From Allah has come to you a Light and a Book manifest' (5:15). 'O Prophet! Truly We have sent you as a Witness, a Bearer of glad tidings, and a Warner, and as one who invites to Allah by His leave, and as a Lamp spreading Light.' (33:45-46). "The likeness of His light is as a niche wherein is a Lamp (the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star) kindled from a Blessed Tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil well-nigh would shine, even if no fire touched it; Light upon Light." (24:35)

The Sufi commentators (*mufasssirūn*) and theologians [Al Suyuti (1445-1505), Fairuzabadi (1329-1414), Fakhruddin, Baydawi (d.1286), Sanaullah Panipathi (1730-1810)] have maintained that the light in these verses refers to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).

nūr-e-muḥammadī, as Hossain maintained, is primordial and the pre-eternal source of prophethood and sainthood. Allah brought it into

existence from His divine radiance, in pursuance of exposing His divine love and infinite authority; it was concealed in His protected domain. The first creation kept saying ‘*aḥmadu*’ (I am praising) till it itself became ‘*muḥammadu*’ (the praised one); thus, the divine attributive luminescent (*nūranī*) and the essence of perfected humanity manifested (Hossain, *Wilāyat*, 19).

The Prophet’s (pbuh) two attributive names; ‘*Muhammad*’ and ‘*Aḥmad*’ represent the dual facets of this primeval light. ‘*aḥmad*’, related with ‘*wilāyat*’, existed in the concealed realm as the nexus of Divine creation, and ‘*muḥammad*’, on the other hand, was sent as the final prophet to this apparent world as the merciful rescuer and to convey His commands and majesty to the creation. Allah blessed the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) with the gift of *nabuwwat* and *wilāyat*, through which he attained the highest status and was endowed unlimited Divine communion during *mi’rāj* (night journey). Because of this, prophethood is viewed as descending (from Allah to mankind) and sainthood is ascending (from creation to the Creator). (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 1 & 4; Bhuiya 7)

Hossain’s discussion about sainthood evolved around the concept of ‘*mashrab*-temperament’. The Prophet’s attributive holy names ‘*aḥmad*’ and ‘*muḥammad*’ symbolize two concurrent distinctive divine effulges of *ḥaqīqat-e-muḥammadī* (pbuh). All the prophets since Adam to Jesus and all saints drew their divine grace and inspiration from either of these two divine streams, which shape their spiritual personification and resultant endeavour. Prophets and saints, who drew inspiration from a particular stream of *ḥaqīqat-e-muḥammadī*, might perform exercises of concentration on the spiritual centre connected with it. This influence is sometimes referred to as a *mashrab* or source of inspiration.

The Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) did not have any ‘*mashrab*’ as he was the source and was referred as ‘*marajal baḥrayn*’-the confluence of both ‘*aḥmadi*’ and ‘*muḥammadī*’ streams. Hossain further mentioned that because of the condition of these *mashrab*, prophethood, in general, is related with circumstantial rules and regulations, and was sealed with his (pbuh) prophecy, while *wilāyat* is a consistent and perpetual divine

power invoked to maintain discipline and peace in the apparent and invisible worlds. It quests for knowledge and prefers Divine wills. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 4 & 10; Bhuiya 12)

The Prophet's authority of *nabuwwat* was exclusive to him whereas his *Wilāyat* was inherited by his companions and the saints thereafter. According to Sufi understanding, Allah chooses great saints to guide the humanity to the right path and to reform his religion and strengthen the bond between Him and His slaves. From this perspective the saints are regarded as the inheritors of the *nūr-e-muḥammadī*.

He followed the traditional explanation of prophethood and sainthood. *nabuwwat*, etymologically, is derived from the word 'naba' (نَبَأَ) - 'to inform'. It is a special quality related with Allah's command and is bestowed upon whomever Allah wills, as it is unattainable through ascetic struggle. The word *wilāyat* (وِلَايَة) is derived from the Arabic word 'walā'. 'Walā' means nearness; a relation of love and intimacy. Hossain defined sainthood as the close relation with Allah. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 1 & 2; Bhuiya 11)

His first classification involved a general perspective of sainthood. In general, there are two types of sainthood. First: *wilāyat-e-imān* is a relation with Allah based on faith that is attainable by any believer. *wilāyat-e-iḥsān* is a special divine relation and authority of Allah that can only be attained by the prophets or the saints. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 2; Bhuiya 12)

Hossain further mentioned that sainthood can be attained in any of four methods. First- *wilāyat bil aṣālat*: It is attained naturally or by birth without any ascetic struggle as a result of Divine predetermination. The saint of this kind is called 'madarjat-born-saint or *ajlī walī* -pre-eternity saint. Second- *wilāyat bil warāthat*: It is a kind of spiritual inheritance and is also termed as *bi-walāyat*. Third-*walāyat bid dirāsāt*: This sainthood attained through study and spiritual mentorship. The story of the Prophet Musa with *Khidr* is of this kind. Fourth- *wilāyat bil malāmat*: This sainthood is attained through self-blaming and continuous resistance to its aptitude. It is also called as '*ḥuṣūl-e-mukhālafāt-e-naḥs* or attaining the resistance of ego'. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 2; Bhuiya 12)

Hossain then proceeded to explain the three levels of sainthood. First-*al wilāyat al ṣughrā*: It is the lowest level of *wilāyat-e-iḥsān* and higher than the general believer. Second-*al wilāyat al wustā*: This is the middle level and higher than the status of the angels. Third-*al wilāyat al ‘uẓmā or kubrā*: The saint of this level has the highest authority and to exert spiritual power over the creation. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 2)

There is another encompassing classification of the sainthood into two major categories based on ‘*mashrab*’ (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 4). First-*ghawthiyyat* is a kind of rescuing sainthood related to the ‘*muḥammadī mashrab*’. The highest rank in this *mashrab* is ‘*Ghawthul A‘ẓam*’. Second-*qutubiyyat* is a type of exertive spiritual authority to maintain discipline in the creation. The highest rank of this *mashrab* is ‘*Qutubul Aqtāb*’. It is related to ‘*aḥmadī mashrab*’.

Syed Delawor Hossain’s Articulation of *Wilāyat-e-Muṭlaqa*

One of the most significant themes of Hossain’s Sufi studies is his classification of *wilāyat* era into two segments: *wilāyat-e-muqayyada* (conditioned spirituality) and *wilāyat-e-muṭlaqa* (unconditioned spirituality). He insisted that during the time of the Prophet (pbuh) spirituality existed in the name of *sunnat-e- muṣtafā*. After his demise, this spirituality continued to be practiced in the activities of the Sufi masters.

Around five hundred years after the demise of the Prophet (pbuh), Muslims fall prey to the temporal temptation and religious confusion due to sectarian and ideological conflicts among the Muslim intellectuals. People were turning away from spirituality. At such juncture of time, Allah sent Syed Abdul Qader Jilani (titled as *Ghawthul A‘ẓam*) to reform the religion and restore spirituality. This was the first circle of *wilāyat*. During this time, the state supported and supervised the Muslim society in their religious and spiritual activities; the Jurists and Muslim rulers, therefore, had leverage over religious life of the masses including Sufi practices. This period is termed as *wilāyat-e-muqayyada*, which worked within the framework of *sharī‘a* and heavily relied upon the government support for its implementation.

Around six hundred years after the demise of the first *Ghawthul A'zam*, the condition of the Muslim society changed dramatically. With the collapse of Islamic Caliphate, the formal religious structure became weaker; consequently, in the absence of a proper religious authority, spirituality started fading away from the society.

Hossain maintained that such transformation needed a new reformed *wilāyat* that prefers morality and inner purification, rather than focusing on external rituals and formality. This reformed spirituality is termed as *Wilāyat-e-Muṭlaqa* which was introduced with the advent of Syed Ahmad Ullah. This *wilāyat* is the essence of Islam and creates a spiritual echo system where an individual can easily combine his religiosity with its temporal counterparts, and equips him for constant spiritual evolvment in the face of challenges. Furthermore, it combines spiritual ecstasy and *sulūk*, and guides an aspirant to the path of Allah in the easiest way. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 55-57)

Attribution of ‘*Ghawthul A'zam*’ to Syed Ahmad Ullah

Syed Ahmad Ullah and his spiritual pinnacle is the centre, around which Syed Delawor Hossain’s Sufi perception and studies revolved and evolved. In order to attribute the highest rank of spirituality and the title of ‘*ghawthul a'zam*’ (The great helper) to his master, he resorted to various evidences: prophecies of the ancient saints; acknowledgement of the contemporary saints and miracles.

He relied on the works of Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Arabi to refer to the concept of a circle of about five/six hundred years, at the beginning of each circle a new spiritual era starts its journey. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was born around six hundred years after the Prophet Isa, and Abdul Qader Jilani was born around five hundred years after his (pbuh) demise. Syed Ahmad Ullah was born around five hundred years after the first *ghawthul a'zam*.

Ibn Arabi and his prophecy constitute an important evidence to articulate his spiritual status. He said in his prophecy that ‘It is in the footsteps of Sheth that the last of this human species will be born, and he will carry his secrets. There will be none of this species born after him, so he will be the Seal of the Begotten. A sister will be born with him, and

she will emerge before him, and he will follow her with his head at her feet. He will be born in China, and he will speak the language of his country. Sterility will spread in men and women, so there will be much cohabitation without conception. He will call people to Allah, but will not be answered. When Allah takes him and the believers of his time, those who remain will be like beasts, not knowing what lawful (*ḥalāl*) is from what is unlawful (*ḥarām*). They will act according to their natural instincts with lust, devoid of reason and law. Upon them the last Hour will occur'. (Arabi 15)

Hossain listed the signs mentioned in the prophecy that matched the personality of Syed Ahmad Ullah: (1) Both the Prophet Seth (a) and Ahmad Ullah belong to '*aḥmadī mashrab*'. (2.) He had a sister born before him. (3) He used to speak the local language. (4) During his time, birth-control prevailed. (5) He called upon the mankind toward the way of Allah, regardless of their race or faith. (6) People could not fully comprehend and respond to his message. (7) After his demise, people forgot the message of Allah and living a life devoid of justice and morality. (8) Chittagong was referred as China, because, during Ibn Arabi's time this area was under the rule of the Chinese. (9) He never spoke against any religions as he acknowledged that goals and ethics of all religions are the same.

He also substantiated the recognition of the contemporary Sufi saints who experienced the highest spiritual status of Syed Ahmad Ullah through their unveiling and divine inspiration, and realized that he was the *Ghawthul A'zam*. Among those Sufi saints were Mawlana Julfiqar Ali, Sufi Safi Ullah, Mawlana Abdul Gani, Mawlana Azizul Hoque Qaderi, all of whom addressed him as the '*Ghawthul A'zam*' (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 37-52). He also mentioned about ninety seven miracles performed by his master, and concluded that such extra ordinary miracles can only be performed by a saint of the highest rank, which is the rank of *Ghawthul A'zam*. He deduced that it is necessary for this type of saint to exert his power so that the commons can realize his status and importance.

Standardization of Spiritual Practices of *Maizbhandari Tariqa*

Different Sufi orders use various techniques and processes to awaken the spiritual faculties and to transform the ‘*nafs*’ to its perfected disposition. In *Maizbhandari Tariqa*, the founder used diverse methods and procedures to advance his aspirants to the path. Syed Delawor Hossain attempted to standardize the practices of this *tariqa*, such as the relation between master and his aspirants, *bay‘at*, *dhikr*, contemplation, the seven principles, *tilawat-e-wajūd* -self accountability etc.

The relation between a *pīr* and his aspirants makes the first step of the spiritual journey. In Hossain’s world of Sufism, *pīr*-dom is a top-down totalitarian spiritual system, where a *pīr* must receive *khilāfa* (authorisation) from his master to be connected to the Prophet (pbuh) through a *silsila* (chain of transmission). Without *khilāfa* and *silsila*, a *pīr* is to be considered a charlatan (Hossain, *Manob* 28 & 31). A perfected *pīr*, in *Maizbhandari* perspective, is not considered separate from the Lord and His prophet (pbuh); rather, he is seen ‘as annihilated and permanent into them’. Inasmuch as ‘words and meaning are inseparable’, the perfected *pīrs* are also inseparable from the Higher Entity and drowned in the ocean of divinity (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 115 & 134). The first step in the path of divine communion is to love the master eclectically and to be annihilated into him.

Bay‘at, in Sufi terminology, denotes giving an oath of allegiance to a saint who will guide him to the path of Allah. There is a very little information about the procedure followed by Syed Ahmad Ullah in giving *bay‘at*. However, it is evident that *Qāderiyya Tariqa* (the origin of the *Maizbhandari*) was solely followed in the procedure of *bay‘at* and in its related rituals. (Hossain, *Mul Totto* 9). Hossain recorded the procedure of oath, which consists of proclamation of faith in Allah, His prophet (pbuh), holy books etc., a promise to abstain from committing polytheism and sin, and to follow the path showed by Syed Ahmad Ullah as well as a firm pledge to observe the fundamentals of Islamic *Shari‘a* such as, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrims. (Hossain, *Mul Totto* 10). The incumbent *pīr* of *Maizbhandar Darbar Sharif*, Syed Emdadul

Hoque, also suggested that the *pīr* has the authority to amend the wording of the pledge according to the situation (Hoque's interview).

Hossain asserted that it is imperative for an aspirant to adhere to the Islamic *Sharī'a* with sincerity, as it is revealed for the people of *nāsūt*. *dhikr* (remembrance) and *fikr* (meditation) are the two ways to advance towards Allah (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 97; *Mul Totto* 20)

Dhikr (remembrance) is the most important practices commonly shared by almost all Sufi orders. In Maizbhandari Sufi order, the beginner chants the *dhikr* (*lā ilāha illallāhu*) of negation (*naḥī*) and affirmation (*ithbāt*); preferably after every prayer or at least after one prayer. It involves with four subtle faculties; *naḥī*, *rūḥ*, *akhfā* and *qalb*. After activating these four subtle faculties, he advances to the next phase where he connects remaining two subtle faculties: *Sirr* and *khafī* (Hossain, *Mul Totto* 11). *Dhikr* can be practiced aloud or silent depending on the taste and quality of the aspirant. (Hoque's interview).

Taṣawwur-e-Shaykh or visualizing the face of the perfected *pīr* during meditation (*murāqaba*) is also recommended for the aspirants. An alternative way of meditation is to visualize the Arabic word '*Allāh*' on the face and to see himself as illuminated with the divine radiance (Hossain, *Mul Totto* 11). However, among the Maizbhandari aspirants the former is more popular than the later. It also became a standard practice to combine *dhikr* with *taṣawwur-e-shaykh* and perform them together. Many aspirants confirmed that such combination is more effective to awaken the subtle faculties and to advance to the next level.

The seven principles (*Uṣūl-e-Sab'a*) were incorporated into the Maizbhandari Sufi order as a comprehensive training program for the aspirants to help them slowly break the snares of the world to start their spiritual journey to the Divine Communion, and to attain the highest attributes of humanity. It has two levels '*fanā-e-salāsa*' (three dissolutions) and '*mawt-e-arba'a*' (four deaths) (Hoque et al. 21).

Fanā 'anil khalq is to dissolve the expectation from the creation. *Fanā 'anil hawā* is the dissolution of one's desire. *Fanā 'anil irāda* is the dissolution of one's own choice and to prefer Allah's wills.

The second layer consists of four deaths. According to Sufi literacy, death implies the obliteration of some human instincts which are considered as a temporal barrier in his perseverance of spiritual journey. They die so that they may die no more. Life to them is death and death to them is a new life.

The four deaths are as follow: (1) White Death is to develop self-restrain through fasting or experiencing hunger to protect him from all forms of religious and moral imperfections that may pose as an obstacle in his journey towards the Ultimate Truth. (2) Black Death is attained through the experience of criticism. 'Subjection of self to criticism helps self-correction' (Bertocci 19). (3) Red Death is attained by liberating the 'self' from greed and sexual craving. Hossain considered this 'death as the last frontier of the realm of *'nafs'*, after which the gate of spirituality opens up. (4) Green Death is attained by being accustomed to frugal lifestyle. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 71-72)

Tilāwat-e-Wajūd implies that an aspirant should, every day, affix a certain short period of time for solitude, when he will withdraw himself from all sort of worldly associations to take account of his own actions.

All the rituals and rigorous practices in this Sufi order are meant to make piety an intrinsic habitual element of human existence, as 'performing good deeds itself is not the ultimate objective; rather, it is to accompany them to the afterlife' (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 99).

These principles and practices derived from the Holy Quran and *Sunnah* of the Prophet (pbuh), are designed to guide a seeker accumulate sublime characters of Islam as well as spiritual wisdom and moral perfection. An aspirant's temporal and spiritual life after completing these stages is more active, meaningful and real as he has now managed to subdue his ego. His heart is now ready to reflect the light of Eternal Divine Love.

Sufi Physiology of Syed Delawor Hossain, and his theory of Spiritual Faculties

Human body is thought of a medium between temporal and spiritual world in Sufi literature. Iconoclastic Sufi notions and practices such as

annihilation, *dhikr*, *murāqaba*, *tazkiyah*-purification have evolved around human physiology. Human body represents the cosmos and reflects in miniature the whole universe. Syed Delawor Hossain developed his Sufi physiology contingent upon the concept of primordial *nūr-e-muḥammadī* (light of Muhammad-pbuh) and *ṣūrat-e-muḥammadī* (structure of Muhammad-pbuh). He further explained how matter and spirit overlap each other in the course of the spiritual journey, be it downward or upward.

Body of Adam was created in the shape of *ṣūrat-e-muḥammadī*. Because of its intrinsic manifestation of primordial ‘the light of Muhammad’, this mould is regarded as the best mould. The Quran referred it as the best shape:

“We have indeed created man in the best shape” (95:3).

Human body is made of four ingredients (clay, water, air and fire) which have their own distinctive characteristics. The combination of these intra-contradictory materials caused seven ambivalent *naḥs* (state) in human nature. They are ‘*ammārah*’- the inciting state, ‘*lawwāmāh*’- the self-blaming state, ‘*mulhamāh*’- the inspired state, ‘*muṭmainnah*’- the tranquil state, ‘*rāḍiyah*’- the pleased state, ‘*marḍiyyah*’- the pleasing state and ‘*kāmilah*’- the perfected state. (Hossain, *Mul Totto* 18; Bhuiya 09) The verse of the Quran (The spirit is from the command of my Lord. 17:85) is indicative of a theory that the spirit, according to Sufi understanding, comes from an immaterial timeless realm of Divine Command (*amr*). At the creation of Adam, Allah emanated the ideal human form with three major spiritual centres: the heart, intelligence, and the *naḥs* (lower soul), and then blew the ‘spirit’ into it and mirrored some of His power and wisdom within this shape. Furthermore, He combines in this structure qualities which are scattered among other creation. Thus, He created the human body from the earth and the spirit comes from the Highest Entity. This is how the incorporeal eternal soul can become attached to a material body.

Hossain asserted that an individual is composed of a system of physical components, spiritual centres and moral predispositions, and that ‘individualism’ is a key contributor to success in spiritual endeavour

(Hossain, *Wilāyat* 26). While constructing his theory of subtle spiritual faculties (*laṭā'if*) and human states (*nafs*), individual personality, the aspects of which constitute a person, and the variations among individuals, all were considered diligently in his thought.

Laṭīfa, (subtle faculty) in Sufi terminology, refers to a nonmaterial component of the person which can be influenced or awakened through spiritual practices. They act as a mediator between the matter and spirit.

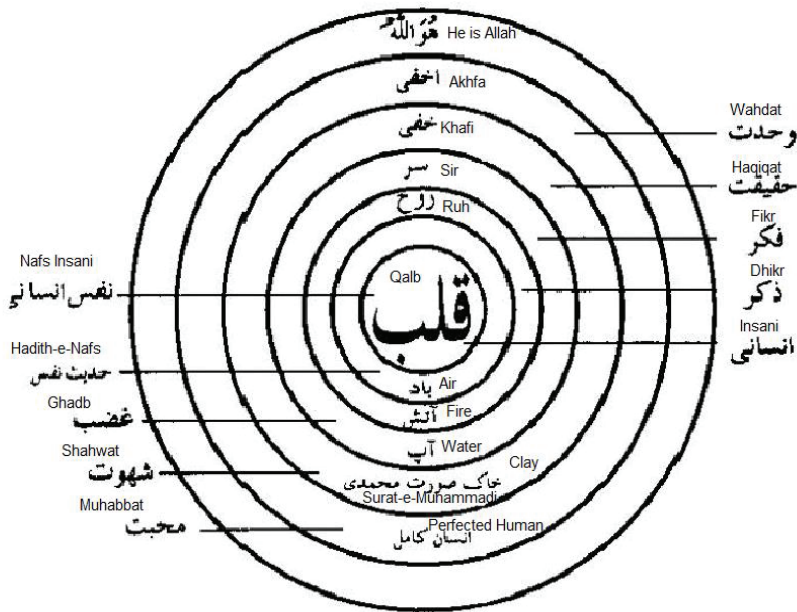
In Mazibhandari Sufi order, there are six *laṭīfa* or subtle faculties. *laṭīfa-e-nafs* is located below the navel and it is a lower, egotistical and passionate human nature which comprises vegetative and animal aspects of human. The initial aim of Sufism is to transform *nafs* (*tazkiya-e-nafs*) from its deplorable state of ego-centeredness to the purity. *Laṭīfa-e-qalb* is located on the left side of the chest. *Qalb* is the space for divine love and nourishment. *Laṭīfa-e-rūḥ* is located on the right side of the chest. *Laṭīfa-e-akhfā* is located in the centre of the head. *Laṭīfa-e-sirr* is located in the middle of the chest. *Laṭīfa-e-khafī* is located just above the '*akhfā*'. (Hossain, *Mul Totto* 10-11)

The Nafs, in its unrefined state, is the animalistic egoistic side of human being that has the potential to evolve and to elevate to the higher levels through purification. There are seven stages of its transformation (Hossain, *Mul Totto* 18-23).

(1) *Ammārah* provokes worldly temptation in the heart of its owner. *Sharia* is his remedy as it resides in the realm of *nasut*. (2) *Lawwāmah* is a transitory state that blames and regrets itself on its action. *Tariqa* is its religion and it belongs to the heart. (3) *Mulhamah* receives unveiling and divine inspiration due to its closer relation with Allah. Its abode is the realm of *ruh* and follows the path of divine knowledge (*ma'rifa*). (4) *Muṭmainnah* is the peaceful *nafs*, that becomes a manifestation of *ḥaqīqat-e-muḥammadī*; hence, its religion is 'realizing the reality' (*ḥaqīqat*). (5) *Rāḍiah* is the satisfied *nafs* that does not have its own will other than Allah's. Its station is *lāhūt* and its religion is the perfected divine knowledge (*ma'rifa kāmila*). (6) *Marḍiyyah* is a *nafs* with which Allah Himself is happy. It follows the essence of *sharī'a* (*ḥaqīqat-e-sharī'at*). It resides in the realm of divine witnessing and is inspired by

only Divine inspiration. (7) *Kāmilah* is the highest level of perfection and its station is the station of ‘unity’ (*waḥdat*). It is a manifestation of Divine attributes and mercy.

An **onion model** of spiritual elevation was developed by Hossain to portray the affinity and hierarchy of matter and *laṭāif*, and at the same time, to indicate the process of spiritual ascension to the Divinity.



This model is based on the idea that human being is a composite of matter, spirit and subtle faculties. Each of these spaces between the circles symbolically (like an onion) marks a transition point in the schema of spiritual evolvement and concurrent ascendance, while the heart, which is not associated with any particular matter, remains as the central space and ambience for all spiritual scheme and Divine grace. However, it is the ‘*nafs*’ that is the subject of transformation and at the realm of ‘*nāsūt*’, it veils the heart.

Human body is created from four materials (air and fire, water and clay), which are considered as lower levels and cause of temporal entanglement, while the higher levels consisted of subtle faculties (*rūḥ*-spirit, *sirr*-mystery, *khafī*-arcane and *akhfā*- super arcane, *qalb*-heart,

naḥs-lower soul). The four ingredients have their own ambivalent nature. At each level, a combination of matter and activated *laṭīfa* triggers certain divine inspirations that are listed on the right side. This mediation also results in creating some distinct characteristics listed on the left side. The process of transformation continues until he arrives (*wuṣūl-waṣlat*) at the station of *insān-e-kāmil* or *ḥaqīqat-e-muḥammadī*. In this station he attains unity (*waḥdat*) and love (*muḥabbat*). Beyond this station, there is, without time and space, only the Highest Entity and Divinity enveloping a lover's whole existence.

Each *laṭīfa* is intimately connected to each successive *laṭīfa* and is progressively more subtle and refined than the one preceding it. These subtle faculties, super arcane in particular, are the gateways through which Divine radiance enters and mirrors in the heart of the seeker.

Syed Delawor Hossain's Postulate of Spiritual Quest, Divine Communion and Love

Hossain divided spiritual endeavour and progression into three major levels. (1) *Sayr ila Allah* (journey towards Allah) is an individual's progression towards Allah. (2) *Sayr fī Allah* (journey in Allah) is a state of annihilation in the oneness of Allah. (3) *Sayr ma'a Allah* (journey with Allah) is the station of permanency with Allah which consequences in attaining authority to exert divine power. He also asserted that his master Syed Ahmad Ullah accomplished all those levels; and hence, is considered as the great saint of the era (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 15)

The ranks, temperament (*mashrab*) and persona of a Sufi individual are determined, throughout his spiritual endeavour, according to the quantity, kind, intensity and method of effusion (*fayḍ*) received from his master. Function of divine effusion corresponds to the capacity (*qābiliyya*) of the receiver more than the giver. Hossain further classified such effusions into four categories with everyone having their own contingencies. (1) *Fayḍ-e-In'ikāsī* (reflective effusion) is the kind of spiritual reflection that the master mirrored upon the aspirants during their physical proximity. (2) *Fayḍ-e-Iṣlāhī* (rehabilitative effusion) is the divine quality that resists the temptation of 'ego' and is received through the mentorship of the master for his aspirants. (3) *Fayḍ-e-Ilqāī*

(inspirational effusion) is the source of ‘inspirational knowledge’-‘*ilmul ‘ilmul ladunni*’, which the master casts upon the heart of his aspirants. (4) *Fayḍ-e-Itteḥādī* (effusion of union) is the effusion through which an aspirant attains the station of spiritual annihilation and comes out of his ‘duality’. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 63)

Allah created human being in the best mould (*ṣūrat-e-muḥammadi*) incorporating two intra-contradictory characters; angelic (*malakuti*) and devilish (*nāsūtī*) (Hossain, *Mul Totto* 2). According to the Hadith (Allah created Adam in His shape- *ṣūrat*), he is enlightened with the Divine radiance, and has potential to become a semblance of divinity and to be attributed with divine attributions. An aspirant must see himself as the container of the divine, annihilated in divinity, united in the witness and permanent with the divine, in order to advance to the path of spiritual perseverance. Thus, Sufism objectivises the experience of Oneness of Allah.

However, formulation of such divine experience and feeling was complex mostly due to extreme diversity among the Sufi masters, in terms of their knowledge, temperament, experience and propriety. Consequently, the Sufi world witnessed emergences of the theory of *wahdatul wajūd* (unity of being) and *wahadat shuhūd* (unity of witness).

Wahdatul-wajūd (unity of being) implies that the created is not permanent; henceforth, the illusion of empirical existence must obliterate itself (*fanā*) in the only existence, which is the existence of Allah. ‘All is He’ (*hama ust*).

Wahdat shuhūd, which was a reaction to the concept of ‘unity of being’, implies that the union of Allah is only experimental (spiritual) and not existential (unreal). A created being can have the experience of being united with Allah, but limited to a subjective perception only. The existence of the created being (relative existence) is incompatible with the existence of Allah (absolute existence). Allah is not and cannot be One with everything: ‘all is from Him’ (*hama az ust*). Consistent with his methodology in Sufi studies, Syed Delawor Hossain favoured to mediate between these disparate metaphysical orientations and synthesized them into one string.

He discussed it in different sections of his writings. There is a stark distinction between being worthy of receiving guidance and the quality of utilizing that guidance to accomplish the mission. The former relates with prophethood while the later sits within the domain of *wilāyat* of the Prophet (pbuh) (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 95).

An individual's predisposition to accept divine guidance relates with prophethood (a combination of commands and observation) and is concerned about the exteriority. Based on a verse from the Quran ('Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is, "be", and it is'. 36:81), Hossain argues (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 95) that the creator brings everything into existence through '*kun*'-'be'. Everything came into existence from Him (*hama az ust*). 'Every day in (new) splendour doth He (shine)'(55:29).

On the other hand, a wayfarer's capacity to incorporate the guidance to reach the destination is related with the inspirational *wilāyat* of the Prophet (pbuh). Nothing has real existence except Allah ('*lā ilāha illallāhu - lā mawjūda illallāh*'). Everything is Him (*hama ust*). External rituals cannot limit this comprehensive Sufi realization.

It appears that, Hossain considered that the stage of 'unity of witness' is inferior to that of 'unity of being', as the former is to meditate with the unseen truth; whereas the latter is to exist through the Existence of Lord (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 114)

Divine love, as Hossain deduced, materializes from the submission and complete obedience of the '*nūr-e-muḥammadī*'. It is said in the Quran, 'If ye do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins' (3:30). Accordingly, the Sufis prefer submission and obedience over rituals and regulations. Furthermore, One's spiritual realization of the creator requires loving His creation. He grounded his ideation of universality of divine love on a Hadith where he (pbuh) said that on the day of judgement there will be some special people who will be envied by the prophets and martyrs for their ranks and nearness to Allah. They are 'people who love one another in Allah'. (*Mishakātul Maṣābiḥ*)

Meeting with Allah is brought about by an eclectic love, which establishes a dialogue between the heart and Him. Allah created because of love as it is said in a Hadith, ‘I was concealed, then wanted to be known’.

The Quran also articulated the idea of inter-exchangeable divine love where Allah and the aspirant love each other; (He loves them and they love Him. (5:54). The concept of divine love is so central in Maizbhandari sphere that this *darbar* is described as ‘*premer bazar*’- ‘Market of Love’.

Syed Delawor Hossain’s view on *Tawhīd-e-Adyān*

Tawhīd-e-Adyān (the transcendental unity of religions) is one of the most complex and divergent concepts from the perspective of inter-religious relationship, especially, in Islamic milieu. The paradoxical crisis does not emerge at socio-cultural level; rather, at the theological level, in particular, in the context of afterlife salvation.

There are some verses in the Quran that urges for an inclusive peaceful coexistence of religions, whereas some other might apparently be seemed as provocative and exclusive. It, therefore, requires a perfect contextualisation of the scriptures for correct understanding of such dual faces of the subject. Opinions of the Muslim theologians, let alone the Sufis, are also varied to such an extreme extent, as it happens, that it is unlikely to find a standard or unified view on this subject.

Hallaj (858-922) was one the ancient Sufis to have conceptualised the theory of ‘unity of religion’, concluding that the origin and destiny of all religions is the single Divine Entity. Religions are varied in names and forms, but they are essentially the same. This theory underlines the fact that religious difference is the will of the Creator; people have very little authority and preference in this issue.

Consistent with its inherent ambiguity, the concept of *tawhīd-e-adyān* caused much complex debate in Maizbhandari sphere, both externally and internally. Syed Delawar Hossain Maizbhandari did not discuss this issue in one chapter; instead, his ideas on this concept are scattered throughout his writings. Moreover, he translated the term ‘*tawhīd-e-*

adyān’ in various ways: ‘religious equality’ - *‘dharma shamma’*; ‘religious unity’ - *‘dharma oikka’*).

In this chapter, it will be argued that Hossain’s concept of *‘tawḥīd-e-adyān’* is consistent with that of the holy Quran, and that his concept is a combination of monotheism, morality, ethics, religious equality, religious unity, peaceful co-existence, tolerance and religious pluralism. His ideation of *‘tawḥīd-e-adyān’* creates an inclusive universal middle ground between the conservative exclusivist perception and the extreme liberalism that advocates for a transcendental religious unity that crosses religious boundaries. In addition, he recognises the importance of individuality for exercising humanity as well.

To lay the foundation for understanding Hossain’s arguments that are scattered in various places, several facts need to be acknowledged. Ideological and ritualistic differences are multi-dimensional, and existed in different contexts. They can be in the form of any of the followings: different rituals of Sufi orders; different explanations and rituals among the theologians (*madhhab*); different *sharī‘a* for different prophets; different faiths and rituals among the monotheistic religions, paganism, polytheism and atheism. Hossain’s treatment of these differences varied according to their orientation.

The holy Quran proclaims that Islam, as a monotheistic religion, has been the religion of all prophets since Adam and that it took its final form with the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh). It recognises all prophets and sacred books, with a constant rebuke to both Jews and Christians (*‘ahlul kitāb’* - ‘people of book’) for their failure to uphold the concept of *‘tawḥīd’* - ‘oneness of God’ and for their intervention into their scriptures. It also vehemently proclaims that no other religion will be accepted.

Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.’(3:85). ‘The (true) religion in the sight of Allah is Islam’ (3:19). ‘Today, I have perfected your religion for you, completed my grace on you and approved Islam as a religion for you. (5:3).

The holy Quran projects the concept of religious inclusiveness, or in another word ‘religious unity’ on the common ground of ‘monotheism’.

‘Say: O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah’ (3:64).

What Islam rejects from theological perspective and after life salvation is polytheism and atheism.

The Quran urges about the peaceful coexistence among the followers of faith.

Let him who will believe, let him who will reject’ (18:29). ‘To you your religion, and to me my religion (109:6).

Hossain (*Wilāyat* 114) unequivocally advocated the idea that the goal of the different Sufi orders is same despite their differences in terms of their methods and practices. All of them aim to uphold the sublime human character and lead the aspirants to the Divine communion. He quoted Rumi’s poem:

‘They are holding each other’s hand in the land of inspiration.

All of whom support religious equality and *wahdatul wajud*.’
(Hossain, *Wilāyat* 3 & 58)

He also argued that the differences between the *sharī‘a* of the prophets are circumstantial. The essence of their faith was monotheism and all of them worked for the same ethical goal.

Hossain’s theory of ‘*tawhīd-e-adyān*’ is to bring people to the common ground of monotheism. He argued that monotheism is closer to the truth than polytheism and atheism (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 62). He grounded his ideation on the verse of the Quran;

‘But say: I believe in the book which Allah has sent down; and I am commanded to judge justly between you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord: for us (is the responsibility for) our deeds, and for you are your deeds (42:15). ‘Those who believe (in the Quran), and those who follow the Jewish and Christians and the *Sābians*,-

any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve (2:62). ‘Then is it only a part of the book that ye believe in, and do ye reject the rest? 2:85).

To add more flesh to his argument, he maintained that because of the contribution of the Sufi saints in Indian sub-continent, many Hindu scholars like Shwami Bibakananda, Ramananda, Loknath, Raja Ram Mohon, believed in monotheism, even if they did not formally accept Islam as a religion.

In addition to monotheism, he also proposed another common ground- ‘ethical perfection’ for inter-faith unity. He concluded (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 98) that although all faiths are different in their rituals and practices, they are, indeed, indifferent in setting up their goal to nurture human morality and to enrich ethics. He further deduced that the Prophet (pbuh) was the perfect embodiment of sublime character and ethical practice, as the Prophet (pbuh) himself declared, ‘I was sent down only to perfect the human character.’

In several places (*Wilāyat* 87 & 97), he proclaimed the supremacy of Islam as a code of life, and that Islam is the final edition of religions. Having been preserved from errors and interjections, the greatness of the Holy Quran lies in its ability to provide a progressive, sustainable and accommodative religion suitable for all in every era.

However, three ‘isms’, in particular, seemed to fall from his grace in his concept of ‘*tawhīd-e-adyān*’; polytheism and atheism and religious extremism. He contended (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 62; *Manob* 31) that ‘*Wilāyat*’ is a divine wisdom to save people from the fold of polytheism, atheism and religious radicalism. Furthermore, he argued (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 135) that even if the atheists have been able to invent many things, they were unable to provide any solution for any human crisis; rather, they are causing more problems.

Nevertheless, he advocated passionately about religious freedom and peaceful co-existence of different religions, proclaiming that everyone has the right to choose his faith according to his taste without being

subjected to any prejudice or hatred. He also advocated for the notion that no one should consider his version of understanding as the ultimate truth and let him engage with another faith or practice in an intimidating way. It also implies that the notion of religious supremacy and any subtle marginalization of someone's faith, race, and rituals are the opening crack that will eventually destroy the foundation of a society and civilisation (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 80 & 148).

Furthermore, he maintained that every being has its own way of survival. The survival and sustainability of human civilization lies in its humanistic nature, which is sourced in the ideation of Sufism or 'Ethical Humanism', whose universality cannot be constrained within the boundaries of place or race (Hossain, *Manob*, Introduction).

There are some traits, such as; slaying, oppression, lies, cruelty and adultery that are abhorred unanimously by all religions; whereas some traits, such as; honesty, benevolence, love, compassion and truthfulness are upheld and praised in every religion. This 'ethical humanism' is the common ground where followers of different religions find their commonality and a drive for working together to stop degeneration of ethical aspects of a human being. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 87; Hoque's interview).

The proponents of the 'Maizbhandari version' of the concept of '*tawḥīd-e-adyān*' argue that '*wilāyat-e-muṭlaqa*' is 'capable of eradicating religious conflicts' through its engagement of 'every faith and their respective law'. It further unites all religions to create a human race with ideal character and uphold the idea that 'no religion is inferior to other'. It treats everyone according to their final destination and acknowledges religious, cultural, ritualistic diversity as a reality. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 91; Alam, *In Search* 2, 11 & 14; Jahangir, *Shoto Borsho* 330-338).

Hossain also asserts that his master *Ghawthul A'zam* Syed Ahmad Ullah has the spiritual authority and power to bring people from different background to the common ground of monotheism without hindering their rituals and practices; thus, building bridges among the faith communities and championing peaceful co-existence, by dissipating faith

related enmity, arrogance, hatred and religious supremacy. (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 60 & 87)

Syed Delawor Hossain's Effort to Harmonize between *Sharī'a* and *Maizbhandari Tarīqa*

There has been a consistent historical argument that Sufism refers to the esoteric aspect of Islam, whereas *sharī'a* represents its exoteric half. In every era of Islamic history, there were innumerable prominent Muslim theologians, who were Sufi as well. In spite of that fact, relationship between Sufism and *sharī'a* usually projects an asymmetrical discourse and an inter-conflicting image. Many Sufi theologians, in the past and present, attempted to reconcile and re-harmonize the bond between the two; nonetheless, the asymmetric trajectory continues.

Maizbhandari Tarīqa, as a Sufi order, naturally inherited Sufism's victimhood of slanderous disparaging vilification. Additionally, it miraculously managed to attract much more criticism and opposition than its local siblings. It is quite astonishing, as many of the first generation Maizbhandari Sufis, if not all of them, were prominent theologians graduated from the traditional *madrashas*. The controversies usually centred into one of these three issues: compliance with *sharī'a*, practice of *samā'* and *sajda ta'zīmī*.

An abecedarian cannot be reprimanded for expecting Maizbhandar Darbar Sharif, as a Sufi centre, to be under a single unified administration. In contrast, it is a densely populated village, mushroomed with shrines, houses and *manzils*, with each having their own independent administration spearheaded by a *pīr*. Some understanding and practices 'can be appropriated by some *manzils* and rejected by others' (Harder 72).

Existence of varied practices and different ideologies is a key element not to be missed in Maizbhandari studies. It is, therefore, a matter of fact that any attempt to generalize a practice or concept as '*maizbhandari*', or to apply fixed notions of what are the core ideologies of *Maizbhandari Tarīqa* will be deemed to be quixotic and will eventually meet resistance and opposition, to an unidentified extent, not only from outside of its

spectrum, but from within as well. Its openness and liberalism, ironically, might have contributed into developing a variety of ideologies and practices within its fold.

Compliance with Islamic *Sharīʿa* has been at the heart of the external and internal debate since its inception. There is an understanding, be it wrong or right, that this *ṭarīqa* transcends, to some extent, the boundary of the religion it claims to be at its centre.

Hossain, classified the *sharīʿa* into two major tiers: Reality of *sharīʿa* (*ḥaqīqat-e-sharīʿa*) and outward *sharīʿa* (*baijjik sharīʿa*). He grounded his argument on the story of the Prophet Musa (a) and Khidr (a), where the holy Quran vindicated the actions of Khidr. In this incident, representing the exterior of the *sharīʿa*, Musa (a) was unable to comprehend the essence and compatibility of the actions conducted by Khidr (a.), who was said to be directed by divine inspirations or the reality of *sharīʿa*.

He argued that Sufi saints of higher status, inspired by divine knowledge and revelation, often conduct actions that apparently are not in compliance with the outer structure of the *sharīʿa*; nevertheless, their actions are in full compliance with the wisdom and reality of *sharīʿa*. They always follow divine instructions and knowledge; rather than following dead rituals.

By explaining the *sharīʿa* in this two-tiered way, Hossain was able to reconcile Maizbhandari thoughts and practices with traditional theological opinions. He further affirmed the affinity between the two, stating that the conducts of the Sufis and their civilization are in fact Quranic civilization, and are completely in harmony with the orthodox Islam (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 99, 117 & 120).

An aspirant at the station of *naḥs-e-ammārah* must be restricted by the *sharīʿa*; because, this is the station of lust, anger, greed and temptation which are the cause of deviation. He is instructed to observe ‘*ibādāt-e-mutanāfiyah*’ (preventative rituals) such as prayer, fasting and almsgiving, whose outward aspects will restrain him within his limit, while his inward evolvment gradually uplift him to the higher station. (Hossain, *Mul Totto* 10; *Wilāyat* 14, 135).

‘*Samāʿ*’ (musical performance) has a long history in the practice of Sufism. The Sufi saints used emotions and passions of the people to induce fire of love in their heart, enabling them to advance easily in their spiritual quest. Having a profound insight in the human nature and psyche of the people and the challenges of modern music, the Maizbhandari masters did not strive to curb or suppress the emotions and passions of the people, instead, attempted to channel the dominant emotion to his spiritual journey. Hossain argues, (*Wilāyat*, 150-151) that introduction of ‘*samāʿ*’ within the Maizbhandari practices was part of ‘the religious wisdom (*hikmat*)’, and one of its benefits was to replace the obscene songs in local culture.

Although the founder did not consider *samāʿ* as an intrinsic obligatory practice of the *ṭarīqa*, but an optional element subject to individual taste and inclination, it managed to become a symbolic practice of the *ṭarīqa*. It is reported that he would occasionally advise some random individuals, not all devotees, to join *samāʿ mahfil* conducted by one of his deputies and nephews Syed Aminul Hoque (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 152).

Maizbhandari followers are most often distinguished by their intense eclecticism which is articulated in the circle of *samāʿ*. Some argued (Jahangir, *Shoto Borsho* 84) that it is impossible to experience the true taste of Maizbhandari songs without being in the Sufi ambience. Additionally, it has also been suggested ‘*samāʿ*’ or musical performance with its broader application has been a ‘major factor in the movement’s appeal’ (Bertocci 15).

In the perception of Syed Delawor Hossain, there is a significant distinction between a *samāʿ mahfil*, whose sole purpose is spiritual endurance, and performance of the songs for mere entertainment and recreation. He imposed some formulaic rules and procedures for the *samāʿ mahfil*, while the general presentation is exempt from this formality. Maizbhandari *samāʿ* culture also faced opposition in regards to its permissibility in Islamic *Sharīʿa*. In addition to Sufism’s original adversaries, the opposition on this issue includes, surprisingly, many adherents and Islamic scholars of local Sufi orders. However, at the

wake of such polemic engagements from two fronts, the followers of *Maizbhandari Tarīqa* have not given away this practice; conversely, their attachment and practice have ever been increasing. As a result, a process of normalisation was eminent. To survive the competition in Islamic cultural arena, some Islamic cultural groups are also found to resort to using musical instruments (such as ‘*daff*’) to some extent.

Sajda ta‘zīmī (prostration of respect) is the most controversial element attached to *Maizbhandari Tarīqa*. This discourse started with the angels prostrating to Adam (*ghayr* Allah-an entity other than Allah) to show their respect, and continued with the Prophet Yaqub and his sons prostrating for the Prophet Yusuf Both incidents are mentioned in the holy Quran (12:99 and 2:34). Although majority of the Sufi Masters deemed this practice as impermissible, some Sufi saints indeed were inclined to stick to such practice as a token of respect and annihilation into their masters.

The question-how and why this practice penetrated into Maizbhandari culture- seems to have no definite answers. The founding saint was reported to answer positively about this subject, referring to the book ‘*Fatawā-e-Qāḍī Khān.*’ He treated it as a mere subject of Islamic Jurisprudence; whether it is permissible or not (Bhuiya 185). But the followers, at least a large number of them, appeared to make it an essential part of spiritual journey and a symbol of annihilation into the *pīr* (Jahangir, *Shoto Borsho* 321). However, among the devotees, there are many, if not the majority, who always preferred not to follow this custom, and are often looked down by the practitioners as a veiled one unable to attain the station of annihilation into his *pīr*.

Hossain attempted to explore its jurisprudential and spiritual background. ‘*Sejda*’, an Arabic word, etymologically means ‘putting forehead on the ground’ or ‘to submit’. According to *sharī‘a*, it is to put the forehead on the ground with the intention of worshipping Allah. Prostration is of two kinds: prostration for worship (which is done to worship Allah) and prostration for respect (which is done to show respect). He grounded his argument on the verse of the Quran:

‘We said to the angels: ‘Bow down to Adam’ (2:34). ‘And they fell down in prostration’ (12:100).

Moreover, Hossain maintained that ‘*sejda*’ not only refers to putting forehead on the ground, it also implies to submission and obedience. The holy Quran confirms that the sky, the earth and the sun prostrate for Allah, although they do not have foreheads. Therefore, humbleness and obedience are the heart of prostration (Hossain, *Wilāyat* 74-78).

However, in terms of practicality, Syed Delawor Hossain was reported to have never performed this type of prostration. He even never allowed anyone to prostrate for him. He would hold the hands of anyone trying to prostrate for him and would tell him to say ‘*assalāmu ‘alaykum*’ (Boshor 94-95). It can be concluded that although he preferred its permissibility from the juristic view point, he actively encouraged not performing it as a copycat. It is also mentioned that the founding saint Syed Ahmad Ullah also would not like it when it was done as a blind culture without understanding its reality. He would adjure to say ‘*assalāmu ‘alaykum*’ (Bhuiya 185).

Given the chronology of *sajda ta‘zīmī* in Maizbhandari culture, it is apparent that the level of its practice and understanding has always been fluctuating widely throughout different generation, various branches and fractions.

Moreover, many prominent Maizbhandari *pīrs* are said to have formally and actively instructed their followers not to practice it. The door of speculation remains open; whether this action is to return to the origin or a deviation from it.

Conclusion

Syed Delawor Hossain’s creative, conscious, restructuring and reconstructing of the spiritual and temporal infrastructure of *Maizbhandari Tarīqa* speaks volumes of his skill, talent and knowledge. His works are also an indicator, to a large extent, for the kind of transformation his era went through in terms of its social, spiritual, economic, political and sectarian aspects.

Hossain's efforts to understand and articulate *Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa* as a total spiritual system, through the dialect of the Quran and Hadith, and his attempt to re-harmonize it with Islamic *sharīʿa*, is one of his most original contributions. He effectively translated the individual spiritual personification into community action, and brought the abstract and out-of-reach Sufi inspirations in line with the conventional interpretations of revelation. It is that dynamic feature in his study being acknowledged and adduced as a precedent by the scholars of later generation.

As an exemplary faithful spiritual and temporal heir apparent to Syed Ahmad Ullah, he devoted his life and work to build his master's spiritual legacy, and to propagate his teaching and message. Moreover, before his demise, he authorised his third son Syed Emdadul Hoque as his spiritual heir apparent to continue with his master's spiritual legacy. Syed Delowar Hossain deliberated the philosophy, methods and culture of *Maizbhandari Ṭarīqa* with such authority and manner that it cemented his thoughts as an essential ingredient of Maizbhandari studies. His literary contributions along with other practical activities are an effective answer to the ethical threats posed by polytheism, atheism, religious radicalism and materialism.

It is evident from his study that this Sufi order is a nucleus of universal love and devotion that prefers obedience and submission over exoteric rituals. Human beings are the best of creation (*ashrāful makhluqāt*) and no discrepancies based on someone's faith, race, colour or anything else should be allowed to marginalize this honour.

The goal of Sufism exists into two-folds; spiritual transformation of the people through renovating their bond with Allah and enrich their ethics and ethos. Imbalance and disorientation between rituals and reality of a faith causes erosion within its structure; and eventually leads to both ideological and structural distortion, either in a liberal or an extreme way; consequently, opens the door for religious exploitation and spiritual deterioration.

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**The Flight Within: The Quintessence of Reflection and Recollection
in the Teachings of Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar
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Abstract

The essence and strength of Sufism lies in the renaissance of the human soul. The mystical experience of a Sufi ennobles his mind and elevates his spirit to an extent where he reaches an intimate and comprehensive understanding of the Truth and the Universe. This study explores the attainment of that understanding through contemplation and remembrance, or more precisely, reflection (tafakkur) and recollection (tadhakkur), the two intrinsic practices of the Sufis for their spiritual ascension. These two complex phenomena that set the internal transcendental experience of a Sufi in motion are examined in this paper with particular reference through the works and teachings of Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar Mohammed Quadri, a renowned saint of the Qadria-Qalandaria Silsila, an alim and Sufi and Sajjada Nashin of the Silsila at his Dargah at Barh (Bihar) during the seventeenth century. The purpose of this paper is to elucidate some of the conceptual and existential characteristics of tafakkur and tadakkur and to expound and explain their correlation with regard to the inclusive Sufi way of life as explained by the Hazrat Deewan, and examine how they lead to kamaal or perfection. It is a qualitative paper with a thorough literature review where the qualitative data is collected and analyzed, and a discussion is generated with facts to support the conclusions.

Keywords

Aurad, Hazrat Deewan Jafar, Malfuzat, Mysticism, Recollection, Reflection, Spirituality, Sufism, Tadhakkur, Tafakkur

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Introduction

It is a fact widely researched and fully understood that belief in mysticism and its practice has been there for thousands of years. Yet no recorded history exists which throws light on the origin of mysticism today, and no access is possible to prehistoric mysticism, if something like that ever existed in the primeval ages. But there is ample evidence to show that all great religions of the world carry some sort of a mystical tradition throughout their epochal journey to the present day. Apart from differences in certain practices and rituals, mysticism in all its forms in every religion seems interlinked as it reveals the basic philosophy of all of the world's major religions. (Collins 6-9).

The mystical experience evolves out of a state of being in which the self and the Divine conflate into a fundamental and endless unity where the identity of the individual disappears, which Sol and Luna describe as 'ego death' (18-24). This awareness of the self, melting or transcending into supra-consciousness offers the individual a greater vision which is fair, impartial, and absolute, and which is vividly described as coming to terms with an experience where the individual discovers that there is a reality that is tangible, and which exists independent of the mind. At this stage, the mystic achieves a profound consciousness of objectivity, where the self and the Divine merge and unify into an intricate unity of existence. This numinous experience elevates the mystic to a state of blissfulness, joy and contentment, where he perceives the Oneness of all things, beyond the limits of time and space. In that blissful state of mind an overpowering feeling of astonishment creeps over the inconsequentiality of the self with respect to the immensity of existence. It is here that the mystic enters a profound state of Being, and he sees life as full of beauty and sacredness. (Sol and Aletheia 49-50).

Mysticism, as much as it appears to the common reader, is not a subjective experience. In his book *Scientific Approaches to Mysticism*, Kaplan notes that mysticism is a conscious experience where the boundaries of subjective feelings and objective realities merge into a unity, into the oneness of Being. Moving away from the psychological state of Being, beyond the functions of language, memory, and emotion,

some thinkers have described and interpreted mysticism with relation to the theories of relativity and quantum physics that elucidate how physical matters work, explaining the nature of particles and the forces with which they interact. Relativity and quantum theories have become the interpretive tools to analyze and interpret the declarations of all sorts of mystical experiences (Sampolahti 743-744). Renowned physicists have shown great interest and entertain a fervent hope in unifying the four forces of nature, and establishing some amazing relationships between the fundamental and basic building blocks of the universe and the origin of the universe. These are exactly what the mystics are concerned with – establishing a unity between matter and that which is beyond it, merging the physical and the metaphysical worlds. But this is not the focal point of interest in this research paper. The researcher does not wish to explain in detail the scientific veracity of the mystical experience. The details are presented because they were important by way of delineation and introduction to the idea of mysticism, and to bring home the point that mystical experiences are not just pure sensations, but objective realities involving a direct perception of the Divine.

At the root of every religious tradition there lie those esoteric experiences in which those who go through spiritual contemplation arrive at an alternate state of consciousness where they discover that their selves have dissolved into a superior and divine truth, and this is how they reach to the awareness of the ultimate truths. In the Islamic tradition, mysticism is by and large recognized and practiced as Sufism. The Arabic word *Ṣūf* means fleece, the coat of wool covering a wool-bearing animal or the wool obtained from a sheep at one shearing (Ba'albaki 704). It is a metaphor for a clothing that symbolizes simplicity and austerity, a dress which the mystics of the earliest times wore, and perhaps that might have been the reason for calling them Sufis. It might as well have been originated from the word *Ṣuffa* which means a stone bench, and refers to the People of the Bench, or the homeless unmarried companions of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), who stayed at the stone platform built at the rear side of the then Masjid *an-Nabawi*.

It is still not clear as to how Sufism came into existence or which term signifies its exact derivation; it, nevertheless, came to be regarded as a system of belief and practice that cannot be separated from Islam. It is true that the Quran and the Holy Prophet's (pbuh) teachings do not espouse a total abstinence from worldly blessings of God, but they undoubtedly uphold and edify piety and a certain kind of austerity, and a self-mortification that draws man to keep concentrating on Allah and the *yaum ul-deen*, the Day of the Last Judgment. And to a certain kind of otherworldliness. These are exactly what the Sufis practice and preach.

The ultimate spirit of Sufism is often said to have stemmed and developed from the Prophet's (pbuh) practices of meditation and numinous experiences and revelations in the *Hira* Cave at Makkah. These experiences and mysteries were then transferred to Ali ibn Abi Talib. (Anjum 222-225). The mystical experiences were eventually believed to have been transmitted to Imam Ali ibn Husayn Zayn al-Abidin, the son of Hazrat Imam Hussain AS, who interpreted it in his famous supplication *Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiya* "The Scripture of Sajjad" and *Risalat al-Huquq* "The Treatise on Rights." It is narrated from the Imam that when he was asked about asceticism, he answered,

Asceticism is of the ten degrees: The highest degree of asceticism is the lowest degree of piety. The highest degree of piety is the lowest degree of certainty. The highest degree of certainty is the lowest degree of satisfaction. (Al-Qurashi 67-68)

The reference to asceticism can be found in one among the many verses of Allah's Book: '*Hence that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you.*' Surah Al-Hadid, Verse 23" (Al-Qarshi 67-69). Imam Zayn al-Abidin withdrew himself from all kinds of social engagements and lived and guided a few of his very close companions, while listening to and advising those who sought his guidance. His life and teachings were completely dedicated to abstinence, simplicity, and the Quranic teachings, predominantly by way of invocations and supplications. Though not subjecting himself to poverty, the Imam forsook worldly pleasures but did not give way to poverty and any kind of infirmity and debility. He was a self-disciplined

ascetic who “turned away from the world, and Sufis consider him as a Sufi and wrote biographies about him” (Munifi 71).

This research paper is going to refer to and elucidate the concepts of reflection (*tafakkur*) and recollection (*tadhakkur*) as the two most important terminologies from the Quranic and Sufi perspectives, and their relevance and reference to the teachings and preaching of Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar Mohammed Quadri as reflected in his masterpieces on Sufism, namely, *Aurad Mujahidat Al-Sufia* “Invocations and Struggles of the Sufis,” *Adab Al-Dhikr* “The Etiquettes Remembrance and Recollection”, and *Adab Al-Muhaqqaqeen* “The Etiquettes of Scholars.”

The spread and influence of Sufism continued after Imam Zayn al-Abidin, and it is often recorded by writers that the name and nature of Sufism expanded to the four corners of the world, as Islamic teachings reached beyond the borders of *Hijaz*. According to the medieval mystic Jami, Abd-Allah ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah (died c. 716) was the first person to be called a Sufi. He was the third son of Ali ibn Abi Talib and a person known for his valour and righteousness, who also distinguished himself as a pious, peace-loving man. He was called Ibn al-Hanafiyyah after his mother, Khawlah bint Jafar, who was known as Hanafiyyah, "the Hanafi woman", after her tribe Banu Hanifah. (Jullundhri 166).

This “inward dimension of Islam” or the marvel of mysticism reached its pinnacle and popularity between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries of the Islamic era, which is often regarded as the Golden Age of Sufism. Sufis like Ali-Hujwiri, Ibn Arabi, Rumi and others wrote their masterly treatises on the mysteries of Sufism and their journey towards God. However, some Islamic scholars living before the Golden Era of Sufism were also referred to as Sufis, like Hasan al-Basri and Habib Al-Ajami. Adel notes that “according to Ibn Khaldun, Sufism was already practiced by the *sahaba*”, but given a more functional and exclusive interpretation the term Sufi was later used to refer to those who emphasized the spiritual practice of Islam” (Adel 3-5).

Towards the eleventh century AD several booklets came to be written recapitulating the canons and practices of Sufis, defining certain distinctive Sufi practices, like *muraqabah* (meditation), *ziyarat* (making a pilgrimage), *karamat* (performing spiritual wonders), *dhikr* (supplication and repetition of divine names), and *tafakkur* (contemplation). Ali Hujwiri's *Kashf al-Mahjub* (Revelation of the Veiled) is the most notable in this context (Al-Qushayri 10-15).

There are different orders of Sufis, and their method of practicing *tadhakkur* and *tafakkur* is also different. Some of these orders organize spiritual sessions known as *majalis* or *majlis-e sama*, a ceremony performed as *dhikr* where they listen to devotional hymns and recitations of poetry and prayers wearing symbolic attire (Nasir and Malik 3-5). In some orders, the Sufis perform physically active meditation, like the whirling Dervishes of the Mevlevi order, through which they aim to forsake their egos or personal desires, by listening to the music, concentrating on God, and whirling in rhythmic circles. In Sufi philosophy *tadhakkur* comes after *tafakkur*. *Tafakkur* is meditating and thinking about the Worshipped One and striving for *ihsan*, perfection of worship, and *tadhakkur* is the resulting attainment. (Green 15).

This paper purports to study, examine and elucidate the general name and nature of the practices of *tadhakkur* and *tafakkur*, their importance for a Sufi, and the purpose for which they are performed, with special reference to their explanation in the works of Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar Mohammed Quadri, one of the most important seventeenth century saints of the Quadria *silsila* in Bihar (Barh). The present paper focuses on the twin concepts of Sufism as understood and practiced by Hazrat Deewan Jafar, expounding on their relationship in the inclusive structure of the Sufi path of initiation, enlightening on and elucidating some of the epistemological and ontological aspects of the concepts of *tafakkur* and *tadhakkur*.

Literature Review

The significance of *tafakkur* and *tadhakkur* lies in the fact that they are the two most important aspects of the epistemic and spiritual ascent of the Sufis. They signify a very intricate spiritual practice whose ultimate and utmost purpose is the mystical comprehension of God. The Holy Quran constantly, in various verses, keeps reminding believers about the obligation and importance of *dhikr*, which can also mean invocation or remembrance. “Then do ye remember Me; I will remember you. Be grateful to Me, and reject not Faith.” (2:152). “Behold! In the creation of the Heavens and the earth, And the alternation of Night and Day, - There are indeed Signs for men of understanding. Men who celebrate the praises of God, standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (With the thought): ‘Our Lord! Not for naught hast Thou created (all) this! Glory to Thee! Give us Salvation from the Penalty of the Fire.’” (3:190-191). “The most beautiful names belong to God; So, call on him by them;” (7:180). “Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of God; for without doubt in the remembrance of God; Do hearts find satisfaction.” (13:28). “O ye who believe! Celebrate the praise of God, and do this often;” (33:41).

In Surah Al-Imran (3:190-191) there is a term “*ulul albab*” which is used for those who are men of understanding and insight. The implication here is that those believers who contemplate and think and understand fully well the purpose of creation and its meaning are the ones who can really remember and invoke Allah in the true sense. Offering prayers five times every day, as instructed in the Quran is the best way to spend time in remembrance and adoration of Allah.

Quran is also very clear about the importance of contemplation and reflection, *tafakkur*, in attaining spiritual knowledge, and stresses strongly and repeatedly on the correct understanding of God as the Supreme Being, and the physical world as His creation. Contemplation rewards believers with wisdom, which brings knowledge and insight with it, and which in turn makes *tadhakkur* meaningful and acceptable to

Allah. And they are the “wise knowledgeable doers.” (Al-Zamakhshari 151). Ibn-Qayyim Al-Jawziyya observes that reflection and contemplation is the early phase of spiritual understanding, and is related to the ‘*qalb*’, the heart. Contemplation or ‘*tafakkur*’ according to him, provides insight and perspicacity, which further develops into wisdom. It is only after the attainment of wisdom that remembrance or *tadhakkur* can be effective and meaningful. *Tafakkur* appears in a number of verses of the Quran implying different levels of thinking.

Does any of you wish that he should have a garden with date-palms and vines and streams flowing underneath, and all kinds of fruit, while he is stricken with old age, and his children are not strong (enough to look after themselves)- that it should be caught in a whirlwind, with fire therein, and be burnt up? Thus, doth God make clear to you (His) Signs; that ye may consider. (2:266).

Had We sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, verily, thou wouldst have seen it humble itself and cleave asunder for fear of God. Such are the similitudes which We propound to men, that they may reflect. (59:21)

Allah exhorts believers to use their intellect to understand the signs, revelations and parables sent in the Quran, so that they may derive lessons from them. The term *tafakkur* is used in the Quran to mean reflection, thought, and consideration. It also signifies meditation and deep thinking, as in Al-Anam (6:50). In Al-Baqara (2:266) Allah asks believers to use their intellect to think about and to understand his Signs and know the realities of temporal existence. So, *tafakkur* is employed here for the intellect. In Surah Ar-Rad (13:3) *tafakkur* is used to mean reflection and deep thinking after observing the earth, mountains, rivers, and every kind of fruit as signs of Allah, in order to attain a deeper understanding of man's life on the earth and Allah's limitless power. In An-Nahl (16:44) *tafakkur* is drawn on to mean the use of imagination and consideration in order that believers may perceive the clear signs revealed in the Holy Quran, and act and disseminate the message that is revealed in the book. In Al-Hashr (59:21) *tafakkur* denotes employing a

deep thinking to understand the reality and the power of the Quranic message. The Quran insists believers to interpret and consider the signs and symbols of Allah and realize the awe-inspiring sublime message.

It is evident from the aforementioned Quranic verses and their analysis that the signs, symbols, parables and revelations in the Quran summon and urge us to comprehend and grasp the truth in them by meditating, evaluating, pondering and reflecting on each and every aspect of Allah's creation, so that we may gain a complete understanding about ourselves and the world around us and beyond. Only after then, *tadhakkur* will be meaningful, acceptable and plausible.

Malik Badri, a well-known scholar and academic, affirms the importance of meditation or *tafakkur* and remembrance, *tadhakkur*, as the two comprehensive Sufi practices that influence and affect his conduct and his activities spiritually as well as cognitively. Contemplation or *tafakkur* involves imagination, and along with invocation, it

“brings about the gradual realization in the self of the virtues of higher order such as repentance (*at-tawbah*), patience (*sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), hope (*rajā*), fear (*khawf*), divine unity (*tawhīd*), trust (*tawakkul*), and finally the highest virtue for the attainment of happiness in worldly life, love of God” (p 29).

What Badri emphasizes on is that *tafakkur* is the highest form of spiritual awareness, a powerful state of divine consciousness which has the potential to transform human beings. Badri regards contemplation of Allah and His creation as the highest kind of worship. He explains that it has the power to prevent people from going astray and indulging themselves with the material aspects of life. It inspires them to observe and perceive with insight and a receptive heart, the signs of Allah in the universe. Badri believes that the contemplation of the magnificence and marvel of creation without any faith in the Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnipresence of Allah, is akin to *shirk*, polytheism, and *kufṛ*, impiety (Badri 53).

The eleventh century Persian theologian, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, considered as one of the most renowned and significant Muslim

philosophers and mystics of Sunni Islam, says in his book *Revival of the Religious Sciences (Iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn)* indisputably held to be the most important treatise on Sufism, that the knowledge acquired through contemplation transforms the heart of the contemplator. Adding on to Al-Ghazali's concept of contemplation and reflection, Jamal Farooqui asserts that *tafakkur* demands pondering over Allah's creation and being thankful for His gifts to mankind. This eventually and necessarily leads the believer to articulate his awe and veneration of Allah and seek His guidance and help. In this way he surrenders himself completely to the will of Allah, and desists from committing any sin, or any act not earning Allah's reward both here and in the hereafter. Only after that stage, arrives the higher level of *tadhakkur*, recollection or invocation which ennoble the heart and the mind (Farooqui 14-15).

But Khurram Murad considers both reflection and recollection as different categories of understanding. He says that a believer first reflects over an occurrence or whatever he or she observes, tries to grasp its essence and existence, and then considers it very seriously and in turn gets affected by it. He observes that according to the Holy Quran, *tadhakkur* or recollection implies being warned and guided, be wary and watchful, and recollect and invoke Allah's mercy. It entails a constant effort to comprehend the message of the Quran, believe it fully well, and act accordingly with the unity of heart and mind. Murad does not think that *tadhakkur* needs a higher degree of skill and intellect. He believes that it dwells on inspiration and insight through which truth could be known and realized (Murad 77). In fact, Murad fails to mention that understanding, knowledge, intelligence, and mental prowess are already achieved by the believer before he enters the state of *tadhakkur*, because in the true spirit of Sufi theology, *tadhakkur* cannot be complete and acceptable, and will remain only a repetition of words, if true understanding, faith, and deep thinking have not been undertaken earlier in order to comprehend and grasp fully well the purpose and significance of *tadhakkur*. A very detailed discussion on this aspect of reflection and recollection is to be found in the writings of Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar Mohammed Quadri, a matter which is taken up in the Discussion part of the present paper.

There is a very strong insistence on creative thinking in Islam, and this aspect of thinking passes through many stages of observation, understanding, and contemplation, after which that deep sense of reflection is transferred into action and conduct. Contemplation or reflection should be so intense and deep that it should inspire and stir the mind and heart, and urge and encourage the believers to act. It fosters tolerance, honesty, and resilience espousing analytical and evaluative thinking. It also refers to Al-Razi's views on thinking in the Quranic context. He quotes from Al-Razi's explanation of Sura Al-Baqarah, verse 31, which says, "And He taught Adam the nature of all things; then He placed them before the angels and said: 'Tell me the nature of these if ye are right.'" (Badi 44)

Here Al-Razi says that the word thinking is compatible with knowledge. He describes this verse as the victory of knowledge. It is knowledge that originates in *fahm*, understanding and *tafaqquh*, profound understanding, and inspires insight and rational observation of the world before us and beyond. Islam, strictly speaking, recommends rational knowledge and understanding that fosters insight as against a strictly narrow and subjective approach to knowledge, which can be anything else but knowledge (Al-Razi 222-226).

The Sufis connect themselves with the Divine through the process of reflection or meditation, at which stage the realization dawns upon them that Allah is the only truth, the rest is all fantasy. It is the highest stage of the mystical awareness of Allah's Oneness and Sovereignty, and of the fact that praise is only due to Him. Ezzeldin describes the different stages of contemplation,

"from the stage of observing creation and wondering about its beauty and uniqueness, to the stage in which the contemplator related his spiritual and aesthetic experience of creation with the almighty Creator Himself, and finally, to the stage which entirely transcends the boundaries between creation and Creator" (122-123).

For Ezzeldin, therefore, contemplation, is much more than a spiritual pursuit. It is closely interrelated with the intellect and imagination. It is

through imagination that the Sufi moves from the world of senses to the eternal world of spiritual reality, the world that lies beyond the physical existence. It is a kind of an inward flight, an ascent to the utmost height of knowledge and awareness. The succeeding pages will make a concerted attempt to understand, explore, analyze, and introduce the works of Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar Mohammed Quadri, and his concept of *tafakkur*, reflection, and *tadhakkur*, recollection, as two distinctive aspects of Sufi doctrine and practice. Attempt will also be made to show how his observations of these two practices of Islamic spirituality are significantly unique, all-embracing, and fundamental to the understanding of mysticism in Islam.

About the Sufi Saint Hazrat Deewan Jafar

Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar Mohammed Quadri was born in 1634 (Hijra 1044) at Barh town, a subdivision of Patna district of Bihar, India, and the oldest subdivision of India. It is located on the southern bank of the Ganges river, and is 34 miles south-east of Patna. Hazrat Deewan died at the age of sixty-five on September, 19. 1699 (24 Rabi ul Awwal, 1111 Hijra). He was a prominent Sufi saint of the Quadria *silsila* and his father was also a very saintly person. Hazrat Deewan was also a poet, who wrote poems in Arabic, Persian, and Hindavi languages. He was an outstanding spiritual scholar, and an incomparable Sufi master, proficient in various branches of knowledge, and the author of Sufi supplications and incantations. Nothing much is known about his life, because he chose to keep himself away from much public appearances. The researcher's great grandfather's grandfather, Meer Qadir Ahmed, was married to Hazrat Deewan Jafar's great granddaughter Bibi Baratunnisa. As she had no brothers, her husband, Meer Qadir Ahmed, became the Sajjada Nashin of the Khanqah Hazrat Deewan Jafar at Barh.

The influence of Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar Mohammed Quadri had spread far and wide, and his preaching and spiritual thoughts and writings influenced a number of leading Sufi saints across Bihar. Hazrat Makhdoom Shah Muhammad Munim Pak who was born in 1671 (1082 Hijra), and whose family lineage goes back to Hazrat Makhdoom

Shamsuddin Haqqani, one of the great Sufis of his time, presented himself before Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar Mohammed Quadri's Khanqah at Barh for a deeper insight, initiation, and knowledge in Sufi theology and precepts. After Hazrat Deewan Jafar's death, Hazrat Munim Pak received knowledge from his son Deewan Syed Khaleel and became his "*murid*" (disciple) under the Quadria Qutubia order, and was rewarded with "*Khilafah*", as his successor in the Quadria Qutubia order. The Khanqah of Makhdoom Munim Pak is situated at Meetan Ghat, Patna City, and it is through this Khanqah that the silsila of Hazrat Deewan Jafar has spread all around the world. Deewan Khalil's grandsons also became the murids of Hazrat Makhdoom Munim Pak.²

The concepts of Reflection and Recollection in Hazrat Deewan Jafar's works

Fortunately for the seekers of Sufi knowledge and research, Deewan Jafar has left behind a considerable literature in the form of commentaries, discourses, and supplications for daily recitals, and other mystical treatises, which can give us precise and valuable ideas and understanding about his mystical convictions, experiences and outlook. Among these, his discourses and supplications constitute the bulk, and are by far the most important part of his writings, as they discuss and elaborate in detail the importance of *tafakkur* and *tadhakkur* as pivotal to Islamic faith and Sufi thought and practices. He considers these two concepts as twin components of Sufi theology and practice which play a hugely central and necessary role in helping the Sufi in the attainment of *kamal*, perfection, in his journey towards the realization and awareness of Divine realities and the essence of existence. '*Aurad Mujahidaat Al-Sufiya*' (Supplications and Strivings of the Sufi) is Hazrat Deewan Jafar's most voluminous and important writing. It is distributed into sixteen chapters, every chapter contains about a hundred pages, and each chapter has subdivisions. The book is written in Persian and is not yet available in print. Three copies of this handwritten manuscript, written in

² The present successor and Sajjada Nashin of Khanqah Munemia, Hazrat Dr. Syed Shah Shamim Ahmed Munemi, has been very kind and generous to allow the present researcher to take help from the wealth of books that are excellently preserved in the impressive and valuable library at the Khanqah of Hazrat Munim Pak at Patna City.

Deewan Jafar's own handwriting, are safe in the library of Khanqah Munemia at Patna City, Bihar (India). Perhaps very few books on Sufism, or none, can be compared with the depth, extensiveness, and the perspicacity with which *tafakkur* and *tadhakkur*, termed as the essential features of Islamic mystical thought, are discussed in this book. The present researcher would refer to some parts of this book that illuminate the meaning and significance of *tadhakkur* and *tafakkur*. '*Adaab ul Muhaqqaqeen*' (Etiquette of Researchers) is his other handwritten manuscript preserved at the Khanqah Munemia Library. '*Adaab Al-Dhikr*' is Deewan Jafar's very important treatise on *tadhakkur*, recollection, and it is available in the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. This paper includes Deewan Jafar's concept of '*dhikr*' explained from this book too.

Aurad Mujahidaat Al-Sufiya' (Supplications and Strivings of the Sufi) carries a comprehensive and meticulously expounded exposition on the concept, importance and inevitability of reflection and recollection (*tafakkur* and *tadhakkur*) in Islam and its imperativeness for a Sufi. The book also specifies and describes the language of recollection, its nature and the manner in which it should be invoked, and the various forms of recollections or invocations propounded by great Sufis of different *salasil*, orders. Chapter One of the erudite work is labeled as *ilm*, Knowledge, and talks about the role of a Sufi, which is to arrive at the highest level of *kamaal*, perfection, through inner illumination. This inner illumination has to be achieved through sacrificing and surrendering all personal whims and fancies and desires to the passionate, all-infusing love for God. Hazrat Deewan encourages a devotion and a passion where fear gives way to a keen realization and knowledge gained from a deep reflection that God is the only Reality, the only Truth, to be believed, obeyed, and loved. A realization that is beautifully described in Surah An-Nur of the Holy Quran,

“God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as if there were a Niche and within it a Lamp: The Lamp enclosed in Glass: The glass as it were a brilliant star: Lit from a blessed Tree, an Olive, neither of the East nor of the West, whose Oil is well-nigh Luminous, though fire scarce touched it: Light

upon Light! God doth guide whom He will to His Light: God doth set forth Parables for men: and God doth know all things.” (24:35).

Hazrat Deewan Jafar encourages and espouses the comprehension of and reflection on this Light that is so accurately and tellingly described in parables in the Holy book, and which illumines the inward and the outward of a believer, a Sufi more so than anyone else.

Chapter four of the book is labeled as *Aqaid e Sufia wa Istalahat Ishan*, The Beliefs of the Sufis and their practices and conventions. Hazrat Deewan considers reflection or *tafakkur* as a journey, the Sufi’s pursuit for comprehending the Truth, reflecting on the Supreme Being. It is a long tortuous pursuit where the Object is alienated and far-off from the seeker. It is a cognitive, conscious search, an ontological journey where the seeker has to negate his self to illumine himself with God’s Light. He transcends himself and becomes fully aware of the mysteries of existence and does nothing except what God wills him to do. The strength and perfection of a Sufi’s *tafakkur* or reflection is ultimately going to decide the power and reach of his *tadhakkur*, recollection or supplication, and its approval by the Ultimate Master towards whom it is directed. According to Hazrat Deewan Jafar, it is the stage where, *ilm ul yaqeen*, the knowledge of certainty, ascends to the state of *ain ul yaqeen*, the vision of certainty, and in a moment of bliss soars to the pinnacle of *haq ul yaqeen*, the final level of certainty gained through personal experience. At this ultimate stage the certainty evolves as Truth. This is what God describes in the Holy Quran as “Indeed, this is the true certainty” (56:95). It is here that the Sufi witnesses the Divine entering his self and soul.

The quintessence of such profound, spiritual reflection are the supplications, or the *tadhakkur*, or recollections or invocations, with their mystical style, their eloquent, articulate expressions, replete with Divine wisdom, not to be found in ordinary languages and expressions. It is the attainment of such a state which Hazrat Deewan regards as the *Irfan* or *muarfah*, a state of esoteric ecstasy, a *wajdan*, and emphasizes on it in the fifth and sixth chapters of the manuscript that reflect on the performance,

etiquettes, manners, and discipline of recollection or supplication, and their mystique paranormal power. This aspect of *dhikr* or *tadhakkur* is also reflected in his other book *Adaab al-Dhikr, The Etiquette of Recollection*. Hazrat Deewan Jafar believes that “*al-iman huwa alwahdan alwujood ma’a al-dhahira wa albatin*” (Faith is the unity of the outward and the inner existence) (194). And this can be achieved only through recollection. It is a mystical state of realization which is the consequence, the reward and the ripeness of all ‘*ibadat*’, prayer or meditation. According to Hazrat Deewan Jafar, *salah*, the obligatory and all other Islamic prayers, are means and sources of recollection, invoking the Almighty, beseeching Him, remembering His names. This can only be attained through valid contemplation. *Tadhakkur*, or reflection, for him, is not just parroting of supplications, and mere chanting of God’s names, and imploring Him. Hazrat Deewan stresses that it is a stage where all worldly desires fade away, a state of ‘*fana fillah*’ the extinction, the evanescence of the self and the melting away of it to God’s will. According to him, as to the general Sufi doctrine, a Sufi attains divine revelation through *tadhakkur* or reflection.

In *Adaab al-Dhikr, The Etiquette of Recollection*, Hazrat Deewan writes that the remembrance and recollection of God should be attuned in conformity with the body, so much so that the tongue that supplicates and the heart and mind that draw upon that supplication themselves become a quintessence, a pivot of *tadhakkur*, nothing else occupies them, to the extent that they become the abode of God. But Hazrat Deewan also enlightens in the book that as much as recollection is the matter of the heart, it must also become an oral incantation, where the tongue becomes immersed in invocation of the Almighty. In this way, recollection or invocation achieves its ultimate perfection and goal where both the inner and the outward unite with a single purpose at all levels of a believer’s existence and thoughts, merging the evident, the palpable and the veiled and hidden aspects of his existence. The test of flawless *tadhakkur* or recollection is that the physical existence and the heart within become greatly enamored with the Divine supplications, the recollection of the absolute beauty and the beneficence of God.

Hazrat Deewan Jafar's concept of *tafakkur*, reflection, and *tadhakkur*, recollection, has influenced an entire generation of Sufis because of his fundamental and inclusive understanding of the two predominantly important practices and principles of Sufi theology which take their inspiration and spirit directly from the Holy Quran, the practices of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), his *ahl al-bayt*, (People of the House) and the early Muslim saints. His teachings about those twin repositories of mystic realization have had far-reaching influences. He believes that the incantations of *ism al-azam*, the Greatest names of Allah, brings forth to the mind's eye of the Sufi, the *mazhar*, the manifestation of Allah. Any shortfall or ignorance in supplication or recollection, any incorrect utterance of the words, would reflect the imperfection of *tafakkur*, reflection or meditation. In his two books mentioned above, he has elaborated and explained, and even noted the various manners and diverse assortments of *tadhakkur*, only to show and emphasize how exactly, and in what manner and mood, the supplications should be offered, and what exact words and phrases should be used to express the strength, the depth, and excellence of *tafakkur*, reflection. Hazrat Deewan's manuscripts and books have much to offer to the seekers of truth and illumine further the enlightened path of the Sufis, where a believer is summoned by Allah Himself to perceive the creation, to assess and investigate his soul, to think and ponder on the mysteries of revelation and to remember The Creator, and seek Him through supplications and prayers day in and day out.

Conclusion

In the preceding pages, the present researcher has presented successively a survey and observation on mysticism, and its role in shaping religious thoughts pertaining to different religions, in addition to its impact in transforming human lives and thinking. The discussion then moved on to the enumeration and analysis of Sufism, its tentative birth and its obvious and steady interpretation of Islam and its practices. Moving from a threadbare analysis of Sufism, the present researcher then focuses on the stipulated title of the research paper, namely the study of the concept of reflection (*tafakkur*) and recollection (*tadhakkur*) as perceived by different Sufi masters, and particularly explicated,

examined, and spelled out by Hazrat Deewan Syed Abu Sayeed Jafar Mohammed Quadri, the great seventeenth century saint of the famed Quadria order, in his books. A comprehensive Quranic view on reflection and recollection, through the verses from the Holy book, has been presented in order to show and ascertain that Sufism is a faith which is very much attested by the Holy Quran. The fundamental tenets of the two concepts were highlighted through the works of Sufis and scholars on Sufism, with particular references to the teachings and thoughts of Hazrat Deewan Jafar as found in his books. It was, however not possible to encapsulate all that the reverend saint has said in detail in his voluminous books. Some of his noteworthy observations were discussed here. So, this research does not claim to be a complete study on *tafakkur* and *tadhakkur* as perceived by Hazrat Deewan Jafar, as his intensive and vastly exhaustive books have much to offer, and more intensive researches are needed to be undertaken to understand and explore his theological insight into the tenets of Sufism.

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