

One thing that, in all fairness to Qushairi, must be pointed out regarding this last comment of his is that in spite of his mode of expression being very much like that of the Malāḥid, the Carmathians, etc., against whom Hujwiri wishes to warn his readers, Qushairi does not mean to maintain that *fanā'* is the actual *fanā'* of the mortal self and *baqā'* is its actual *baqā'* in the Real as the Carmathians, etc., maintained. Qushairi, on the other hand, maintains, as would be clear from the comments from him quoted earlier, what in substance is maintained by Hujwiri himself.

Although there are scores of such pairs and groups of terms as have been discussed above, what has been said so far should be enough to give us some idea at least of what type of men the early Sufis were, and what went into making them what they were. If, on the other hand, we were to go into a detailed study of their mode of life we will not be able to do justice to it without taking into consideration not only their basic attitudes, as has been done so far, but even the specific applications of these to each and every little detail of their daily lives. The early Sufi was involved in his Creator in a relationship, an extremely pale example of which is the relation of the maddest love between two human beings. As the lover thinks of nothing, dreams of nothing, sees nothing, and feels nothing but his beloved and of his beloved all the time, a Sufi thinks of nothing, dreams of nothing, sees nothing, and feels nothing but his beloved and of his beloved, that is, his Creator. The result is that when one studies the lives of these Sufis, one finds that they take not even a single step in their lives without feeling sure within themselves that this and nothing else will please Him. How they should walk when they tread the earth, how they should talk when they mix with their fellow-men, how they should dress, what they should eat, what they should drink, what they should do when they get up in the morning if they go to sleep at all—each and every little detail of everything relating to these matters is prescribed for them. And the basic principle underlying all such prescriptions is that even the maximum of obedience, service, sacrifice, devotion, and love is not enough; so they should always regard the maximum as the minimum, and constantly strive for a devotion more thorough and a love more intense. It is this burning desire to lose oneself in the Creator on an ever-increasing scale in everything, major or minor, over the whole period of one's life, which distinguishes the early Sufi from everybody else.

## Chapter XVII

## EARLY SUFIS (Continued)

Although space does not allow us to go into the detailed study of the lives of the early Sufis we may yet give a brief biographical account of some of them who made a definite contribution towards the general doctrine which we have described in the preceding chapter.

## A

## SUFIS BEFORE AL-ḤALLĀJ

## 1. Ḥasan of Baṣrah (21/642–110/728)

Ḥasan of Baṣrah belonged to the class of those who did not see the Prophet but his Companions (Ṣaḥābah) and the Companions of his Companions (*Ṭābi'in*). Although he took no active part in politics, yet in his fight against the Umayyads, he was sympathetic towards Imām Ḥusain.

Ḥasan represented a tendency towards otherworldliness, piety, and asceticism in which the element of fear of God predominated. In a letter to 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Aziz, the Umayyad Caliph, he said, "Beware of this world, for it is like a snake, smooth to the touch, but its venom is deadly . . . . Beware of this world, for its hopes are lies, its expectations false." Later on, in the same letter, he praised hunger and poverty as symbols of the righteous and looked upon wealth as an evil which distracts people from their rightful goal.<sup>1</sup> He regarded piety as the quintessence of true religion.<sup>2</sup> According to him, it has three grades. The first is that a man should speak the truth even though he is excited through anger. The second grade of piety demands that he should control his bodily organs and refrain from things which God has forbidden. The third and last stage of piety is that he should desire only those things which lead to God's pleasure (*riḍā'*). A little of piety is better than prayer and fasting of a thousand years.<sup>3</sup> It is the lust for this world and avarice that destroy piety.<sup>4</sup>

Ḥasan was so much overpowered by fear and was seldom seen laughing that when he sat he appeared as if he were sitting before an executioner.<sup>5</sup> He was ever conscious of his sins and the fear of hell. He thought he would consider himself fortunate if he would be delivered from hell after tribulations of a thousand years.<sup>6</sup> Somebody asked him how he felt himself in this world. He replied

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Arberry, *Sufism*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>2</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirah*, p. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

Imagine a people in a boat which has capsized and everybody is trying to save himself by clinging to broken pieces of wood. Such is the real position of man in this world.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Abu Hāshim of Kūfah (d. 160/776)

Abu Hāshim belonged to Kūfah. There were people before abu Hāshim who were famous for their asceticism (*zuhd*), piety (*war'*), engagement in the science of practical religion, trust in God, and love; but it was abu Hāshim who first of all came to be called by the name of Sufi. The first monastery where the Sufis began to gather for exchange of ideas and mutual discussion about their mystic experiences was established by some wealthy Christian in Ramlah in Syria where he had observed some Muslim saints engaged in mystic exercises in the open.

According to Sufyān Thauri, abu Hāshim knew the subtlety of *riyā'* (showing off) more than anybody else. Abu Hāshim once said that it was far easier to pull down a mountain with the help of a needle than to remove vanity and arrogance from one's heart. On seeing a judge coming out of the house of a minister, he remarked: May God protect people from knowledge that does not lead to the benefit of the heart.<sup>8</sup>

All these incidents point to the fact that, according to abu Hāshim, inner transformation of the heart was the essence of Sufism.

## 3. Ibrāhīm b. Adham (d. 160/777)

Ibrāhīm b. Adham, whom Junaid of Baghdād called the key to Sufism, also advocated asceticism which, according to him, involved otherworldliness, celibacy, and poverty. For him a true saint is one who covets nothing of this world, nothing of the next, and devotes himself exclusively to God.<sup>9</sup> In the same strain he told a questioner who had asked him about his occupation that he had left the world to the seekers of the world and the hereafter to the seekers of the hereafter, and had chosen for himself the remembrance of God in this world and the beatific vision in the next.<sup>10</sup>

He advocated celibacy and poverty as the prerequisites of true asceticism. According to him, he who adopts poverty cannot think of marriage, for it becomes impossible for him to fulfil the needs of his wife. When a Sufi marries, he enters, so to say, a boat, but when he gets a child, his boat sinks and his asceticism disappears.<sup>11</sup> A certain man was bewailing of his poverty. Ibrāhīm b. Adham remarked that he had paid nothing for this poverty of his. The man

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Jāmi, *Nafahāt al-Uns*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>9</sup> 'Ali Hujwiri, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, English translation by R. A. Nicholson, p. 217;

Atṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> 'Atṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

was surprised and asked: Is poverty a thing to be bought? Ibrāhīm said: Yes, I chose it of my own free-will and bought it at the price of worldly sovereignty and I am ready to exchange one instant of it with a hundred worlds.<sup>12</sup>

In Ibrāhīm b. Adham we meet with the practice of courting blame (*malāmah*) for the purpose of self-discipline. Once he was asked if he was ever happy in his life by attaining his heart's desire. He replied: Yes, twice. He related two different events when people not knowing him mocked and jested at his cost.<sup>13</sup>

He referred to the principle of *tawakkul* (trust in God), but in his case it was a moral principle as enunciated in the Qur'ān, which does not exclude earning one's livelihood by one's own efforts.

## 4. Shaqīq of Balkh (d. 194/810)

Shaqīq of Balkh was a pupil of abu bin Adham. He developed and perfected the doctrine of *tawakkul*.<sup>14</sup> The story of his conversion to Sufism is revealing. Once in the course of his trade he went to Turkestan and visited a temple of idol-worshippers. Shaqīq told the people there that their Creator is omnipotent and omniscient and they should, therefore, be ashamed of worshipping idols which are powerless in providing them anything. The idol-worshippers told him: If your Creator is omnipotent and all-knowing, why have you come into this distant land for seeking livelihood? Can He not provide you in your own town? On hearing this Shaqīq gave up the world, went to Khurāsān and became an ascetic.<sup>15</sup>

Shaqīq interpreted *tawakkul* as negation of earning one's living. He once remarked that the efforts put in by man in seeking livelihood are the result of his ignorance of God's ways of dealing with men and, therefore, to work hard in order to win bread is unlawful (*ḥarām*).<sup>16</sup>

## 5. Hārith Muḥāsibī (165/781-243/857)

Hārith Muḥāsibī started his life as a theologian and belonged to the school of Shāfi'i. He advocated the use of reason and employed the technique of the Mu'tazilites in controversies with them and was thus a precursor of the Ash'arites. His career resembled that of Ghazālī's in some respects. Both had a complete theological education, were well versed in philosophical and religious problems of their day, and were later on converted to the Sufistic Path, partly under the stress of circumstances and partly as a result of their inner moral

<sup>12</sup> M. Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>13</sup> Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 68; see also 'Atṭār, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66. The events related in the two books are different, but they lead to the same conclusion.

<sup>14</sup> 'Atṭār, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-29.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

strain. Muḥāsibī's book *Waṣāyā*, which again served as a prototype for Ghazālī's *Munqidh*, relates the events which revolutionized his life. The first thing that struck him was the division of the Muslim community into numerous sects and sub-sects each claiming the monopoly of salvation. He devoted a great part of his life to discovering the clear way and the true path amid these divergences. He met all kinds of people who claimed to know and follow the truth, but in almost every case he failed to be convinced; most of them were busy in worldly gains. "I looked to knowledge for guidance, thinking deeply and considering long. Then it was made clear to me, from God's Book and the Prophet's practice and the consensus of believers, that the pursuit of desire blinds a man and so prevents him from seeking the right path, and leads him astray from truth." This conviction led him to self-examination (*muḥāsabah*, which brought him the title Muḥāsibī),<sup>17</sup> self-discipline, and moral transformation. He realized that the path of salvation consists in the fear of God, compliance with His ordinances, sincere obedience to Him, and the imitation of His Prophet. When he tried to search for the ordinances in the life and conduct of the saints, he was again struck by differences. Of this much, however, he was assured that only those people can be sure guides who, knowing God, labour to win His pleasure. But at first it proved almost impossible for him to find such men and yet he continued his quest, for it was a matter of life and death for him: Finally, through God's grace he was successful in his search and came across people who were models of piety: God opened unto me a knowledge in which proof was clear and decision shone, and I had hopes that whoever should draw near to this knowledge and make it his own would be saved. When this enlightenment dawned upon him, the course of future action was clear. "I believed in it in my heart and embraced it in my mind and made it the foundation of my faith."<sup>18</sup>

In spite of his conversion, his attitude towards mysticism was marked by his intellectual approach. His famous disciple Junaid of Baghdad relates how he used to discourse with him on different topics of mysticism. Muḥāsibī would come to Junaid's house and ask him to come out with him. Junaid would protest at being dragged from solitude into the world of allurements. But Muḥāsibī would press him to ask whatever question came to his mind. This questioning and answering proved very stimulating to him and when he returned home he would put the entire discussion in a notebook.<sup>19</sup> Here we see the picture of a great Sufi teacher who approached his subject in the intellectual spirit of a great scholar.

An important contribution of Muḥāsibī to the science of mysticism is his definitions of station (*maqām*) and state (*ḥāl*) and his inclusion of satisfaction (*riḍā*) among the states. Station, according to him, is the particular position

which a seeker attains after making necessary efforts to reach it; it involves all the obligations pertaining to the stage. State (*ḥāl*), on the other hand, is something that man receives through God's grace without involving any effort on his part. In short, station belongs to the category of acts, while state belongs to the category of gifts,<sup>20</sup> as stated in the preceding chapter.

Satisfaction (*riḍā*) is an attitude of mind which also, according to Muḥāsibī, a man is able to attain through divine grace and not through his own efforts. He says, "Satisfaction is the quintessence of the heart under the events which flow from the divine decree."<sup>21</sup>

With regard to the problem whether an attitude of poverty (*faqr*) or wealth (*ghina*) is preferable for a mystic, Muḥāsibī holds that the latter attitude is better. He argues that wealth is an attribute of God, whereas poverty cannot be ascribed to Him and, therefore, an attribute common to God and man is superior to an attribute that is not applicable to God.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, his attitude in the controversy as to whether presence (*ḥuḍūr*) or absence (*ghaibah*) is preferable for the mystic, is that presence is superior to absence, because all excellences are bound up with presence. He says that absence from one's self is a preliminary stage on the mystic Path which gradually leads to presence before God, and the Path becomes for him an imperfection after he has arrived at the goal.<sup>23</sup>

#### 6. Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyyah of Baṣrah (95 or 99/713 or 717-185/801)

Rābi'ah al-'Adawīyyah of Baṣrah was a famous woman mystic, well known for her advocacy of disinterested love for God. She was born into a poor home, stolen as a child, and sold into slavery. But her devotion to a life of piety and prayer enabled her to win her freedom. She decided to adopt a life of celibacy in spite of many offers of marriage by renowned mystics of her time. Once her companion suggested to her in the spring season to come out of the house to behold the works and beauties of God. She replied: Come you inside that you may behold their Maker. Contemplation of the Maker has turned me away from the contemplation of what He has made.<sup>24</sup>

Rābi'ah's main contribution to mysticism was her doctrine of disinterested love of God which served both as a motive and a goal for her. With most of her contemporary mystics the guiding motive for asceticism and otherworldliness was the fear of hell or the reward of paradise. Rābi'ah, on the other hand, tried to emphasize that a man who claims to attain union with God should be oblivious of both. 'Aṭṭār relates that once some mystics came to Rābi'ah. She asked: Why do you worship God? One said: There are seven stages in

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

<sup>18</sup> A. J. Arberry, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-50.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>20</sup> Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179, 180; see also 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>22</sup> Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>24</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

hell, and everybody has to pass through them; therefore, in fear and dread of them I worship. Another replied: The eight stages of paradise are places of great delight and a worshipper is promised complete rest there. Rābi'ah replied: He is a bad servant who worships God for fear of punishment or desire of reward. They asked her: Why do you worship if you have no desire for paradise? She replied: I prefer the Neighbour to the neighbour's house (i.e., paradise). She added that God is worthy of worship even if there is no motive of fear or reward.<sup>25</sup> It is related that one day Rābi'ah was running with fire in one hand and water in the other. People asked her the meaning of her action. She replied: I am going to light fire in paradise and to pour water on hell so that both veils may completely disappear from the pilgrims and their purpose may be sure, and the servants of God may see Him without any object of hope or motive of fear.<sup>26</sup> In the following verses, she distinguishes the two kinds of love, selfish and disinterested:

In two ways have I loved Thee: selfishly,  
And with a love that worthy is of Thee.  
In selfish love my joy in Thee I find,  
While to all else, and others, I am blind.  
But in that love which seeks Thee worthily,  
The veil is raised that I may look on Thee.  
Yet is the praise in that or this not mine,  
In this and that the praise is wholly Thine.<sup>27</sup>

The object of this disinterested love, according to Rābi'ah, was union with God. She says: My hope is for union with Thee, for that is the goal of my desire.

#### 7. *Dhu al-Nūn Misri* (180/706-245/859)

*Dhu al-Nūn Misri* is regarded by most biographers as a renowned mystic. He was the first to give expression publicly to his mystic experiences.<sup>28</sup> Like other early mystics, he practised asceticism of extreme type,<sup>29</sup> regarded the temptations of self as the greatest veil,<sup>30</sup> and looked upon seclusion as indispensable for the promotion of sincerity in a Sufi.<sup>31</sup> According to him, there are

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>26</sup> Aflāki, *Manāqib al-ʿArifin*, as quoted in *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 463a.

<sup>27</sup> M. Smith, *Rābi'ah, the Mystic*, pp. 102-04. Commenting on these verses, al-Ghazālī says: "She meant by selfish love, the love of God for the bestowal of His favours and grace and for temporary happiness, and by the love worthy of Him, the love of His beauty which was awarded to her, and this is the higher of the two loves and the finer of them" (*Iḥyāʾ*). See also *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 463a.

<sup>28</sup> ʿAṭṭār, *op. cit.*, pp. 76, 80.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83; Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>31</sup> ʿAṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

two different paths for the mystic to follow. The first path, lesser in degree, is to avoid sin, to leave the world, and to control passion; the second path, higher in degree, is to leave all besides God and to empty the heart of everything.<sup>32</sup>

*Dhu al-Nūn* interprets *tawakkul* (trust in God) as opposed to reliance on intermediate causes and the use of planning.<sup>33</sup> It demands solitude and complete break with the world and its people, and total and full reliance on God.<sup>34</sup> Repentance, according to him, is essential for everybody; the common people repent of their sins, while the elect repent of their heedlessness. Repentance is of two kinds: repentance of return (*inābah*) and repentance of shame (*istiḥyāʾ*). The former is repentance through fear of divine punishment, the latter is repentance through shame of divine clemency.<sup>35</sup>

*Dhu al-Nūn* distinguishes knowledge from certitude (*yaqīn*). Knowledge is the result of sensory perception, i.e., what we receive through bodily organs, while certitude is the result of what we see through intuition.<sup>36</sup> In another context he says that knowledge is of three kinds: first, knowledge of the unity of God and this is common to all believers; second, knowledge gained by proof and demonstration and this belongs to the wise, the eloquent, and the learned; the third, knowledge of the attributes of Unity and this belongs to the saints, those who contemplate the face of God within their hearts, so that God reveals Himself to them in a way in which He is not revealed to anyone else in the world.<sup>37</sup> It is this knowledge which is called gnosis (*maʿrifah*), the idea of which, it is claimed, was first introduced into Sufism by *Dhu al-Nūn*. The core of gnosis, according to him, is God's providential communication of the spiritual light to one's heart.<sup>38</sup> The gnostics see with direct knowledge, without sight, without information received, without observation, without description, without veiling, and without veils. They are not in themselves; but in so far as they exist at all, they exist in God. Their movements are caused by God and their words are the words of God which are uttered by their tongues, and their sight is the sight of God which has entered into their eyes.<sup>39</sup> Thus, with *Dhu al-Nūn* the highest achievement of the mystic is to get super-intellectual knowledge known as gnosis which involves complete unconsciousness on the part of man. In one of his statements quoted by ʿAṭṭār, he says, that "the more a man knows God, the more is he lost in Him." It appears that he had in his mind the mystic state which his contemporary, Bāyazīd of Bisṭām, designated as *fanāʾ*.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>35</sup> Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, pp. 298, 299.

<sup>36</sup> ʿAṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84; see also Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>39</sup> ʿAṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

## 8. Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī (d. 260/874)

Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī was a Persian Muslim whose ancestors were Zoroastrians.<sup>40</sup> In his early life he was a jurist and was reckoned among *aṣḥāb al-rā'i*, the followers of abu Ḥanīfah, but later on he turned to Sufism.<sup>41</sup> His teacher in mysticism was a Kurd. It is related that he associated with a mystic abu 'Alī of Sind, who taught him the doctrine of annihilation in unity (*fanā' fi al-tauḥīd*) and in return abu Yazīd taught him the doctrine of monotheism as embodied in the Qur'ānic chapters, *Fātiḥah* and *Iklās*.<sup>42</sup> He was familiar with the Indian practice of "watching the breaths" which he described as the gnostic's worship of God.<sup>43</sup>

For thirty years Bāyazīd wandered in the deserts of Syria, leading a life of extreme asceticism—with scanty sleep, food, and drink. He once said that a mystic can reach his goal only through blindness, deafness, and dumbness.<sup>44</sup> He seemed to be very scrupulous in the observation of Islamic injunctions and would not tolerate any deviation, however small or insignificant it might be.<sup>45</sup>

In Bāyazīd's utterances we notice a distinct tendency towards monism. He tries to reach the divine unity by the process of abstraction (*tajrid*) till he is devoid of all personal attributes and feels himself as well as others submerged in the One. In this state of unity he gave expression to his experiences which remind one of the *an al-Ḥaq* of Ḥallāj. "I went from God to God, until He cried from me in me, 'O thou I.'" "Glory to me! How great is my majesty." "When I came out of my 'self,' I found the lover and the beloved as one, for in the world of thought, all is one."<sup>46</sup> "For twelve years I treated the self (*nafs*) in me as a smith does with his material, heating and beating alternately in the fire of penance and with the hammer of blame (*malāmah*) till it became a mirror. For five years I was busy in polishing this mirror with different kinds of religious practices. For one year I looked within myself, and discovered a girdle of infidelity (*zunnār*) round my waste. For another five years I tried to remove that girdle till I recovered my true faith. Then I found everything dead before my eyes and God alone living."<sup>47</sup> What is 'arsh? It is I. What is Chair (*kursi*)? It is I. What is the Tablet or the Pen? It is I. What are prophets like Abraham, Moses and Muḥammad? They are I. Explaining it further, he remarked that whoever becomes annihilated in God finds that whatever is, is God.<sup>48</sup> His negativism (*tajrid*) is illustrated by the following quotation: "Nothing is better for man than to be without aught: having no

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>41</sup> Jāmi, *Nafahāt al-Uns*, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>43</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 92; see *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. XII, p. 12a.

<sup>44</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, pp. 90, 92, 110.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90; see Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>46</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

asceticism, no theory, no practice. When he is without all, he is with all."<sup>49</sup> A mystic should be in a domain where neither good nor evil exists; both good and evil belong to the phenomenal world; in the presence of unity there is neither command (*amr*) nor prohibition (*nahi*).<sup>50</sup>

Bāyazīd is the first Sufi who gives a detailed description of his mystic experience and calls it by the name of ascension (*mi'rāj*), a practice which was later followed by ibn 'Arabi and others. We give below a few passages from the account as given by 'Aṭṭār in his *Tadhkirah*.<sup>51</sup>

"When I attained the stage of indifference (*istighna*) towards the things of this world and was lighted up by the light of God, several mysteries were revealed to me. I looked from God towards myself and found that my light was utter darkness in comparison with God's light, my loftiness was utter lowliness; it was all purity there and all darkness here. But when again I looked, I found my light in His light, my loftiness in His loftiness, and that whatever I did I did through His power. His light shone in my heart and I discovered that in truth all worship was from God and not from me, though all the time I had thought that it was I who worshipped. I felt perplexed and received the explanation: All that is, is I and not not-I . . . I looked from God towards God and saw Him as the only reality. I remained in this stage for long, left all efforts and all acquired knowledge. Grace from God began to flow and I got eternal (*azli*) knowledge. I saw that all things abide in God.

"Then I was given wings and I began to fly in the air and saw strange and wonderful things. When He noticed my weakness, He strengthened me by His strength and put the crown of honour on my head. He opened the gate of the avenue of divine unity (*tauḥīd*) before me. Then I stayed in the stage of *malakūt* till the apparent and hidden aspects of I-ness vanished. A door was opened into the darkness of my heart and I got an eloquent tongue to express *tauḥīd* and *tajrid* (abstract unity). Now, my tongue came from God, my heart felt the effulgence of His light, and my eyes reflected His creativity. I spoke through Him and talked through His power. As I lived through Him I became eternal and immortal. When I reached this stage, my gestures and my worship became eternal; my tongue became the tongue of unity (*tauḥīd*) and my soul the soul of abstraction (*tajrid*). It is He who moves my tongue and my role is only that of an interpreter: talker in reality is He, and not I.

"My soul passed through all the world of the unseen. Paradise and hell were shown to it but it paid no attention to them. It traversed the different spheres where it met the souls of prophets. When it reached the sphere of the soul of Muḥammad, it saw millions of rivers of fire without end and a thousand veils of light. If I had put my foot into them, I would have been burnt. I lost my senses through awe and fear. I tried hard to see the ropes of Muḥammad's tent, but could not till I reached God. Everybody can reach God according

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112-15.

to his light, for God is with all; but Muḥammad occupies a prominent position, and so unless one traverses the valley of *tauḥīd*, one cannot reach the valley of Muḥammad, though as a matter of fact both valleys are one."

#### 9. Junaid of Baghdād (d. 298/910)

Junaid of Baghdād was well versed in theology, jurisprudence, and ethics and was acclaimed as a leader in the science of Sufism by the Sufis of all schools.<sup>52</sup> He was perhaps the first mystic who explicitly expressed his indebtedness to 'Alī for his mystic knowledge, for 'Alī, according to him, possessed an abundance of both exoteric and esoteric knowledge (*'ilm* and *ḥikmah*).<sup>53</sup> He studied law under abu Thaur and associated with Ḥārith Muḥāsibī and discussed different problems of Sufism during walks with him.<sup>54</sup>

Junaid advocated the principle of sobriety (*ṣabr*) as opposed to that of intoxication (*sukr*).<sup>55</sup> According to him, intoxication is an evil, because it disturbs the normal state of a mystic and leads to the loss of sanity and self-control.<sup>56</sup> In this connection, the conversation between Junaid and Ḥallāj, when the latter after leaving the society of 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Makki came to Junaid seeking his company, is illuminating. Junaid refused to accept him as his disciple because, as he said, association demands sanity which was lacking in him. Ḥallāj replied: O Shaikh, sobriety and intoxication are two attributes of man, and man is veiled from his Lord until his attributes are annihilated. Junaid replied: You are in error. Sobriety denotes soundness of one's spiritual state in relation to God, while intoxication denotes excess of longing and extreme of love, and neither of them can be acquired by human effort.<sup>57</sup>

This advocacy of the doctrine of sobriety made Junaid a model Sufi who was acceptable both to the mystics and the theologians, and it is for this reason that we find in him an advocate of religious Law. Nobody could raise any objection against him with regard to his apparent behaviour (*ẓāhir*) which was in perfect consonance with the *Shari'ah*, or with regard to his inner state (*bāṭin*) which was in perfect harmony with the principles of mysticism.<sup>58</sup> According to him, only he can truly traverse the Path (*ṭarīqah*) who walks with the Book of God (al-Qur'ān) in his right hand and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet in his left hand.<sup>59</sup> He preferred to wear the dress of the '*ulamā*' rather than mystics and in spite of constant requests by his disciples and others he would not like to change it for the woollen garb (*khirqah*) of the mystics.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 128; see 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>53</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-15; Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>54</sup> Jāmi, *op. cit.*, p. 81; Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 46. According to 'Aṭṭār he was the disciple of Sari Saqī (*op. cit.*, p. 213).

<sup>55</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>56</sup> Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189; 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-17.

<sup>58</sup> Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

<sup>59</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

According to him, the only safe path open to the people is the path laid down by Muḥammad, for true and sure knowledge is the knowledge revealed by God in the Qur'ān and enunciated by the Holy Prophet, as embodied in the Sunnah.<sup>61</sup>

*Tauḥīd*, according to Junaid, is the separation of the eternal from that which was originated in time,<sup>62</sup> for, as he puts it, God cannot be comprehended by any of the categories of our phenomenal existence.<sup>63</sup> Explaining it further, he says that true belief in unification is "that one should be a figure in the hands of God, a figure over which His decrees pass according as His omnipotence determines, and that one should be sunk in the sea of His unity, self-annihilated and dead alike to the call of mankind to him and his response to them, absorbed by the reality of the divine unity in true proximity, and lost to sense and action, because God fulfils in him what He has willed of him, namely, that his state should be as it was before he existed."<sup>64</sup> According to Junaid, the efforts of man in search of truth throughout human history have been directed towards fulfilment of the covenant entered by man in the presence of God<sup>65</sup> and to return to the state in which he was before he was born.<sup>66</sup>

Most of the pantheistic Sufis look upon Iblis as their teacher in unification and regard his refusal to bow down before Adam as a testimony of his strict unitarianism. In his conversation with Iblis, Junaid asked him the reason for his refusal and received the same reply. But Junaid does not become an "advocate of the devil" like other pantheistic mystics, and points out his (the devil's) mistake in taking cover under God's will (*mashīyyah*) in order to violate His command (*amr*). Junaid said, "You lie. Had you been an obedient servant, you would not have transgressed His command," thus stressing the strictly monotheistic position that moral behaviour is the *sine qua non* of a truly religious life which consists in total obedience to God's command (*'ubūdiyyah*). He defines '*ubūdiyyah*' as the state in which a man realizes that all things belong to God, that He is the cause of their being and existence, and to Him alone they will all return.<sup>67</sup>

Trust in God (*tawakkul*), according to Junaid, is to maintain your relation with God now, as you had before you came into existence; it consists neither in acquisition (*kasb*) nor in non-acquisition, but in putting your heart in tune with God's promise.<sup>68</sup> Repentance involves three stages: first, the expression of regret at the wrong done; secondly, the resolve to avoid doing that wrong for ever; and, thirdly, to purify oneself of all dross, evils, and impurities.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 227; Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

<sup>63</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>64</sup> Hujwiri, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-83.

<sup>65</sup> Qur'ān, vii, 166-67.

<sup>66</sup> Arberry, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>67</sup> 'Aṭṭār, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

## B

## AL-ḤALLĀJ

Al-Ḥallāj (abu al-Mughīth al-Ḥusain bin Maṣṣūr bin Maḥamma al-Baidāwī, in Persian and Turkish literature abridged as Maṣṣūr) was a Muslim mystic and thinker who taught in Arabic. He was born in Persia, at al-Tūr, near Baidā to the north-east of Shīrāz in 244/857. Baidā was deeply arabicized; the great grammarian Sibawaihi was born there, among Ḥārithiyyah Yamani clients. Ḥallāj's father, a wool-carder by *profession*, took the boy, a wool-carder by *name* (for in Arabic word *ḥallāj* means a wool-carder), with him to Wāsiṭ, an Arab city of the Ḥanbalites with a minority of the Shī'ahs. Wāsiṭ had a good school in which teaching of the Qur'ān was undertaken. At this school, al-Ḥallāj became a *ḥāfiẓ*, trying to "interiorize" his recitation of the Qur'ān, so that his "*bismillah*" could become his "*kun*", i. e., his invocation of the name of God might unite him with God's creative will. So did he begin the mystic quest. He became a disciple of Sahl bin 'Abd Allah of Tustar (the founder of the Salāmiyyah school) whom he left in order to settle down in Baṣrah, where he received the Sufi gown (*khirqah*) from 'Amr bin 'Uthmān Makki's hands. He was married to umm al-Ḥusain. It was a monogamic wedding, unshaken during his whole life. From her he had three sons. She already had a daughter from another Sufi, abu Ya'qūb Aqṭa' Karnāba'i. The Karnāba'iyyah, banu al-'Amm of Nahr Tirah, were clients of the banu Mujāshi (Tamīm clan) and political supporters of the rebellion of the Zanj, which raised the slaves of Baṣrah against the 'Abbāsid Caliphate under a supposed 'Alid (Zaidi) leader. Such was the beginning of al-Ḥallāj's contacts with the revolutionary Shī'ahs, contacts perceptible in the technical terms of his apologetics. Al-Ḥallāj, in fact, remained always a Sunni, with a strong leaning towards hard asceticism in observing the Ramaḍān fasts and, when in Mecca, in performing '*umrah*',<sup>70</sup> in complete silence (cf. Qur'ān xix, 27) so as to listen to God from inside.

When he came back to Tustar, he threw off the *khirqah* to deliver God's message to laymen, scribes, and publicans, most of them case-hardened and sceptical. Some of them, of vizierial families, listened to him, becoming his friends (Sunnīs: Qunnā'iyyah: ibn Wahab and ibn Jarrāḥ), or his enemies (Imāmis: ibn al-Furāt and ibn Naubakht), denouncing him either as a miracle-worker or as a trickster. Friends from Baṣrah induced him to carry on his apologetical mission among the Arabs colonizing Khurāsān, and among the *ribāṭ* of the *mujāhidīn*. After five years al-Ḥallāj came back to Tustar and, with the help of Ḥamd Qunnā'i, settled among workers of the imperial *Dār al-Ṭirāz* (fashion-house) of Tustar (for the *kiswah* [covering] of the Ka'bah) in a suburb of Baghdād. Then took place a second *hajj*, and a second mission to Khurāsān

<sup>70</sup> '*Umrah* is the pilgrimage performed at any time other than the 9th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah.

and Turkeṣtān (as far as Māṣīn-Turfān), with a kind of apocalyptic goal (seeking the hiding-place of the Ṭālaqāniyyīn, the future *Anṣār al-Mahdī*). Then he performed his last *hajj*; on the *Yaum 'Arafāt*, he dedicated himself, at the *Waqfah*, as a substitute for the *ḥabībīyah* (just as some Shī'ahs think of the Martyr of Karbala as *ḥabībīyah* 'azīm). Back in Baghdād, he began an extraordinary way of talking in the streets, about his desire of dying as sacrificed by the Law for the sake of the Law (*kūnū antum mujāhidūn, wa ana shahīd*). It was in the last days of Mu'taḍid's Caliphate that a decree (*fatwa*) was given against al-Ḥallāj for his queer way of proving his love for God by offering his life, by a Zāhiri lawyer ibn Dāwūd (d. 297/909), the author of a charming anthology about pure love (*Kitāb al-Zahrah*). But another lawyer, ibn Suraij, a Shāfi'i, saved him by pleading that mystical utterances were not to be judged on juridical grounds. It is said that one day al-Ḥallāj uttered the famous words *ana al-Ḥaqq* (I am the Creative Truth), a kind of eschatological cry (named *ṣiyāḥ bi al-Ḥaqq*) in the Holy Qur'ān. "Blasphemy," said the lawyers. Al-Ḥallāj himself explained it in verses: "Oh! the secret of my heart is so fine that it is hidden from all living beings. . . ." Involved in the Sunni plot of the Caliph ibn al-Mu'tazz, al-Ḥallāj was prosecuted; he remained hidden in Susa near the tomb of Prophet Daniel, the "announcer of the Last Day," but was arrested in 301/913. The first trial under 'Alī bin 'Isa, the "good vizier," was suspended through the influence of ibn Suraij, and al-Ḥallāj was merely kept as a prisoner in the royal palace for nearly eight years and eight months. Afraid of Hallāj's influence on the Court of the Caliph Muqtadir, two Shī'ah leaders, the *wakīl* ibn Rauḥ Naubakhtī and his rival Shalmāghani, succeeded in persuading the vizier Ḥamid bin al-'Abbās, through his Shī'ah financial supporters, to reopen the trial on two charges. The first of these charges was that he was a Qarmāṭian agent of the Fāṭimids. It is true that Ḥallāj on grounds not political but spiritual did share with the Fāṭimids belief in the apocalyptic significance of the year 290 of the Hijrah, for in the esoteric alphabet 290 means "Maryam" or "Fāṭir." The second charge was that with the Qarmāṭian rebels he advocated the destruction of the Ka'bah and Mecca. It is also a fact that, while in Mecca, Ḥallāj did write to his disciple Shākīr, "Destroy your Ka'bah," meaning in esoteric language "Do sacrifice your life for the sake of Islam as I do." The Qāḍī abu 'Umar Ḥammādi, a Māliki, insisted on taking this allegorical letter in an unjustifiable literal sense. And al-Ḥallāj was condemned to death, and "crucified" (*maṣlūb*, cf. Qur'ān, vii, 124) on 24th of Dhū al-Qa'dah 309/26th of March 922. Curiously enough, this year 309 is the Qur'ānic year of the "Awakening of the Seven Sleepers" (Qur'ān, xviii, 25), celebrated by the Islmā'īlite Fāṭimid propagandists as the year of the coming out of the Mahdī from the cave of concealment (but al-Ḥallāj's disciples explained it mystically).

Al-Ḥallāj's crucifixion has been looked at by the Sunni Sufis as the height (*mi'rāj*) of saintship; and many beautiful utterances are ascribed to al-Ḥallāj while on the stake. Naṣr Qushūri, the high chamberlain, put on mourning



clothes publicly with the approval of the Queen-Mother, Shaghab. And some Sufi witnesses, Qannād and Shibli, acknowledged his death as the seal of a most saintly vocation.

Though it was proclaimed after the year 309/922 that al-Hallāj had been executed in compliance with the unanimity (*ijmā'*) of the jurists (*fuqahā'*), yet a respected lawyer, his friend ibn 'Aṭa, had objected to this verdict and was killed for that. Ibn 'Aṭa's death nullifies this so-called *ijmā'*. The memory of al-Hallāj slowly spread aflame with beauty. Among the Shāfi'yyah, ibn al-Muslimah, the very day he was appointed as vizier (437/1045), was seen coming to al-Hallāj's place of crucifixion (*maṣlīb* al-Hallāj) and praying—a silent act of rehabilitation. Sufis have kept his creed (*'aqidah*) as a motto in their exoterical books (e.g., Kalābādhi, and Qushairi); and they have his name "understood" in their esoterical *isnād* (with his friends Shibli and Naṣr-ābādhi). Farid al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār celebrated al-Hallāj's martyrdom as the "apex" of Sufism, and the great painter Behzād painted it for Baiqara in Herāt. Independent Muslim philosophers, Balkhi, Manṭiqi, abu Ḥayyān Tauhidi, and abu Ḥasan Dailami, set off the metaphysical originality of al-Hallāj's spiritual experiences. In spite of his adversaries classifying him among the adepts of existential unity (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), al-Hallāj has been proved to be a vindicator of cognitive unity (*waḥdat al-shuhūd*). 'Abd al-Qādir Jilāni, Rūzbehan Bāqili, and Fakhr al-Dīn Fārisi have given convincing explanations of and commentaries on the doctrine of Unity, in spite of the subtleties of ibn 'Arabi's school. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmi, and after him the great mystics of India, Semnāni, 'Alī Hamadāni, Makhdūm-i Jahāniyān, Gisūdarāz, Aḥmad Sirhindi, and Bedil have considered al-Hallāj to be a believer in cognitive unity (*shuhūdi*). In his *Jawid Nāmeḥ*, the great poet-philosopher of Pakistan, Iqbāl, stated that al-Hallāj was a kind of "Promethean" personality. L. Massignon also heard him say this when Iqbāl gave him the privilege of a visit to him in Paris in 1351/1932.

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'Abd al-Ghafūr Farhādī published an extensive notice on al-Hallāj in Kabul in 1951.

The theological condemnations of al-Hallāj by *fuqahā'* are to be found among ibn Taimiyyah's decrees (*fatāwa*). See notes in the *Akhbār* above quoted, in ibn Dihyah Nibrās edited in Baghdad by 'Abbās 'Azzāwī, and in the early *Imāmi* writings (ibn Bābawaih, Mufid, A. J. Tūsi).

Later on, the great Naṣir al-Dīn Tūsi included al-Hallāj among the celebrities in his *Auṣāf al-Ashraf*.

On his metaphysical tenets, see R. A. Nicholson, "Hallāj" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, and L. Massignon, *La Passion d'al-Hallaj, martyr mystique de l'Islam*, Paris, Vol. II.

## Chapter XVIII

'ABD AL-QĀDIR JILĀNI AND SHIHĀB AL-DĪN SUHRAWARDI

## A

## 'ABD AL-QĀDIR JILĀNI

Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir Jilāni (470-561/1077-1166) was born at a period when Malikshāh the Saljūq (465-485/1072-1091) ruled over a vast Muslim Empire. This period is famous for great patronage of learning. It was during this period that the great Nizāmiyyah University was founded in Baghdad by Nizām al-Mu'k. But after Malikshāh's death in 485/1092, fight for succession started which brought about anarchy and disorder in the country. In 513/1119 Sanjar succeeded in securing the throne and was crowned at Baghdad. But after his death in 552/1157, there was once again the same anarchy and disorder. Constant wars between the different factions of the Saljūqs destroyed the peace and security of the Empire.

But there are two events which stand out prominently. They contributed much towards the disintegration of the social and political structure of the Muslims of this period. The first was the rise and gradual spread of the group of people called Assassins under the leadership of Ḥasan bin Ṣabbāḥ. Thousands of people, great and small, fell to the dagger of these fanatics. The second was the starting of the Crusades. The first Crusade lasted from 488-489/1095 to 493/1099. The Christian hordes succeeded in occupying