

Chapter XVIII

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

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'ABD AL-QĀDIR JĪLĀNI

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 Nizāmīyyah University was founded in Baghdād 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 Baghdād. 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 Šabbāh. 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

Jerusalem in 492/1099, and putting to death thousands of innocent Muslims and Jews. News of the disaster and huge processions of refugees entered Baghdad where people clamoured for revenge. But the Saljūq rulers were too busy in their wars to take up the challenge. The Christian invaders were allowed, for a long time, to rob and destroy the country. Life became unsettled and there was no peace or security.

It was amid such circumstances that Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir lived at Baghdad where he had come from far off Jilān. Being a man of great intelligence he was soon able to acquire what the usual system of education had to offer. He then became a pupil of a Sufi saint Ḥammād under whose spiritual care he acquired great proficiency in the mystic lore. For eleven years he spent his life in total seclusion from worldly affairs. After this period of retirement and spiritual discipline he came back to Baghdad and adopted the career of a preacher to the people in response to what he calls the "inner command." The students and the people in large numbers began to gather round him and within a short time the premises where he had started lecturing had to be enlarged and expanded. At the age of 51, he got married, and died at the ripe age of 91. He was a man of charming personality and by his eloquent speech exerted great influence on the people. He stands in the forefront of the Muslim mystics of all ages, and is the founder of the Qādiriyyah school of Sufism which includes within its fold many renowned Sufis of the Muslim world.

Futūḥ al-Ghaib (Revelations of the Unseen), a collection of eighty sermons which he delivered on different occasions, reflects the unstable condition of the times. He emphasizes in almost every sermon that social ruin and instability is the result of excessive materialistic outlook on life; true well-being is the result of a harmonious development of an individual's personality whose material as well as spiritual demands are being properly looked after. But as a reaction against the prevalent materialism he emphasizes religious values to an extent which seems to be exaggerated. In the fifty-fourth Discourse, for instance, he advises people in general to adopt an attitude of total and complete indifference towards the world, to kill desires and ambitions of all kinds. In order that his indifference in worldly life may become complete and unalloyed, it is proper for an individual to remove all things from his heart and cultivate pleasure in annihilation, abiding poverty, and want, so that there may not remain in his heart even so much pleasure as that of sucking the stone of a date.¹

With regard to the question of free-will he adopts an attitude of determinism, though sometimes he tries to avoid the extremes of deterministic position by resort to what has come to be known in Muslim scholastic circles as acquisition (*kasb*). He says, "Do not forget the position of human efforts so as not to fall a victim to the creed of the determinists (Jabriyyah), and believe that no action attains its fulfilment but in God. Nor should you say that actions

of man proceed from anything but from God, because if you say so you will become an unbeliever and belong to the category of people known as the indeterminists (Qadariyyah). You should rather say that actions belong to God in point of creation and to man in point of acquisition (*kasb*)."² But in a later Discourse (sixteenth), he points out that to rely on *kasb* is *shirk*, i.e., association of partners with God. There is a verse in the Qur'ān³ which refers to a particular episode in the life of Abraham. While denouncing idol-worship, he says that it is God who created you as well your handiwork (*ta'malūn*). Muslim pantheists and determinists have always used this verse in support of their contention, rendering *ta'malūn* as "what you do," instead of correct rendering, "what you make." Shaikh Jilāni here follows the same line, arguing for total determinism, though he does not advocate cessation of all activities.⁴

There is another verse of the Qur'ān in which God says, "Enter the garden of paradise because of what you have been doing."⁵ Here, the text unequivocally points out that paradise is the reward of actions. But this being incompatible with the creed of determinism, Shaikh Jilāni hastens to add, "Glory be to Him, how generous and merciful of Him! He ascribes the actions to the people and says that their entry into paradise is on account of their deeds, whereas their deeds owe their existence to His help and mercy."⁶

Good and evil are the twin fruits of a tree; all is the creation of God,⁷ though we should ascribe all evil to ourselves.⁸ There is, however, the question of undeserved suffering which a man of conscience has to undergo. Shaikh Jilāni thinks that the spiritual peace which is indispensable for a mystic cannot be said to be complete unless he is trained in the school of adversity. The degree of the undeserved suffering, according to him, determines his spiritual rank. He quotes a tradition of the Holy Prophet in this respect: "We prophets are beset with the greatest number of trials and so on according to rank."⁹ What is essential is to hold fast to faith for the ultimate victory of good over evil. This victory is possible not only in the hereafter but also in this world. If a man has faith and is grateful, these things will put out the fire of calamity in this life.

Men can be divided, according to the Shaikh, into four categories. The first category includes those who have neither tongue nor heart. They are the majority of the ordinary people, who do not care for truth and virtue and lead a life of subservience to the senses. Such people should be avoided except when they are approached and invited to the path of righteousness and

² *Ibid.*, Discourse 10, pp. 23-24.

³ Qur'ān, xxxvii, 96.

⁴ *Futūḥ al-Ghaib*, Discourse 27, pp. 56-58. See also Discourse 13, p. 29, and Discourse 70, pp. 129-30.

⁵ Qur'ān, xvi, 32.

⁶ *Futūḥ al-Ghaib*, Discourse 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Discourse 27, p. 56.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Discourse 70, p. 130.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Discourse 27, p. 59.

¹ *Futūḥ al-Ghaib*, Discourse 54, pp. 102-04.

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godliness. In that case you shall be following in the honourable footsteps of the prophets.¹⁰ The second category includes people who have tongue but no heart. They are people of great learning and knowledge and possess eloquent tongue with which they exhort people to live a life of piety and righteousness. But they themselves lead a life of sensuality and rebellion. Their speech is charming but their hearts are black. To the third category belong people who have a heart but no tongue. They are the faithful and true believers. They are aware of their own shortcomings and blemishes and are constantly engaged in purifying themselves of all dross. To them silence and solitude are far safer for spiritual health than talking to and mixing with people. To the last category belong people who have heart as well as tongue. They are in possession of the true knowledge of God and His attributes and are able to reach and understand the ultimate truth. Equipped with this wisdom and truth they invite people to the path of virtue and righteousness and, thus, become true representatives of the prophets. They are at the highest stage, next only to prophethood, in the spiritual progress of mankind.¹¹

With reference to mystical states, he gives us four stages of spiritual development. The first is the state of piety when man leads a life of obedience to the religious Law, totally reliant on God and without any recourse to the help of other people. The second is the state of *reality* which is identical with the state of saintliness (*iwālayah*). While in this state, man obeys God's commandment (*amr*). This obedience is of two kinds. The first is that an individual strives to satisfy his basic needs, but abstains totally from any luxurious indulgence in life and protects himself against all open and hidden sins. The second obedience is to the inner voice, to what is directly revealed to him. All his movements and even his rest become dedicated to God. The third is the state of resignation when the individual submits completely to God. The fourth and last is the state of annihilation (*fanā'*) which is peculiar to *Abdāl* who are pure unitarians and gnostics.¹²

The state of annihilation is the unitive state in which the individual attains nearness¹³ to God, which implies discarding one's own desires and purposes and identifying oneself with the cosmic purpose of God. In this state man comes to realize that there is nothing in existence except God¹⁴—a position

¹⁰ *Shaiḥ* Jīlāni extols in many sermons the role of a mystic saint who, after completing his spiritual discipline and attaining proficiency in mystic lore, assumes the onerous duty of leading the people to the way of God. The ideal type of a mystic in his eyes is not one who becomes a recluse or anchorite but a man of the world who by the example of his life and the words of his mouth helps the ignorant and misguided to the way of *taqwā*, righteousness.

¹¹ *Futūḥ al-Ghaib*, Discourse 33, pp. 66–69. See also Discourse 77 where a different division is presented.

¹² *Ibid.*, Discourse 10, pp. 23–26. See also Discourse 18, p. 40.

¹³ *Shaiḥ* Jīlāni is careful to point out that the term union (*wuṣūl*) is only symbolical, for this union is something totally different when applied to human individuals. See *Futūḥ al-Ghaib*, Discourse 17, p. 36.

¹⁴ *Futūḥ al-Ghaib*, Discourse 40, p. 81, and Discourse 17, p. 37.

which is characteristic of pantheistic mysticism, though we do not find in the *Futūḥ al-Ghaib* this statement associated with the usual metaphysical implications that we find, for instance, in ibn 'Arabi and his followers. It is only an expression of psychological experience of the individual traversing the mystic Path. A man who reaches this stage acquires the creative power (*takwīn*) like God's, and his ordering a thing to be (*kun*) becomes as effective as God's.¹⁵

Shaiḥ Jīlāni holds that mystic intuition gives the recipient knowledge of reality that is not possible to gain through reason. Not only that; vision (*kashf*) and experience (*mushāhadah*) overwhelm the reasoning power of man. This manifestation reveals two aspects of God: (a) His majesty (*jalāl*) and (b) His beauty (*jamāl*), both of which are revealed to one at different times.¹⁶ But in another Discourse he approaches the problem in a truly empirical way. He says that the only way to know Reality is to look to the self (*nafs*) as well as to observe nature (*āfāq*). It is only through this approach that we can arrive at a true conception of God. He quotes with approval the following statement of ibn al-'Abbās, the famous Companion of the Holy Prophet: "Everything reflects one or other of the attributes of God and every name signifies one of His names. So surely you are surrounded by His names, His attributes, and His works. He is manifest in His attributes and concealed in His person. His person is concealed in His attributes and His attributes are concealed in His actions. He has revealed His knowledge through His will and His will is manifest in His continuous creative activity. He has concealed His skill or workmanship and has expressed it only when He has so willed. So He is hidden in His aspect of *ghaib* (unseen) and He is manifest in His wisdom and power."¹⁷

Mysticism, according to the *Shaiḥ*, is not the result of discussion and talk but of hunger and privation. It consists of generosity, cheerful submission, patience, constant communion with God through prayer, solitude, wearing of woollen dress, globe-trotting, and *jaqr*,¹⁸ and also of humility, sincerity, and truthfulness.¹⁹

B

SHIHĀB AL-DĪN SUHRAWARDI

Shaiḥ Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (539–632/1144–1234) was born at a time when the fate of the whole Muslim world was hanging in the balance. The last king of the Saljūqs, Sultān Sanjar, died in 552/1157. Soon after the Ghuzz came on the scene, and carried fire and sword wherever they went; peace was, however, restored by the Khwārizm Shāhs. But in 615/1218 started

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Discourse 46, p. 93; Discourse 13, pp. 40–42; Discourse 18, p. 60; Discourse 28; etc.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Discourse 9, p. 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Discourse 74, pp. 135–36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Discourse 75, p. 137.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Discourse 76.

the Mongol invasion under Chingiz Khān. One town after another was ravaged and people were indiscriminately massacred. There was nobody to check this advance. The people had lost all morale.

It was during this period of insecurity and fear that Shaikh Suhrawardī lived. He died in 624/1226 eight years after the death of Chingiz Khān. These events must have influenced the mind of the Shaikh; hence the note of pessimism often met with in his work *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, in which he expresses with a sad heart the decline in moral character of his contemporaries. He passed the major part of his life at Baghdād where he now lies buried. He founded the school of mysticism which is known as Suhrawardiyyah after his name. His work *Awārif al-Ma'ārif* is a standard treatise on mysticism extensively used in all mystic circles.

Origin of Sufism.—According to him, the word *ṣūfī* is etymologically derived from "*ṣūf*," the coarse woollen cloth which, as he says, was worn by the Holy Prophet.²⁰ He enumerates several other views: (i) The Sufis are those who stand in the first rank (*ṣaff*) before God; (ii) the word was originally *ṣafawī* and was later on changed into *ṣūfī*; (iii) it was derived from *ṣuffah*, the mound where a group of Muslims used to spend their time in religious learning and ascetic ways of life. According to Suhrawardī, these derivations are etymologically incorrect, though with regard to the third it may be said that the life led by the people of the *ṣuffah* resembled the pattern of life adopted by the Sufis. He also refers to a particular group of the people of Khurāsān²¹ who used to live in caves far off from inhabited places. They were called *Shagustīyyah*, from *Shagust*, the name of the cave. The people of Syria used to call them *Jaw'īyyah*.

A detailed discussion about the origin of the word *ṣūfī* has already been given in Chapter XVI, where, on the authority of Sarrāj, it has been maintained that the word *ṣūfī* was in use in Arabia even in pre-Islamic days. Suhrawardī, however, thinks that this word was not used in the time of the Holy Prophet. According to some people, it became current during the third generation after the Prophet (*Taba' Ṭābi'in*). According to others, it came into use in the third century of the Hijrah. The titles of *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions of the Prophet) and *Ṭābi'in* (their Successors) were held in great esteem and, therefore, the word *ṣūfī*—a title of honour, no doubt—did not make its appearance during their times. But when these peaceful times disappeared and gave place to turbulent periods of unrest and political intrigue, pious people found it convenient for their peace of mind to shun society and live in seclusion and pass their time in meditation and spiritual exercises.²²

²⁰ According to the tradition transmitted by Ans b. Mālik; cf. *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Chap. 6.

²¹ Khurāsān had been one of the centres of Buddhist missionaries before Islam where, it seems, people adopted the practices of Buddhist *Bhikkhus* in later times.

²² Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Urdu translation, Newal Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1926, Chap. 6.

What is Sufism?—Suhrawardī tries to establish a very intimate relationship between Sufism and knowledge. According to him, knowledge that is followed by moral behaviour is the main characteristic of Sufi life. Such knowledge is called by him *Fiqh* which is not used in the usual legal sense but for spiritual insight as it is used in the Qur'ān. He refers to several Qur'ānic verses to prove this point. First, he quotes the verse; "He (God) taught man what he did not know,"²³ and concludes that the spiritual status of man is based solely on knowledge.²⁴ Secondly, he holds that Sufis are the people who acquire spiritual insight into religion and this helps them lead people to the right path. This spiritual perception, according to him, pertains to the sphere of the heart and not to the sphere of the head.²⁵ He argues that, according to the Qur'ān, knowledge and moral uprightness are the characteristics of the truly learned persons. He holds that knowledge is the consequence of *taqwa*, i.e., piety and moral integrity. In a verse it is said that "those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge have *taqwa*."²⁶ This verse is very significant in establishing the relationship between knowledge and moral behaviour, for, as Suhrawardī puts it,²⁷ it excludes knowledge from those who are not characterized by moral integrity (*taqwa*).

But to what kind of knowledge does Suhrawardī refer? In this connection he enumerates different views. According to some, it is the knowledge of the psychological states of an individual, for, without this kind of knowledge, it is contended, it is not possible for a person to distinguish between different types of revelations and experiences.²⁸ According to others, it is the knowledge concerning worldly matters, for, without proper information in this respect, a person is liable to be misled in his religious pursuits. According to abu Ṭālib of Mecca, it is the knowledge of the five religious duties of a Muslim. But, according to Suhrawardī himself, the knowledge which is incumbent on all Muslims is the knowledge of religious commandments and prohibitions. And yet true knowledge, which manifests itself in practice and moulds and informs the life of the individual possessing that knowledge, is not formal knowledge that is imparted in schools and colleges but a state of the heart that grasps the truth of things without thereby becoming the master of details. Such a person is called in the Qur'ān the one firmly rooted in knowledge (*rāsikh fi al-'ilm*).²⁹ He calls it the knowledge which one receives as a legacy ('ilm

²³ Qur'ān, xcv, 5.

²⁴ *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Chap. 1, p. 17.

²⁵ In another place he explicitly says that this knowledge is intuitional. Only he who experiences it can fully realize its import. You may describe the sweetness of sugar in any way you like, but it can be realized only by one who tastes it. *Ibid.*, Chap. 3, p. 43.

²⁶ Qur'ān, xxxv, 28.

²⁷ *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Chap. 3, p. 46.

²⁸ Reference is to what is theologically called as interpolations of Satan in the revelations of saints. See the Qur'ān, xxii, 51, and also *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Chap. 3, p. 36.

²⁹ Qur'ān, iii, 6.

al-wirāṭah) from the prophets and saints. He distinguishes it from the knowledge gained through formal education (*ilm al-dirāsah*).³⁰ Their relation, according to him, is like the relation of butter and milk. It is not milk but butter that is the object of man. We take milk only because it yields butter and fat. This type of knowledge is usually divided into three stages: knowledge by inference, knowledge by perception (or observation), and knowledge by personal experience or intuition (*ilm al-yaqīn*, *ain al-yaqīn*, and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*). A person who attains to the stage of intuition, though less careful in observing ritualistic formalities, is far superior to a man who has many ritualistic practices to his credit but whose knowledge is not of the highest type.³¹

Sufism, according to Suhrawardi, is characterized by two things. It consists in following the practice of the Holy Prophet (*Sunnah*) and in inculcating purity of motives and attaining the highest integrity of character. There are two different categories of Sufis. The first includes those persons in whom mystic illumination (*kashf*) is followed by exercise of personal effort (*ijtihād*). He quotes the example of Pharaoh's magicians. When they realized the spiritual stature of Moses in comparison with their petty tricks, they were overwhelmed by the effulgence of spiritual illumination as a result of which they decided there and then to break with the Pharaoh in favour of Moses. This decision of theirs for which they willingly bore all the terrible consequences with which the Pharaoh threatened them came to them with an ease that follows spiritual illumination. To the second category belong those people who lead a hard ascetic life spending their days in prayers and nights in meditation. It is only after a long struggle spread over days, months, and years that they receive divine illumination. Here illumination is the fruit and crown of personal efforts and hard ascetic life. He quotes a saying of Junaid: "We did not gain access to the domain of Sufism through discursive reasoning or intellectual discussion but through hunger, abdication of worldly lust and prestige, and discarding of even lawful things."

There are two other kinds of people usually called Sufis but, according to Suhrawardi, they cannot be included among mystics at all. The first are the *majdhūbs*, i.e., those who receive spiritual illumination through divine grace but cannot reap the full fruit of their illumination because they are not able to supplement it with their personal efforts. The others are the ascetics who spend their whole life in self-mortification and meditation but whose efforts are not crowned with illumination.³²

In another place, discussing the qualities of a spiritual guide, he divides persons into four categories: (1) Pure or absolute ascetic (*sālik*). (2) Pure or

absolute *majdhūb*. People belonging to these two categories do not deserve to be adopted as spiritual guides. The absolute ascetic retains the consciousness of self to the last. He starts with ascetic practices but, unfortunately, he is not able to ascend to the stage of *kashf*. The absolute *majdhūb*, on the other hand, receives through divine grace a little illumination, and some veils from the face of Reality (God) are removed for him, but he does not put in the requisite labour that forms an indispensable part of mystic discipline. (3) First *sālik* and afterwards *majdhūb*. Such a person is fit for becoming a guide. He starts with ascetic practices and reaches the goal of his endeavour, viz., spiritual illumination, which relieves him of the severity of his earlier discipline. He becomes the repository of divine wisdom. (4) But the most perfect stage, according to him, is the fourth, viz., first *majdhūb* and afterwards *sālik*. Such a person receives divine illumination in the beginning and veils are removed from his heart. His interest in the material world vanishes and he looks towards the spiritual world with eagerness and joyful expectations. This inner transformation affects his outward life and the antagonism between love and Law ceases for him. His outward and inward life, this world and the other world, wisdom and power, all become one. His faith is so deep that even if all the veils that hide the face of the Real were removed, he will gain nothing thereby.³³

Suhrawardi makes a distinction between a person of the third rank and a person of the fourth rank. The former who follows the path of a lover (*muḥibb*) is freed from the bonds of the lower self (*nafs*) but is tied down in the bondage of the heart. The latter who traverses the way of the Beloved (*Mahbūb*) is freed both from the lower self and the heart.³⁴ Again, the former follows the forms of action (*suwar al-a'māl*) and thinks that just as a man cannot do without a body so long as he is alive, so action of one sort or other is indispensable for him. But the man belonging to the fourth category passes beyond all these. He leaves behind everything—lower self (*nafs*), heart, states, and actions—and achieves complete unity with God to the extent that God becomes his ears and eyes so that he hears with God's ears and sees with God's eyes.³⁵

Sufism covers both poverty (*faqr*) and continence (*zuhd*), but is identical with neither. *Faqr* is a difficult term to translate. Usually it means poverty, but in mystic morality it signifies the positive attitude of total independence from worldly needs. Suhrawardi quotes different definitions and descriptions of *faqr* in Sufism given by several eminent mystics. Ruyām says that Sufism is based on three principles, the first of which is attachment to poverty. Ma'rūf of Karkh says that he who does not possess *faqr* is not a Sufi. *Faqr*, according

³⁰ *Awāriṣ al-Ma'arīf*, Chap. 9, p. 21; Chap. 6, p. 14; Chap. 25, p. 50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Chap. 3, p. 54.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 61–64. He adds that any revelation or ecstatic experience (*kashf* or *wajd*) which is contrary to the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet is unacceptable to the Sufis.

³³ *Ibid.*, Chap. 10, pp. 103–07. But Ghazālī thinks otherwise. According to him, the third category is the perfect specimen of spiritual leaders. See B.A. Dar's article, "Intellect and Intuition," in *Iqbal*, Vol. IV, No. 3, pp. 97–99.

³⁴ He defines *nafs* as a dark earthly veil and *qalb* as a veil of heavenly light.

³⁵ *Awāriṣ al-Ma'arīf*, Chap. 10, pp. 103–07.

to *Shibli*, is indifference towards all except God.³⁶ According to usage of the terms in Syria,³⁷ there is no difference between Sufism and *faqr*. They argue on the basis of the Qur'anic verse that "(alms are for) the poor (*fuqarā'*) who have devoted themselves to the way of God,"³⁸ which, according to them, is the description of the Sufis. But Suhrawardi disagrees with this view. He thinks that a person's constant attachment to poverty and fear of riches is a sign of weakness; it amounts to reliance on external causes and conditions and dependence on expected reward. But a true Sufi is above all these things. He is motivated neither by fear nor by rewards; he is above all such limitations. Again, adoption of poverty and avoidance of riches imply exercise of personal will and freedom of choice which is contrary to the spirit of Sufism. A true Sufi has subjected his will to the will of God and, therefore, he sees no difference in poverty or riches.

Sufism is, thus, distinct from *faqr*, though the latter forms the basis of the former in the sense that the way to Sufism passes through *faqr*, not in the sense that both are identical or indispensable to each other. The same is the case with asceticism (*zuhd*), which may be a preparatory stage for Sufism but cannot be identified with it at all. There is a Qur'anic verse which says to the believers to be "upright (*qawwāmīn*) for Allah and bearer of witness with justice."³⁹ This uprightness (*qawwāmīyyah*), according to Suhrawardi, is the essence of Sufism. There are three stages in the mystic process; first, faith (*īmān*); secondly, knowledge (*ilm*); and lastly, intuition (*dhawq*). When a person is at the first stage, he is called "one who is like a true Sufi in appearance and dress (*mutashābih*)."⁴⁰ When he attains to the second stage, he is called "one who pretends to be a Sufi (*mutaṣawwif*)."⁴¹ Only he who reaches the last stage deserves to be called a true Sufi. Suhrawardi again refers to a Qur'anic verse⁴¹ where three different kinds of persons are mentioned who have been chosen by God as the repositories (*wāriṭh*) of the knowledge of the Book: "Of them is he who makes his soul suffer a loss, of them is he who takes a middle course, and of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness." The Qur'an uses the word *zālim* for the first, *muqtaṣid* for the second, and *sābiq* for the third. According to some, *zālim* is the ascetic (*zāhid*), *muqtaṣid*

³⁶ One mystic, abu al-Muẓaffar Fārmaisi, said that *faqir* is one who is independent even of God. Such a saying is, of course, a blasphemy, but almost all mystics have tried to explain away its sting. Qushairi in his *Risālah* and Suhrawardi in his book both try to justify this saying, but ibn al-Qayyim is not satisfied with any of these explanations and rejects this definition *in toto*. See *Islāmī Taṣawwuf*, al-Hilāl Book Agency, Lahore, pp. 124-26.

³⁷ Syria here does not stand for the geographical area which is now called Syria. Previously, nearly all the land now including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, etc., was called Syria.

³⁸ Qur'an, ii, 273.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, v, 8.

⁴⁰ *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Chap. 7, pp. 80ff.

⁴¹ Qur'an, xxv, 32.

is a gnostic (*'arif*), and *sābiq* is the lover (*muḥibb*). According to others, the first is one who cries when any calamity befalls him, the second is one who patiently bears it, while the third feels positive pleasure in it. According to another version, the first are those who worship God carelessly and as a matter of routine, the second do it with hope and fear, while the third are those who do not forget God at any time. These three categories of people according to Suhrawardi are identical with the three types of mystics: *Mutashābih*, *Mutaṣawwif* and the Sufi, respectively.⁴²

He refers to two other groups. The first are *Malāmītiyyah* who do not manifest good deeds and do not hide evil. But they are inferior to a true Sufi who is so engrossed in his experiences and illumination that he does not know what to hide and what to manifest.⁴³ The second are *Qalandariyyah* who are people of integrity but who do not subject themselves to full ascetic discipline. They have no ambition for further spiritual progress and lead a life of happiness and contentment.⁴⁴

He mentions a group of people who claim that *Shari'ah* (the religious Law) is binding only up to a certain stage. When reality manifests itself to a gnostic, the bonds of the Law disappear. Suhrawardi holds that these are misguided people, for Law and reality (*Shari'ah* and *Haqiqah*) are not antagonistic but interdependent. He who enters the sphere of reality (*Haqiqah*) becomes bound to the rank of slavehood (*'ubūdiyyah*). Those who subscribe to the doctrine of incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and employ the Christian terms *lāhūt* and *nāsūt*⁴⁵ without understanding their real significance are all misguided people. He holds that the saying attributed to Bāyazīd, viz., *subḥāni, ma'a'zamu shāni* (all praise to me, how exalted is my position!), if spoken by him at all must have been said about God and not about himself as is commonly held. The *ana al-Haq* (I am the Truth) of Ḥallāj must be similarly interpreted according to the true intention of the statement. Suhrawardi adds that if it were known that Ḥallāj by this statement implied incarnation (*ḥulūl*), he would condemn him outright.

There are some people who think that they receive words from God and often converse with Him, and, as a result of this conversation, they claim to receive messages which they attribute to God. Such people, according to Suhrawardi, are either ignorant of the true nature of their experience or are deceived by their intellectual conceit. The words they hear are mere words which appear in their mind and in no way can be attributed to God. Such things

⁴² *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Chap. 7, p. 82.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Chap. 8, pp. 85-90.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Chap. 9, pp. 90-92.

⁴⁵ *Lāhūt* and *nāsūt* are terms for the divine and human aspects of Christ's personality. This doctrine became the basis of many controversies in the Christian Church and many sects like the Nestorians and Monophysites (or Jacobites) appeared in Syria and Egypt respectively. But in spite of Suhrawardi's protests, these terms were used first by Ḥallāj and then by ibn 'Arabi and even Ghazālī, after which they were accepted by almost all later mystics.

appear when a man due to excessive ascetic practices is morally uplifted. Their attribution to God should be like attribution of everything to the Creator and not as a result of any kind of conversation with Him. He mentions another group of people who claim to be submerged in the sea of Unity and deny man's free-will and look upon each human action as the direct consequence of God's will or act. It seems that the *Shāikh* is referring to those mystics who were later called pantheists, for they were the people who claimed to be the followers of the true doctrine of *taḥīd*, interpreted by them as the denial not only of any gods besides God but the denial of any existence besides His.⁴⁶

Suhrawardi thinks that mystics must live in monasteries (*khānqāhs*) quite unconcerned with the problem of earning their bread. Without complete break with the world, it is not possible for them to turn their attention to God and to the purification of their hearts. As this seems to be incompatible with the generally held view, he tries to justify his stand by reference to certain Qur'ānic verses and the Prophet's traditions.

There is a verse which says: "Be patient and vie you in patience and be steadfast (*rābiṭu*)."⁴⁷ Suhrawardi interprets the word *rābiṭu* in his own way. He says that *ribāṭ* was originally a place where horses were tied, then it came to be used for a fortress the residents of which gave protection to the people. Later on, it came to be employed for monasteries, for the people of monasteries by their godliness are able to protect people from the influence of evil. So the word *rābiṭu* in this verse stands, according to Suhrawardi, not for struggle against the enemies but for struggle against the self, not for smaller *jihād* but for greater *jihād*, as a tradition puts it.⁴⁸ But the Qur'ānic verse⁴⁹ that he quotes in the beginning of the chapter⁴⁹ conclusively disproves the whole tenor of his stand. It is clear that the Qur'ān refers to the houses, the inmates of which have not turned their back upon the world but are engaged in full worldly pursuits, and these pursuits never stand in the way of their remembrance of God.

If monastic life is accepted as an ideal for the mystic, as Suhrawardi does, it follows naturally that begging and celibacy should be adopted as the basic principles governing the life of the mystics. Naturally, therefore, we find him

⁴⁶ 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, Chap. 9, pp. 93-96.

⁴⁷ Qur'ān, iii, 199.

⁴⁸ He quotes the story of two brothers, one of whom was a Sufi and the other a soldier. The latter wrote to his brother inviting him to join war against the enemy because the times were critical. The Sufi brother refused to accept his advice for he preferred his way of life to that of his brother's, with the remarks: "If all people were to follow my path and remember Allah sitting on their prayer-carpet, they would have conquered Constantinople." 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, Chap. 13, pp. 125-26.

⁴⁹ Qur'ān, xxiv, 36-37: "In houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted so that His name may be remembered in them; they glorify Him therein from the morning and evening, men whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from remembrance of Allah . . ."

defending both these principles in spite of his view that they are not in complete accord with the Islamic way of life, as enunciated by the Qur'ān and sanctioned by the Holy Prophet. While discussing begging, he refers to several traditions which prohibit a man from begging and yet he insists that a Sufi who is engaged in a life of total dedication to *dhikr-Allāh* (remembrance of God) is compelled to satisfy his minimum physical needs of hunger and thirst by resort to begging. For justifying his point of view he misinterprets the traditions. There is a saying of the Prophet that the most lawful of foods for a Muslim is what he earns by his own hands. Many mystics tried to explain it away by holding that "earning by hand" means stretching hand in prayers to God for sending them food through other persons. He refers to abu Ṭālib of Mecca who rejected this misinterpretation and still clings to it.⁵⁰ There is another tradition according to which the upper hand (of the giver) is better than the lower hand (of the beggar). But Suhrawardi, following Hujwiri, interprets it again in his own way. According to him, the upper hand is the hand of the beggar who by receiving alms gives blessing to the alms-giver.⁵¹

Similarly, discussing the question of celibacy, he wavers between the two positions. On the one hand, he feels inclined towards celibacy as a logical consequence of the conception of mysticism that he holds. On the other hand, there are many traditions to the effect that he who does not marry does not belong to the Muslim community. Ultimately, he leaves the question to the discretion of the individual mystic or to the advice of the spiritual guide.⁵²

On the question of listening to music, again, his attitude is non-committal. On the one hand, he quotes several eminent Sufis who were fond of music and who referred to several traditions in their support. On the other, there were several eminent persons who did not like it because, according to them, there was no scriptural support for it. While discussing the question of musical assemblies, he points out that some people look upon these assemblies as innovations. But he adds that not all innovations are religiously blameworthy and, therefore, the question under discussion cannot be decided on this ground.⁵³ Again, he quotes a tradition in support of the mystic dance (*waḥd*) and tearing of the mystic robe (*khirqah*) in these assemblies and yet adds that traditions invariably reject them as unlawful,⁵⁴ and, therefore, the matter stands where it is. But on the whole he seems to be in favour of music.⁵⁵

With regard to travel, Suhrawardi thinks that a Sufi cannot be expected to conform to any particular pattern of life. He divides Sufis into four classes

⁵⁰ 'Awārif al-Ma'ārif, Chap. 19, pp. 178-79.

⁵¹ Ibid., Chaps. 19, 20, pp. 173, 186.

⁵² Ibid., Chap. 21, pp. 192-206. It appears that, in his estimation of women, he is influenced by the Christian doctrine that woman is the source of all evil. See p. 195.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 224.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 248.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Chaps. 22, 23, 24 and 25.

in this respect: First those who start their mystic career as travellers but then change into stays-at-home. Their travelling is for several purposes—for acquiring knowledge, which, as the *Shaikh* quotes different traditions, is incumbent on all Muslims; for visiting people versed in knowledge (*rāsikhūn fi al-'ilm*) and benefiting from their company; for observing the various forms of natural phenomena, for, according to the Qur'ān, God shows "His signs in the objective world and in the subjective world of the self till the truth is clear to them"⁵⁶; for moral and spiritual discipline which will season them and train them to achieve self-control and other virtues. The second are those who start their mystic life with a retreat to solitude and end up with travelling. Such persons happen to enjoy the company of a perfect saint and under his guidance cover several stages of the mystic discipline and then after maturity try to consolidate their position by travelling from place to place. To the third category belong people who start their mystic life in solitude and retirement and end with it. "Such people keep their heads on the knees and find therein the Mount of Sinai." In other words, they enjoy the nearness and see the light of divine illumination. It is said that water if stationary begins to stink. To this the mystics reply that one should become as vast as an ocean and thereby become protected from stagnation and nasty smell. To the fourth category belong people who are always on the move and with them travelling is the beginning and end of mystic discipline.

Psychology: Soul, Appetitive Self, Heart.—The *Shaikh* bases his account of the soul (*rūh*) on two verses of the Qur'ān. In the first it is held⁵⁷ that man was created by God from fine clay, then it successively changed into a moist germ, a clot of blood and flesh, till all of a sudden this compound of apparently chemical changes assumed a form beyond the material plane, acquired the new spiritual dimension and became a new creation (*khalqan ākhar*). Beginning as a piece of matter, man acquires at a certain stage of development characteristics which as if push him out of this plane into the plane of life. This stage, according to Suhrawardi, was reached when soul was breathed into him. But what is this soul which changes a piece of clay and matter into a being of a different dimension? He refers to the second verse: "They ask you of the soul (*rūh*). Say, the soul is from the command (*amr*) of my Lord."⁵⁸

On the basis of this verse, some mystics regard the soul as eternal—as being an emanation of God's *amr*, which, as an attribute of God, is eternal. Suhrawardi, however, thinks that the soul is not eternal but created (*hādith*), though it is the most subtle of all things and purer and lighter than all else.

The next question is to determine whether it is an attribute (*'ard*) or a substance (*jauhar*). In a tradition it is mentioned that the souls have the capacity to move here and there, fly to different places, etc. On this basis

⁵⁶ Qur'ān, xli, 53.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, xxxiii, 2-14.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, xvii, 85.

some mystics are inclined to the view that soul is a substance characterized by some definite attributes. But Suhrawardi does not accept this interpretation. He holds that the account of the soul in the traditions is only symbolical and, therefore, cannot be taken in a literal sense. Soul is neither eternal nor is it a substance but created (*hādith*) and is an attribute (*'ard*). It is a created thing which acts according to its nature; it keeps the body alive as long as it is associated with it; it is nobler than the body; it tastes death when it is separated from the body; just as the body meets death when it is separated from the soul.

There are, according to him, two stages of the soul. The first is that of the animal soul (*rūh al-hayawāni*) which is a subtle body. It is the source of movement in the human body and produces in it the capacity of receiving sensations from the outside world. This soul is common to all animals and is intimately connected with the digestive organism of the body. The other grade of the soul is what Suhrawardi calls the heavenly soul of man. It belongs to the world of command (*'ālam al-amr*). When it descends upon the animal soul, the animal soul is totally transformed. Now it acquires the characteristic of rationality and becomes capable of receiving inspiration (*ilhām*).⁵⁹

The appetitive self (*nafs*) is the source of all undesirable activities. It has two dominant impulses, rage and avarice. When in rage, it is like a circular substance which is by its nature always on the move. When avaricious, it is like the moth which, being not satisfied with a little light, throws itself headlong into the flame of the candle and burns itself to death. A man is able to attain true rank of manliness when he tries to purify his self (*nafs*) of these gross characteristics by bringing into play reason and patience.

The self passes through three different stages of development. The first stage of the Self is evil-prompting (*ammārah*), the second is repentant (*lawwāmah*), while the third is satisfied (*muṭma'innah*).⁶⁰

Heart (*qalb*) is a spiritual principle (*latīfah*) and has its locus in the heart of flesh. It comes into being as a result of mutual attraction between the human soul and the appetitive self. According to a tradition of the Holy Prophet (narrated by Ḥudhaifah), there are four kinds of hearts. The first is like a pure soil free from all kinds of vegetation. It is illumined as if by a shining lamp. It is the heart of a true believer (*mū'min*). The second is a dark, inverted heart which belongs to an unbeliever. The third belongs to a hypocrite and is enveloped in a veil. The last is a pure but many-faceted heart, with an inclination towards good as well as evil.⁶¹

Mystery (Sirr).—There is difference of opinion among the mystics with regard to the exact place which the secret occupies in the psychological make-up of man. According to some, it is prior to the soul (*rūh*) and posterior to the heart (*qalb*) as a spiritual principle. To others it is posterior to the soul, though higher and subtler than it. According to these mystics, *sirr* is the

⁵⁹ 'Awāriḥ al-Ma'āriḥ, p. 552.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 555-58.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 553.

locus of spiritual observation (*mushāhadah*), soul is the locus of love, and heart is the locus of gnosis (*ma'rifah*).⁶¹ Suhrawardi, however, thinks that secret (*sirr*) has no independent being like the soul and heart. It refers to a particular stage in the spiritual development of man. When man is able to free himself from the dark prison of the appetitive self, and looks towards the spiritual soul, his heart acquires a new characteristic which is called mystery (*sirr*). Similarly, at this stage his soul also attains a special position which again is called mystery. At this stage, man acquires the satisfied self and he acts and wills what God wishes him to do or will; he loses his individual power of action and freedom of choice and becomes a perfect servant (*'abd*).

Reason ('Aql).—It is the essence of the heavenly soul, its tongue, and its guide. The *Shaikh* quotes the usual traditional account that reason was the first creation of God. God asked it to come forward, to turn back, to sit, to speak, to become silent in turn, and it obeyed God's orders to the very letter. At this God said, "I swear by My majesty and power that I did not create a being dearer and more honourable than you. I shall be known, praised, and obeyed through you. I shall give as well as take through you. My pleasure and wrath shall follow deeds through you. People shall be rewarded or punished in accordance with you."

Some people think that reason develops from the study of sciences (*'ulūm*), especially those which are necessary and axiomatic. But Suhrawardi does not seem to agree to this, for, as he argues, there are many people who are not versed in any art or science and yet possess abundance of reason and common sense. It is the inborn capacity of man which helps him in acquiring different kinds of arts and sciences. There is placed in man a natural power which prompts him to acquire different kinds of knowledge. It is thus truly established that reason is the tongue of the soul which is the Word of God (*amr Allah*). From this flows the light of reason which then leads to the discovery of knowledge, science, and art. Some people think that reason is of two kinds. By the one, man looks to the affairs of this world, and its seat is brain. The other reason has its place in the heart (*qalb*) with which a man looks to the affairs of the other world. But, according to Suhrawardi, this division is meaningless and unnecessary. Reason as the vehicle of the soul (*rūh*) is one. When it is supported and supplemented by the light of the *Shari'ah* and spiritual perception (*baṣīrah*), it helps a man traverse the straight path of guidance and tread the middle course of the golden mean. Such a person gets knowledge of the heavenly spheres (*malakūt*) which is the innermost secret (*bāṭin*) of the universe. This illumination is the peculiar characteristic of the elect. Such men are capable of looking to the affairs of both the worlds, the world of matter and space and the world of spirit, the present world and the next world. When reason is not supplemented and supported by the *Shari'ah* and *baṣīrah*, a man may be

⁶¹ The *Shaikh* points out that the Qur'ān mentions only soul (*rūh*), self (*nafs*), reason (*'aql*), heart (*fu'ād*), but there is no reference to what Sufis call *sirr*. See *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, p. 558.

able to do well in this world, but he shall be deprived of the blessings of the world of spirit.⁶²

As the goal of the mystics is thoroughly practical, their excursion as novices into the psychological field is really for the purpose of securing a good ground on which to build an edifice of moral and spiritual development. Their aim is to attain a vision of God and enjoy communion with Him. This involves the necessity of the destruction of vices and elimination of imperfections, which often raise their head imperceptibly. The main cause is the wrong interpretation which a man puts on the revelations (*ilhāmāt*) he receives after undergoing mortification. A true mystic is one who is able to discriminate between the sources of these experiences (*khawāṭir*). With regard to the sources, he divides these experiences into four kinds: (1) those that flow from the appetitive self (*nafs*), (2) from God (*Ḥaq*), (3) from Satan, and (4) from the angels. There must be one of the following causes why a person cannot discriminate between the sources of experiences: (a) weakness in faith, (b) lack of proper knowledge with regard to the appetitive self and morals, (c) following the dictates of the appetitive self, and, lastly, (d) love of the world and material goals. Anyone who protects himself from all these causes will surely be able to distinguish between revelations from God and those from Satan. It is an established fact, according to Suhrawardi, that he whose source of livelihood is not pure cannot be safe from evil influences. An attitude of balanced detachment from the material world, mortification of flesh, and constancy in ascetic practices are essential for a true mystic, and it is only then that a mystic can hope to achieve the beatific vision.⁶³

State and Station (Ḥāl wa Maqām).—Suhrawardi thinks that most mystics confuse state with station because there is a great similarity between the two, and yet these must be distinguished, for otherwise there is a possibility of a misunderstanding the true nature of the mystic experience.

State (*ḥāl*) as a technical term is indicative of a psychological condition which is implied in its etymology, viz., its liability to change and progress, while station (*maqām*) implies a psychological condition which is relatively permanent. A psychological attitude that a mystic adopts at a particular stage of his mystic experience may be called state because the mystic is not yet used to it, but when later on through practice it becomes a permanent feature of his mystic life, it becomes a station. Take, for instance, the attitude of critical examination (*muḥāsabah*) of one's self from a moral point of view. When a mystic adopts this attitude first, it is a state which recurs at different periods; it comes and goes at intervals. By constant practice, however, he is able later on to make it a permanent feature of his normal life. Then it is a station. Again, the mystic tries to adopt the attitude of meditation or

⁶² *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Chap. 56, pp. 541-64.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Chap. 57, pp. 565-78.

contemplation (*murāqabah*) which becomes his state. Sometimes he is able to contemplate but, due to negligence and other distractions, he cannot find it possible to make it a permanent feature of his life. But steadily and gradually he gains his desired end and a day comes when contemplation becomes a station. Then he advances to the third stage, of observation (*mushāhadah*), where he perceives with his own eyes the secrets of the spiritual world. This, again, is first a state and only gradually by personal effort passes into a station. Thus it follows that "station" is a psychological state which is the result of personal effort, while "state" is the result of divine grace. Every moral attitude is characterized by both. Continence (*zuhd*), complete reliance on God (*tawakkul*), and submission to God's pleasure (*riḍā*), for instance, have both these aspects—at one stage, they are acquired after a constant and toilsome effort and, at another stage, they become a permanent feature of the life of a mystic due to divine grace.⁶⁴

Among the states Suhrawardī discusses love, feeling of nearness to God (*qurb*), bashfulness, reverence, union (*ittiṣāl*), contraction (*qabḍ*) and expansion (*bast*), annihilation (*fanā*) and abiding (*baqā*), etc.

Love.—There is an instinctive love in man for wife, wealth, and children, but the love at which the mystics aim is not instinctive. It flows from the heart of an individual after he has reached a particular level of moral development where all his capacities and tendencies are directed towards the realization of union with God. It is then that the sentiment of love appears in him and all inclinations are subordinated to it. He begins to feel love for God with the full force of instinctive impulse as well as conscious purpose. There are four kinds of love, according to Suhrawardī: (1) love of appetitive soul (*nafs*), (2) love of reason, (3) love of heart as a symbol of spiritual perception, and (4) love of soul (*rūḥ*). The love for God which is the ideal of the mystics combines all these loves.

When love appears in a mystic on the basis of the first three sources, it is called general love which is the result of direct apprehension (*mushāhadah*) of God's attributes. But when he passes from attributes to God's essence (*dhāt*), his love assumes a new dimension; it flows from his soul, and he is thus enabled to attain his goal. At this stage the mystic acquires and appropriates all the divine attributes. His position becomes what God says: "When I love a person I become his eyes and ears, etc."

Nearness (Qurb).—This is not physical nearness but only a psychological state in which the mystic feels a profound consciousness of intimacy with the Ultimate Reality. The Qur'ān says: "And prostrate and draw near (to Him)."⁶⁵ On this basis Suhrawardī thinks that attainment of nearness depends upon concentration on God which enables the individual to surpass levels of normal consciousness. There are two stages in this process. In the first place, the

mystic falls as if into a trance and is overcome by intoxication (*sukr*); his consciousness of self (*nafs*) disappears in the spiritual light of his soul (*rūḥ*). The next phase begins when both *nafs* and *rūḥ* regain their separate identities and the individual feels the consciousness of nearness intimately and yet, in spite of it, the consciousness of otherness, which is involved in his relation of slavehood (*'ubūdiyyah*) to God, is also conspicuously present. He quotes a mystic as saying: "By following the Sunnah one attains gnosis (*ma'rifah*) by observing the obligatory duties (*farā'id*) one reaches nearness, while by practising daily 'extra' prayers (*nawāfil*), one attains love."

Bashfulness (Hayā).—There is a saying of the Holy Prophet: "Be modest with God as it is due to Him." Suhrawardī explained it as follows: "He alone can be called modest in relation to God who is careful of his daily behaviour towards Him and remembers his death and the hereafter, with the result that his heart cools off towards this world and its entanglements."

But this modesty or bashfulness, being acquired, is a station (*maqām*), while bashfulness of a special quality is a state. In order to define it, Suhrawardī quotes certain sayings of some mystics. One says: "Bashfulness and attachment (*uns*) hover about the heart, and when they find that it is possessed of continence (*zuhd*) and piety (*war'*), they descend into it, otherwise they move away." This bashfulness is the submission of one's soul to God for maintaining the grandeur of His majesty (*jalāl*), while attachment is the soul's experience of pleasure in the perfection of His beauty (*jamāl*). When both bashfulness and attachment combine, it is the end of a mystic's ambition. According to abu Sulaimān, there are four different motives of action: fear, hope, awe, and bashfulness, and that action is the best which is motivated by the last.

Union (Ittiṣāl).—As Nūrī says, union is the revelation of the heart and the observation of secrets. There is a person who attains union through his personal efforts but loses this position as soon as there is slackness in his efforts. This is all but natural, for human efforts cannot be kept up at the same degree of intensity for a long time. Such a person is called *mufaṣṣal*. But the union that Suhrawardī commends is one which is the result not of personal effort but of divine grace. A person who receives it is called united (*wāṣil*). But there are several grades of this union.

There is a person who receives illumination from divine actions. To such a person, actions, his own as well as those of others, cannot be attributed, for his role is only passive. It is God who does all actions through him and he loses all freedom of choice or independence of action. Secondly, there is illumination from divine attributes. Here the recipient through revelation of divine attributes of majesty and beauty stays at the stations of awe (*haibah*) and attachment (*uns*). Then there is the illumination of divine essence (*dhāt*) which is a stage towards annihilation (*fanā*). A person at this stage is illumined with the divine light of faith and in the observation of God's face loses his individuality. This is a further stage in union (*ittiṣāl*) It

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Chap. 5, pp. 578-82.

⁶⁵ Qur'ān, xvi, 13.

is open only to a few, the *muqarrabin*, who enjoy nearness to God. Above it is the stage of spiritual perception (*baqq al-yaqin*) which is vouchsafed to very few persons and that only for the twinkling of an eye. It is the complete permeation of divine light in the recipient, so much so that his self (*nafs*) and heart both feel overpowered by it. And, in spite of its being a very rare experience attainable by a few select persons, the recipient feels that he is perhaps at some preliminary stage of his journey towards union. It is a long and toilsome journey for which perhaps a life of eternity may not suffice.

Contraction and Expansion (Qabḍ wa Bast).—These two emotional states are dependent for their appearance on certain preliminary conditions. They are usually experienced by a mystic when he is traversing the early stages of what Suhrawardi calls the states of special love.⁶⁶ They appear neither at the stage of general love, nor at the termination of the stage of special love. There are some emotional experiences in the state of general love which seem to correspond to contraction and expansion, but which in reality are nothing more than fear (*khauf*) and hope (*raja'*), while at other times they are what he calls grief (*hamm*) and pleasure (*nishāt*) which the experient confuses with contraction and expansion. Grief and pleasure emanate from the self (*nafs*) which is yet at the appetitive stage (*nafs-i ammārah*), a stage susceptible to the promptings of evil. *Hamm* is the feeling of dissatisfaction experienced at the failure of attaining the object of self-love while *nishāt* is the crest of the wave when the sea of self-indulgence is all astorm.

It is only when the mystic enters the next stage which is connected with the stage of special love and when his appetitive self becomes the repentant self (*nafs-i lawwāmah*) that the true moods of contraction and expansion make their appearance. The mood of contraction is the result of a psychological state when the self (*nafs*) is in ascendance, while the mood of expansion follows when the heart (as an organ of spiritual perception) is in ascendance. When the appetitive self becomes repentant (*lawwāmah*), there is a constant up and down in the urges towards evil; sometimes the urge towards good has the upper hand, while at others there is a tendency towards the other pole. The appearance of contraction and expansion corresponds to these two poles of the life of the self. *Nafs* is the veil of darkness and heart is the veil of light, and as long as an individual is in the sphere of these veils, he continues to experience these two moods of contraction and expansion. But as soon as he passes beyond these veils, these moods also disappear. In the experience of annihilation (*fanā'*) and abiding (*baqā'*), there is neither contraction nor expansion; they are intimately connected with the consciousness of selfhood.

According to some Sufis, the mystic first experiences contraction in his spiritual development and then it is followed by expansion. Suhrawardi also holds the same opinion. But there are certain situations where this order is

⁶⁶ As previously stated in this chapter, general love is the result of observation of divine attributes as distinguished from special love which appears when the mystic passes to the observation of divine essence (*dhāt*).

reversed. Under the mood of expansion, the experient feels overjoyed and happy. This happiness then filters down to the self (*nafs*) which is by nature inclined to interpret it appetitively so that this mood of expansion degenerates into an attitude of pleasure. At this stage the mood of contraction of necessity makes its appearance to bring the self to the state of sanity and equilibrium. If the self were to be free from a tendency towards the extremes, the mystic would be in a perpetual state of expansion (*bast*) and blessedness.

When the self passes into the last stage and becomes the satisfied soul, it attains complete harmony and passes beyond the bi-polar strife of good and evil. For such a person the moods of contraction and expansion are non-existent.

Annihilation and Abiding (Fanā' wa Baqā').—According to Suhrawardi, what most mystics describe as the state of annihilation (*fanā'*) is in reality not *fanā'* but something else. According to some, *fanā'* is the annihilation of all attachment, absence of all urges towards satisfaction of worldly desires, etc. This state, according to Suhrawardi, is what is implied in repentance of a true type (*taubat al-naṣīh*). To some *fanā'* is the annihilation of evil attributes and *baqā'*, the abiding of good attributes. This, again, according to Suhrawardi, is not true *fanā'* and *baqā'* but the result of moral transformation and purification (*tazkiyah*). There are many phases of *fanā'*, but the state of absolute *fanā'* is one where the Being of God is so overpowering and overwhelming that the consciousness of the finite self is totally obliterated. He quotes with approval the following event as a true representation of the state of annihilation (*fanā'*). A person greeted 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar while he was engaged in circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) of the Ka'bah to which he made no response. Later on he heard that the man had complained to someone at the absence of his response. At this 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar replied that in that state he was in communion with God and, therefore, did not have any consciousness of himself, not to speak of others.

There are two kinds of *fanā'*. The first is the apparent annihilation (*fanā' al-zāhir*). Here the mystic receives illumination through divine action with the result that freedom of action and choice disappears from him. He sees all actions, his as well as those of others, emanating directly from God. At the stage of the real annihilation (*fanā' al-bāṭin*), the mystic receives illumination from God's attributes and His essence (*dhāt*) with the result that he is overwhelmed by the divine *amr* so much so that he becomes totally immune from evil promptings of all kinds.

Some people in the state of annihilation lose all consciousness but, according to Suhrawardi, it is not an essential phase of this state.

In the state of abiding (*baqā'*), the mystic is restored the power of action which had been annihilated previously. God allows him full freedom to act as he likes and as the situation demands. In this state he is conscious of the obligations both to the world and to God and none of these becomes a hindrance to the other. His duty to the world does not make him oblivious of his duty

to God, nor does his communion with God debar him from turning his attention to the worldly matters.

The apparent annihilation (*fanā' al-zāhir*) is for those who are at the station of heart and are busy with emotional states, while the real annihilation (*fanā' al-bāṭin*) is for those who have passed beyond that station and attained union with God and who are what he calls *bi-Allah* (with God).⁶⁷

Union and Separation (Jam' wa Tafrīqah).—According to Junaid, nearness to God in ecstasy (*waḥd*) is union while the sense of selfhood (*bashriyyah*) and absence from God (*ghaibah*), i.e., awareness of self, is separation (*tafrīqah*). Suhrawardi accepts this position and says that the state where the mystic feels himself united with God (*taḥkīd al-tajrīd*) is denoted by union (*jam'*), while ordinary and normal state of consciousness, where the mystic feels the separate individuality of his own self as well as of other things, is called separation (*tafrīqah*). He adds that both these states are complementary; if we ignore union, we are landed in negation of the divine attributes (*ta'fīl*) and if we ignore separation, it leads to heresy (*ilhād*) and denial of God (*zandaqah*). Union is annihilation in God (*fanā' bi-Allah*), while separation (*tafrīqah*) is relationship of an obedient servant to God (*'ubūdiyyah*). Union is the result of man's possession of a soul, while separation is due to his possession of a body, and as long as the combination of the soul and the body persists, these two states must equally be emphasized in the life of the mystic.

There is another state which is called by mystics the union of the union (*jam' al-jam'*). When a mystic looks towards God's action, he is in the state of separation; when he looks towards God's attributes, he is in the state of union; and when he looks towards God's essence, he is in the state of union of the union.⁶⁸

Process of Self-Purification.—The ideal life, according to Suhrawardi, is the life of a perfect man who, in spite of the highest spiritual attainments, is yet conscious of his subservience to the Law of *Shari'ah*. But this stage of purification cannot be attained without a long process of self-mortification which demands self-examination, introversion, contemplation, patience, submission to God's will, and an attitude of complete detachment. The spark of life that is kindled within the heart of the mystic has a charm of its own, but it cannot be kept burning unless it is fed constantly on the oil that flows from continuous efforts towards asceticism. He receives wayward glimpses of the Infinite Beauty and is charmed, but they prove fleeting; he wants this experience to be broadened in extensity and deepened in intensity; he wants this experience to be stabilized and enriched—hence the necessity of the whole process of self-purification. The result is second birth out of the womb of spirit into the kingdom of the re-awakened spirit.

Suhrawardi gives the details of this process of gradual enlightenment. There

⁶⁷ *Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Chap. 61, pp. 623–53.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 655–57.

are four preliminary stages: Faith, repentance (*taubah*), continence, constancy in unblemished virtuous actions. These four must be supplemented by four other things which are essentials of asceticism, viz., minimum conversation, minimum food, minimum stay-at-home, and minimum contact with people.

Repentance (*taubah*) over past shortcomings and determination to avoid them in future are effective only when a person keeps a constant check over his thoughts and actions and is fully awake to all situations.⁶⁹ But to maintain this psychological state of repentance there are certain essential requirements. The first is self-examination (*muḥāsabah*) and the other is introversion or meditation (*murāqabah*). A person asked Wāṣṭī, "Which is the best virtuous action?" He said, "Outwardly self-examination and inwardly meditation; both are perfected by each other and help to maintain the attitude of repentance in the mystic which leads to concentration on and communion with God (*inābah*)."

The other thing that is essential for a mystic is patience (*ṣabr*) without which it is not possible for him to continue his life. This moral quality enables him to endure the vicissitudes of life. It is far more easy for an individual to show his mettle in adversity than in prosperity and hence the mystics have emphasized the importance of patience in a state of affluence which is regarded superior to patience shown in a state of want. The next state is that of *riḍā'* which is in a way the fruit of conversion (*taubah*) where the mystic enters the sphere of fear and hope. He feels shocked at the tendency towards evil and, being morally at a higher stage of development, he fears succumbing to these temptations. This feeling of fear, therefore, serves to keep him aware and make him watchful of any fall towards the satisfaction of his baser self. He is repentant and feels hopeful of ultimate victory over these evil forces. Thus, the life of the mystic moves between these two poles of fear and hope and gradually attains the stage of what Suhrawardi calls continence (*zuhd*), which in a way sums up all that he has achieved so far. The stage of continence, in other words, is the stage where the fruits of conversion (*taubah*) with its constituents of self-examination and meditation, patience and voluntary submission to God, piety, hope, and fear, all converge and make the mystic into a perfect ascetic who lives, moves, and has his being in complete communion with God and in total reliance (*tawakkul*) upon Him. This second stage of continence is distinct from poverty (*faqr*). A *faqīr* is one who is forced by circumstances to lead a life of poverty, while the continent person (*zāhid*), on the other hand, adopts this life of detachment of his own free-will even when the state of affluence is open to him.

The third stage is that of stability in morally virtuous actions. According to Suhrawardi, a *zāhid* who does not follow the Law of the *Shari'ah* is liable to be led astray. It is only through constancy in action for God (*'aml li-Allah*),

⁶⁹ He calls them scolding of one's self (*zaḥr*), warning (*intibāh*), and awakening (*bidāri*).

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remembrance (*dhikr*), recitation from the Qur'ān, prayers, and meditation (*murāqabah*) that a mystic can hope to attain his objective which is 'ubūdiyyah, perfect obedience to God. Sahl b. 'Abd Allah Tustari said about this stage: "When a man after passing through repentance, continence, and constancy in virtuous deeds reaches the stage of slavehood, he becomes totally passive towards the divine will and of his own free-will decides no longer to exercise his freedom of choice and action. Then he is granted full power of activity and freedom of action because he has identified himself with the will of God. His self-determination is equivalent to God-determination; the liability of his falling a prey to evil temptations and ignorance are totally obliterated."

According to Suhrawardi, the stage of giving up freedom of choice and action is the stage of annihilation, while the second stage where the mystic freely acts, because his will follows the will of God, is the state of abiding in God. It is the shedding of the mortal self for the eternal, material for the spiritual, human for the divine. The mystic at this stage is the perfect servant.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ 'Awāriḥ al-Ma'ārif, Chap. 59, pp. 585-600.

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