

The response to suffering that Islam advises is a complex one and is essentially different from either the Jewish or Christian viewpoint. In Islam, suffering is not a welcome way of proving one's faith, as in Christianity; neither is it something that should be avoided whenever possible, as in Judaism. Rather, Islam sees suffering as a necessary though unfortunate component of man's life that should be alleviated where possible and endured otherwise.

According to Bowker (1970), Islam advocates both an active and a passive response toward suffering: one should not only endure one's own suffering, but also perform good works to alleviate the suffering of others. Both responses are required of the true believer. The passive response to suffering is based on the idea of suffering as a test of one's belief in God. One must live through suffering, accepting it as God's will and having faith that God will not force any soul beyond its capacity. Nonetheless, one should not surrender to fatalism when facing suffering, but should always keep hope and faith in God. This opinion is implied by the Qur'an's argument against suicide: God's plans will justify and vindicate the righteous in the end, and to deny this by suicide is to blaspheme against him.

The active response to suffering is grounded in the Islamic belief that man is the cause of his own suffering. Islam considers good those things that rid the world of suffering. The man who helps others is a righteous man; the true believer is revealed by his good works as well as by his acceptance of suffering. Moreover, if suffering is punishment for sin, then doing good works will alleviate this punishment.

Within Islam there is a problematical contradiction between the belief in God's omnipotence and recognition of the existence of suffering. All suffering is believed to be part of God's overall design, and is thought to have a distinct and undeniable purpose. This has tended to lead to a determinist view of existence; the free will of man is questioned. Such a tendency was prominent in the early period of the development of Islam but was later challenged by several schools of thought. The Qur'an is ambiguous on this issue and points to both the designs of God and the free will of man as causes for suffering.

SEE ALSO Cosmology; Four Noble Truths; Holocaust, article on Jewish Theological Responses; Karman; Myth; Ordeal; Saṃsāra.

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JACK BEMPORAD (1987)

SUFISM. One of the truly creative manifestations of religious life in Islam is the mystical tradition, known as Sufism. The term derives most probably from the Arabic word for wool (*ṣūf*), since the early ascetics of Islam (*Ṣūfīs*) are said to have worn coarse woolen garments to symbolize their rejection of the world.

ORIGINS. Muslim mystical writers such as Abū Bakr al-Kalābādhī (d. 990/5) and 'Alī al-Hujwīrī (d. 1071/2?), nonetheless, have proposed a number of etymologies for *Ṣūfī*: *ṣaff*, "rank," implying that *Ṣūfīs* are an elite group among Muslims; *ṣuffah*, "bench," alluding to the People of the Bench, the intimates of the prophet Muḥammad who gathered at the first mosque in Medina; *ṣāfā'*, "purity," focusing on the moral uprightness essential to the *Ṣūfī* way of life. The resolution of the etymological debate is less critical than the recognition that the terms *Ṣūfī* and *Sufism* evoke complex layers of meaning in Islam, including the denial of the world, close association with the Prophet and his message, and a spiritual attainment that raises one to a rank of unique intimacy with God.

Some earlier Western scholars of Sufism concluded that mysticism is incompatible with the Muslim perception of an almighty, transcendent God with whom one shares little intimacy. In their opinion *Ṣūfī* mysticism was born of Islam's contact with other major world religions, especially Christianity and Buddhism. This theory is no longer considered viable for two reasons: First, the Qur'anic perception of the relationship of the individual to God is quite complex, highlighting both immanence and transcendence, and second, while no one denies that Islam evolved in a religiously pluralistic environment, one need not conclude that phenomena common to both Islam and other traditions are therefore derivative.

The vision of the God-man relationship in the Qur'an offers a study in contrasts. On the one hand God is the almighty creator and lord of the cosmos who sustains the universe at every moment (Qur'an 10:3 ff.); men and women are but servants—finite, vulnerable, and prone to evil (2:30 ff. and 15:26 ff.). God is both lawgiver and judge (surahs 81

and 82); whatever he wills comes to be (2:142; 3:47; 3:129; 5:40; 13:27). Servants of God are enjoined to embrace his will, not question its import, for men and women will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds. To breach the lord-servant (*rabb-ʿabd*) relationship leads easily to the cardinal sin of *shirk*, substituting some other power for that of God.

On the other hand the inaccessibility of the transcendent Lord must be understood in the context of those Qurʾānic verses that speak of his abiding presence both in the world and in the hearts of the faithful. For did he not actually breathe his own spirit into Adam at creation (Qurʾān 15:29, 38:72)? And is he not closer to man than his own jugular vein (50:16)? God's presence is all-pervasive, for to him belong the East and the West, the whole of creation,

. . . and wherever you turn, there is God's face. Truly God is omnipresent, omniscient. (2:115)

The Qurʾān enjoins on every Muslim the practice of recollecting God (33:41), for the peaceful heart is one in which the remembrance of God has become second nature (13:28–29). The most crucial Qurʾānic verse for Ṣūfīs, however, describes the establishment of the primordial covenant between God and the souls of men and women in a time before the creation of the cosmos:

And when your Lord took from the loins of the children of Adam their seed and made them testify about themselves (by saying), "Am I not your Lord?" They replied, "Yes, truly, we testify!" (7:172)

This unique event, which confirms the union between God and the souls of all men and women, has become known in Ṣūfī literature as the "Day of *Alast*," the day when God asked "Alastu bi-rabbikum" ("Am I not your Lord?"). The goal of every Muslim mystic is to recapture this experience of loving intimacy with the Lord of the Worlds.

The experience of mystical union need not, therefore, be seen as foreign to Islam. On the contrary, interior spiritual development becomes a concern at a relatively early date in the writings of important Qurʾānic commentators. Of the two traditional methods of Qurʾānic exegesis predominating in Islam, *tafsīr* emphasizes the exoteric elements of the text: grammar, philology, history, dogma, and the like, while *taʾwīl* stresses the search for hidden meanings, the esoteric dimensions of the Qurʾānic text. It is among Ṣūfīs (and Shīʿī Muslims) that *taʾwīl* has found special favor.

Early commentators such as Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d. 767) often combined literalist and allegorical methods depending on the nature of the verse in question. More important is the contribution of the sixth imam of the Shīʿah, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 765), who stressed not only the formal learning of the commentator but also his spiritual development. An individual's access to the deeper meanings of the Qurʾān is dependent, therefore, on his or her personal spiritual development. Since text and commentator interact dynamically as living realities, the Qurʾān reveals more of itself

to the extent that the Muslim makes progress in the spiritual life. The power of the text is such that for many later Ṣūfī commentators such as Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 896) simply hearing the recitation of the sacred text could induce ecstatic states in the soul of the listener.

The Ascetic movement. The early catalysts for the development of mysticism in Islam, however, were not all spiritual in nature. The dramatic social and political changes brought about by the establishment of the Umayyad dynasty in the mid-seventh century also played a pivotal role. The capital of the empire was moved from Medina to the more opulent and cosmopolitan Damascus, and the rapid spread of Islam introduced enormous wealth and ethnic diversity into what had originally been a spartan, Arab movement. In reaction to the worldliness of the Umayyads, individual ascetics arose to preach a return to the heroic values of the Qurʾān through the abandonment of both riches and the trappings of earthly power. The three major centers of the ascetic movement in the eighth and ninth centuries were Iraq, especially the cities of Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad; the province of Khorasan, especially the city of Balkh; and Egypt.

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. A leading figure of the period was Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, who was born in Medina in 642 but settled in Basra, where he died in 728. Ḥasan was renowned for his almost puritanical piety and exceptional eloquence. At the heart of his preaching was the rejection of the world (*al-dunyā*), which he described in a letter to the Umayyad caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (r. 717–720) as a venomous snake, smooth to the touch, but deadly. Ḥasan contrasts this world of transiency and corruption with the next world, which alone is a realm of permanence and fulfillment.

The extreme to which Ḥasan's anti-worldly stance led him is reflected most vividly in this same letter where he implies that the creation of the world was a mistake. From the moment God first looked on his handiwork, Ḥasan insists, God hated it. Such a theological position runs counter to the basic understanding of the value of creation that Islam shares with Judasim and Christianity. As *Genesis* 1:31 affirms, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." To speculate on the origins of Ḥasan's gnosticlike condemnation of the material world would take us beyond the objectives of this present article; suffice it to say that ambivalence toward materiality remained a significant aspect of later Islamic mysticism. The impact of gnostic ideas, however, continued to mold later Sufism, especially in the eastern provinces of the empire. The work of Henry Corbin has done much to open for the student of Sufism this complex world of Ṣūfī, and especially Ismaʿīlī, gnosis.

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's asceticism, although world-denying, did not entail the total abandonment of society or social structures. On the contrary, Ḥasan functioned as the moral conscience of the state and fearlessly criticized the power structures when he felt they overstepped moral bounds. He eschewed the role of the revolutionary and refused to sanc-

tion movements designed to overthrow irreligious politicians. In Socratic fashion, Ḥasan preferred to work for the ruler's change of heart through persuasion, not violence. Ḥasan's dedication to ascetic ideals did not, moreover, lead him to forsake family life. He married and raised a family, albeit in straitened circumstances. While Ḥasan al-Baṣrī is considered a pivotal figure in the early development of Sufism, he is also noted as a transmitter of traditions (*ḥadīth*) and as a defender of human freedom in the early theological debates of Islam.

Ibrāhīm ibn Adham. While there are some extant written materials attributable to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, textual sources for the lives and teachings of many early ascetics are of questionable value. Often the dearth of authentic historical sources makes it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between facts and pious embellishments. A prime example is the life of the famous ascetic Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 770?). Ibrāhīm was said to be a prince of the formerly Buddhist city of Balkh; he gave up his throne in order to pursue the path of asceticism. Some Western commentators have pointed to the possible parallel between his life story and the Buddha legend.

The fables about Ibrāhīm highlight his generosity, altruism, and, most important, his complete trust in God (*tawakkul*). Ibrāhīm's quietism, however, did not lead him to depend on others for his subsistence. He preferred to work and scorned those who relied on begging. It would seem to be fact that he served in two naval battles against the Byzantines; while fighting in the second, he lost his life.

Many tales of Ibrāhīm's life stand out because of the ascetic practices they describe. He cherished ridicule and humiliation; more startling is his joyous acceptance of physical abuse—bloody beatings, being dragged by a rope tied round his neck, being urinated upon, and the like. Clearly such stories are later additions by hagiographers. Nonetheless these grotesque, seemingly masochistic acts are accepted as integral elements of his life history by many Ṣūfī writers. And such tales have helped to shape later authors' understandings of asceticism in this early period of Sufism.

Rābī'ah al-'Adawīyah. The actual transition from asceticism to true love mysticism in Islam is documented in the spiritual theory of one of the first great female Ṣūfis, Rābī'ah al-'Adawīyah (d. 801). Sold into slavery as a child, she was eventually freed because of the depth of her piety. Rābī'ah's focus was not on asceticism as an end in itself, but rather on its ability to help foster a loving relationship with God. Asceticism was only one of the means necessary for the attainment of union; to make ascetic practices themselves the goal, and not intimacy with the Beloved, was, in her estimation, a distortion of the Ṣūfī path.

The love Rābī'ah nurtured was completely altruistic; neither fear of Hell nor desire for Paradise were allowed to divert her gaze from the Beloved.

Rābī'ah's vision of altruistic love (*maḥabbah*) and mystical intimacy (*uns*) are preserved in beautiful prayers and

poems attributed to her. These represent some of the earliest aesthetic expressions of mystical experience in Islam.

One particularly vivid body of fables scattered throughout the Muslim sources centers on the spiritual rivalry between Rābī'ah al-'Adawīyah and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. The problem with these tales, however, is that they describe a relationship that was historically improbable. Ḥasan died in 728, when Rābī'ah was at best in her early teens. Despite its questionable historicity, the Ḥasan-Rābī'ah cycle provides a valuable insight into male-female relationships in early Ṣūfī circles.

In the vast majority of these didactic tales Rābī'ah's spiritual insight and emotional maturity set her far above her male rival, Ḥasan, whose naiveté and presumptuous self-confidence are held up to ridicule. On occasion the conflict is described in actual male-female terms, with Ḥasan and his male Ṣūfī companions insisting that no woman has the ability to match a man's spiritual perfection. While Rābī'ah proves them wrong beyond the shadow of a doubt, there remains the fact that her success is due partially to the abandonment of the traditional female role and the assumption of more male characteristics. For example, she is said to have repeatedly refused Ḥasan's marriage proposals and remained celibate and childless throughout her life.

Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī. A number of early Ṣūfis such as Rābī'ah evinced a sophistication of esthetic expression and theoretical speculation that laid a solid foundation for later work by Ṣūfī mystics. Pivotal figures such as Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 859) were both poetic stylists and theoreticians. Although no complete text of his mystical writings has survived, many of his logia, prayers, and poems have been preserved by later writers. He was master of the epigram and an accomplished poetic stylist in Arabic. The full force of his literary talent comes to light, however, in his prayers.

The child of Nubian parents, Dhū al-Nūn was born in Upper Egypt at the end of the eighth century. While many of the factual details of his life are often indistinguishable from pious fiction, a reliable kernel of historical data emerges. Although he lived in Cairo, Dhū al-Nūn traveled extensively, and during one of his sojourns in Baghdad, he ran afoul of the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847–861). The confrontation was sparked by his refusal to accept the Mu'tazilī doctrine of the createdness of the Qur'ān. For this act of defiance, Dhū al-Nūn was imprisoned; during his heresy trial, however, he so affected the caliph with his *apologia* for the Ṣūfī life that al-Mutawakkil released him unharmed.

The preserved sayings of Dhū al-Nūn attest to the profundity of his mystical insight and to the skill with which he developed terminology and structures to analyze the mystical life. He excelled at elucidating the nuances of the various stages (*maqāmāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*) encountered by the mystic along the Ṣūfī path. To him is attributed the first construction of a coherent theory of *ma'rifah*, spiritual gnosis, which he contrasts with *'ilm*, the more traditional path of discursive reason.

A pivotal aspect of Dhū al-Nūn's mysticism is the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the "conjunction of opposites." The God who pours out his love upon the faithful Ṣūfī wayfarer is, in Dhū al-Nūn's view, the same God who afflicts his lover with pain and torment. God is, at one and the same time, *al-muhyī*, "the giver of life," and *al-mumīt*, "the one who kills." Legend has it that at his death the following words were found inscribed on his forehead:

This is the beloved of God,
who died in God's love.
This is the slain of God,
who died by God's sword.

Mystical ecstasy. The evolution of ascetic and theoretical principles to guide the Ṣūfī wayfarer, and the growing sophistication of aesthetic expressions of love mysticism were not the only signs of a maturing mystical tradition in Islam. An additional area of creative exploration by a number of ninth- and tenth-century Ṣūfīs centered on refining the understanding of what actually constitutes the goal of mystical experience.

Rābi'ah's articulation of the primacy of love in mystical union provided a general framework for discussion; it did not, however, resolve the most vexing question. Does union entail the complete obliteration of the lover's soul in the Beloved or is the object of mysticism a loving relationship in which both lover and Beloved preserve their independence? Expressed more technically, of what do the experiences of mystical annihilation (*fanā*) and persistence in union (*baqā*) consist?

Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī. The debate was brought to a head in dramatic fashion by a number of mystics whose ecstatic utterances provoked and scandalized the traditional elements both within and without the Ṣūfī movement. One of the earliest ecstasies was Abū Yazīd (known also as Bāyazīd) Ṭāyfur ibn 'Isā al-Bisṭāmī (d. 874), who lived in seclusion at Bisṭām in the province of Qūmis. Few details of his life are known, but it is said that he was initiated into the subtleties of mystical union by one Abū 'Alī al-Sindī and that he developed a friendship with Dhū al-Nūn.

Muslim hagiographers and spiritual writers have preserved, nevertheless, many of the ecstatic utterances (*shataḥāt*) attributed to Abū Yazīd. These sayings differ from earlier Ṣūfī expressions of union because of their seeming affirmation of the total identification of lover and Beloved. Cries of "Subḥānī!" ("Glory be to me!") and "Mā a'zaMā sha'nī!" ("How great is my majesty!") shocked the uninitiated because they smacked of *shirk*, associationism, and aroused many Muslims' suspicions that Sufism was a heretical movement.

In a famous text, considered spurious but existing in several versions, Abū Yazīd vividly describes his reenactment of the Prophet's night journey (*mi'rāj*) as a mystical ascent during which his "I" is gradually absorbed into the "He" of the Beloved. Eventually "He" and "I" become interchange-

able, for in reality the attributes of Abū Yazīd's essence have been subsumed into God.

This particular understanding of mystical annihilation (*fanā*) is characteristic of Abū Yazīd's mystical theory. Complete *fanā* is attained only after the most arduous stripping away of one's attributes. Nothing is spared, neither personality nor spiritual attainments. Abū Yazīd compares the process to the snake's struggle to slough off its skin, or to the blacksmith's violent manipulation of red-hot iron. The mystic experiences the most dramatic shifts of emotion and spiritual experience; the soul vacillates between the expansive rapture of *baṣṭ*, in which the self appears literally to fill a room, and the implosion of *qabd*, in which the self seems reduced to the size of the tiniest sparrow.

Because of the apparent extremism of his ecstatic utterances, al-Bisṭāmī was revered by later Ṣūfīs as the advocate of the path of intoxication (*sukr*) in contrast with the path of sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) associated with the famous Baghdad Ṣūfī Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 910). The division between sober and intoxicated Ṣūfīs was to remain an important one throughout the history of Islamic mysticism.

Al-Ḥallāj. Despite their dramatic power, the ecstatic utterances of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī are overshadowed by those of the most famous of the Baghdad mystics, Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj. He was born in 857 at al-Ṭūr, in the Iranian province of Fārs. His initiation into Sufism began early in life, while he was still a teenager. For more than twenty years he lived in seclusion and was trained by a number of the great Ṣūfī masters of the period: Sahl al-Tustarī, 'Amr al-Makkī, and al-Junayd.

Eventually, however, al-Ḥallāj broke away from his teachers and became an itinerant preacher. His wanderings led him through Arabia and Central Asia to the Indian subcontinent. He came into contact with sages and mystics from a number of other religious traditions who expanded the horizons of his own religious experience. As he continued to mature spiritually al-Ḥallāj attracted increasingly larger numbers of disciples. He became known as *ḥallāj al-asrār*, "the carder of consciences," a play on the family name al-Ḥallāj, which meant "cotton carder."

The core of al-Ḥallāj's preaching was a call to moral reform and to the experience of intense union with the Beloved. Among al-Ḥallāj's poetic and prose writings, one phrase stands out as the paradigmatic expression of mystical ecstasy, his famous "Anā al-Hāqq!" ("I am the divine Truth!"). To the ears of non-Ṣūfīs and of more sober elements in Sufism, al-Ḥallāj's self-divinizing cry was tantamount to *shirk*, if not a bald rephrasing of the Christian notion of incarnation (*ḥulūl*).

It is very doubtful that al-Ḥallāj wished to be considered primarily a metaphysician. Consequently the charges leveled against him were due to misperceptions of the intent of his mystical expressions. It would remain for later Ṣūfīs to articulate philosophically a doctrine of identity between God and

creation. Al-Ḥallāj's expressions of ecstasy, on the contrary, are part of a tradition whose main goal was to celebrate the transforming power of the experience of mystical union with the Beloved; secondarily the concern was to contribute to the growing body of technical terminology and theoretical speculation about the nature of mysticism.

Many scholars have considered al-Ḥallāj's proclamation of unique intimacy with the divine to be one of the main causes of his eventual imprisonment and execution at the hands of the Abbasid authorities. There is no doubt that al-Ḥallāj's ecstatic utterances and his reinterpretation of certain elements of Islamic ritual practice were objects of violent criticism by many of the religious hierarchy. His execution, however, was as much the result of politics as of mysticism.

Al-Ḥallāj's insistence on announcing publicly his vision of mystical union transgressed a cardinal principle of the great Ṣūfī masters of his generation. The accomplished mystic was never to divulge to the uninitiated experiences that were beyond their comprehension; the true nature of union was to be discussed only with one's fellow adepts or not at all. Such elitism did not conform to al-Ḥallāj's more populist notion of mysticism. For his lack of prudence he was ostracized by his former teacher al-Junayd and was branded a political threat and rabble-rouser by the secular authorities.

Finally, al-Ḥallāj found himself embroiled in caliphal politics during the reign of al-Muqtadir (908–932). He was lionized and defended by one vizier and condemned by the next, protected by the caliph's mother, but finally sentenced to death by the son. Al-Ḥallāj spent about eight years in prison before he was eventually executed in 922. The gruesome details have been recorded by his disciples: Al-Ḥallāj was flogged, mutilated, exposed on a gibbet, and finally decapitated. The body was then burned. For al-Ḥallāj, however, death was not a defeat; on the contrary, he desired fervently to become a martyr of love. Al-Ḥallāj was convinced that it was the duty of the religious authorities to put him to death, just as it was his duty to continue to preach aloud the unique intimacy he shared with the divine:

Kill me, my trusted friends,
for in my death is my life!
Death for me is in living, and
life for me is in dying.
The obliteration of my essence
is the noblest of blessings.
My perdurance in human attributes,
the vilest of evils.

The creativity of al-Ḥallāj's work is reflected perhaps most strikingly in his ingenious use of the science of opposites. In his *Kitāb al-tawāsīn* al-Ḥallāj describes his two role models in mysticism as Iblīs (the devil) and Pharaoh. Both suffered condemnation at the hands of God, al-Ḥallāj attests, yet neither swerved from his appointed course. The Qur'anic text affirms on several occasions that Iblīs, who was chief of the angels and the most dedicated of monotheists, was com-

manded by God to bow to the newly created Adam. He refused, despite God's threat to condemn him forever, and chose, like al-Ḥallāj, to become a martyr of love.

My refusal is the cry, "Holy are you!"
My reason is madness, madness for you.
What is Adam, other than you?
And who is Iblīs to set apart one from the other?

All three are outcasts who have transgressed the law to attain a higher goal. Yet the reason for the transgression is each one's love relationship with God, which functions as a higher law for the perfected Ṣūfī.

My friend and my teacher are Iblīs and Pharaoh. Iblīs was threatened with the fire, but he did not go back on his preaching. And Pharaoh was drowned in the Red Sea, but he did not acknowledge any mediator at all. . . . And if I were killed, or crucified, or if my hands and feet were cut off, I would not go back on my preaching.

'*Ayn al-Quḍāt*. An even more subtle treatment of the science of opposites (*coincidentia oppositorum*) is evident in the work of another martyr-mystic of Islam, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt al-Hamadhāni, who was born in western Iran in 1098. He proved himself a brilliant student as a young man, mastering the traditional Islamic religious sciences. He was also recognized for the quality of his literary style in both Arabic and Persian. The most influential Ṣūfī master in his spiritual formation was Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (d. 1128), a preeminent teacher and the brother of the most famous mystic-theologian in Islam, Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). Aḥmad's own contribution to Sufism is considerable, especially his classic treatise on mystical love, *Sawānīh*.

As 'Ayn al-Quḍāt's fame grew, his disciples increased and, like al-Ḥallāj, he soon incurred the wrath of the religious and political authorities. He was accused of a number of heretical ideas, the most serious being the claim that there was a complete identity between the Creator and his creation. Imprisoned in Baghdad, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt was later transferred to his native city of Hamadhān where he was put to death in grisly fashion in 1131; he was only thirty-three years of age.

The conjunction of opposites, according to 'Ayn al-Quḍāt, is reflected in the very notion of the God of Islam. One need look only to the Muslim confession of faith (Shahādah) for confirmation: "Lā ilāha illā Allāh" ("There is no god but God!"). *Lā ilāha* ("there is no god") is the realm of the malevolent divine attributes, which spawn falsehood and which seduce the soul of the mystic away from the truth.

To pass from *lā ilāha* to the realm of *illā Allāh* ("but God") requires that the Ṣūfī wayfarer confront God's chamberlain, who stands guard at the threshold of *illā Allāh*. Who is this chamberlain? None other than the devil Iblīs.

In the same way that al-Ḥallāj in his *Kitāb al-tawāsīn* purports that the devil Iblīs is a model of piety, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt employs this paradoxical motif to dramatize the

tension of opposites in God. He links Iblīs with Muḥammad, claiming that both are but different aspects of the same divine reality. Iblīs is described as the black light of straying while Muḥammad is the white light of truth and gnosis; both spring, however, from the same attribute of God, namely his power. Muḥammad is the guiding light of God's power while Iblīs is its destructive fire.

Perhaps the most creative symbols employed by 'Ayn al-Quḍāt to capture the conflict within God are those of the curl and the mole that lay upon the face of the Beloved. The lock of hair that hangs in an arrogant curl over the cheek of the Beloved enjoys a privileged state of intimacy. Instead of driving away the seeker from the threshold of *illā Allāh* with the sword of divine power, or deceiving the soul with black light, the Iblīs-curl distracts and seduces the Ṣūfī with the amorous gestures of the coquette, thus entangling the soul in lesser spiritual attainments.

The image of the Iblīs-curl must, of course, have its Muḥammad counterpart. In addition to the curl, the mistress possesses another mark of beauty, a black mole on the cheek that is equated with Muḥammad. Both curl and mole, however, spring from the face of God; the curl is seducer while the mole is the guide to Truth.

All of the paradoxical images used by 'Ayn al-Quḍāt—the tension between curl and mole, black light and white light, between *lā ilāha* and *illā Allāh*—point to the fact that God himself is the source of paradoxes. Moreover 'Ayn al-Quḍāt is convinced that both poles of the paradox must be experienced if one is to attain true spiritual gnosis:

Unbelief and faith are two veils beyond the throne between God and the servant, because man must be neither unbeliever nor Muslim.

MYSTICAL LITERATURE. The science of opposites, with its rich symbolism and provocative speculation, appealed only to a small number of Ṣūfīs because of the level of intellectual sophistication it demanded and because of its esoteric quality. In contrast, beginning in the late ninth century, a number of texts began to appear that were aimed at a broader spectrum of the Muslim faithful and functioned as training guides for men and women interested in cultivating mystical experience.

The manual tradition. The emphasis of the manuals was not on the arcane dimensions of Sufism, but on its accessibility and its conformity with Islamic orthodoxy.

One of the earliest manuals addressed to a Ṣūfī novice is the *Kitāb al-ri'āyah* (Book of consideration) of Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥārith ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī (d. 857). He is remembered particularly for his skill in developing the examination of conscience as an effective tool for advancement in the spiritual life.

Among the classics of this genre of religious literature in Sufism are the *Kitāb al-ta'arruf* (Book of knowledge) of Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Kalābādhī (d. 990 or 995), the

Kitāb al-luma' (Book of concise remarks) of Abū Naṣr 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Alī al-Sarraj (d. 988), *Al-risālah al-qushayrīyah* (The Qushayrīan letter) of Abū al-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qushayrī (d. 1074), the *Kashf al-mahjūb* (Unveiling of the veiled) of 'Alī ibn 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Hujwīrī (d. 1071/2?), and the *Qūt al-qulūb* (Nourishment of the heart) of Abū Ṭālib Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Aṭīyah al-Ḥārithī al-Makkī (d. 996).

Spiritual guidance. Doubtless the primary goal of these manuals was to serve as guides for novices newly embarked upon the Ṣūfī path. The literary structure reflected this; often the conceit was that of the master writing to, or answering the questions of, a particular disciple. The internal composition of the texts varies considerably from one author to the next. Some are collections of insights strung together like random pearls; others, such as the *Kashf al-mahjūb* of al-Hujwīrī, present a coherent and systematic analysis of Sufism.

Earlier Ṣūfīs had relied heavily on the personal relationship of master (shaykh, pir) with disciple (*murid*, *ṭālib*) to provide the guidance necessary for spiritual progress. But as the number both of disciples and of famous shaykhs increased, written manuals became invaluable supplements to personal spiritual direction. The manuals preserved the teachings of many of the greatest Ṣūfī guides and made their wisdom available to a larger number of the brethren. While Ṣūfī manuals never supplanted the master-disciple relationship, they did attain a permanent place of influence and honor among Muslim mystics.

In addition to providing spiritual guidance, the Ṣūfī manuals also addressed a number of subsidiary issues of critical importance. The first was the need to legitimize the place of Sufism in the broader spectrum of Islamic religious life. To this end authors such as al-Kalābādhī and al-Qushayrī made deliberate efforts to demonstrate that Sufism was in conformity with the orthodox theological synthesis, namely Ash'arism. Al-Sarrāj as well took pains to prove that Sufism was completely in tune with the Qur'ān, *ḥadīth*, and Islamic legal tradition (*sharī'ah*).

A further cause of heightened tension between Ṣūfīs and the champions of orthodoxy concerned the possible conflict between the roles of Ṣūfī saint and traditional prophet. Sunnī Islam presumed that prophethood was the pinnacle of spiritual perfection, exemplified by Muḥammad himself. To substantiate this claim, Muslim theology asserted that all prophets possessed the special gift of impeccability (*'iṣmah*); each had the power, moreover, to perform a unique miracle (*mu'jizah*) in order to verify his mission.

Some Ṣūfīs, on the other hand, suggested that sainthood was an even more elevated spiritual rank than prophethood because it presumed a unique intimacy with the divine. Most manual writers, however, evolved a less polemical stance, one designed to reinforce the mainstream character of Sufism. They concluded that the highest level of saint-

hood was only the first level of prophethood. While the prophet was impeccable from birth, the saint was only protected (*mahfūz*) from committing serious sin, and this only after he or she had attained sainthood. Whereas the miracles of the prophets were unique and indisputable, the miracles of the saints (*karāmāt*) were repeatable and subject to satanic influence.

A common objective of all the Sūfī manuals is to analyze in depth the various stages and states that make up the Sūfī path. Stages are considered by spiritual writers to be levels of permanent growth in the mystical life; states represent the more transient emotional and psychological experiences associated with the various stages. The process of scrutinizing in analytic fashion the stages and states of mystical experience resulted in the creation of a sophisticated technical vocabulary that provided a basis for common discourse among Sūfis of every generation.

The exploration of the stages and states of mystical experience resulted, as well, in the development of highly refined theories of spiritual psychology. Sūfī psychologists aimed first and foremost at providing trainees with the means to gain control over the *nafs*, or lower soul (see surah 12:53), which was identified as the satanic element within men and women. Al-Makkī describes the *nafs* as arrogant, deceptive, envious, a beast that wallows in excess.

The Sūfī novice was not helpless, however, in his confrontation with the *nafs*. Men and women possessed an angelic force (*malak*) sent by God to do battle with the *nafs* in the arena of the heart (*qalb*). As al-Muḥāsibī indicates, both *malak* and *nafs* employ similar weapons, notably the various internal impulses (*khawāṭir*) that arise in the heart urging one to good or evil.

On occasion the various movements in the heart are quickly identifiable either as the satanic whisperings (*waswasah*) of the *nafs* or as the impulses of the *malak*. Much more difficult, however, are those times when the origin of the *khawāṭir* is unclear. For the devil-*nafs* excels at deluding the soul of the Sūfī and seducing him or her to actions that, while not sinful, deflect the Sūfī from the road to the greater good. It is in dealing with these spiritual dilemmas that the techniques of Sūfī psychology articulated in the manual tradition demonstrate their subtlety and true sophistication.

Al-Ghazālī. The effort of many of the manual writers to legitimize Sufism's place in Islam culminates in the work of a man whose contribution to the Islamic religious sciences ranges far beyond mysticism. Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī was born at Ṭūs near the modern Iranian city of Mashhad in 1058. His early training was in jurisprudence (*fiqh*), but he soon excelled in theology (*kalām*) and eventually in Arabic philosophy (*falsafah*), which was exemplified by the Neoplatonism of al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna).

A recurring theme in al-Ghazālī's work is the relationship between reason and revelation. The great Arab philoso-

phers tilted the balance in favor of reason, insisting that truth was attainable without the aid of revelation. The conclusions arrived at by philosophers, however, did not always conform to the standard orthodoxy derived from the Qur'ān. For example, dogmas on the creation of the world from nothing, the resurrection of the dead, God's knowledge of particulars as well as universals—all were called into question by the philosophers.

Al-Ghazālī championed the truth of revelation over that of philosophical speculation. He was not, like some fundamentalist extremists, antiphilosophical however. On the contrary, al-Ghazālī's fascination with philosophical logic is manifested in many of his works, for he was convinced that philosophy could contribute substantially to Muslims' understanding of law and theology. It was only against the excesses of philosophy that he railed in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifah* (The incoherence of the philosophers), not against philosophical reasoning per se.

Al-Ghazālī's influence was enhanced by the political support he received from the ruling authorities, especially the Seljuk vizier Nizām al-Mulk, who appointed him professor at the Nizāmīyah *madrasah* in Baghdad in 1091. It was during his professorship at Baghdad, however, that a personal crisis radically transformed the future shape of al-Ghazālī's career. Whereas his earlier concerns had been with more theoretical and speculative issues, the focus now shifted to the role of religious experience in the life of the Muslim.

In 1095 al-Ghazālī experienced what can only be called an emotional and psychological breakdown. As he described it later in his autobiography, *Al-munqidh min al-dalāl* (The deliverer from error), his state of anxiety left him almost catatonic. He suffered terrible doubts about his ability to arrive at any religious truth; more important he was overwhelmed by the emptiness of external religious ritual and law. Al-Ghazālī abandoned his teaching career and sought a solution to his doubts in Sufism, which, he hoped, would provide him with the personal experience of truth or *dhawq* (lit., "taste").

The success of his quest is attested by his later writings, which foster the integration of an interior life with the life of external observance. Alone, each leads either to excess or to spiritual myopia; together, however, they constitute a life of balance and dynamic spiritual growth. To this end al-Ghazālī wrote what was to be his most influential work, the *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn* (Revivification of the religious sciences), which epitomizes his vision of Islamic life and which remains an integral part of the training of Muslim scholars to this day.

After eleven years of absence from teaching, al-Ghazālī was persuaded to return once again to the classroom by the vizier Fakhr al-Mulk, son of his late patron, Nizām al-Mulk. His second career lasted only several years, for he retired to a Sūfī convent at Ṭūs before his death in 1111. The measure of his impact on the intellectual life of Islam is impossible

to calculate. In the history of Sufism, however, he is especially remembered for having contributed substantially to the acceptance of mystical experience as an integral dimension of Islamic religion.

Other genres. In addition to the Šūfī manuals, other important genres of mystical literature developed in the classical period. Fables, epigrams, epic poems, poetry, aphorisms, all were creative vehicles for mystical expression. Early Qurʾān commentators and street preachers had focused on the lives of the prophets for inspiration. This spawned the *Qīṣaṣ al-anbīyaʾ* (Tales of the prophets), collections of lively didactic stories, often with moral themes. In similar fashion the lives of famous Šūfīs were assembled by mystical writers into biographical dictionaries, which evolved into important companion volumes to the manuals.

Despite the fact that authors rarely distinguished between historical fact and pious fiction, these hagiographic compendia are crucial for current knowledge of the lives and teachings of the great masters of classical Sufism. Individual compilers, moreover, offer important critiques of a number of Šūfī movements, mystical theories, and the like.

The first systematic history of the lives of Šūfī mystics is ascribed to Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Azdī al-Sulamī (d. 1021). His *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyyah* (Generations of the Šūfīs) became the basis for the expanded versions of two later Šūfīs, the *Ṭabaqāt al-šūfiyyah* of Abū Ismāʿīl Abd Allāh Anṣarī (d. 1089) and the *Nafāḥat al-uns* (Wafts of pleasure) of Nūr al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad Jāmī (d. 1492). The most comprehensive work of Šūfī hagiography, however, is the prodigious, multivolume *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ* (Necklace of saints) of Abū Nuʾaym al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1037). Later writers continued the tradition, including Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (d. 1221?) with his *Tadhkirat al-awliyāʾ* (Biographies of the saints).

ʿAbd Allāh Anṣarī and the epigram. Many of these authors excelled at more than one genre of mystical literature. ʿAbd Allāh Anṣarī of Herat, a city in present-day Afghanistan, for example, is noted for important works on mystical theory but most especially for his epigrams, the *Munajat* (Intimate conversations). This tiny book, a milestone in Šūfī literature, is the *vade mecum* of countless Persian-speaking Muslims. Although the text appears deceptively simple it contains the kernel of Anṣarī's complex vision of mystical union.

To appreciate Anṣarī's contribution to Islamic mysticism, it is essential to place him in the context of the theological debates that resulted in the classical synthesis of al-Ashʿarī (d. 935) and his school. Controversies arose in the ninth century over differing interpretations of the Qurʾānic verses dealing with freedom and predestination, the nature of divine attributes, and the origins of good and evil. The most influential group defending radical freedom and moral responsibility were the Muʿtazilah, whose views were strongly influenced by Greek thought. Since human beings are re-

sponsible for their deeds, they insisted, God cannot be blamed in any way for human turpitude. Reward and punishment are absolutely just because God himself is just. Furthermore God's justice requires that actions have an intrinsic moral worth that can be recognized by men and women.

The logic of the Muʿtazilī view, nevertheless, was challenged by verses in the Qurʾān itself that emphasize God's complete omnipotence and question human beings' ability to determine their fates, for God "leads astray whomever he wills and guides whomever he wills" (16:93). A solution proposed by al-Ashʿarī and his followers was to choose neither radical freedom nor complete predestination, but rather to affirm both as true. This use of paradox as a hermeneutical tool permeates both theology and mysticism in Islam.

It must be admitted, however, that al-Ashʿarī's views leaned more in the direction of predestinarianism than of freedom. He was a staunch proponent of God's complete control over human actions; freedom is little more than God's willingness to allow people to participate in their determination of their fate. It is God alone who first creates human actions and then ascribes them to humans.

Even secondary causality is called into question because to assert that nature functions independently according to its own laws seems to ascribe to nature an independent power separate from God, a position smacking of *shirk*. In defending God's absolute omnipotence, furthermore, al-Ashʿarī was obliged to deny the intrinsic goodness or evil of human actions. An action is good or evil only because God has determined it to be so. Lying, for example, is evil because God has so decreed; if he changed his mind lying would be right.

Anṣarī's theological views were even more conservative than those of al-Ashʿarī. As a follower of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855), Anṣarī defended the most literalist interpretations of the Qurʾān. Whereas the Muʿtazilah allegorized the anthropomorphic descriptions of God's attributes in the Qurʾān, and the Ashʿarīyah affirmed their existence, albeit in a way beyond the grasp of human reason, Anṣarī and the Ḥanabīlah insisted that the verses must be taken at face value. Consequently his positions appeared even more paradoxical than those of the more moderate Ashʿarīyah.

As Anṣarī indicates in the *Munājāt*, God commands people to obey him and then prevents their compliance. Adam and Eve, for example, are seduced not by Satan, but by God. Their seduction is predestined and they are obliged to participate. Despite the seeming victimization of humans by God, however, the Šūfīs are not to conclude that they are absolved of responsibility for their evil deeds. Paradoxical as it may sound, Anṣarī recommends that the true attitude of the devoted mystic is that taken by Adam and Eve when they were confronted with the tragedy of their sin. They realized they were God's pawns but blamed themselves for the deed: "And they both said, 'O Lord, we have wronged ourselves!'" (surah 7:23).

Anṣarī moves naturally in the *Munājāt* from a discussion of the paradoxical tension between freedom and predes-

tionation to that between good and evil. And he reflects an attitude toward ethics that is characteristic of many of the ecstatic Ṣūfīs: Whatever God wills for the mystic, be it blessing or curse, intimacy or separation, is good because it comes from God. Such a stance runs counter to the mainstream ethics of Sunnī Islam, which locate the guide for human action and the determination of moral worth in the synthesis of Qurʾān, *ḥadīth*, and *sharīʿah*.

For the perfected Ṣūfī, however, there is a higher law, namely the love relationship, that determines action and provides the means to evaluate the goodness or evil of particular behavior. The upshot is that, for the Ṣūfī elite, certain practices are permissible that would be disproved according to the religious law of the community.

Such an attitude has often been cited as proof of the dangerous antinomian tendencies endemic to Sufism. On closer examination, however, such behavior is not that far removed from the classical Ashʿarī synthesis. Al-Ashʿarī, as has been seen, claims that actions are good or evil because God determines them to be so; moreover, if he changed his mind about a particular action its moral worth would change. What one finds in the behavior of a number of Ṣūfīs is, in fact, the acting out of this hypothetical case, for the Ṣūfī elite insist that the quality of their love relationship with the divine raises them to a higher tier of ethics, one at times radically different from the lower tier. Anṣarī counsels the Ṣūfī to move beyond the everyday concerns with reward or punishment, and beyond the common notions of good and evil. The goal is to please the Beloved; that is what constitutes the good.

Anṣarī goes so far as to claim that the lover-beloved relationship moves one to a plateau on which even the five pillars of Islam appear superfluous. The pilgrimage to Mecca is an occasion for tourism; almsgiving is something that should be left to philanthropists; fasting is an ingenious way to save food; and ritual prayers should be left to old crones. The focus of the mystic should not be the laws and ritual structures of the Islamic community (*ummah*); it is the love relationship that supersedes all.

Anṣarī is a dramatic example of the mystic whose basic theological and religious conservatism do not bar him from the most exuberant expressions of union. He is not, however, alone in perceiving that the Ṣūfī adept must often move beyond the constraints of Islamic law. Abū Saʿīd ibn Abī al-Khayr (d. 1089) of Mayhana in Khorasan, for example, mirrors as well the same paradoxical approach to religious practice. He began his life as a violent ascetic, isolating himself from normal social intercourse and faithfully observing the obligations of the law. It is said that he was discovered by his father hanging upside down in a pit, reciting the Qurʾān.

At the age of forty, however, Abū Saʿīd attained gnosis (*maʿrifah*) and his actions changed dramatically. He and his followers became renowned for their feasting. In place of ritual prayer, communal Ṣūfī devotions were substituted.

Once, when questioned by a non-initiate about his attitude toward the pillars of Islam, especially the pilgrimage to Mecca, he replied that it was a waste of time to travel so far simply to circumambulate a stone house (the Kaʿbah). Rather, the sacred cube should circumambulate him! These statements, shocking though they were to non-Ṣūfīs and even to some of the more sober mystics, were not intended to flout the law. On the contrary, the privileged spiritual elite understood their behavior as that which was enjoined on them by the Beloved.

The mathnavī: Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār. The epigrams of ʿAbd Allāh Anṣarī, succinct and accessible to a wide range of people, are in sharp contrast with the poetic genre of *mathnavī*, which was introduced into Sufism by the Ghaznavid poet Ḥakīm Abū al-Majd Majdūd ibn Adam Sanāʾī (d. 1131?). The rhyming couplets of the *mathnavī* had previously been made famous in secular literature by the renowned Persian poet Firdawsi in his *Shāh-nāmah* (The epic of the kings). The general structure of Sanāʾī's mystical *mathnavīs*, the most famous of which is the *Ḥadīqat al-ḥaqīqah* (The garden of truth), is imitated by later Ṣūfī authors. The framework consists of mystical teachings interspersed with illustrative fables, anecdotes, proverbs, and the like. The different *mathnavīs* vary, however, in length, the quality of their style, and in the organization and development of their themes.

Important as Sanāʾī's introduction of the *mathnavī* into Sufism was, he is not remembered as a great stylist. For a true master of the *mathnavī* form one must turn to the Persian poet and spiritual guide, Farīd al-Dīn ʿAṭṭār (d. 1221?). ʿAṭṭār lived most of his life in and around the city of Nishapur, near the modern Iranian city of Mashhad. It is reported that he was killed during the Mongol sack of the city. His name indicates his occupation, that of apothecary, and it appears that he continued in his profession even as he composed his mystical treatises.

It is evident from ʿAṭṭār's work that he was a man learned in both the religious sciences and secular literature. He demonstrates enormous perspicacity in his treatment of the subtleties of the spiritual life. ʿAṭṭār's success, however, is due equally to the fact that he possessed the requisite literary skills to mold his ideas into an aesthetic whole of genuine quality. ʿAṭṭār is poet, storyteller, and spiritual theorist; he entertains, cajoles, and leads the reader through numerous levels of spiritual awareness.

Of his *mathnavīs* the best known is the mythic fable *Manṭiq al-ṭayr* (The conference of the birds). The text operates on a number of levels. On the surface it is a lively fable about a group of birds who decide to seek out their king, the Sīmurgh, of whom they have only the barest recollections. The journey is long and arduous, the path uncertain. Many birds abandon the quest out of weakness, apathy or fear; others perish along the way. Finally thirty birds arrive at the palace of the Sīmurgh. This event constitutes the pun on which the story is based, for "thirty birds" in Persian is *sī murgh*.

The far more serious level on which the fable operates is that of an elaborate analysis of the Šūfī path. Asceticism, illumination, and finally union are explored in depth. The internal structure of the work resembles an ascending spiral staircase. The bird-souls progress upward, often returning to an earlier point, except now at a more advanced level. The birds are not uniform souls but mirror a variety of human personality types. Their strengths and difficulties reflect, moreover, the issues faced by a wide variety of Šūfī seekers.

The overall power of the work is due to its meticulous organization. It is necessary to study the text closely to appreciate the care with which ‘Aṭṭār develops his multileveled thematic structure. The last section of the work describes the seven valleys through which the tested remnant must pass in order to reach the Simurgh. The final valley is that of *fanā’*, “annihilation,” where the thirty birds merge with their beloved Simurgh as the moth merges with the flame.

Lyric and mathnavī: Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. Despite ‘At-tar’s obvious literary and analytic skills, his work is surpassed by the greatest of the Persian mystical poets, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (known as Mawlānā, “our master”). Rūmī was born in Balkh in 1207, the son of Bahā’ al-Dīn Walad, who was himself a noted legist, teacher, and spiritual guide. Around 1219, however, Bahā’ al-Dīn left Balkh because of the threat of invasion by the Mongols. The family set out on pilgrimage to Mecca, passing through the city of Nishapur where, it is reported, Bahā’ al-Dīn and his young son met ‘Aṭṭār, who predicted Rūmī’s future greatness.

Bahā’ al-Dīn settled eventually in Konya in Anatolia (known as Rūm, hence the name Rūmī). He was warmly received by the ruling Seljuk authorities and resumed his career as teacher and shaykh. Following in his father’s footsteps, Jalāl al-Dīn became well versed in the Islamic religious sciences and philosophical theology. After Bahā’ al-Dīn’s death in 1231, Jalāl al-Dīn assumed his father’s teaching post.

Rūmī’s Šūfī training progressed in serious fashion under the tutelage of Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaiqqiq, one of his father’s disciples. The critical moment in Rūmī’s spiritual development, however, was his meeting in 1244 with Shams al-Dīn of Tabriz. For two years they were inseparable, Rūmī finding in Shams the vehicle through which to experience the true ecstasy of mystical love. Their relationship was a source of jealousy and scandal among Rūmī’s family and followers. Abruptly, Shams departed Konya for parts unknown.

Rūmī was disconsolate, but, with the help of his son Sulṭān Walad, he engineered Shams’s return. Rūmī’s rekindled joy was shortlived, however, because Shams disappeared for the last time in 1248, and there is persuasive circumstantial evidence that Shams was murdered, perhaps with the connivance of Rūmī’s family.

The intense love relationship Rūmī shared with Shams was the catalyst for the creation of some of the most extraordinary poetry in the Persian language. Rūmī was prolific; his poetic verses number close to forty thousand, collected in a

work that bears the name of his beloved, the *Divānī Shams-i Tabrizī*. He is a master of imagery, ranging from the mundane realities of food, weaving, and the like to more subtle treatments of nature, music, and religious symbols. Prominent, of course, is the image of Shams, “the sun,” in whose brilliance and intensity Rūmī loses himself. Both the agony of separation and the exhilaration of union ebb and flow throughout his poetry. The emotions evoked run the gamut of human experience. Rūmī does not hesitate to shock; anger, cruelty, and vulgar sexuality share the stage with the ecstasy of annihilation in the Beloved, proving that the Šūfī quest must not be romanticized. Love not only has the potential to fulfill; it also destroys.

Rūmī’s other masterpiece, his *Mathnavī-yi ma’navī* (Spiritual Couplets), was written at the urging of his cherished disciple Ḥusām al-Dīn Chelebi. Ḥusām al-Dīn, like many Šūfis of the period, discovered in the *mathnavīs* of Sanā’ī and ‘Aṭṭār a wealth of spiritual wisdom. It was imperative, Ḥusām al-Dīn believed, for his revered shaykh to preserve his teachings in similar fashion for posterity. Thus Rūmī was persuaded to dictate his *Mathnavī* to Ḥusām al-Dīn, who transcribed the text and read it back to his master for correction. The final product is substantial, six books totaling almost thirty thousand verses. Several of Rūmī’s lesser works—letters, discourses, and sermons—have been preserved as well.

Whereas ‘Aṭṭār’s works, especially his *mathnavīs*, are noted for their clear structural development, those of Rūmī resemble more the stream-of-consciousness style. One must be steeped in Rūmī’s work before daring to analyze his thought.

The statement is often made that Rūmī’s *Mathnavī* is the Qur’ān of the Persians. While the main point is the enormous popularity the text has had, and continues to have, in the Persian-speaking world, there is another level on which the comparison is apt. The Qur’ān communicates itself primarily in individual, sometimes self-contained, units, not as a structured whole. Similarly, many segments of the *Mathnavī* have an internal unity of their own. Yet the sections of the text are strung loosely together like a string of pearls of different sizes, shapes, and hues. Themes appear and disappear, only to be addressed again from a different perspective. To seek out a unifying structural element in the *Mathnavī* is perhaps to do an injustice to the intent of the author. Its appeal lies in its fluidity and allusiveness. True, this can be frustrating at times; frustration, however, soon turns to fascination as the reader is lured once again into the complex web of Rūmī’s thought.

GNOSIS AND IBN ‘ARABĪ. The history of mysticism in Islam is replete with individuals of brilliance and creativity. Among these exceptional personalities, however, one stands out from the rest because of his unique genius. Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-‘Arabī al-Ḥātimī al-Ṭā’ī was born at Murcia in Muslim Spain in 1165. He is honored with the titles “Al-Shaykh Al-Akbar” (“*doctor maximus*”) and “Muḥyī al-Dīn” (“the re-

vivifier of religion"). Eventually he came to be known under the name Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Arabī.

While still a child, Ibn 'Arabī and his family moved to Seville, where he received the greater part of his education in the traditional Islamic religious disciplines. He was greatly influenced in his spiritual development by two female Ṣūfīs, especially Fāṭimah of Cordova. A great deal of his mystical insight, however, evolved from visionary experiences, the first occurring during an illness in his youth. Throughout his life he continued to have visions on which he placed a great deal of reliance.

Ibn 'Arabī's visionary bent is equally evident in his claim to have been initiated into Sufism by the mythic figure Khidr, a mysterious being, said to be immortal, associated with a Qur'ānic fable (*sūrah* 18) and pre-Islamic legends. Khidr is renowned in Sufism as a saint and guide of exceptional spiritual power; to be chosen as one of his disciples is a rare privilege.

In his early twenties Ibn 'Arabī traveled extensively throughout Spain and North Africa and broadened his intellectual perspectives. He describes a unique meeting in Cordova with the greatest of the Muslim Aristotelian philosophers, Ibn Rushd (known as Averroës in the Latin West). The encounter is heavy with symbolism, for Ibn Rushd represents the total reliance of philosophers on reason (*'aql*), while Ibn 'Arabī champions gnosis (*ma'rifaḥ*) as the only means to experience the fullness of truth.

In 1201 Ibn 'Arabī left Spain and North Africa for the last time, undertaking travels that brought him to many important centers of Islamic learning. In 1223 he settled in Damascus, where he remained until his death in 1240. His mausoleum continues to be an important pilgrimage center.

Ibn 'Arabī is unique because he was both an original thinker and synthesizer. Many of his ideas resonate with earlier intellectual developments in Sufism and in philosophical theology. His greatness, however, lies in his ability to systematize Ṣūfī theory into a coherent whole with solid metaphysical underpinnings. Ibn 'Arabī, therefore, should not be viewed as an eccentric outside of the mainstream, but rather as the genius who was able to gather together various strains of mystical philosophy and to mold them into an esthetic whole.

The corpus of Ibn 'Arabī's work is massive, which complicates considerably any attempt at a comprehensive analysis of his thought. In addition his style is often dense, reflecting the esoteric nature of his ideas. Two of his most influential works are *Al-futūḥat al-makkīyah* (The Meccan revelations), which he was ordered to write in a visionary experience while on pilgrimage, and *Fuṣūs al-ḥikam* (The bezels of wisdom).

Waḥdat al-Wujūd. The central concept in Ibn 'Arabī's system is *waḥdat al-wujūd*, "unity of being." Scholars have debated whether Ibn 'Arabī intends this term to describe a monist system, where nothing exists but the One. An affirmative response does not indicate, however, a dramatic shift

in Muslim metaphysics because, in reality, Ibn 'Arabī is only taking the Ash'arī synthesis to its logical extreme. The Ash'arī insistence on God's total omnipotence and control over the universe implies that God is the only true agent. It is not illogical, therefore, to suggest, as Ibn 'Arabī does, that God must also be the only true existent.

The divine essence in itself is completely transcendent; it is, in fact, unknowable, the *lā ilāha* ("there is no god") of the Muslim confession of faith. This plane of unconditioned unity (*aḥadīyah*), however, is not the only plane on which divine reality exists. The plane of oneness (*wāḥidīyah*) is characterized by a unity in plurality, a unity in which the qualities of all possible existents reside. Once again the ultimate solution is paradox. The divine is undifferentiated and totally transcendent; yet in the divine are discovered the qualities of all potential beings.

Reality, therefore, is tiered, a progression of spiritual manifestations. Ultimate reality is the *theos agnostos*, the "unknown God," from which emerge the different planes of divine existence, culminating in the God of revelation, Allāh, the *illā Allāh* ("but God"), of the confession of faith. The creation of the cosmos occurs, not out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) as traditional Western theology would have it, but because of the yearning of the unknown God to escape from isolation. A *ḥadīth* dear to Ṣūfīs encapsulates God's intent: "I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known, so I created the creation in order that I might be known."

Creation, therefore, is the manifestation of the One in the plurality of created beings. God's sigh of longing breathes forth the universe, the mirror in which he comes to know himself. The agency through which the cosmos is produced is the divine creative imagination. The process is not static but dynamic, for in the same way that God exhales, he inhales, drawing creation back to its source in the One. Gnosis for the Ṣūfī, therefore, entails progress along the path from illusion (the naive conviction that he is an independent reality distinct from God) to insight into creation's identification with God's self-revelation.

The Perfect Human Being. The mirror that the One projects forth is not uniformly polished. The created being in which the Absolute becomes most fully conscious of itself is man. And there is in every generation *al-insān al-kāmil*, the Perfect Human Being, who is the link between Absolute Being and the created realm. Through the mediacy of the Perfect Human Being the dynamic process of emanation and return takes place. In fact, the process would be impossible without that being, the most perfected Ṣūfī, the *quṭb* ("pole"), the axis around which the cosmos revolves.

Ibn 'Arabī's emanationist view of creation reinterprets, moreover, the traditional understanding of the goal of mysticism in Islam. Many early Ṣūfīs described the path as a growth in loving union between a soul, which retains its essential independence, and the Beloved who, while being the source of creation, is distinct from it. For Ibn 'Arabī and his

followers, the goal is not primarily love but wisdom, to move from the illusion of plurality to the gnostic insight that one has always been, and will continue to be, totally united with the source of all being.

Wahdat al-wujūd has enormous implications, furthermore, for the Ṣūfī understanding of human freedom and ethics. Nothing manifests itself in creation unless God wills it. This is an axiom of both Ibn ‘Arabī and traditional Islam. In Ibn ‘Arabī’s system, the archetypes of all potential beings exist in the One. When these potential realities are actualized in the illusory realm of plurality, they function completely in accord with their celestial archetypes. In the realm of the created world, therefore, individual free choice is illusory. All change is predetermined by the archetype of the particular reality. Freedom exists only insofar as all creatures participate in the freedom of the One, with which they are ultimately identified.

Ethics, in addition, must be seen in the light of the determinative power of the celestial archetypes. In the realm of creation, the law (*sharī‘ah*) delineates what actions are in accord with God’s revelation. From the perspective of the One, however, all actions are good since they are manifestations of the divine creative imagination and are in accord with the celestial archetypes. Culpability is relative because it is operative only in the realm of created illusion. Eventually all return to the undifferentiated One; thus there is no eternal reward or punishment in the traditional sense.

The complexity of Ibn ‘Arabī’s thought defies summation in a few brief paragraphs. Nor have scholars in the field yet gained sufficient mastery of his work to unravel his convoluted and sometimes contradictory ideas. What is clear, however, is the pervasive influence of Ibn ‘Arabī and his school on later Sufism. Disciples such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274) in Anatolia and commentators on his work such as ‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn Aḥmad Jāmi (d. 1492) in Persia disseminated his ideas throughout the Islamic world.

ṢUFĪ FRATERNITIES. The history of Sufism is much more than the history of mystical theory and expression. There is a significant social dimension to Islamic mysticism that must be explored if the picture is to be complete. Even many of the early Ṣūfīs, individualists though they were, sought out the advice and counsel of their fellow wayfarers. From the very beginning, therefore, companionship (*ṣuhbah*) was considered essential for progress in the spiritual life.

Fluid interaction among Ṣūfīs soon evolved into the more structured relationship of master and disciple, adding a new level of social complexity. Not only would disciples visit their masters, but many also took up residence with them. The earliest formal Ṣūfī convent seems to date from the latter part of the eighth century CE, on the island of Abadan.

Political changes in the Islamic empire contributed to the stabilization of Ṣūfī institutional structures. In the mid-eleventh century the Seljuks wrested control of the Abbasid

caliphate from the Shī‘ī Buyids. The Seljuks were staunch Sunnīs who took over the religious educational system of the *madrasahs* in order to reindoctrinate the intelligentsia with Sunnī orthodoxy. The public support they provided for Ṣūfī establishments afforded the Seljuks more control over the type of Ṣūfī piety inculcated in the new recruits, but at the same time, government patronage ensured the survival of the various Ṣūfī institutions.

By the thirteenth century, several types of Ṣūfī establishments had evolved, each with a different general purpose. The *ribāṭ* was a residence or training center, which originated in the Arab regions of the empire. *Khānqāhs* were similar establishments rooted in the more persianized environment of Khorasan; they eventually spread, however, into the Arab centers. The more serious training took place in the *zāwiyahs*, which usually housed a teaching shaykh; *khalwah* is the name given to the retreat of a single Ṣūfī or dervish. (Dervish is derived from the Persian word for Ṣūfī, *darvīsh*, “poor,” “beggar.”)

More important than the physical environment in which Ṣūfīs congregated is the evolving infrastructure of the Ṣūfī communities themselves. In the eleventh century, fluid organizations continued to predominate; their common link was the desire for *ṣuhbah* and for the guidance of a shaykh. Frequently, a master and his disciples remained a cohesive social unit only until the death of the master, after which the group disbanded.

By the thirteenth century the situation had altered significantly. Many Ṣūfī groups became self-perpetuating social organizations whose central focus was the founder and his teaching. No longer was the survival of the group dependent on a particular living shaykh; authority was passed from shaykh to disciple, thus providing a stable structural basis for the continued growth and development of the community. The new master was the chief custodian of the founder’s spiritual legacy and, on occasion, an innovator in his own right.

Silsilahs. These stable social organizations came to be called *ṭarīqahs* (“ways”), known in English as Ṣūfī orders, fraternities, or brotherhoods. Each founding shaykh had his *silsilah* (“chain”), his spiritual lineage which contributed substantially to his stature in the Ṣūfī community. The *silsilah* is, more precisely, a genealogy, tracing the names of one’s master, of one’s master’s master, and so on back through history. Often a prominent shaykh would have been initiated more than once, by a number of illustrious Ṣūfīs, thus adding additional stature to his spiritual pedigree.

There are two main *silsilah* groups, which later subdivided into literally hundreds of Ṣūfī fraternities. The first chain, generally considered the more sober of the two, traces its links back to Abū al-Qāsim al-Junayd, the famed spiritual guide from whom al-Ḥallāj eventually broke away. The second, and more intoxicated, *silsilah* derives from the first great Ṣūfī ecstatic, Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī. These designations are very general, and membership in either group indicates only

a spiritual genealogy, not necessarily an actual attitude toward mystical experience.

The members of the Biṣṭāmī branch are often called Malāmatī, “blameworthy.” The appellation, however, can be overstressed, for it does not mean that they scorned Islamic law. On the contrary, many were meticulous in their observance. But eventually the name came to describe, in broad terms, those Ṣūfīs who eschewed completely all of the public trappings of Sufism and of piety in general; they were characterized by the virtue of absolute sincerity (*ikhhlās*). The Malāmatīyah rejected Ṣūfī initiation and the guidance of a shaykh, nor would they engage in public devotional practices common to Ṣūfīs. Whatever ritual acts they performed were carried out in private. Their individualism made them appear to some as suspicious and marginal. The Malāmatīyah, nevertheless, should be clearly distinguished from the Qalandariyah, or wandering dervishes, many of whom did engage in practices that made mockery of the religious law and of traditional morality.

The centrality of *silsilabs* in Ṣūfī fraternities is not completely unique. One discovers an analogous emphasis in the *ḥadīth* literature, where the literary structure of a *ḥadīth* has two parts: the chain of transmitters (*isnād*) and the body of the text (*matn*). According to Muslim tradition, the authenticity of the *ḥadīth* is guaranteed by the reliability of the *isnād*. In the same way that the power of sacred word in the *ḥadīth* has been preserved by the chain of transmitters, so too do the teachings and powers of a particular shaykh remain alive through his *silsilah*.

Whether or not the *isnāds* are historically reliable is not a question that need be discussed here. Suffice it to say that the importance of *isnāds* for Muslims is to ground *ḥadīths* solidly in the period of the original revelation. Thus there can be no question that the teachings of the *ḥadīths* are innovations; rather *ḥadīths* are but more detailed insights into God’s will already expressed in general terms in the Qur’ān.

In similar fashion the *silsilabs* of Ṣūfī shaykhs provide them with religious legitimacy. Even though the Ṣūfī orders may vary considerably in their teachings and attitudes toward mystical experience, they each can claim, through their spiritual genealogies, to be solidly based upon the foundations of Sufism.

Veneration of saints. The institutionalization of *ṭarīqabs* and the emphasis on *silsilabs* enhanced substantially the religious and political position of the master. Whereas in the past the shaykh functioned primarily as an expert and confidant, he now became a repository of spiritual power as well. A shaykh’s lineage did not provide simply a list of teachers; it implied that the spiritual power of each of these great Ṣūfīs had been transmitted to this last member of the line.

The shaykhs of the great Ṣūfī orders, therefore, took on superhuman qualities. They became known as *awliyā’* (sg., *walī*), intimates or friends of God. Their spiritual perfection raised them far above the level of their disciples and of the

masses of Muslim faithful. The spread of Ibn ‘Arabī’s teaching, particularly the notion of the Perfect Human Being, which was elaborated upon by Ibn ‘Arabī’s intellectual disciples, especially by ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jīlī (d. 1428), provided an intellectual framework within which to explain this cosmic role of the saintlike shaykh. Many of the shaykhs of important orders were acknowledged by their followers as the *quṭb*, the “pole” or “axis” around which the cosmos revolves, the Perfect Human Being, the point at which the divine Creative Imagination most fully manifests itself in the world of illusion. The fact that a number of individuals claimed this status at one and the same time was cause for a certain amount of friction and rivalry among the powerful fraternities.

The concept of *quṭb* is linked by Ibn ‘Arabī and his predecessors with a whole hierarchy of cosmic beings. Al-Hujwīrī describes them as the officers of the divine court, made up of three hundred *akhyār* (“excellent ones”), forty *abdāl* (“substitutes”), seven *abrār* (“piously devoted ones”), four *awṭād* (“pillars”), three *nuqabā’* (“leaders”), and one *quṭb* (known also as *ghawṭh*, “succor”). Ibn ‘Arabī’s hierarchy is somewhat different in structure. The *quṭb* is joined by two *a’immah* (“guides”), four *awṭād*, seven *abdāl*, twelve *nuqabā’*, and eight *nujabā’* (“nobles”). The cosmic hierarchy, regardless of its particular description, is the spiritual power through which the order and continued existence of the cosmos are ensured.

The term *walī* is often translated as saint; this is misleading because there is no religious hierarchy in Islam empowered to canonize individuals as saints, as one has, for example, in Roman Catholicism. Rather, the status of *walī* is attained through public acclamation. There are, nevertheless, analogies between Christian saints and Muslim *awliyā’*, insofar as both possess spiritual power that is capable of being transmitted to disciples or devotees. In Islam this power is called *barakah* (“blessing”). The *barakah* of a *walī* has the potential to transform an individual spiritually as well as to provide concrete material blessings. *Barakah* should be understood as concretely as possible. It is often transmitted through the power of touch, similar to the laying on of hands or the application of relics, practices common in other religious traditions of the West.

The perfected shaykhs are objects of veneration both during their lives and after their deaths. It is generally accepted that they possess the power of miracles (*karāmāt*), although their miracles are subject to satanic influence in a way that the miracles of prophets are not. The extraordinary powers of the *awliyā’* are not diminished in any way after their death; on the contrary, their intercession often appears more efficacious. Consequently the tombs of great Ṣūfī *awliyā’* are vibrant pilgrimage centers to this day.

Ritual practice. Much has been said thus far about the shaykhs of Ṣūfī orders. What were the general patterns of life of the members of these communities? It is difficult to generalize because of the different character of the various brother-

hoods. There are, however, some areas of commonality. The full members of the fraternities committed themselves in obedience to the shaykh, who initiated them into the order and bestowed upon them the patched frock (*khirqah*), the sign of their entry onto the Šūfī path. They were encouraged to subject themselves completely to the master's will, to be like dead bodies in the hands of the body-washers. Some members of orders remained celibate while others married; some lived lives of extreme poverty while others had a very comfortable existence. Common to most of the Šūfī fraternities were ritual practices called *dhikr* ("remembrance") and *samāʿ* ("audition").

Dhikr. The impetus for the practice of *dhikr* is derived from those Qurʾānic verses that enjoin the faithful to remember God often. Among Šūfis this duty evolved into a complex exercise performed by an individual or group. Many fraternities put their own particular stamp on the *dhikr* exercise. Most *dhikr* techniques, however, involve the rhythmic repetition of a phrase, often Qurʾānic, in which one of the names of God appears. In Islam, Allāh has one hundred names, ninety-nine of which are known; the hundredth name is hidden. Certain Šūfis who ascribed to themselves the rank of *qutb* claimed to have been blessed with this most precious secret.

The more sophisticated methods of *dhikr* usually involve breath control, body movements, and a number of other complex techniques to gain control over the five senses as well the psyche and imagination. In some Šūfī groups, such as the Naqshbandīyah, *dhikr* is a private exercise. The goal is to move from vocal *dhikr* to silent *dhikr*, with each stage representing a more intense level of union with the Beloved until, at the final stage, *dhikr* moves to the innermost recesses of one's being and one can no longer distinguish between the one remembering and the Remembered.

Samāʿ. Like *dhikr*, *samāʿ* has become identified with Šūfī ritual practice. It involves listening to music, usually with a group. The music is often accompanied by Qurʾān chants and/or the singing of mystical poetry. The recital is intended to spark a mystical experience within the auditors. Those most affected by the *samāʿ* rise up to dance in unison with the music. Depending on the Šūfī group, the dance can be a marvel of aesthetic movement or the frenetic writhings of the seemingly possessed.

From its inception *samāʿ* has been controversial among Šūfis. No one questions the efficacy of chanting the Qurʾān. The doubts arise with music and the singing of mystical love poetry. Music and singing were considered by many shaykhs to be amoral: neither good nor evil by nature. *Samāʿ* possesses the power, however, to engulf the spirit of the disciples and to seduce them to immoral behavior. Consequently many shaykhs, if they approve of *samāʿ* at all, insist that only accomplished Šūfis be allowed to participate. Novices are warned to beware.

Dhikr and *samāʿ* have served an important function outside of the ranks of the full-fledged members of the Šūfī

orders. The theoretical developments in Sufism from the thirteenth century onward were shaped by the work of Ibn ʿArabī and his interpreters. The complex and esoteric nature of this school of Šūfī thought, however, placed it far beyond the reach of most Muslims. It was the ritual exercises of the orders that helped fill the gap and minister to the immediate spiritual needs of the faithful. Thus Sufism came to represent, for many, not abstruse theory but concrete practice that was accessible to all.

The emphasis on *dhikr* and *samāʿ* has helped to blur the distinction in popular Sufism between mystical experience that is attained after serious spiritual training and experience that is self-induced. Unsophisticated sessions of *dhikr* and *samāʿ*, to this day, often consist of self-hypnosis, hysteria, drug-induced states, and other violent emotions that pass for mystical experience. Despite accusations of vulgarization, *dhikr* and *samāʿ* remain important emotional outlets in the Muslim community and are unique sociological events during which various levels of society find themselves interacting on an equal footing. And in the hands of spiritual adepts, *dhikr* and *samāʿ* remain potent tools for creating an ambiance in which to attain heightened levels of religious experience.

The widespread interest in *dhikr* and *samāʿ* among the Muslim faithful has resulted in increased membership in the Šūfī fraternities. These new members, however, should more properly be called affiliates. They perhaps take some training from a shaykh; their primary vehicle for contact with the group, however, is attendance at periodic sessions of *dhikr* and *samāʿ*. Otherwise they lead the normal life of a layman or woman. In parts of the Islamic world today, membership in one Šūfī order or another has become for many a social obligation, even though those so affiliated have little interest in, or understanding of, mysticism.

Particular orders became associated with different strata of society, geographical regions, and guilds. The Suhrawardīyah, for example, were extremely influential in court circles in thirteenth-century Delhi, while orders such as the Bektāshīyah and Khalwatīyah in Turkey had a more popular appeal. The identification of order with social group became so complete that one could be said to be born into a particular fraternity. This did not, however, prevent an individual's eventual shift from one order to another.

The orders: individual characteristics. The role of the shaykh and the ritual exercises of *dhikr* and *samāʿ* are integral elements in almost all of the Šūfī orders. The distinctive personalities of the fraternities, however, are as significant as their similar structures and practices. The contrasts are often striking. In Anatolia, for example, the Mawlawīyah (or Mevleviye) and the Bektāshīyah represent opposite ends of the spectrum.

Mawlawīyah and Bektāshīyah. The Mawlawīyah trace their *silsilah* to the mystic and poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. Rūmī himself, however, did not establish a formal *ṭarīqah* during

his lifetime; rather, it was his son, Sulṭān Walad, who took upon himself the task of organizing the order. The Mawlawīyah are known for their aesthetic sophistication, both in ritual practice and in mystical poetry. The order's particular identity is derived, of course, from Rūmī's *Mathnavī* and the *Divāni Shams-i Tabrīzī*.

Perhaps the most famous aspect of the Mawlawīyah is its ritual *samāʿ*, an exquisite combination of music, poetry, and whirling dance (hence their name in the West, "Whirling Dervishes"). It is hard to capture in words the refinement of the choreography. The rhythmic, turning movements of the adepts are mesmerizing and executed with a subtle grace and precision equal to the best of European classical dance. The serene faces of the Ṣūfīs, moreover, reflect the depth of the spiritual rapture achieved by the practitioners.

In contrast, the Bektāshīyah takes its name from a shadowy figure, Ḥajjī Bektāsh of Khorasan (d. 1337?). At first the group was loosely organized, but by the fifteenth century it had developed a highly centralized structure. The Bektāshīyah are noted for their syncretism; the rituals and beliefs of the order represent an amalgam of Shiism, Byzantine Christianity, esoteric cults, and the like. By the end of the sixteenth century, the Bektāshīyah had become associated with the Janissary corps, an elite military unit of slave-soldiers established by the Ottoman sultan Murād I (1360–1389). Despite the heterodox practices of the Bektāshīyah, their identification with the powerful and much-feared Janissaries provided them with security from persecution by the orthodox religious authorities. Where the Mawlawīyah attracted a more educated elite, the Bektāshīyah appealed to the less literate masses who were fascinated with the magic-like rituals and political power.

Suhrawardīyah and Rifāʿīyah. In Iraq, as well, there arose two fraternities with diametrically opposed interpretations of religious experience. The genealogy of the Suhrawardīyah begins with Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī (d. 1168), who was a disciple of Aḥmad al-Ghazālī. Abū Najīb is the author of an important rulebook for novices, *Kitāb ādāb al-murīdīn* (Book of the manners of the disciples). The text evinces Abū Najīb's long experience as a director; his rules are strict and comprehensive, yet attuned to the human frailties of the young and untutored.

The fraternity that bears the name Suhrawardī was founded by Abū al-Najīb's nephew, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī (d. 1234). Shihāb al-Dīn, the author of the extremely influential work, *ʿAwārif al-maʿarīf* (Masters of mystical insights), is remembered in Ṣūfī circles as a great teacher. Teaching, in fact, became a characteristic note of the fraternity. The Suhrawardīyah made significant inroads into the Indian subcontinent, where its ranks included such important figures as Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zakarīyā of Multan (d. 1268).

While the ethos of the Suhrawardīyah is characterized by serious training in the classical Ṣūfī tradition, the

Rifāʿīyah or "Howling Dervishes" focus primarily on dramatic ritual. This fraternity springs from the marshlands of southern Iraq, where its founder, Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Rifāʿī (d. 1182), spent most of his life. Contemporary observers describe vividly the bizarre practices engaged in by members of the fraternity: fire-eating; piercing ears, hands, necks, and penises with iron rings; biting heads off live snakes, and so forth. Clearly the appeal of the Rifāʿīyah is primarily emotional.

Shādhilīyah. A fine example of a fraternity that responded to the religious needs of the larger community while cultivating a solid intellectual base in mystical theory is the Shādhilīyah. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī (d. 1258) began his religious career at Tunis, where he was well known as a preacher. It was there that he founded his order in 1227. Impelled by a vision, he traveled eastward and settled eventually in Egypt, where the Shādhilīyah order came to flourish.

The most famous of the early Shādhilī shaykhs is not the founder but the third leader of the group, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh (d. 1309). He was born in Alexandria and spent his early years in the study of *ḥadīth* and the law. Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's training in the traditional religious sciences made him wary of any involvement with Sufism. His attitude eventually mellowed, and for twelve years he placed himself under the direction of the second shaykh of the order, Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Mursī (d. 1287), whom he eventually succeeded.

Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh's writings epitomize the spirit of the Shādhilīyah order. On one hand his work is very much in the intellectual tradition of the Ibn ʿArabī school. For example his book, *Laṭāʾif al-minan* (Subtle graces), written in defense of the fraternity and its practices, emphasizes the exalted role of the shaykh as *walī* and *qutb*. On the other hand, the true genius of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh is most evident in his collected aphorisms, the *Ḥikam* (Maxims). They remain to this day one of the most popular Ṣūfī texts in the Islamic world. Combining the erudition of the scholar with the vibrant, persuasive language of the enthusiast, Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh succeeds in communicating complex ideas in a way that is accessible to a wide range of individuals. Like the *Munājāt* of ʿAbd Allāh Anṣarī, the *Ḥikam* of Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh must be savored time and time again, for their richness seems almost inexhaustable.

In the same way that Ibn ʿAṭāʾ Allāh, through his writings, made the Sufism of the orders more accessible to larger numbers of Muslims, his fraternity as a whole adopted a structural form more in tune with the lives of the laity. Whereas some brotherhoods insisted on the abandonment of one's profession and even of family life, the Shādhilīyah allowed its members to remain involved in the secular world. In this respect, they were precursors of a similar development in the Christian West, when, in the sixteenth century, Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits, whose members contrary to traditional monastic structures, were intent on fostering *contemplatio in actione*, contemplation while remaining fully involved in the secular world. Ibn ʿAṭāʾ

Allāh's *Hikam* has a place of honor in Islamic spirituality equal to that of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* in Christianity.

There is not sufficient space to describe even briefly all of the great *ṭarīqahs* that have become part of mainstream Sufism since the thirteenth century. The Qādirīyah, whose eponymous founder, 'Abd al-Qādir Jilāni (d. 1116), is perhaps the most widely revered saint in all of Islam; the Naqshbandīyah, whose stern Sunnī spirit, disseminated in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, has spawned political movements and great poets such as Mīr Dard (d. 1785); the music-loving Chishtīyah, Kubrawīyah, and so forth—all have played pivotal roles in the formation of Islamic religious life.

Decline of the orders. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, have not been kind to Sufism, especially the Sufism of the orders. A number of factors contributed to the decline: the general secularization of world culture; colonialism, with its concomitant critique of Islamic religion and society; the response of Islamic modernism; and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.

The changing political climate had profound effects on the Ṣūfī orders. In Turkey, for example, they were abolished by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1925 because they represented to him all that was corrupt and backward about Islam. Atatürk was in the process of transforming Turkey into a modern nation state from the rubble of the Ottoman empire. The traditional power of the Ṣūfī shaykhs and orders was incompatible with nationalism; the orders, therefore, were eliminated as public institutions.

At times, however, the orders were not victims of political change but its instigators. The Tijānīyah of West Africa and the Sanūsīyah of North Africa are prime examples. The Tijānīyah were militant revivalists. They fought bravely against the French in West Africa and eventually established a kingdom of their own during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The Sanūsīyah were similarly fundamentalist and militant. For decades they were at odds with Italian colonial power in North Africa. As a counterbalance they sided with the British who eventually invested the shaykh of the Sanūsīyah with authority in the region. The transformation of the shaykh into king of Libya and the accompanying solidification of political power eventually led to the decline of the Sanūsīyah as a Ṣūfī movement.

Despite the fact that many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ṣūfī groups reflected fundamentalist tendencies, they still became the objects of attack by the ultra-orthodox, of whom the Wahhābīyah of Saudi Arabia are but one example. Among such groups, any ritual practice not explicitly sanctioned by religious law is anathema. The very premise on which Sufism is based, namely union with God, is rejected as un-Islamic. One sees today in many of the most vibrant Islamic revivalist movements a similar tendency to espouse the most puritanical forms of literalist religion. In such a world Sufism has little place.

In the Indian subcontinent, the involvement of many hereditary pirs (i.e., shaykhs) with Sufism has been based, in the modern period, more on family status, wealth, and influence than on any serious interest in mysticism. A backlash was inevitable. Muhammad Iqbal, one of the fathers of modern Muslim intellectual life in the subcontinent, rejected Sufism because of the corruption he perceived. He also reacted strongly against the Ṣūfī doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, because it entailed the negation of the self: If the self is nonexistent, why confront the problems of human existence? Nevertheless, his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, published in 1930, reflects Ṣūfī emphases on interiority, although his goal was to reinterpret Islam in humanistic terms that harmonized the spiritual and material realms of existence.

Attacks on Sufism are not new; they have occurred throughout the history of the tradition. The dramatic decline of Sufism in the modern period, however, is due as much to external as to internal forces. The intimate contacts between the Islamic world and the European West resulted in virulent critiques of Islamic religious practice, especially devotionalism. Muslim reactions were varied: Some accepted the critique and mimicked Western secular societies (Atatürk's Turkey, for example); some reasserted their identity by returning to what was believed to be true Islam, devoid of Ṣūfī accretions (the Wahhābīyah, for example); others, such as the Muslim modernist Muhammad 'Abduh and his successors, proposed various more moderate plans for the adaptation of Muslim society to the demands of the modern world.

All of these responses, however, possessed anti-Ṣūfī elements, for most rejected Ṣūfī ritual practice and devotionalism as either non-Muslim or antimodern. Moreover, the power of the Ṣūfī shaykhs over masses of the faithful was seen by most to be counterproductive to modernization and to the development of a functioning secular state, for the shaykhs were often perceived as proponents of superstition, religious emotionalism, and outmoded power structures.

Mysticism in modern Islam is not an arid wasteland but rather more like a fallow field. There have been important modern teaching shaykhs such as Aḥmad al-'Alawī (d. 1934), whose influence is still felt in North Africa. Moreover, the popular piety of Sufism still flourishes in many parts of the Islamic world, including North Africa, Egypt, the Indian subcontinent, and Indonesia. The great tradition of vernacular poetry, established by master artists such as the Turkish mystic Yunus Emre (d. 1321), continues to produce a rich literature. Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Africa, Indonesia—every corner of the Islamic world has produced its local poet-saints.

Doubtless Sufism has become increasingly more identified with popular ritual practice than with formal spiritual training. The transformation of Sufism into a mass movement could not help but lead to a certain vulgarization. There continue to arise, nevertheless, individual masters whose commitment to the path is reminiscent of the great

figures of the classical period. Classical Şūfī literature survives because it still has the ability to touch the spirits of modern men and women. It is in this continued interaction between shaykh and *murīd* that hope for the future of Sufism resides.

SEE ALSO Darwīsh; Dhikr; Folk Religion, article on Folk Islam; Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al-; Ḥallāj, al-; Ibn al-ʿArabī; Madrasah; Mawlid; Miʾrāj; Nubūwah; Nūr Muḥammad; Rūmī, Jalāl al-Dīn; Samāʾ; Şuhbah; Ṭarīqah; Walāyah.

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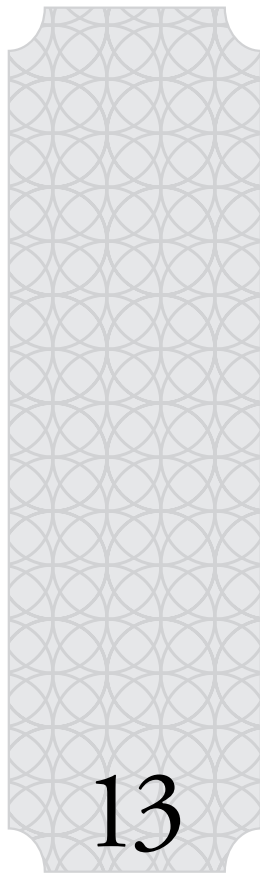
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PETER J. AWN (1987)

ŞUHBAH (lit., “companionship”). In mystical parlance, *şuhbah* can refer to (1) a mystic's return from seclusion (ʿuzlah) to human society; (2) the company of the spiritual mentor, which a new entrant to the mystical fold needs for spiritual training; and (3) social contact with all human beings. The value of *şuhbah* was first to be appreciated when those near the Prophet became known as *ṣaḥābah* (“companions”), since they had the privilege of being in his company. Thereafter mystics looked upon the “company” of a superior mystic-master as a way to spiritual development. The spiritual guide (pir or shaykh) came to occupy a high position on account of his capacity to influence the thought and character of those who came near him.



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