

Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj: Ideas of an Ecstatic

M. ABDUL HAQ ANSARI

Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922) is remembered as the Ṣūfī who said: “I am the Real” and went boldly on the cross. The word and the event, both are awful. But they are by no means unique. Ṣūfīs before and after Ḥusayn uttered similar words. Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī (d. 261/875) said: “Glory to me”, and Abū Sa‘īd Faḍal Allāh ibn Abū’l-Khayr (d. 440/1049) said: “There is none in the cloak other than God”; Abū ’l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī (d. 295/907–908) was driven out of his town and Abū ’l-Abbās ibn ‘Atā’ (d. 309/922) was beaten to death. To be sure, the case of Ḥusayn they assumed, for many reasons, tremendous proportions. That is why Ḥusayn’s incident has attracted the attention of people throughout the ages.

Louis Massignon, the great French scholar of our times, was so impressed by Ḥusayn that he dedicated almost his whole life to the study of his life and ideas. His book, *La Passion de al-Hallāj*¹ is an extraordinary work, a treasury of information on the life of Ḥusayn as well as on the culture and history of the age he belonged to. However, I must add that the perspective from which Massignon looks at Ḥusayn’s life, interprets his experiences and evaluates his ideas is, unfortunately, inspired by traditions of mysticism other than Islamic. A simple consequence of this approach is that the image of Ḥusayn which emerges from his work sharply contrasts with the one which the Ṣūfīs themselves have held of him. Ḥusayn stands out as a grand figure in comparison to whom such great personalities of Sufism as Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī, Sahl ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 283/896) and even Muḥammad al-Junayd (d. 298/910) appear to be dwarfs. Following Massignon’s lead, his successors, Louis Gardet and George Anawati, present Ḥusayn as the highest culmination of Sufism.²

Ṣūfīs, on the other hand, view Ḥusayn in a completely different way. Some like Shaykh Aḥmad b. ‘Alī ibn Yaḥyā al-Rifā‘ī (d. 580/1184) deny that

¹Professor Massignon’s *La Passion de ’l-Hallāj* was first published in 1922; later it was revised and enlarged. Its English translation, *The Passion of al-Hallāj* by Herbert Mason in four volumes is from the French edition of 1975, and was published from Princeton by the Princeton University Press in 1982.

²See George Anawati et Louis Gardet, *Mystique Musalmane*, 2nd ed. (Paris: 1968), ch. 2.

he was a *walī*;³ some like Abū 'l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) abstain from expressing any opinion;⁴ some like 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d. 561/1166) attest to his *walāyah* but find fault with his experiences and apologize for his utterances on grounds of *sukr*;⁵ and some, like Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā' (d. 725/1334) reject his ways altogether.⁶ Some do hold him in esteem, but the most that they say of him is that he was a gnostic of God ('*ālim rabbānī*')⁷ or that "if there was any Unitarian (*mawahhīd*) after the prophets and the *ṣiddiqīn* it was Ḥusayn".⁸ But no Ṣūfī worth the name has ever exalted him over the great leaders of Sufism such as the ones I have mentioned. That Sufism reached its culmination in Ḥusayn is an idea which hardly ever occurred to the mind of any reputed Ṣūfī.

This is not the place to discuss Massignon's view of Sufism: the way he looks at the mystical experience, the nature of the Ṣūfī enterprise, the end of the Ṣūfī *ṭarīqah*, the place of Sufism in Islam, the status of a *walī* and his role vis-à-vis the Prophet. This will require a separate study by itself. Nor do I intend to review Massignon's interpretation of Ḥusayn's life and thought. I only propose to present the facts of Ḥusayn's life-experience, and discuss some of his ideas in the light of the view of Sufism outlined in an earlier work of mine, *Sufism and Shari'ah*.⁹

Life

Most of the facts of Ḥusayn's life have been unearthed by Massignon and everyone coming after him would be indebted to him in that respect. I am no

³The words of Shaykh Aḥmad b. 'Alī ibn Yahyā al-Rifā'ī are: "In my opinion he [Ḥusayn] was not a sage; in my opinion he neither imbibed nor perceived anything. I believe that he heard only a murmuring, a tinkling, and that his imagination then carried him away from state to state" (quotation from *The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 2: 177).

⁴Qushayrī quotes Ḥusayn's words at various places in his *al-Risālah*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Muḥammad and Muḥammad b. al-Sharīf, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīth, 1972), see 32, 374, 483, 484, 494, 551, 604, 617, 636. This only implies a tacit approval of his words on subjects they refer to. As for Ḥusayn's mystical journey (*sulūk*), *ṭarīqah*, achievements and ideas, Qushayrī abstains from any comments. He does not include him among the leaders (*mashā'ikh*) of Sufism whom he mentions in the first pages of his book.

⁵For Jīlānī's words see *infra* p. 298.

⁶See Sayyid Muḥammad Mubārak 'Alawī Kirmānī, alias Amīr Khurd, *Siyar al-Awliyā'*, Urdu trans. I'jāz al-Ḥaqq Quddūsī (Lahore: 1980), 515. The words of Shaykh Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā' are: "He (Ḥusayn) is to be rejected (*mardūd*). Junayd was the leader of Ṣūfis in his time, and he rejected him, and his rejection is to be taken as the rejection of Ḥusayn by all the *mashā'ikh*".

⁷This is the estimate of 'Abd Allāh b. Khafīf, the Ṣūfī shaykh from Shīrāz. See Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh ibn As'ad ibn 'Alī al-Yāfi'ī (d. 768/1367) *Mir'at al-fīnān* (Hyderabad: Dāirat al-Ma'ārif al-Nizāmiyah, 1339 A.H.), 2: 254.

⁸These are the words of Abū 'l-Qāsim Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Naṣrābādī (d. 369/979). See also al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, n.d.), 8: 121.

⁹See chapters 2 and 3 in my *Sufism and Shari'ah: A Study of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī's Effort to Reform Sufism* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 1986).

less indebted to him on that account. I mostly differ from him on the interpretation of events. Let me first state here the bare facts of Ḥusayn's life.

Ḥusayn was born about 244/857–8 at al-Ṭūr near Baydā' in Fāris, some eight miles from Shīrāz. His grandfather was a Zoroastrian. His father, a wood-carderer (*ḥallāj*) by profession, was the first to embrace Islam. A few years after Ḥusayn's birth, he left al-Ṭūr and settled down in the thoroughly Arabicised town of Wāsit, where Ḥusayn had his early education. He acquired great proficiency in Arabic, forgetting his native Persian almost completely. He also committed the Qur'ān to memory. When he was sixteen he went to Tustar to further pursue his studies. After sometime he joined the company (*ṣuḥbah*) of Sahl ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 287/900), a leading Ṣūfī of the time. But he hardly passed two years there and then left for Baṣrah. There he pursued *Taṣawwuf* under the supervision of 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān al-Makkī (d. 297/910). Eighteen months later he married the daughter of a Ṣūfī colleague of 'Amr, Abū Ya'qūb al-Aqṭa' of the Karnabā'ī family. For some reason 'Amr did not approve of the marriage; and his relation with Aqṭa' and Ḥusayn became strained. Ḥusayn went to Junayd at Baghdād, the preceptor of both 'Amr and Aqṭa', and sought his help to straighten the relations. But Junayd declined to intervene and advised Ḥusayn to be patient and continue to honour both the Ṣūfis.¹⁰

The reason for 'Amr's unhappiness with Ḥusayn's marriage in a Karnabā'ī family was most probably his fear that it might land an ambitious youth of independent mind like Ḥusayn in political strife and impede his spiritual progress. Unfortunately what 'Amr had feared came to pass. Ḥusayn's brother-in-law in whom he came to confide more and more introduced him to a clan that supported the Zaydī rebellion of the Zanj who had been influenced in varying degrees by Shī'ite extremism. As a consequence Ḥusayn came to be regarded as a Shī'ī missionary.¹¹ Perhaps Ḥusayn had already developed some sympathy with the movement when he was at al-Tustar, which was probably the reason why he left Sahl abruptly before he could proceed in his *sulūk* to any length. 'Amr was perhaps aware of it. This rather than spiritual jealousy¹² was the reason of his unhappiness with Ḥusayn's marriage. In 270/883 the Zaydī rebellion was crushed¹³ and Ḥusayn, fearing repressive action, left for Makkah.

At Makkah he performed *'umrah* and took up a year of fasting and prayer in the open courtyard of the *Haram*. He cared little for sun or rain, and hardly moved from his seat except for unavoidable needs or for *ṭawāf*. Every evening

¹⁰Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 112, 121.

¹¹*The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 64; see the article on al-Hallāj in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new ed.).

¹²Massignon attributes 'Amr's unhappiness with Ḥusayn's marriage to his spiritual jealousy (*The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 22). This is a part of his effort to play up the image of Ḥusayn and bring down the image of his fellow Ṣūfis, even his teachers including Sahl, 'Amr and Junayd.

¹³*The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 23.

a jug of water and some bread was brought to him; he would take four bites from the bread, drink two swallows of water, and leave the rest to be removed in the morning.¹⁴ It seems that at this time he started to have visions and inspirations. 'Amr used to visit Makkah often; he happened to see him and found with him some writings. When he inquired about them, Ḥusayn said that he was trying to contest the Qur'ān.¹⁵ 'Amr was greatly shocked at this answer; he did not expect this arrogant response from a disciple. The incident brought the already strained relations between them to an end.

After a year Ḥusayn returned to Iraq, went to Junayd, the undisputed leader of the Ṣūfīs (*Sayyid al-Tā'ifāh*) at the time, and sought to pursue his *sulūk* under his guidance. But Junayd declined saying: "I do not take mad people (*majānīn*) in my company".¹⁶ Disappointed at Baghdad, Ḥusayn came to Basrah and saw his wife and children who were staying with his father-in-law. Unfortunately, the latter did not welcome him either. He too was unhappy with the way Ḥusayn was conducting himself. Ḥusayn took his family and left for al-Tustar where his brother-in-law was staying. Determined to pursue the Ṣūfī path, whatever the odds, Ḥusayn gave himself to *dhikr*, prayer, and sincere penances. Within a short time he became famous for his asceticism and austere practices. Miracles often happen at the hands of such Ṣūfīs, and they came to Ḥusayn, too. But unlike other Ṣūfīs he did not try to hide them or restrain himself from them. Instead he indulged in them freely, resorted at times to some undesirable methods, such as utilizing the services of *jinns*. His popularity increased and disciples gathered around him. He assumed the role of a *Shaykh* and started teaching and instructing.

Ṣūfīs are not supposed to take up teaching and guidance unless they complete their *sulūk* and are authorized by their preceptors. Ḥusayn had not completed his *sulūk*, and had no teacher to authorize him. His rapturous condition for which Junayd refused him disqualified him further; for guiding, one has to be sober and in full possession of oneself. Yet Ḥusayn appointed himself as a *Shaykh*. This stance was opposed by the Ṣūfīs of the time. 'Amr, in particular, strongly disapproved of this stance. He wrote letters to people in different cities warning them against Ḥusayn and his ideas and practices.¹⁷

Instead of changing his ways, Ḥusayn reacted sharply to the opposition of the Ṣūfīs. He broke with the entire community, discarded its symbolic dress, donned like a soldier, mixed with the people of the world, and started delivering sermons in a popular style.¹⁸ Some of those who later rose to

¹⁴Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 118; *Akhhār al-Hallāj*, ed. L. Massignon & Paul Kraus (Paris: 1936), 43.

¹⁵Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 121.

¹⁶Alī b. 'Uthmān Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, ed. Zukovsky with Persian trans. of the Russian Introduction by M. 'Abbāsī (Tehran: 1926), 235.

¹⁷Abū 'l-Fidā' Ismā'il ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa 'l-Nihāyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Rayyān li al-Turāth, 1408/1988), 9: 135; Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 113.

¹⁸*The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 24; al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 113.

important positions in Baghdād became his disciples, while others condemned him and incited people against him. It was not wise for him to stay at al-Tustar any more. He entrusted his family to some friends and left. When he was in the Jabal, he was arrested and flagellated on the charge of supporting the Zaydī or Qaramatian cause and was also detained for a short time.¹⁹

After he was released he proceeded on a long journey to Ṭāliqān, Kūhistān, Juzjān and Balkh. When he reached Māwarā' 'l-Nahr he retraced his steps. Passing through Sajistān and Kirmān, and stopping for some time at Fāris, where he wrote his first books, he came to Ahwāz where his family joined him after five years in 279/892. At Ahwāz Ḥusayn addressed different sections of the people, expounded his ideas openly, and worked wonders. He told people the secrets of their heart, which won him the title of the Carder of Secrets (*Hallāj al-Asrār*), offered them things of summer in winter, and things of winter in summer.²⁰

From Ahwāz Ḥusayn went to Baṣrah, where he maintained a low profile, spending most of his time in *dhikr* and devotion. After a period he took four hundred disciples, all clad in patched clothes (*muraqqa'ah*), and went for *Hajj* for the second time in 281/894. Reaching Makkah, most of the disciples dispersed in the city; with the rest Ḥusayn went to the mount Abū Qubays. After the dinner he offered to entertain them with the sweets of Zabīd. Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq ibn Muḥammad Nahrajūrī (d. 330/941), a close friend of Ḥusayn was not happy with this show of miracle and accused him of making pact with *jinn*s.²¹

After the *Hajj*, Ḥusayn went to Baṣrah, and then to Ahwāz to see his family. He did not stay there for long, and left with his family and brother-in-law for Baghdād where he succeeded to instal them with the help of the secretary of state, Ḥāmid Qunnā'ī. Here he met an aging Ṣūfī Abū'l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī and a young ecstatic like him, Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946) who became a close friend.²² In 284/897, he went out again on a long journey of the East with a diplomatic envoy of Mu'taḍid (279/891–299/920). Travelling through Western India he went to Turkistān and Māṣīn, the capital of Ughar Turks who were Manichaeans by religion. Thereafter, he returned to Baghdād by way of Khurāsān, Nihāwand and Dīnawar.²³

Throughout his journey (284/897–289/902) Ḥusayn preached to the people and called them to Allah, visited Ṣūfī centres, spoke of his experiences, set forth his ideas and worked wonders. The impression that he left on the people can be gauged from the titles by which men writing from different places addressed

¹⁹*The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 82 ff.

²⁰Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 113; Abū 'l-Fidā', *al-Mukhtaṣar fī Ta'rikh al-Bashar* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah Ḥusayniyyah, 1325, A.H.), 2: 70; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt A'yān*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfah, 1969), 2: 141.

²¹Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 125–6; *The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 117.

²²*The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 82 ff.

²³Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 120.

him in their letters. From India they addressed him as *al-Mughīth*, the Saviour; from Māshīn and Turkistān as *al-Muqīt*, the Nourisher; from Fāris as ‘Abd Allāh *al-Zāhid*, the Ascetic; from Khurāsān as *al-Mumayyiz*, the Discerner; from Khūzistān as *al-Shayekh Hallāj al-Asrār*, the Carder of Secrets; from Baṣrah as *al-Muhayyar*, the Dazed; while the people of Baghdād called him *al-Muṣṭalam*, the Enraptured.²⁴ He thus appeared to people as a Ṣūfī engrossed in God, enraptured and intoxicated, with miraculous powers of reading hidden thoughts, relieving people of their suffering and fulfilling their wishes.

In 290/920 Ḥusayn left for his third and final *Hajj* clad in a piece of patched clothes (*muraqqa‘ah*) thrown a round his shoulders, and an Indian loin cloth (*Fūṭah*) around his waist. When he was at ‘Arafāt he beat his chest in a state of rapture and prayed to God that he may efface himself in Him completely.²⁵ After *Hajj* he visited Madīnah and then Jerusalem. In 292/905 when he returned to Baghdād he changed his life style completely. He acquired property, built a house, in a portion of which he made *tawāf*, celebrated the ‘*Īd al-Qurbān*, and performed the rites of *Hajj* every year.²⁶ At night he prayed at the grave of ibn Ḥanbal; in day he sang his union with God and indulged in *shath*. It was in this state that he exclaimed: “I am the Real” (*Anā ‘l-Haqq*). Other Ṣūfis in this state keep away from people, but Ḥusayn mixed with them in the markets and the mosques, talked of his experiences and feelings, and pleaded to them to kill him in order that he may attain permanent union with God while they save their religion from his blasphemous words.

The deteriorating conditions of the Caliphate at the time had given rise to a movement of reform. Ḥallāj had some of his writings dedicated to the leaders of the movement.²⁷ In 296/908 an unsuccessful attempt was made to seize power and raise Ibn al-Mu‘tazz to the throne. The move failed and al-Muqtadir was restored by his Shī‘ite *wazīr* Ibn al-Furāt. During the hunt of the reformers that followed, Ḥusayn fled to Sūs in Ahwāz. Four of his disciples were arrested. Three years later, he, too, was caught, brought to Baghdād and put in jail, where he remained for nine years till the end of his life. When Ibn ‘Īsā, the cousin of Hāmid Qunnā‘ī, his disciple, became *wazīr*, he closed down the trial and set free the reformers. But Ḥusayn could not be released; instead, he was exposed for three days on the pillory with ‘Qarmathian agent’ written on his forehead.²⁸ Later he was confined in the palace. In 304/916 Ibn al-Furāt replaced Ibn ‘Īsā, but the influence of the Queen mother prevented him from reopening the trial. Probably Ḥusayn wrote a part of his *Tawāsīn* and his tract on *Mi‘rāj* during this period.

²⁴Ibid., 8: 113–4.

²⁵*The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 222. Actually Ḥusayn prays for greater infidelity which, as we will explain (see *infra*, p. 313), means the experience of union and identity.

²⁶*The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 1: 28; Baghdādī, *Ta‘rīkh Baghdād*, 8: 114.

²⁷*The Pasison of al-Hallāj*, 1: 29.

²⁸Ibid., 30.

In 308–9/921–2 when Ḥāmid was made *wazīr*, he reopened the trial. Several charges were brought against Ḥusayn: that he claimed union with God and that God had entered him, that he was misleading people with his miracles and tricks, that his followers worshipped him, that he was undermining the *Sharī'ah* and preaching a form of *Hajj* which every one could do at home.²⁹ When his Ṣūfī friends were questioned about his claim: “I am the Real”, Abū Bakr al-Shiblī said that he should be stopped from saying that, and Abū Muḥammad al-Jarīrī (d. 311/924) said that he was an infidel and that he should be killed. Only Ibn ‘Aṭā’ (d. 309/922) defended him. He was ill-treated by the guards and died of the blows he received.³⁰ The Mālīkī *qādī*, Abū ‘Amr, who was presiding over the trial questioned Ḥusayn on his view regarding *Hajj* and on his saying that the important thing was not its celebration as a ritual at Makkah but its enactment in the heart in one’s house, and that it would absolve of one’s duty to perform *Hajj*. Abū ‘Amr condemned him and pronounced the death sentence. The verdict was then signed by other members of the jury. The Caliph ordered the sentence to be carried out. Ḥusayn was beaten, his hands and legs were cut off, and lastly, he was executed. His body was sprinkled with oil and put on fire. Throughout this whole ordeal Ḥusayn displayed extraordinary courage and patience. Unlike his reaction at the earlier stage of the trial when he protested strongly that it was not right to kill him, he submitted this time to his fate calmly and coolly. May God have mercy on him.

Sulūk and Experiences

Of all the early Ṣūfī writers Hujwayrī (d. 465/1072) has the greatest regard for Ḥusayn. He recognises his *walāyah*, mentions him along with other Ṣūfīs, and defends him against various charges. He had also written a separate book on Ḥusayn explaining his words, which unfortunately is not extant. However, at the end of his discussion on Ḥusayn in *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, he writes:

His words are not to be followed; for he is overpowered by his experiences (*maghlūb al-hāl*), and is not in control of himself (*mutamakkin*). One should only follow the words of a *mutamakkin*. Ḥusayn, thank God, is very dear to me. But his *ṭarīqah* is not based on any sound principles; his states are not settled, and his experiences are fraught with danger.³¹

These observations on Ḥusayn’s *ṭarīqah*, experiences and states are confirmed by many Ṣūfīs who have no reservation about his *walāyah*. For

²⁹Baghdādī, *Ta’rikh Baghdād*, 8: 138; Ibn Kathīr *al-Bidāyah wa ‘l-Nihāyah*, 9: 141; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam fī Ta’rikh al-Mulūk wa al-Umam* (Hyderabad: 1357 A.H.), 6: 163; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, 2: 143; Abū ‘l-Fidā’, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī ‘l-Ta’rikh*, 1: 89.

³⁰Ibn Hajar, *Lisān al-Mizān* (Hyderabad: 1330 A.H.), fascimile ed. (Beirut: 1390/1971), 2: 315.

³¹Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 192.

instance Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī (d. 561/1166) writes: "Husayn stumbled and fell on the way; no one could hold his hand. Had I been in his time I would have held his hand".³²

Let me review Husayn's *ṭarīqah*, experiences and states and see what is there which called for these remarks and led to his tragic end. The first thing to note in this regard is that Husayn did not benefit properly from the guidance of his teachers. In fact, leaving out the initial stage of his *sulūk* which was supervised by his teachers, he traversed the rest of the path all by himself. He, therefore, could not avoid the pitfalls of the road, made mistakes, and as Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir says, stumbled in the way.

He went first to Sahl ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Tustarī (d. 284/896) at the age of sixteen and was initiated into Sufism. But before he could proceed to any length, he left him. Hujwayrī says that "Husayn left Sahl abruptly without taking permission from him".³³ Qushayrī hails Sahl as one of the leaders (*a'immaḥ*) of the community, who had no peers in his times in his works and in his piety.³⁴ The reason why Husayn left Sahl without any specific reason probably had to do, as I have said earlier, with the interest in political movements that Husayn started taking. After Sahl, he joined the company of 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān al-Makkī whom Qushayrī calls the master of the Ṣūfis (*shaykh al-qawm*) and leader of the groups (*imām al-tā'ifah*) in doctrine and practice (*al-usūl wa al-ṭarīqah*).³⁵ But his marriage in a Karnabā'ī family strained their relations and deprived of benefiting from him. If Junayd, whose help Husayn sought to straighten out the things did not intervene, the reason most probably was that Junayd, like 'Amr, did not like Husayn to be involved in politics.³⁶ But he could not advise Husayn to undo the marriage, nor did he expect that Husayn would give up his interest in politics and restrain himself if he asked him. On the other hand, Husayn could not ask 'Amr to revise his attitude and continue to supervise his progress.

Up to the time Husayn left for Makkah for *'Umrāh* he had made no progress in his *sulūk*. Hujwayrī says that he left 'Amr just as he had left Sahl before taking permission from him.³⁷ Left to himself and determined to pursue the path whatever the odds, Husayn embarked on a very severe course of devotion and self-mortification. He vowed to spend a whole year in fasting, *dhikr* and prayer in the open court of the *Haram*, braving the scorching sun in day and chilly cold at night, taking four bites from dry bread and two swallows of water in twenty four hours. When one inflicts upon oneself such a severe discipline, against the wish of his Lord and the advice of His Prophet, he is put

³² Al-Yāfi'i, *Mir'fat al-Jinān*, 2: 254; see also al-Khifāji's commentary *Nasīm al-Riyād*, on *Kitāb al-Shifā'* of Qāḍī 'Ayād (Madinah: al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah, n.d.), 538.

³³ Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 190.

³⁴ Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 92.

³⁵ Ibid., 132.

³⁶ See *infra*, p. 299.

³⁷ Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 190.

to a test. When in the course of these penances Ḥusayn came to have visions and inspirations, instead of bowing himself to the Lord in gratitude, he thought he could produce something matching the Qur'ān, as he said to 'Amr, his teacher, when he saw him in Makkah. This indicates that he was losing balance and was being overpowered by his experience (*maghlūb al-hāl*) under some powerful experience. Notwithstanding this self-exaltation, Ḥusayn was also deeply conscious of his imperfections. When after a year he returned to Baghdād, he went to Junayd and sought to join his company in order to complete his *sulūk*. Hujwayrī has this account of the meeting:

When Husayn ibn Maṣṣūr in an ecstatic condition (*ghalabah*) severed his relations with 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān, and came to Junayd, the latter asked him: 'For what have you come?' He said: 'To join the company (*ṣuḥbah*) of the master (*shaykh!*)' Junayd said: 'I do not take mad people (*majānīn*) in my company. For company (*ṣuḥbah*), sobriety is required so that you can achieve something. (Otherwise) what you did with Sahl and 'Amr may happen again'. Ḥusayn said: 'Sir, sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) and intoxication (*sukr*) are the attributes of man, and continue with him so long as he is veiled from God'.³⁸

Junayd objected, and said that Ḥusayn was wrong, and did not allow him to be in his company. Ḥusayn did not learn any lesson from it, nor was he discouraged in his pursuit. He went on all by himself. "He would either attain something great or perish in the way".³⁹ With that spirit he exhorted himself to the most. He offered four hundred *rak'ahs* of optional (*nafl*) prayer every day,⁴⁰ remained awake all night, neither slept in bed nor reclined on a mat. When his eyes became heavy he would put his head on the knees and take a short nap. When someone asked him to take things easy, he replied: 'My Friend has not been easy with me so that I may take rest. Has not the Prophet said: 'The men who suffer most are the prophets, then the best among the Muslims and then the best'.⁴¹ During Ramaḍān he exerted even more: he would read the whole Qur'ān in two *rak'ahs* every night, and in hundred *rak'ahs* every day.⁴² To strengthen concentration at times, he would put his head down and raise his legs up and say *dhikr*.⁴³

Ḥusayn scorned at the easy and loved the difficult. He did not stick to any particular school of *fiqh*, and looked for the most difficult course wherever he found.⁴⁴ God has asked only to avoid the unlawful, but Ḥusayn loved to shun

³⁸Ibid., p. 235.

³⁹Al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 117; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 9: 134, Yāfi'ī, *Mir'at al-Jinān*, 2: 258.

⁴⁰Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūh*, 39.

⁴¹Abū Bak Muḥammad al-Kalābādhi, *Kitāb al-Ta'arruf li Madhhab ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Tāhā 'Abd al-Bāqī Surūr (Cairo: al-Ḥalabī, 1990), 85.

⁴²*Akhhār al-Hallāj*, 46.

⁴³Ibid., 14.

⁴⁴Ibid., 19.

the lawful, as much as he could.⁴⁵ A disciple who was with him for seven years, never saw him eating seasoning except salt and vinegar.⁴⁶ For twenty years he did not change a cloak. . . .⁴⁷ He did not accept any presents, when he was offered a trouser, he took it but gave it to others. Once he was offered two thousand *dinārs*; he distributed the whole money among the poor and saved nothing for himself.⁴⁸ He went without food for days and nights. Once after many days of starvation when he got bread and meat, he gave it to a dog saying: 'This was what my soul had desired for many days, and I had deprived it so far. But tonight she forced me to go out in search of it. Thank God, He enabled me to subdue it'.⁴⁹

Austerities such as these are not uncommon among the *Ṣūfis*, even though some of them are quite repugnant to the spirit of the Islamic *Sharī'ah*. But *Ṣūfis* indulge in them away from the gaze of the public, complying with the Prophetic direction that *nafl* (supererogatory works) should be better done at home,⁵⁰ to save oneself from pride. But *Ḥusayn* did not mind it. At the time of his first visit to Makkah, he chose to carry on his year-long fasting and prayer in the open courtyard of *Haram*, and at the time of the second *Hajj* he chose the mount of *Abū Qubays* by the side of *al-Ṣafā* for his prayers. When 'Abd Allāh al-Maghrabī, a leading *Ṣūfi* of Makkah went to see *Ḥusayn* he found him sitting on the stone under the sun sweating profusely. He resented the practice so much that he returned without meeting him. Turning to his disciples he said: "If you live long, you would see what happens to this man. God will put him to a test which he would not be able to stand".⁵¹ A disciple of *Junayd*, al-Maghrabī did not like *Husayn* exposing himself to the heat of the sun above and stone beneath, and that too in the gaze of public eyes. This was obviously in conflict with the teaching of the Prophet (peace be on him).

Renunciation, poverty, devotion and *dhikr* are some of the essential states of the *Ṣūfi tariqah*. The next stage is the negation of the will. At the lowest level it means to avoid engaging in things not liked by God; on a higher level, it means to purify one's obedience and devotion from every consideration, however good, other than the pleasure of God; and finally, to negate the

⁴⁵ *Dīwān al-Hallāj*, ed. Luis Massignon (Paris: Librarie Orientaliste, 1955), 80.

⁴⁶ *Akhhbār al-Hallāj*, 45.

⁴⁷ Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 118; 'Aṭṭār, Farīd al-Dīn, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*, with preface by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (Tehran: 1331 A.H.), 2: 117.

⁴⁸ *Akhhbār al-Hallāj*, 42.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁵⁰ Supererogatory works of different kinds have been preferred to be performed in private or at home. For instance: "If you disclose charity, even so it is well; but if you conceal it and make it reach those in need that is best for you" (Qur'an: 2: 271). "Call on your lord with humility and in private" (Qur'an: 7: 55). About the *dhikr* of God, the Prophet (peace be on him) has said: "The best *dhikr* is one that is done in low voice". Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), 1: 187. He has also liked that one should do the supererogatory prayers (*ṣalāh*) at home.

⁵¹ Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 119; *Akhhbār al-Hallāj*, 104.

thought that one achieves anything by one's own will and effort, and instead consider every achievement as a sheer grace of God. Sober Ṣūfis pursue this negation of the will in a way that does not conflict with the word of God in the Qur'ān. They do not, for instance, oppose seeking the good of the Hereafter to seeking the pleasure of God, since God wants them to pursue it. Ṣūfis overwhelmed by their experiences often put up that opposition and fail to see that the pleasure of God or His vision in Paradise is a part of the joys of Paradise God likes His servants to strive for.⁵²

To a question, how to reach God? Ḥusayn answered: "Just take two steps, and you reach God: Throw this world on the face of those who love it; and leave the other world for those who strive for it".⁵³ His attendant Ibrāhīm b. Fātik recounts the words he said one night addressing God: "The breeze of love that I feel and the fragrance of Your intimacy that I enjoy makes me look down on mountains and look down on the heavens and the earth. By Yourself, if you sell me the Paradise for a moment of my time, or for an instant of my love I would not buy it. And if You raise the Hell to me with all its torments I would consider it less painful in comparison to the experience of Your going out of my sight.... Part of the real love is that one should not love anything which is finite".⁵⁴

Love of God in the Qur'ān and in the life and teaching of the Prophet (peace be on him) does not exclude the love of finite beings, wife, children, friends and other human beings. In fact, it involves the love of everything which God loves: the religion that He has ordained and the people who strive for it, even though they are finite beings. Love in the Qur'ān, moreover, is as much the love of the Divine Being as it is the love of His will. The goal of the Qur'ānic love is the fulfilment of God's will, by loving Him as well as by carrying out His will. If we may venture to generalize, Ṣūfi love tends to be more concerned with the Being of God than His will; it seeks more to negate the self and unite with God rather than to carry out His will. This characteristic is much more visible in ecstatic Ṣūfis. When they cross that stage and become sober, they attend equally to the will of God.

Ḥusayn's love shows the characteristics of the passionate love of an ecstatic. The pages of his *diwān* eloquently speak of it. He says:

I left to the people their world and their religion
For you, O 'my world' and 'my religion'!
I have lit two fires within me;
One between the ribs, and
The other within the intestines.⁵⁵

⁵² Ahmad Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt Imām Rabbānī*, ed. Nūr Ahmad (Lahore: Nūr Company, 1304/1964), 1: 799–800, Letter 302.

⁵³ *Akhhār al-Ḥallāj*, 107.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵⁵ *Diwān al-Ḥallāj*, 38–39.

The first fire which is in the chest burns the concerns of the spirit, the second which is in the abdomen reduces the desires of the body to ashes; they leave Ḥusayn with God alone.

You drew me so near to Yourself
That I thought You were me,
I forgot myself, and the consciousness
Of Yourself replaced my self-consciousness.⁵⁶

That feeling intensified to such an extent that Ḥusayn neither perceived himself nor the world and perceived only God there.

You effaced my name and my form,
Then enquired about me. I said: 'you'.
Your knowledge encompasses everything
And whatever I see is You.⁵⁷

It is in such moments that Abū Yazīd said: "There is none in the house but God"; or "Glory to me, how great I am"! And it is in such moments that Ḥusayn exclaimed: "I am the Real".

Ḥusayn's experience of God's union was not stable. At times he felt God near and exulted, and at times he felt Him remote and lamented. This feeling of closeness at one time and of remoteness at another continued to alternate in the early stages of his *sulūk*. Ḥusayn has expressed it in these words:

O One who is so close as to live in my heart,
And so remote as the Eternal from the contingent!
You appear to me till I think You are all, and
You draw away from me till I think You are not there.
Neither Your remoteness persists, nor Your closeness benefits.
Neither Your war destroys, nor Your peace saves.⁵⁸

The Ṣūfī in this condition does not have peace. When God witnesses he cannot bear the weight of His presence, and when He hides he cannot bear the pain of His absence. This condition lasted with Ḥusayn for long. Abū 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad ibn Mardawayh who saw him in Baghdād a little before his house-arrest, reports that one day Ḥusayn started weeping in a market place, and cried out:

O people! Save me from God. (He said that three times). He has robbed me from myself and does not return me to me. I cannot stand to His presence. I fear He may leave me, and I lose sight of Him and be miserable. Woe to one who loses

⁵⁶Ibid., 30.

⁵⁷Ibid., 45.

⁵⁸*Akhhbār al-Hallāj*, 14.

sight of Him after He is present to Him, and suffers separation after union (*wasl*).⁵⁹

Husayn began to think that neither his *fanā'* was complete nor his *jam'* was perfect. What stood between him and his goal was he himself. Unless he was removed from between he would continue to get God at one moment and lose Him at another. Like a mad man he would go out in the market and cry out for help:

O people of Islam! Save me. God does not leave me to my self, so that I can be at peace with my self. Nor does he take my soul from me so that I am relieved of it. This coquetry I cannot stand.

Then he sang:

O my Holy (love)! I have embraced with the whole of my
 Being Your whole Being.
 You manifest to me till You are as if in me.
 When I think of things other than You
 I feel nothing but disgust.
 I feel at home only in Your company.
 But alas! I am in the prison of my life
 Deprived of Your intimacy.
 Take me out, I pray, from this prison.⁶⁰

Husayn's feeling that he is the cause of his troubles intensified, and he cursed himself:

Woe to me because of me,
 Wail on me, because of me.
 I am the cause of all my troubles.⁶¹

He insistently prayed to God to annihilate him:

Between me and You there is myself
 That keeps me away.
 Remove it from between, and replace
 It by Yours.⁶²

It was at this time that charges were levelled against him from different quarters. He felt that what he was saying or doing was in conflict with Islam

⁵⁹Ibid., 25.

⁶⁰Ibid., 57–58.

⁶¹*Diwān al-Hallāj*, 13.

⁶²Ibid., 90.

as people know it, and hence they were quite justified to condemn him. If they killed him, they would be doing something which was right from their viewpoint. But this was also what he himself was looking for, in order to achieve complete and abiding union. He cried out in the market of Baghdād:

Go, tell my friends: I have set sail
On the sea, and my raft has broken.
It is in the religion of the cross that I will die.
I will go neither to Bathā' (Makkah) nor to Madīnah.

Then he came home, recited the *sūrahs al-Fātiḥah, al-Shu'arā'* and the succeeding *sūrahs* till he reached this verse of *Sūrah al-Rūm*, "Those who are given knowledge and faith would say ..." (30: 56). He repeated the verse times and times again and wept. When he finished the prayer (*ṣalāh*), his attendant Ḥusayn ibn Hamdān said: "Sir, in the market you said words of infidelity (*kufr*), and here in prayer you cry. What do you want"? Ḥusayn said: "I want this (pointing to himself), curse be on it, to be killed". Ibn Hamdān said: 'Is it right, Sir, to incite people to something wrong'? He said: 'Certainly not. But I incite them to something right. For me to kill it is a duty and if they do it for the sake of their religion, they would be rewarded'.⁶³

These words are not sarcastic. Ḥusayn is quite serious. If suicide had been allowed in Islam Ḥusayn would possibly have killed himself, by dropping himself from a mount or jumping into a river, as mystics in other traditions have done. That would have enabled the drop to mingle with the ocean, and the lover to unite with the Beloved. Ḥusayn elaborates the point himself in these verses:

O righteous people! Kill me
For I shall live by dying,
My life is in my death,
And my death is in my life.
To me the effacement of my being
Is the noblest of all the acts,
And my persistence with (human) qualities
Is the greatest of all the evils.⁶⁴

Ḥusayn was passing through this condition when he was put in prison. He stayed there for nine years. It appears that he gradually overcame his restlessness and agony and attained the permanent union he was craving for. Many of his verses refer to this condition. For instance:

I saw the Lord with the eyes of my heart

⁶³ *Akhhār al-Hallāj*, 81–82.

⁶⁴ *Dīwān al-Hallāj*, 33–34.

I said: 'Who are You'? He replied: 'You'.⁶⁵

Or:

Your soul has blended with my soul,
As wine mixes with distilled water,
What happens to You happens to me,
Hence You are me all the time.⁶⁶

Union is the highest stage which Ḥusayn reached in his mystical journey. He did not go beyond and attain the stage of post-union separation (*farq ba'd al-jam'*), as Abū Yazīd and Shibli who were no less ecstatic eventually attained.⁶⁷ There is no indication of this stage in Ḥusayn's reported experiences, nor is there anything in his writings to suggest it. His words show that he was aware of only three stages of the spiritual journey: difference, union, and complete extinction. He says:

There is contraction, then expansion and finally

Extinction

Or

There is difference, then union and finally obliteration.⁶⁸

At another place, he describes these stages more clearly:

The gnostic passes through three stages:
At the first, the heart is robbed of its self-identity.
Then it passes through an overpowering ecstasy.

⁶⁵ Ḥallāj, *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*, ed. Louis Massignon (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1913), 31.

⁶⁶ *Dīwān al-Ḥallāj*, 82.

⁶⁷ A number of things suggest that Shibli crossed the stage of unitive experience (*jam'*) and its concomitant states of ecstasy and intoxication (*sukr*) and reached the stage of separation after union (*farq ba'd al-jam'*) and became sober: One, Junayd's expectation about him expressed in these words: "Shibli is at present intoxicated (*sukrān*); if he comes out of it he will prove to be a leader (*imām*) from whom people will benefit a lot" (Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd and Tāhā 'Abd al-Bāqī Surūr (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīth 1380/1960), 382. Second, Shibli's attitude that he should not talk publicly of his unitive experience which is reflected in his words: "I and Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr were one except that he talked of it openly and I kept it hidden": (Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 121). Third, his comment on the words of Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī that had emerged from the latter's experience of union and identity with God: "Had Abū Yazīd been here he would have entered in Islam (*aslama*) at the hand of some of our boys" (Sarrāj, *K. al-Luma'*, 479). This indicates that Shibli had passed the stage of union (*jīm'*) which is, as the later Ṣūfis called it, the *kufr* of the *ṭarīqah*, and reached the stage of post-union separation (*farq ba'd al-jam'*) which is the stage of *Islām* of the *ṭarīqah*. Fourth, Ibn 'Arabī's words: "We do not accept Ḥallāj's statements about himself or about Shibli. For Ḥallāj was intoxicated (*sukrān*) while Shibli was sober" (*al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyah*, Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabīyyah al-Kubrā, n.d., 2: 15). Finally, the fact that Ṣūfis in general distinguish him from Ḥallāj, and categorize him with Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī who had in the end crossed over the stage of union.

⁶⁸ *Dīwān al-Ḥallāj*, 20.

Finally, the lofty powers of the heart are subjected
To a vision that completely wipes out the seer.⁶⁹

The third stage which Ḥusayn calls complete obliteration of the seer is what other Ṣūfis call *jam' al-jam'*, union of union or absolute union where all distinctions between the seer and God are wiped out from the consciousness of the mystic. Ḥusayn has elsewhere called it *'ayn al-jam'*, union pure and complete. It is this state of *'ayn al-jam'* which Ḥusayn finally attained. Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034/1624) has observed in one of his letters that Ḥusayn lived in this state and died in it.⁷⁰

The state of union as noted earlier is characterized by a set of attitudes and ideas which are quite different from the ones which characterize the state of second separation (*farq thānī*). For various reasons, these characteristics are more pronounced in some Ṣūfis than in others. In the case of Ḥusayn they are found in their extreme form.

Unitive experience, first of all, is an ecstatic experience (*wajd*), and Ṣūfis live under its intoxicating influence for years unless they are taken beyond that stage. Ḥusayn persisted in that state till the end of his life and hardly moved beyond it. Till the end he continued to speak of *wajd* and *sukr* and sang of its praises: For example:

One who is intoxicated by the lights of the unitive experience (*al-tawhīd*) is veiled from speaking about His (God's) isolation (from the world), and one who is intoxicated by the lights of pure devotion to Him speaks of the reality of union; for it is the intoxicated one who speaks of every mystery.⁷¹

Or

When the mystic attains perfection in love,
And forgets union with the Beloved because of *intoxication*,
He has true experience whereas he only perceived his
desires before.
For lovers offer prayer in the state of union (*kufr*).⁷²

That Ḥusayn always lived in the state of ecstasy and intoxication, and did not move beyond it, is attested by the last words he said on the gibbet: "All that matters for an ecstatic is that he devotes to the One exclusively" (*ḥasb al-wājid ifrād al-wāhid lahu*).⁷³

Under the influence of the unitive experience ecstatic Ṣūfis very often indulge in *shath*. They identify themselves with God or with any of His

⁶⁹ *Akhhār al-Hajjaj*, 55.

⁷⁰ Aḥmad Sirhindī, *Maktūbat Imām Rabbānī*, Vol. 3.

⁷¹ Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyah*, ed. Nūr al-Dīn Sharībah (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1953), 378.

⁷² *Akhhār al-Hallāj*, 103.

⁷³ Sarrāj, *K. al-Luma'*, 378.

attributes, acts or privileges. The *shathāt* of several important Ṣūfis including even Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī are well-known. Here are some of Ḥusayn's. He said:

O the inmost of my inmost!
(You are not other than me.)
hence my apologies are not to anyone but to me.⁷⁴

Or

My "One" has made me one with the truth of unity.
There is no other way to Him at all.
I am the Real,
(and the Real appears truly in the Real)
Concealing His Essence,
(where there is no difference.)⁷⁵

Ecstatic Ṣūfis often make high claims. A small provocation, even an innocent occasion may excite them to fantastic claims. Once God cured a sick man at the hands of Ḥusayn. This spurred him to say: Had God not said: "I would fill the hell with a lot of jinn and men, I would spit at the Fire (of Hell) and turn it into a garden for its inhabitants".⁷⁶ Turning at another time to the people in a mosque he said: "If a particle of what is there in my heart were dropped on the mountains of the earth, they would melt away. If I were put into Hell at the Day of Judgement its fire would burn out; and if I entered Paradise it would be razed to the ground". After that he began to sing:

I wonder how a part of my body holds my whole being
Where the earth cracks under the weight of a part of mine.
Could the broad expanse of the earth be enough to hold (me).
I would be unhappy over such an expansion.⁷⁷

No wonder if in this state Ḥusayn wrote a letter to a man, probably a disciple at Dīnawar, which began with these words: 'From the All-Gracious and the All-Merciful (*al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*) to so and so ...'. When the letter was discovered by the police and presented to Ḥusayn, he admitted that it was written by him. When they scolded him saying: "Earlier you claimed prophecy. Now you are claiming Lordship (*rubūbiyyah*)"? Ḥusayn denied the charge and said: "I don't claim Lordship. This is the state of '*ayn al-jam*', pure union in our way. Is there any Actor other than God? I and my hands are only instruments in His hand"?⁷⁸

⁷⁴*Dīwān al-Hallāj*, 103.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 75.

⁷⁶*Akhhār al-Hallāj*, 85.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁸Ibn Hajar, *Lisān al-Mizān*, 2: 317.

Şūfīs in the state of *'ayn al-jam'* are expected to keep silent and avoid making high claims. Indulgence in *shath* and high claims is regarded as a sign of weakness and immaturity. Once when Shiblī was passing through that state and indulged in *shath* Junayd reprimanded him, and he learned the lesson.⁷⁹ But Ḥusayn was not the man who would listen to anyone. Shiblī referred to the difference in their attitudes when he said: "I and Ḥusayn ibn Maṣṣūr were one thing; the difference between us was that he proclaimed it, and I concealed it".⁸⁰ When Ḥusayn was put on the cross he addressed him and said: "Did I not forbid you from speaking of it in public".⁸¹

Miracles (*karāmāt*) happen at the hands of saints. No theologian has denied that except some Mu'tazilah. The common view among the Şūfīs is that miracles happen more at the hands of the ecstatic and the enraptured than the sober Şūfīs. In fact, sober şūfīs deliberately abstain from working miracles. For, first of all, miracles are not the sign of *walāyah*; a Şūfī may be a *walī*, even if he works no miracles.⁸² On the other hand, even a non-believer may work miracles. False prophets like Musaylamah and Aswad al-'Ansi⁸³ had in the past worked miracles, and the Anti-Christ (*Dajjāl*) would work great miracles in his time. He would even kill a person and then raise him from the dead.⁸⁴ Secondly, miracles are not at all the measure of a *walī*'s greatness; on the contrary, the real measure is how he submits to the will of God, and obeys the *Sharī'ah*. Abū Yazīd said: "If a man spreads his prayer-mat on water, and sits cross-legged in the air, don't be deceived, till you ascertain how does he do with the injunctions (of the *Shar*)."⁸⁵

Thirdly, since miracles may produce a sense of pride or self-conceit or at least a sense of satisfaction and elation in the Şūfī and may lead credulous people to wrong beliefs about him, great Şūfīs have discouraged the working of miracles in public and made their concealment obligatory.⁸⁶ Abū Yazīd said: "God showed signs and wonders at my hand in the beginning, but I did not attach to them any importance. When He saw that, He opened the door for gnosis to me".⁸⁷ It is said that Abū'l-Ḥusayn al-Nūrī once asked a fisherman to throw his fishing net in the water saying that if he were a *walī*, he would catch a big fish weighing three *ratl* (one and a half kilogram). The fisherman threw

⁷⁹Sarrāj, *K. al-Lumā'*, 306. For other instances of Junayd's admonition to Shiblī see *al-Lumā'*, 487–88; Kalābādī, *al-Ta'arruf*, 172; Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 215.

⁸⁰Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 121.

⁸¹Ibid., 121.

⁸²Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 662.

⁸³Alī Asghar Chowdhari, *'Ahd-i Nabwī Kē Nādir Wāqī'āt* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Foundation, n.d.), 2: 145, 147.

⁸⁴Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Ismā'il al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Fitan, Bāb lā yadkhulu al-Dajjāl al-Madīnah.

⁸⁵Sarrāj, *K. al-Lumā'*, 400.

⁸⁶Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 285.

⁸⁷Sarrāj, *K. al-Lumā'*, 400.

the net and did catch a fish of that weight. When this was reported to Junayd he said: "I wish the fisherman would have caught a snake instead, and Nūrī would have been proven wrong".⁸⁸ Finally, Ṣūfis are not supposed to attribute to themselves the miracles that happen at their hands; for it is not they who work them, but it is God Who works at their hands. They have no power in themselves to bring anything into being. If they claim it for themselves they claim participation in lordship, which is wrong and unjustified. Even Jesus when he cured the leper or restored sight to the blind, and raised the dead to life he would do that in the name of God,⁸⁹ and would not attribute anything to himself. Prophets are sober not ecstatic.

Ḥusayn has been reported to have worked a number of miracles. Some have doubted their reality and regarded them as mere jugglery. These people either denied the possibility of miracle altogether, or for some reason or other, were opposed to Ḥusayn. Ṣūfis, whatever their view of Ḥusayn, do not deny his miracles. But whether all the miracles which have been reported of him were real miracles, or simply trickery is a question about which some ṣūfis, even the ones very close to him, had their doubts. Abū Ya'qūb Ishāq ibn Muḥammad al-Nahrajūrī, a close friend of Ḥusayn doubted the reality of some of them.⁹⁰ Ḥusayn's father-in-law, Abū Ya'qūb al-Aqṭa' is reported to have been disillusioned with him and called him a trickster and magic-monger.⁹¹ Ibn 'Aṭā', who loved Ḥusayn and lost his life on his account, did not rule out the possibility of Ḥusayn making pact with *jinn*s.⁹² A number of writers have attributed magic, alchemy, exorcism and sorcery to Ḥusayn and have mentioned many instances.⁹³ Part of the purpose of his journey to India is said to have been to learn magic.⁹⁴ Hujwayrī has denied these charges on the grounds that it is not consistent with Ḥusayn's prayers, devotions and *walāyah*.⁹⁵

What Ṣūfis mostly objected to was Ḥusayn's free indulgence in miracles. This had its wrong and highly reprehensible effects on many credulous people, as they feared. Some of Ḥusayn's followers deified him. They believed that God had entered in him and that he had the power to raise the dead.⁹⁶ They worshipped him, sought *barakah* from his things, even considered his excretion to be pure.⁹⁷ They did not believe that he was executed, and looked for his

⁸⁸Ibid., 403.

⁸⁹See the Qur'ān 3: 49; 5: 110; also 12: 38 and 40: 78.

⁹⁰'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*, 2: 116.

⁹¹Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 121.

⁹²Ibid., 120–1.

⁹³See Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 122–126; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān al-Mizān*, 2: 314; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 9: 135–37.

⁹⁴Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 191–2.

⁹⁵Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 191–2.

⁹⁶Ibn Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī l-Ta'rikh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1385/1965), 8: 127.

⁹⁷Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntazam fī Ta'rikh al-Muluk wa l-Umam* (Hyderabad: 1359 A.H.), 8: 162.

return after forty days,⁹⁸ as early Christians are said to have looked for the return of Jesus after his claimed crucifixion. This belief persisted in some Hallājians at least for one and a half-century as Abū'l 'Ulā' al-Mu'arri (d. 449/11057) has mentioned.⁹⁹

What is most shocking is that Ḥusayn is never reported to have condemned these beliefs and practices. On the contrary, he appears to have given a fillip to them by such practices as writing to his disciples in the name of 'the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful', as noted before, and justifying his acts, when questioned, on the basis of the unitive experience ('*ayn al-jam'*). As usual, one might try to excuse Ḥusayn on grounds of ecstasy and intoxication. However, it seems that he was not very much convinced of this. He appears to feel that he deserved to be hanged as he failed to attribute his miracles and other favours to God. It is reported that once he heard a *jinn* reading the Qur'ān. Ecstasy overtook him: he started dancing, raising his legs from the ground, and sang:

If one to whom some secret is revealed
Goes on to disclose it
They don't trust him with regard to secrets
So long as he lives.
They punish him of his lapse
And desert him rather than love him.¹⁰⁰

His friend and disciple, Aḥmad b. Fātik saw the Lord in dream as if he was standing before him, and said: "Lord! What did Ḥusayn do to suffer such a misfortune"? He said: "I revealed to him something sublime (*ma'nā*), but he called people to himself. So I inflicted on him what you have seen".¹⁰¹ Ibrāhīm ibn Shaybān (d. 330/941) whom Qushayrī calls the leading mystic of his time said: "Don't indulge in claims. If you want to see where claims lead, look at Hallāj and what happened to him".¹⁰²

Massignon has observed that Husayn put his miracles as a proof for the truth of the ideas he was expounding. But he has not cited any statement of Ḥusayn in support of this.¹⁰³ What is true is that his miracles did boost his popularity, and won him many followers, inspite of the fact that most Ṣūfis of his time opposed him or disowned him.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh Baghdād*, 8: 137.

⁹⁹ Adam Metz, *Islamic Civilization in the Fourth Century Hijrah*, Arabic tr. M. 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Ridāh entitled *al-Hadārah al-Islāmiyyah fī 'l-Qarn al-Rābi'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 4th ed. 1967), 2: 59.

¹⁰⁰ *Akhhār al-Hallāj*, 123-4.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 87.

¹⁰² Ibid., 105.

¹⁰³ *The Passion of al-Hallāj*.

¹⁰⁴ Sulamī, *Tabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, 307.

One major reason why Ṣūfis extol ecstasy is that in their view ecstatic experience reveals the reality and uncovers mysteries. Husayn said: "The mystic who is thrown into ecstasy by the effulgence of isolation (*tajrīd*) speaks of the reality of *tawḥīd*. None but the ecstatic talks of all the hidden truths".¹⁰⁵ He seemed to believe that whatever he perceived was true and certain and needed no checking with the Prophetic Revelation. "When one reaches the stage of gnosis (*ma'rifah*)", he said: "God makes revelation to his heart and protects his inmost (*al-sirr*) against wrong ideas".¹⁰⁶ Did Husayn rule out the possibility of error or of satanic insinuation in mystical inspirations? It is difficult to ascertain from the material at our hand. Ṣūfis who go beyond the stage of pure union (*'ayn al-jam'*) affirm the reality of difference along with unity, and those who reach the end of the road affirm absolute otherness of God and His complete transcendence. In general, Ṣūfis admit the possibility of error in mystical inspirations and insist on a confirmation from the Prophetic Revelation as Qushayrī says: "Inspired ideas are true only if they agree with the facts of revealed knowledge (*'ilm*)".¹⁰⁷

It is pertinent to point out that there are three different views among the Ṣūfis regarding the goal of Sufism. For some Ṣūfis the goal is union with God, or an ecstatic realization of oneness (*tawḥīd*, or more precisely *tawḥīd ḥālī*). For the more intellectual among them it is the intuitive knowledge of reality or gnosis (*ma'rifah*) revealed in the unitive experience, *kashf* and vision. For a third group of Ṣūfis the goal is sincere and absolute obedience to God; for them the unitive experience is a station of the mystical path, a means necessary for the realization of one's servanthood (*'ubūdiyyah*).

For Husayn, as one can expect from him, the goal of Sufism is the experience of union of *tawḥīd*, unification as he calls it; at times, however, he stresses upon the knowledge (*ma'rifah*) that this experience reveals. The advice that he gave to his son regarding the goal of Sufism was: "People strive for works (*a'māl*); but you must strive for that of which one particle is better than all the words of men and jinn, and which is nothing other than the knowledge of reality (*'ilm al-ḥaqīqāh*)".¹⁰⁸ All renunciation, devotion, love and self-annihilation is for the purpose of gnosis. In a couplet he expresses the idea in this manner:

O my soul! have patience,
Honour is in asceticism and renunciation.
But you must rise to that height
Whence comes revelation and illumination.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 311.

¹⁰⁶Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 604–5.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 263.

¹⁰⁸Attār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*, 2: 120.

¹⁰⁹*Dīwān al-Hallāj*, 81.

For Ṣūfis who believe that the goal of Sufism is the attainment of union with God or the knowledge revealed in that experience, obedience to the *Shari'ah* is only a preparation for the realization of that end. Though this preparation is necessary, and without it the attainment of the goal is inconceivable, the fact that the end is not a part of the *Shari'ah* and is realized in and through mystical experience of *fana'* and *jam'* often gives rise to the idea that *Shari'ah* is nothing but a means or a form of the reality. This is exactly the position which Ḥusayn states in these words:

As for the inner reality of Truth, its outer form is the *Shari'ah*. Whoever is perfect in the form of the *Shari'ah*, to him its inner reality is revealed and its inner reality is the gnosis of God.¹¹⁰

To a disciple Ḥusayn explained the point further:

Know that one treads on the ground of the *Shari'ah* until one enters the stages of union with God (*mawāqif al-tawhīd*). When one reaches there for him (obligation to) the *Shari'ah* drops. He perceives (*lawā'ih*) flashes (of reality) emerging from the depth of true experience (*ma'dan al-sidq*). When these flashes recur and glimpses (*tawālī'*) multiply the pronouncement of *tawhīd*, God's unity becomes to him blasphemy and the *Shari'ah* a folly (*hawās*). He is at that stage eradicated root and branch. Now if he observes the *Shari'ah* he does so as a habit (*rasm*) and if he speaks of *tawhīd* he speaks of it under an overwhelming ecstasy.¹¹¹

If oneness with God (*tawhīd*) is the ultimate reality and the true faith (*imān*), the *Shari'ah* which presumes the otherness of God and the duality of the Creator and the creation would be infidelity (*kufr*). On the other hand, if duality is the truth and God's transcendence is the true faith (*imān*), then the experience of oneness with God is infidelity (*kufr*). Ḥusayn adopts the first terminology in exhorting a disciple to the experience of union:

May God hide from you the outer form of *Shari'ah* and disclose to you the reality of *kufr* (i.e. oneness with God), for the outer form of *Shari'ah* is concealed infidelity (*kufr khafī*) and the reality of *kufr* is the manifest gnosis (*ma'rifah jalīyyah*).¹¹²

He mixes up both the terminologies in this puzzling way:

Whoever differentiates between *kufr* (infidelity) and *imān* (faith) commits *kufr*. On the other hand, whoever does not differentiate between *kāfir* (infidel) and *mu'min* (faithful) he, too, is guilty of *kufr* (infidelity).¹¹³

¹¹⁰ *Akhhbār al-Ḥallāj*, 19.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 63.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 74.

What this statement means is this: The true reality of faith as revealed in mystic experience is oneness with God. Seeing in the light of this experience everything is one with God, hence, the distinction that the *Shari'ah* makes between faith and unfaith is blasphemy (*kufr*). However, from the point of view of the *Shari'ah* which one has to follow so far as life in society is concerned, not to differentiate between a rejector (*kāfir*) of the *Shari'ah* and its sincere adherent (*mu'min*) is also infidelity.

Later Sūfī terminology made the problem of comprehension easy by qualifying *kufr* in the sense of the experience of oneness with God *kufr-i ṭariqah*, the *kufr* of the mystic way. By contrast, it called the experience after union *Islām-i ṭariqah*, the Islam of the mystic way.¹¹⁴ The *kufr* which Ḥusayn says in the following couplet he must stick to is the *kufr-i ṭariqah*.

I rejected (*kafartu*) the religion of God, and rejection (*kufr*) is necessary even though it is abhorrent to the Muslims.¹¹⁵

Ḥusayn, to be sure, did not reject Islam; he was not a renegade. He only speaks of his experience of oneness with God and his resolve to stick to it, even though Muslims call it *kufr*, as it goes against their belief that God is other than and different from the world.

Sūfis under the intoxication of the unitive experience see only the will of God operating in the world. They negate the will of man as they negate all natural causes. We have already mentioned the words of Ḥusayn which he said justifying his writing to disciples in the name of the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful. "This is the state", he said, "of *'ayn al-jam'*. Is there any Actor other than God? I and my hands are only an instrument in His hand".¹¹⁶

If the truth is that God's will is the only will there, and He is the only actor then all that happens in the world is good and right; for God does not do anything evil. There cannot therefore be any difference between Islam and *kufr*, between *tawhīd* and *shirk*, faith and unfaith, *mu'min* and *kāfir*. One can now see why an ecstatic mystic does not affirm the reality of human will or the reality of good and evil, truth and untruth, faith and unfaith, *tawhīd* and *shirk*, *Islām* and *kufr*. In this state, he tends to see all religions as one. Ḥusayn taught this sublime truth to a disciple in this way:

My son! All religions are of God the Most High. To each group of mankind He has assigned its religion. They have not chosen their religion for themselves; He has chosen it for them. So if one reproaches a person that he has a wrong faith; one, in fact, assumes that he has chosen it of himself. This is the way of the freewillers (*al-Qadarīyah*), and the Qadarīyah are the Zoroastrians of this *Ummah*.

¹¹⁴Sirhindī, *Maktūbāt*, 2: 1137; letter 95 in my *Sufism and Shari'ah*, 46–7, 192–3, 238.

¹¹⁵*Akhhār al-Ḥallāj*, 99; Sirhindī quotes the same lines in his *Maktūbāt*, 2: 1137, letter 95. illustrate the meaning of *kufr-i-ṭariqah*.

¹¹⁶Ibn Hajar, *Lisān al-Mizān*, 315; al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Sūfiyyah*, 311.

Know that Judaism, Christianity, Islam and all other religions are so many titles and names. The goal of all of them is one and the same.

Then he recited these lines:

I pondered deeply over all the religions.
I found that they emerge from one truth
Which appears in different forms
Don't expect from everyone the same religion,
This will bar him from reaching the truth.
The truth which has been given to him
Exhorts him to all truths and all virtues
And he understands them all.¹¹⁷

On the same logic, the claim of Pharaoh that 'he is the Great lord', and the claim of Moses that 'there is no lord other than Allah' both are equally right. One night Ḥusayn camped along with a group of his followers at the mosque of Dinawar. A person from the group asked Ḥusayn: "What do you say about the claim of the Pharaoh"? He said: "That is right". The man then asked: "What do you say about the call of Moses"? He replied: "That is also right. Both the words are true in post-eternity as they are true in pre-eternity".¹¹⁸ All that is thought, said or done in this world happens according to what God has determined in pre-eternity. Hence, according to Ḥusayn, all beliefs, ideas and actions, however contradictory they may appear to us, are right in reality forever and ever.

Having arrived at this "ultimate truth" it is quite natural for Ḥusayn to regard Iblīs' non-submission to God's command as submission to His eternal decree. In fact Iblīs obeyed God by disobeying Him, and upheld the Lordship (*tawhīd*), by refusing to comply with His command.¹¹⁹

Ecstatic Sūfis like Husayn fail to distinguish between the existential will (*mashī'ah*) of God and His prescriptive will (*amr*), and put the one against the other. They similarly fail to see the relation between the outer form of God's *Shari'ah* and its inner reality. Ḥusayn tries to dissociate the internal states of the heart from the external actions of the body, the inner graces of God from the outer rituals, and seeks the one without the other. He tends to reduce religion merely to a matter of the heart, a matter of intention and feeling, ignoring its active and social dimension. This is what he did when he treated a part of the house he built as *ka'bah*, made *tawāf* of it, performed the *wuqūf* of 'Arafah on its premises, and preached to people that if anyone did sincerely at his own house just as he did he would have the pleasure of God along with all the graces as the one who performs *Hajj* at Makkah. Ḥusayn not only committed

¹¹⁷ *Akhhbār al-Hallāj*, 70.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹¹⁹ *Hallāj, al-Tawāsīn*, 41 ff: *Tāsīn al-Azal wa al-Iblīs*.

this blasphemy (*zandaqah*) and similar others, he demonstrated through his action that he assumed the powers of the law-giver (*Shāri'*), which was not given to him. Not a few Ṣūfis have declared in the state of intoxication that his *wilāyah* is higher than the *wilāyah* of the Prophet, or that he has been graced with powers greater than those of him. But even they have not thought of superseding his legislative authority.¹²⁰ It was the maddening ecstasy of Ḥusayn that took him that far.

It is not unexpected from such an intoxicated Ṣūfī to celebrate the *ʿId* by mourning in black clothes, in face of the Prophet's instruction to celebrate *ʿId* rejoicing in gay dresses, under the feeling that his works might be rejected by God as unworthy of Him.¹²¹ One cannot but appreciate the humility and the feeling of contrition behind this action; on the other hand, one cannot but censure this asocial and non-religious behaviour. The life of an ecstatic is full of such contradictory stances: humility and arrogance, submission and revolt, self-negation and self-exaltation.

Ideas on Reality

Some Ṣūfis like Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī described their experiences; they did not speculate on the nature of reality. Some like Junayd expounded a few doctrines without going into allied issues. Some like Ibn ʿArabī worked out a whole system. Ḥusayn could not develop any coherent doctrine. We have in him three different stances which he could not weave together. There is, first, the stance of absolute transcendentalism which negates the possibility of any real union with God. The second stance is pantheistic which asserts the essential oneness of God and the world and treats their differences as relative. The third stance which is open to different interpretations is that God enters the human form and gives it a semi-divine status.

The transcendental stance comes out in the passage on *tawḥīd* which Qushayrī quotes from Ḥusayn in the beginning of his *Risālah*:

Believe everything to be contingent; for eternity belongs to Him alone. What exists in a body has to have accidents; what is assembled with instruments is sustained by its forces; what a moment of time integrates another moment disintegrates; what subsists by another is prey to necessities; what is caught in imagination is comprehended through concepts; what is in space can be located at a place; what belongs to a specie it native can be known through inquiry.

¹²⁰ Abū Yazīd, for instance, is reported to have said: "My banner is higher than the banner of Muḥammad". A claim greater than this is reported of him. When a person recited the Qur'ānic verse (85: 12): "Truly the grip of your Lord is strong", Abū Yazīd said: "My grip is stronger than His". See ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Badawī, *Shataḥāt al-Ṣūfiyyah* (Kuwait: Wakālat al-Maṭbaʿāt, 1976), 143.

¹²¹ *Akhbār al-Ḥallāj*, 46.

But God, exalted is He! No 'above' hangs over Him; no 'under' supports Him; no 'limitation' confronts Him; no 'near to' faces Him; no 'behind' pursues Him; no 'front' limits Him; no 'before' makes Him appear; no 'after' terminates Him; no 'whole' unifies Him; no 'becoming' brings Him into being; and no 'non-being' makes Him disappear.

His discretion is not His attribute. His action has no cause, and His Being has no boundaries. All that characterizes His creation He is above that, and nothing of it is found in Him. His actions are done without any efforts. He is different from the objects of the world in His eternity as they are different from Him in their contingency.

If you ask about Him 'when',¹²² His being precedes time; if you call Him *Hurwa* (He) this *h* and *w* are His creation; if you ask 'where', He was before space.

Words are nothing but signs for Him; His existence is its own proof. To know Him is to believe that He is one, and to affirm His unity is to distinguish Him from His creation. Whatever reason conceives He is above that. How can something enter Him which originates from Him; how can something return to Him which is brought into being by Him.

Eyes see Him not, imagination catches Him not. His coming near is His favour; His going remote is His disfavour. He ascends without going up, and descends without moving down. He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden, the Near and the Distant. There is nothing like unto Him; He is All-Hearing All-Seeing.¹²²

Husayn succinctly stated the same thing as follows:

God is a unique being (*dhāt wahīd*) existing by Himself, different from everything in His eternity, separate from all in His Lordship. Nothing mingles with Him, nor anything mixes with Him. Space does not surround Him, time does not contain Him, reason does not comprehend Him, thought does not conceive Him, contemplation does not penetrate Him, and weariness does not overtake Him.¹²³

He ruled out that any object of the world may partake of the essence or the attributes of God:

God appears through every body and every form, but He does that without touching them or mingling with them.¹²⁴

He stated it even more clearly:

One who thinks that Divinity mingles with humanity or humanity mingles with Divinity, he is certainly an infidel. For God *in His essence and attributes is unique*

¹²²Qushayrī, *al-Risālah*, 32–34.

¹²³*Akhhār al-Hallāj*, 29.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 22.

and different from the essence and attributes of the objects of the world. He does not resemble them in any sense, nor do they resemble Him in any thing. How can there be a resemblance (*shibh*) between the Eternal and the contingent!¹²⁵

This statement makes a sharp distinction between God and the world on the pattern of Junayd and rules out the possibility of God entering into or mingling with man or man mingling with Him or uniting with Him in any real sense. It also rules out the possibility of man being transformed in absolutely unique and different from everything else both in His essence and attributes. Husayn presents here the *Eternal* and the contingent as two exclusive categories which have nothing common in them.

About his experience of union with God Husayn clarifies:

My humanity vanishes in Your Divinity without mingling with it, and Your Divinity dominates over my humanity without touching it.¹²⁶

Hence the union of Husayn with God is neither a fusion of God's divinity with Husayn's humanity nor the assimilation of Husayn's humanity into God's divinity. This passage unequivocally rejects the possibility of God's entering into man, His indwelling, incarnation, infusion or essential union, whatever word one may like to use.

What Husayn says about his union he says about the union of every other Ṣūfi: "Humanity does not leave him (man), nor does it unite with Him (God)".¹²⁷ In line with this view Husayn explains, *tawhīd* in this manner:

Tawhīd is to distinguish the contingent from the eternal, and then turn away from the contingent and concentrate on the Eternal. This is, however, the husk of *tawhīd*; the real *tawhīd* is to die (*fanā'*) to the contingent and live by (*baqā'*) the Eternal.¹²⁸

Obviously if the second sentence is not to contradict the first, the only proper way to interpret *fanā'* and *baqā'* and the experience of *tawhīd* is on *shuhūdī* lines; that is to say that the experience is only a matter of vision, not of reality.

The pantheistic stance comes out in passages which say that God alone exists, that nothing exists beside Him, and that the objects of the world are manifestations of God proceeding from Him yet not different from Him. In the following passage Husayn explains the idea through the example of a point

¹²⁵Ibid., 47.

¹²⁶Ibid., 8.

¹²⁷Ibid., 117.

¹²⁸Ibid., 95.

and the lines which are formed by the movement of the point and are not different from it:

The point is the origin of every line, and the entire line is points joined together. The line cannot do without the point, nor the point without the line. Every line, straight or crooked, is formed by the movement of the point, and all that one sees is a point between two points. This may indicate how God appears (*tajallā*) in everything that is seen, and is visible in all that eyes fall upon. That is why I say I do not see a thing but see God in it.¹²⁹

The idea that God alone exists, and that nothing exists besides God comes out also from this anecdote. Someone asked Ḥusayn: "What is the way that leads to God"? Ḥusayn said: "You have a road between two things. But there is none there beside God". The questioner could not grasp Ḥusayn's point and begged for elaboration. Ḥusayn said: "He who does not understand our allusions cannot benefit from our elaborations". Then he sang:

'Is it You' or 'is it I'? This would be
 (true) in case of two gods.
 Avoid, therefore, saying: two beings.
 Your existence is in my non-existence
 My whole is a fraud against all in two respects.
 Where is Your being other than me that I can see You?
 It is clear that my self is beyond space.
 How can be Your Face an object to be seen
 By eyes of the heart or the eyes of the head!
 Between me and you there is my ego that obstructs
 Take away my self, I beseech, from between, through
 Your Self.¹³⁰

In these lines Ḥusayn makes three major points: One, that there is only one being there, God. Second, that Ḥusayn does not exist as a separate being in himself. He is eternally non-existent and his existence is an illusion. Third, that his real self is above space and one with God. But what obstructs the realization of this truth is his false ego, which he entreats God to remove away from between them. That his real self is one with God, Ḥusayn states in different places. For example:

I do not play with affirming the unity (*tawḥīd*)
 Though I sometimes forget it.
 But how can I forget it, or play with it.
 It is true that I am He.¹³¹

¹²⁹Ibid., 16.

¹³⁰Ibid., 75–76.

¹³¹*Dīwān al-Ḥallāj*, 103.

Ḥusayn affirms not only that he is one with God, he also affirms that everything is one with Him:

In existence there who is man, who is Iblīs!
Who is the throne of Solomon, who is Bilqīs!
Everything is a symbol, and to You it refers,
O You that attracts the hearts like a magnet.¹³²

His words, "I am the Real" is not only an affirmation that he is one with God, it is also a declaration that every thing that is there is one with God. When hearing his words "I am the Real" someone advised Ḥusayn to say instead: "He is the Real", he said: "Nay, all is He".¹³³

Aḥmad b. Fātik related that he heard Ḥusayn saying:

I am the Real, and the Real
is truly in the real.
Hiding His self, and there is
No difference between the two.¹³⁴

However, the way Ḥusayn understood this essential unity does not completely identify the world with God. To be sure, the world is essentially one with God, yet God is more than the world. When people asked Ḥusayn how was his saying "I am the Real" consistent with his prayer and worship, he said: "I know my own worth".¹³⁵

The third stance that God enters into a human form and transforms it into a semi-divine being appears in the following verse:

Exalted is He Whose humanity (*nāsūt*) revealed
The mystery of the shining light of His divinity (*lābūt*)
Then He appeared externally in His creation
In the form of one who eats and drinks
Till His creation saw Him
Just as one eyebrow feels the other eyebrow.¹³⁶

What this human form is stated by Ḥusayn in a number of verses, such as:

Your soul is mingled with my soul
As wine is mixed with distilled water
Now, if any thing touches You it touches me
So You are me all the time.¹³⁷

¹³²Ibid., 64.

¹³³Attār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*, 2: 119.

¹³⁴*Akhhbār al-Hallāj*, 108.

¹³⁵Attār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'*, 2: 120.

¹³⁶*Dīwān al-Hallāj*, 41.

¹³⁷Ibid., 82.

And

I am the One I love, and the One I love is me.
We are two souls that occupy one body.
So when you see me you see Him,
And when you see Him you see us.¹³⁸

And

You move between the pericardium and the heart
Just as tears run from the eyelids
You enter the inmost part of the heart
Just as souls enter the bodies.¹³⁹

On the basis of these and similar verses it has been understood that Ḥusayn was a *ḥulūlī*, that he believed that God had entered in him. A number of things may be cited in support of this view: One, that this is the apparent meaning (*al-zāhir*) of these verses. Anyone who will hear them will interpret them on *ḥulūlī* lines. To cite an instance, when ‘Abd Allāh ibn Khafīf, an admirer of Ḥusayn, heard the first verses and did not know that they were said by Ḥusayn he cursed their author. But when he was told that they were composed by Ḥusayn he qualified his remark and said: “If that really is his belief he is an infidel. But perhaps the lines are falsely ascribed to him”.¹⁴⁰ Ḥusayn’s words, ‘I am the Real’ may also be cited in support; they readily send themselves to a *ḥulūlī* interpretation. One can also point to the fact that Ḥusayn wrote letters in the name of God, that his disciples bowed to him and worshipped him, and that when he worked miracles he hardly attributed them to God.

Hujwayrī denies that Ḥusayn could have believed in *ḥulūlī* incarnation or infusion, and ascribes the doctrine to a later Sūfī sect who claimed to follow Ḥusayn and called themselves Ḥallājiyyah.¹⁴¹ But he does not discuss the issue in his book. Maybe he had discussed it in the tract which he wrote in defence of Ḥusayn. Sūfis in general follow the line of Hujwayrī, and take Ḥusayn’s above verses as ecstatic utterances of a Sūfī overpowered by his experiences.

All the three stances are present in Ḥusayn’s writings and there is no visible effort on his part to weave them into a single doctrine.



¹³⁸Ibid., 93.

¹³⁹Ibid., 96.

¹⁴⁰Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, 8: 129; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, 9: 134.

¹⁴¹Hajwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, 192