

## CHAPTER 13

# SPIRITUAL MOVEMENTS, PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY IN THE SAFAVID PERIOD

## THE BACKGROUND

The Safavid period is one of the outstanding epochs in the intellectual and spiritual history of Islamic Iran, although its artistic and political life is much better known to the outside world than what it created in the domains of sufism, philosophy and theology. Particularly in *Hikmat* – that combination of philosophy and gnosis which should be translated as theosophy rather than philosophy as currently understood in the Occident – the Safavid period is the apogee of a long development which reaches back to the 6th/12th century and the introduction of new intellectual perspectives into Islamic civilisation by Suhrawardī and Ibn ‘Arabī. Likewise, in sufism and the religious sciences the sudden flowering of activity in the 10th/16th century is based on the important but little studied transformation that was taking place in Persia since the Mongol invasion.

Persia did not become Shī‘ī through a sudden process. Ever since the 7th/13th century Shi‘ism was spreading in Persia through certain of the ṣūfī orders which were outwardly Sunnī – that is, in their *madhhab* they followed one of the Sunnī schools, usually the Shāfi‘ī. But they were particularly devoted to ‘Alī and some even accepted *wilāya* (or *valāyat*, in its Persian pronunciation), that is, the power of spiritual direction and initiation which Shī‘īs believe was bestowed upon ‘Alī by the Prophet of Islam. It was particularly this belief that made the transformation of Persia from a predominantly Sunnī land to a Shī‘ī one possible. The Shī‘īs consider Ṣafī al-Dīn Ardabīlī, the founder of the Safavid order, as a Shī‘ī, whereas the research of modern historians has revealed him to be a Sunnī. The same holds true of Shāh Ni‘mat-Allāh Valī, the founder of the Ni‘matallāhī order, which is the most widespread ṣūfī order in contemporary Persia. In a sense both contentions are true depending on what we mean by Shi‘ism. If we mean the Shāfi‘ī school or madhhab, then these ṣūfī orders such as the

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Ṣafavī and Ni‘matallāhī were initially Sunnī and later became Shī‘ī. If, however, by Shi‘ism we mean the acceptance of the *valāyat* of ‘Alī, then in this sense these orders were inwardly Shī‘ī during this period and became also outwardly so during the Safavid era.

In any case the rôle of sufism in the spread of Shi‘ism and the preparation of the ground for the establishment of a Shī‘ī Persia with the Safavids remains basic both in the direct and active political rôle played by the Ṣafavī order and in the religious and spiritual rôle of other orders such as the Kubraviyya and especially the Nūrbakhshiyya, which more than any other order sought to bridge the gap between Sunnism and Shi‘ism.<sup>1</sup> Shaikh Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd-Allāh, entitled Nūrbakhsh, who died in Ray in 869/1464–5, made indirect claims to being the Mahdī and sought to bring Shi‘ism and Sunnism closer together through sufism. His successors Faizbakhsh and Shāh Bahā’ al-Dīn continued the movement in the same direction and finally became fully Shī‘ī. A celebrated member of this order, Shaikh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Lāhijī, the author of the best-known commentary upon the *Gulshan-i rāz*, a work which is a bible of sufism in Persian, was thoroughly Shī‘ī while being an outstanding ṣūfī. The story of his encounter with Shah Ismā‘īl and the question posed to him by the shah as to why he always wore black, to which he replied that he was always mourning the tragic events of Karbalā, is well known.<sup>2</sup> And it indicates the complete transformation that had taken place within the Nūrbakhshī order so that it became totally Shī‘ī in form. We observe the same process within the Ni‘matallāhī and Ṣafavī orders. Both Shāh Ni‘mat-Allāh, who came to Persia from Aleppo, and Shaikh Ṣafī al-Dīn from Ardabīl were at first ṣūfīs of Sunnī background such as the Shāziliyya and Qādiriyya brotherhoods. But the inner belief in the *valāyat* of ‘Alī gradually transformed the outer form of the orders as well into thoroughly Shī‘ī organisations, although the inward structure of these orders, being ṣūfī, remained above the Shī‘ī – Sunnī distinctions. The Ni‘matallāhī order became Shī‘ī during the Safavid period itself, while the Ṣafavī order began to show Shī‘ī tendencies with Junaid, who was attracted to the Musha‘sha’ movement, and became fully Shī‘ī with ‘Alī b. Junaid. In all these cases, however, a similar process was occurring. Ṣūfī orders with Shī‘ī tendencies were

<sup>1</sup> See the series of articles by M. Molé, in *REI* during 1959–63; Shushtari, *Majālis al-ma‘minin* II, 143–8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150–6.

inwardly transforming Persia from a predominantly Sunnī to a predominantly Shī'ī land. Therefore, sufism is the most important spiritual force to be reckoned with in studying the background of the Safavid period.

As for the intellectual background of the Safavid era, there also the theoretical and doctrinal aspect of sufism, known as gnosis ('*irfān*'), plays a fundamental rôle along with schools of philosophy and theology. The very rich intellectual life of the 10th/16th and 11th/17th centuries did not come into being from a vacuum. There was a long period of preparation from the time of Suhrawardī and Ibn 'Arabī to the advent of the Safavid renaissance, a period which, although spanning nearly four centuries, remains the most obscure in the intellectual history of Persia. Yet without a knowledge of this period an understanding of Safavid intellectual life is impossible.

There are four major intellectual perspectives and schools of thought, all clearly defined in traditional Islamic learning, which gradually approach each other during the period leading to the Safavid revival: Peripatetic (*mashshā'ī*) philosophy, illuminationist (*ishrāqī*) theosophy, gnosis ('*irfān*') and theology (*kalām*). It is due to the gradual intermingling and synthesis of these schools that during the Safavid period the major intellectual figures are not only philosophers but also theologians or gnostics. The very appearance of the vast syntheses such as those of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī attest to the long period preceding the Safavid renaissance which made these all-comprehending metaphysical expositions possible.

The usual story of Islamic philosophy, according to which it was attacked by Ghazālī and after an Indian summer in Andalusia disappeared from Muslim lands, is disproven by the presence of the Safavid philosophers and metaphysicians themselves. The fact that they were able to expound philosophical and metaphysical doctrines and ideas matching in rigour and depth anything written before or after in traditional philosophy is itself proof of the continuity of Islamic philosophy after the attacks of Ghazālī and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī.<sup>1</sup> Actually, in the 7th/13th century the mathematician and theologian, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, who was also one of the foremost of Islamic philosophers, revived the Peripatetic philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, which had been attacked by both of the above-mentioned theologians, through his philosophical master-

<sup>1</sup> Nasr, "Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī".

piece the *Sharḥ al-ishārāt*, which is a reply to Rāzī's criticism of Ibn Sīnā's last philosophical testament, the *Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt*. Henceforth, Persia continued to produce philosophers who followed upon Ṭūsī's footsteps. His own students, Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, author of the monumental philosophical opus *Durrat al-tāj* in Persian, and Dabīrān Kātibī, author of the *Hikmat al-'ain*, continued the tradition immediately after him. In the 8th/14th and 9th/15th centuries Quṭb al-Dīn Rāzī and a whole group of philosophers who hailed from Shīrāz and the surrounding regions also wrote important philosophical works. Among them Ṣadr al-Dīn Dashtakī and his son Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Manṣūr Dashtakī are particularly noteworthy. The latter, the author of *Akblāq-i Manṣūrī* in ethics, a commentary upon the *Hayākil al-nūr* of Suhrawardī and glosses upon Ṭūsī's commentary upon the *Ishārāt*, lived into the Safavid period and was very influential upon the major Safavid figures such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, for whom he has been mistaken by many traditional scholars as well as by some modern historians. Many of the cardinal themes of Safavid philosophy and metaphysics may be found in the writings of Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Manṣūr and other figures of the period, not one of whom has by any means been studied sufficiently.

Even these philosophers, who were mostly Peripatetic, were influenced by the ishrāqī theosophy of Suhrawardī, especially in such questions as God's knowledge of things. After the founding of this new intellectual perspective by Suhrawardī in the 6th/12th century, its teachings spread particularly in Persia and became more and more integrated with Avicennan philosophy as seen in the case of Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Manṣūr and similar figures from the 7th/13th to the 10th/16th century. And this ishrāqī interpretation of Avicennan philosophy is one of the characteristics of the intellectual life of the Safavid period, as seen to an eminent degree in the case of the founder of the school of Iṣfahān, Mīr Dāmād.

There is also the basic question of gnosis to consider. The teachings of the founder of the doctrinal formulation of gnosis in Islam, Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, spread throughout Persia rapidly, especially through the works and direct instruction of his pupil, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qunyawī. Henceforth nearly all the masters of sufism in Persia, such as 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, Ibn 'Arabī's eminent commentator, Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūya, 'Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī and such famous poets as Fakhr al-Dīn 'Araqī, Auḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī and 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, were deeply influenced by the gnostic teachings of Ibn 'Arabī. Jāmī in fact wrote

several commentaries upon Ibn 'Arabī's works as well as composing on the themes of gnosis independent treatises such as the *Lavā'ih* and *Asbī'at al-lamā'āt*.

Certain philosophers and theosophers began to incorporate this form of teaching into their schools. Ibn Turka of Iṣfahān, the 8th/14th century author of *Tamhīd al-qawā'id*, was perhaps the first person who sought to combine *falsafa* and 'irfān, philosophy and gnosis. In the following centuries this tendency was accelerated in the hands of a few Shī'ī gnostics and sages such as Sayyid Ḥaidar Āmulī, author of *Jāmi' al-asrār*, which is so deeply influential in Safavid writings, Ibn Abī Jumhūr, the author of *Kitāb al-mujlī*, which is again a doctrinal work of Shī'ī gnosis, and Rajab Bursī, known especially for his *Mashāriq al-anwār*. The importance of the work of these figures for the Safavid period can hardly be over-emphasised, because it is they who integrated the sapiental doctrines of Ibn 'Arabī into Shī'ism and prepared the ground within Shī'ī intellectual life for those Safavid figures who achieved the synthesis between philosophy, theology and gnosis within the cadre of Twelver Shī'ism.

As for theology or Kalām, in its Shī'ī form it reached its peak in a certain sense with the *Tajrīd* of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. During the centuries preceding the Safavid period a very large number of commentaries and glosses were written upon it by Shī'ī theologians while the Sunnī theologians of Persia such as Taftazānī and Davānī – at least in his early period – continued to develop the Ash'arī Kalām, which had reached its peak with Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī. In fact, this outspoken theological opponent of the philosophers was also influential in many ways among Shī'ī theologians and thinkers.

In this domain also gradually philosophy and theology began to approach each other. It is difficult to assert whether a particular work of Sayyid Sharīf Jurjānī or Jalāl al-Dīn Davānī is more Kalām or Falsafa. Moreover, certain glosses and commentaries upon the *Tajrīd* such as those of Fakhrī and especially of Sammākī, who influenced Mīr Dāmād, contain many of the themes that belong properly speaking to Ḥikmat and Falsafa and were adopted by the Safavid philosophers. The long series of commentaries upon the *Tajrīd*, which has not been studied at all fully, is the source of many of the important elements of Safavid philosophy.

From this vast intellectual background there gradually emerged the tendency towards a synthesis of the different schools of Islamic thought within the background and matrix of Shī'ism, which because

of its inner structure was more conducive to the growth of the traditional philosophy and theosophy which reached its full development in the 10th/16th and 11th/17th centuries. The advent of the Safavids, which resulted in Persia's becoming predominantly Shī'ī, along with temporal conditions such as peace and stability and the encouragement of the religious sciences, which in Shī'ism always include the intellectual sciences (*al-'ulūm al-'aqliyya*), aided in bringing nearly four centuries of intellectual development to fruition. And so with such figures as Mīr Dāmād and Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, usually known as Mullā Ṣadrā, an intellectual edifice which has its basis in the teachings of Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī and Ibn 'Arabī and also upon the specific tenets of Shī'ism as found in the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet and Imāms reached its completion. A synthesis is created which reflects a millennium of Islamic intellectual life.

#### THE REVIVAL OF RELIGIOUS LEARNING IN THE SAFAVID PERIOD

For both religious and political reasons the Safavids sought from the very beginning of Shah Ismā'īl's reign to foster the study of Shī'ism and to encourage the migration of Shī'ī scholars from other lands to Persia. Of scholars of non-Persian origin most were Arabs either of the Jabal 'Āmila region in today's Lebanon and Syria or of the Bahrain, which included in the terminology of that day not only the island of Bahrain but the whole coastal region around it. There were so many Shī'ī scholars from these two regions, which had been strongholds of Shī'ī learning, that the two biographical works, *Lu'lu' al-Bahrain* by Yūsuf b. Aḥmad al-Bahrānī and *Amal al-'āmil fī 'ulamā Jabal 'Āmil* by Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī, are devoted to the account of the scholars of Bahrain and Jabal 'Āmila. Such men as Shaikh 'Alī b. 'Abd al-'Ālī Karkī, Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, his father Shaikh Ḥusain, a disciple of Shahīd-i ṣānī, and Ni'mat-Allāh Jazā'irī, all of Arab extraction, were some of the most famous of a large number of Shī'ī scholars and theologians who were responsible for the major renaissance of Shī'ī religious learning during the Safavid period.

It has often been said, even by such authorities as Browne and Qazvīnī, that the very emphasis upon religious and theological learning during the Safavid period stifled science and literature and even sufism. This is only a half-truth which overlooks previous conditions

and what was actually happening in these fields. The emphasis upon the study of the *Sharī'a* and theology, while helping to unify Shī'ī Persia, did not stifle activity in other domains until the second half of the 11th/17th century, when a reaction against sufism set in. As far as literature is concerned, it is true that this period did not produce another Ḥāfiẓ or Sa'dī, but such poets as Šā'ib Tabrīzī, Kalīm Kāshānī and Shaikh-i Bahā'ī (Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī) cannot be brushed aside as insignificant. Moreover, there are two types of poetry which reach a new mode of perfection at this time: the poetry dealing with the life, sufferings and virtues of the Shī'ī Imāms, which is particularly associated with the name of Muḥtasham Kāshānī, and poems in which the doctrinal teachings of sufism or gnosis, as well as theosophy, are set to Persian verse. In this latter case the Safavid period witnesses the interesting fact that most of its great philosophers and gnostics were also poets, some of commendable quality.

As for science, a decline had already set in in Islamic science with the Saljūqs, after which the mathematical sciences were revived by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī and his school at Marāgha. The early Safavid period continued this tradition of mathematics and astronomy, whose centre of study in the 10th/16th century was Herat. Only in the following century did the study of mathematics begin to decline in the *madrasas*. As for medicine and pharmacology, this period, far from being one of decline, produced outstanding figures like Bahā' al-Daula to the extent that some have called it the golden age of pharmacology.<sup>1</sup>

The case of sufism is somewhat different and more complex. During the early Safavid period sufism flourished spiritually and even politically, until, due to the danger of a Qizilbāsh uprising and a certain mundaneness which had penetrated into some ṣūfī orders possessing worldly powers, a religious and theological reaction set in against sufism as seen in the figure of the second Majlisī. But many of the earlier religious scholars and theologians like the first Majlisī and Shaikh-i Bahā'ī were either ṣūfīs or sympathetic toward sufism. Moreover, it was because and not in spite of the spread of Shī'ī religious learning that the type of metaphysical and theosophical doctrine associated with Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā became current. Such forms of thought would have been inconceivable without the Shī'ī climate established by the Safavids. Even if the Shī'ī 'ulamā opposed the

*mutaṣawwifa* in late Safavid times, 'irfān or gnosis continued to be taught and studied within the traditional Shī'ī madrasa system itself, in which milieu it survives to this day in Persia. Those who know most in Persia even today about Islamic philosophy and even the "theology of Aristotle", or in other words Plotinus, wear the turban and belong to the class of religious scholars; they are not "free thinkers" who are *hakīms* in spite of being Shī'ī divines. The establishment of centres of religious learning by the Safavids and the emphasis placed upon Sharī'ī and theological learning undoubtedly diverted much of the energy of the intelligentsia to these fields and indirectly diminished activity in other fields. Not only did it not destroy the intellectual sciences, however, but it was an essential factor in making possible the appearance of the vast metaphysical syntheses for which the Safavid period is known.

## SUFISM IN THE SAFAVID PERIOD

The major ṣūfī orders of the 9th/15th century such as the Nūrbakhshī, Ni'matallāhī and Qādirī, not to speak of the Ṣafaviyya themselves, continued into the Safavid period and flourished into the 11th/17th century. Naturally most of these orders acquired a purely Shī'ī colour and centred most of all around the Eighth Shī'ī Imām, 'Alī al-Riḍā, who is the "Imām of initiation" in Shi'ism and to whom most ṣūfī orders in the Shī'ī and Sunnī world are attached through Ma'rūf al-Karkhī. Many eminent ṣūfī masters of the 10th/16th century in fact lived at or near Mashhad, as we see in the case of Muḥammad al-Junūshānī, 'Imād al-Dīn Faẓl-Allāh Mashhadī and Kamāl al-Dīn Khwārazmī, all spiritual descendants of 'Alī Hamadānī. All these masters expressed a special devotion to Imām Riḍā.<sup>1</sup> Likewise the masters of the Ni'matallāhī order, such as some of the actual descendants of Shāh Ni'mat-Allāh from whom most of the present-day orders in Persia derive, were thoroughly Shī'ī, although here the order was attached most of all to 'Alī himself.

A ṣūfī order which to this day considers itself as the purest Shī'ī ṣūfī order, the Ṣahabī, was also active during the early Safavid period. The Ṣahabīs, like most other Shī'ī ṣūfī orders, believe that even before the advent of the Safavids the basic chains (*silsila*) of ṣūfīs were Shī'ī but hid their Shi'ism through the process of concealment (*taqiyya*). The Ṣahabīs

<sup>1</sup> Elgood, Chapter 13.

<sup>1</sup> Shushtarī, *Majālis al-mu'minīn* 11, 156ff.

claim that only with the advent of the Safavids did the necessity for *taqiyya* subside so that the orders were able to declare themselves openly Shī'ī in Persia. Among all the orders the *Zahabīs* consider themselves as being the most intensely Shī'ī; and being especially devoted to Imām Riḍā they add the title *raḡaviyya* to the name of their silsila.

An outstanding example of a ṣūfī work belonging to the Safavid period and typical of a Shī'ī ṣūfī order in its new setting is the *Tuhfat al-'abbāsiyya* of the *Zahabī* master, Muḥammad 'Alī Sabzavārī, a contemporary of Shah 'Abbās II and, interestingly enough, the *mu'adhdhin* (he who calls the prayers) of the mausoleum of Imām Riḍā at Mashhad. The work consists of an introduction, five chapters, twelve sections and a conclusion. The titles of the chapters and sections are as follows:

Chapter I – On the meaning of *taṣavvuf* and *ṣūfī*, why there are few ṣūfīs, why they are called so and the signs and characteristics pertaining to them.

Chapter II – On the beliefs of ṣūfīs in unity (*tanḥīd*).

Chapter III – On the beliefs of ṣūfīs in prophecy (*nubuwwat*) and imamate (*imāmat*).

Chapter IV – On the beliefs of ṣūfīs concerning eschatology (*ma'ād*).

Chapter V – On the dependence of the ṣūfīs upon the Shī'ī Imāms.

Section I – On the virtue of knowledge.

Section II – On continence and asceticism.

Section III – On silence.

Section IV – On hunger and wakefulness.

Section V – On self-seclusion.

Section VI – On invocation.

Section VII – On reliance upon God.

Section VIII – On contentment and surrender.

Section IX – On worshipping for forty days.

Section X – On hearing pleasing music and on that all pleasant music is not the singing that is scorned in the Sharī'a.

Section XI – On ecstasy and swoon.

Section XII – On the necessity of having a spiritual master, and the regulations pertaining to the master and the disciple.

Conclusion – On the sayings of the ṣūfīs concerning different subjects.

An examination of the contents of this work reveals that it deals very much with the same subjects as one finds in the classical treatises of sufism such as the *Kitāb al-lumā'*, *Risāla qushairiyya* and *Ihyā' 'ulūm*

*al-dīn*. The only difference that can be discerned is in its relating the chain of sufism to the Shī'ī Imāms and in its relying not only upon the Qur'ān but also upon Prophetic *Ḥadīth* and traditions of the Imāms drawn from Shī'ī sources, whereas ṣūfī works within the Sunnī world are based upon the Qur'ān and Prophetic *Ḥadīth* mostly of the *ṣiḥāḥ* literature. As for the rôle of the Imāms, this is a major point that distinguishes sufism in its Shī'ī and Sunnī settings. In the chain of nearly all the orders that are widely spread in the Sunnī world such as the Shāziliyya and Qādiriyya the Shī'ī Imāms up to Imām Riḍā appear as saints and spiritual poles (*quṭb*), but not as Imāms as this term is understood specifically in Shi'ism. In Shī'ī ṣūfī orders the presence of the same figures is seen as proof of the reliance of sufism upon the Imāms, as the fifth chapter of the *Tuhfat al-'abbāsiyya* demonstrates in a typical manner.

Besides the type of Sufism represented by the *Zahabī* and other regular orders during the Safavid period, there are two other kinds of Islamic esotericism to consider: the first is the case of those like Mīr Abu'l-Qāsim Findiriskī and Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī who were definitely ṣūfīs and are recognised as such by the ṣūfī orders, but whose initiatic chain and spiritual master are not known; the second is the case of gnostics like Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī who definitely possessed esoteric knowledge usually in the form of *Ḥikmat* – which also implies means of attaining this knowledge – but who did not belong, at least outwardly, to any ṣūfī orders, so that the means whereby they acquired this gnostic knowledge remains problematic. Mullā Ṣadrā, while being a thorough gnostic like Ibn 'Arabī, wrote his *Kaṣr al-aṣnām al-jāhiliyya* against those in his times who pretended to belong to sufism and whom he calls *mutaṣavvif*, using this term in the particular context of his time and not as it has been employed throughout the history of sufism.

In fact, what we observe during the Safavid period is that as the ṣūfī orders become more popular and acquire in certain cases a worldly character, a reaction sets in against them from the quarter of the religious scholars. Henceforth within the class of the 'ulamā it is no longer socially acceptable to belong openly to one of the well known ṣūfī orders so that esoteric instruction is imparted without any outwardly declared ṣūfī organisation. Moreover, the term 'irfān, or gnosis,<sup>1</sup> is employed with respect in place of *taṣavvuf*, which from the

<sup>1</sup> By gnosis we mean, of course, that knowledge which is related to being and results from the union between the subject and the object, and not the Christian heresy of the 3rd century.

11th/17th to the 12th/18th centuries falls into disrepute in the circles of exoteric authorities of the religion. That is why, while Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī practised sufism openly, Qāzī Sa'īd Qumī, whom a contemporary authority has called the Ibn 'Arabī of Shi'ism, refers constantly to 'irfān, but never claims to be a šūfī in the usual sense that is found within the *turuq*, although without doubt he was a šūfī. To this whole situation must be added the initiatic rôle of the Twelfth Imām for the *élite* of Shi'ism in general, and the fact that the whole structure of Shi'ism possesses a more esoteric character than we find in the exoteric side of Sunnism. This fact made it possible for esoteric ideas to appear even in certain exoteric aspects of Shi'ism.

As a result, the Safavid period presents us with not only the regular šūfī masters of the well known orders, but also with gnostics and šūfīs of the highest spiritual rank whose initiatic affiliation is difficult to discern. Moreover, the gnostic dimension of Islam penetrates at this time into philosophy and theosophy or Hikmat, and most of the important figures of this era are thinkers with the highest powers of ratiocination and with respect for logic while at the same time seers with spiritual visions and illuminations. It is hardly possible to separate philosophy, theosophy and gnosis completely in this period.

#### OUTSTANDING INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL FIGURES OF THE SAFAVID PERIOD

##### *Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī*

From the point of view of versatility, Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī, known to the Persians as Shaikh-i Bahā'ī (the name is quite unconnected with the heterodox Bahā'ī sect which finally broke away from Islam), is the most remarkable figure of the Safavid renaissance. Born in Ba'labakk in present-day Lebanon in 953/1546, the son of the leader of the Shī'ī community of that region, Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn was brought to Persia by his father at the age of thirteen and soon mastered the Persian language to such an extent that he is usually considered the best Persian poet of the 10th/16th century. He studied in Qazvīn, then a centre of Shī'ī learning, and in Herat, where he mastered mathematics. His most famous teachers were his own father, 'Izz al-Dīn Ḥusain b. 'Abd al-Šamad, and Maulānā 'Abd-Allāh Yazdī, the author of the celebrated glosses upon the *Tabdhīb* in logic, which is studied to this day in

Persian madrasas under the title of *Ḥāshiyā-yi Mullā 'Abd-Allāh*. He also studied medicine with Ḥakīm 'Imād al-Dīn Maḥmūd. After a period of travelling in Persia and pilgrimages to Mecca, Shaikh-i Bahā'ī settled in Iṣfahān, where he gained the title of Shaikh al-Islām and where, during the reign of Shah 'Abbās, he became the most powerful Shī'ī figure in Persia. He died in 1030/1621 and is buried in Mashhad near the tomb of Imām Riḍā. His beautiful mausoleum is visited by thousands of pilgrims to this day.

The many-sided genius of Shaikh-i Bahā'ī is best illustrated by the diversity of his works, nearly all of which have become authoritative in their own domain. These works include: in the field of Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, *Arba'ūn ḥadīthan*, a collection of forty prophetic traditions with commentary, glosses upon the *Tafsīr* of Baiḍāwī, *Ḥall al-ḥurūf al-Qur'ān* on the opening letters of some of the chapters of the Qur'ān, *'Urwat al-wuthqā*, a commentary upon the Qur'ān, and *Wajīza*, also known as *Dirāyat al-ḥadīth*, on the science of Ḥadīth; in the field of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology, and specifically Shī'ī studies, *Ithnā'ashariyyāt* in five parts on the Muslim religious rites, *Jāmi'-i 'abbāsī*, the most famous Persian work on Shī'ī *fiqh*, *Ḥabl al-matīn* on the injunctions (*aḥkām*) of religion, *Ḥadā'iq al-šāliḥīn*, a commentary on the *Šaḥīfa sajjādiyya* of the Fourth Shī'ī Imām, *Miftāḥ al-falāḥ* on daily litanies and prayers, and a treatise on the necessity to perform the daily prayers (*ṣalāt*); in the sciences of language, *Asrār al-balāgha* on rhetoric, *Tabdhīb al-bayān* on Arabic grammar and *Fawā'id al-šamādiyya*, an advanced work on Arabic grammar still very much in use in Persia today; dozens of works on various branches of mathematics such as *Tashrīḥ al-aflāk* on astronomy, *Khulāṣat al-ḥisāb*, the most famous Muslim mathematical treatise of the last few centuries, and glosses on Chaghmīnī's astronomical treatise;<sup>1</sup> several treatises on the occult sciences now lost; and many works on sufism of which the most famous is the *Kashkūl* ("The begging bowl"), which as the title indicates contains, like the begging bowl of the dervishes into which bits of food were thrown, selections from masterpieces of šūfī literature. His poems also, such as the *maṣnawīs* *Ṭūṭī-nāma*, *Nān va ḥalwā* and *Shīr va shikar*, which are written in the style of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's *Maṣnavī*, all deal with sufism. Altogether nearly ninety works are known to have been written by him concern-

<sup>1</sup> See H. Suter, *Die Mathematiker und Astronomen der Araber und ihre Werke* (Leipzig, 1900), p. 194.

ing nearly every domain of the Islamic sciences from mathematics to gnosis, from astronomy to theology.<sup>1</sup>

But the works of Shaikh-i Bahā'ī include, besides these writings, buildings and gardens which have helped leave such a vivid memory of this figure in the minds of the people of Iṣfahān and surrounding regions to this day. Shaikh-i Bahā'ī was an accomplished architect and helped in drawing the plans for the Shāh mosque in Iṣfahān, which is among the masterpieces of Islamic art. He built a bath house based on the oral and secret knowledge of masonry and architecture which he undoubtedly possessed, a bath which according to many witnesses had hot water with only a candle burning underneath its water tank. The bath was destroyed about forty years ago. He designed the plans for the beautiful Fīn Garden of Kāshān, which served as a model for the more famous Shalimar Garden of Lahore. In yet another field, he calculated the proportion of water of the Zāyandarūd to be distributed to each piece of land on the river's course to Iṣfahān, a work which is called the *Tūmār-i Shaikh-i Bahā'ī*. This involves a very complicated mathematical problem, which he solved so well that over three and a half centuries later his method is still used and only after the projected dam on the river is finished will his division of its waters be no longer applicable.

Shaikh-i Bahā'ī is the last eminent representative of the Muslim ḥakīm in the sense of being the master of all the traditional sciences. He was also one of the last eminent representatives of the class of 'ulamā who were outstanding mathematicians and who did not feel it below their dignity to take an astrolabe and make actual observations or measurements. After him, with only a few exceptions, the 'ulamā ceased to be interested in the mathematical sciences, with the result that the teaching of these sciences deteriorated rapidly in the madrasas.

Shaikh-i Bahā'ī was an authority in both the exoteric and esoteric aspects of Islam. He hardly hid his sufism and frequented ṣūfī gatherings openly. His *Ṭūṭī-nāma* contains some of the most eloquent and frank expositions of sufism in Persian verse. His sufism also possessed a popular aspect without itself being in any way devoid of intellectual content or the awareness that belongs only to the élite (*khavāṣṣ*) among the ṣūfīs. But in the sense that the highest is reflected in the lowest, his

<sup>1</sup> For his works, see Nafīsī, *Aḥwāl va asb'ār*, pp. 92-110. The traditional biographies of the Safavid and later periods, such as *Amal al-āmūl*, *Salāfat al-'aṣr*, *Lu'lu'at al-Bahrain*, *Tārīkh-i 'ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, *Rauḡāt al-jannāt*, *Mustadrak al-vaṣā'il* and *Raiḡanat al-adab*, all contain accounts of, or references to, his life and works.

sublime ṣūfī message was propagated within the popular strata of sufism and even in fact among the populace in general. To this day many storytellers (*naqqāls*) in the traditional tea houses chant his poetry, while his theological and juridical works are read by advanced religious students in the madrasas. Also his prowess and competence as a mathematician of the Pythagorean kind and fame as an alchemist have left their mark on the popular conception held of him. He is an eminent representative of the ṣūfī scientists of which Islamic history has produced many examples.

In traditional theosophy or Ḥikmat Shaikh-i Bahā'ī does not reach the level of Mīr Dāmād, his contemporary and close friend, or Mullā Ṣadrā, his student. But his contributions to Shī'ī law and theology, mathematics and sufism are sufficient to make him one of the leading lights of the Safavid period. He is one of the figures most responsible for the rapid spread of Shī'ī learning in 10th/16th century Persia and a person who, more than any other figure of his day, sought to display the harmony between the law and the way, the *Sharī'a* and the *Tarīqa*, which comprise the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of Islam.

Most of the well known scholars who came to Iṣfahān were students of Shaikh-i Bahā'ī: men such as Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī, Sayyid Aḥmad 'Alavī, Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Mullā Muḥsin Faiz Kāshānī. Over thirty of his students, many of whom also studied with Mīr Dāmād, became well known figures themselves, spreading in yet another way the influence of their teacher. Through all these channels, that is, his writings, monuments and students, Shaikh-i Bahā'ī was able to exercise widespread influence throughout nearly all classes of Persian society. There is no other figure of the Safavid period who became so well known to the élite and the common people alike, and who left such a deep mark as a national and almost mythological hero upon the people of Persia.

#### Mīr Dāmād

Mīr Muḥammad Bāqir Dāmād Ḥusainī, entitled Sayyid al-ḥukamā' and Sayyid al-falāsifa,<sup>1</sup> is the real founder and central figure of the theosophical and philosophical school which has now come to be known as

<sup>1</sup> These titles are mentioned in Maulavī Muḥammad Muẓaffar Ḥusain Ṣabā, *Taẓkira-yi rūḡ-i raushan* (Tehran, 1343), p. 51, and Hājji Āqā Mujtabā 'Irāqī, *Fibrīst-i kitābkhāna-yi madrasa-yi faizīyya-yi Qum* 1 (Qum, 1338), p. 391. Most historians, such as Tunakābunī, *Qisas*, p. 333, agree that Mīr Dāmād was a descendant of the Prophet through Imām Ḥusain, whereas 'Alī Khān, *Salāfat al-'aṣr*, p. 485, considers him as Hasanid.

the School of Iṣfahān. As the person who established and classified the traditional sciences in the new Shī'ī setting of Safavid Persia, as Aristotle had done in Athens and Fārābī in the newly born Islamic civilisation as a whole, Mīr Dāmād has been honoured with the further title of the "Third Teacher" (*mu'allim-i sālis*), following Aristotle and Fārābī, the First and the Second Teachers.<sup>1</sup> As for his title *Dāmād* ("son-in-law"), it refers to the fact that his father was the son-in-law of Shaikh 'Alī 'Abd al-'Alī Karkī, the celebrated Shī'ī scholar of the early Safavid period.<sup>2</sup> Mīr Dāmād also composed fine poetry under the pen name Ishrāq, by which he is known in the annals of literary history. But this appellation also has a philosophical significance in that it demonstrates openly his attachment to ishrāqī theosophy.

The date of Mīr Dāmād's birth has not been determined with certainty: that given in the glosses upon the *Nukhbat al-'iqāl* of Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥusain Burūjirdī is 969/1561-2, and appears as fairly likely considering the date of his death and the approximate span of his life, which are known. His education was carried out mostly in Mashhad, and possibly Arāk, and his best known teachers were Shaikh 'Izz al-Dīn Ḥusain b. 'Abd al-Ṣamad, the father of Shaikh-i Bahā'ī, and Mīr Fakhr al-Dīn Sammākī, who taught him the intellectual sciences (*al-'ulūm al-'aqliyya*).<sup>3</sup> Mīr Dāmād travelled several times within Persia to Qazvīn, Kāshān and Mashhad and accompanied Shah Ṣafī to Iraq, where he died in 1040/1630-1; he was buried in Najaf near the mausoleum of 'Alī, and his tomb is venerated to this day.

It was possible for Mīr Dāmād to revive the intellectual sciences and especially Hikmat because of his special gift in these sciences, added to the remarkable respect and authority in which he was held among the jurists and theologians as well as with the king. He lived an extremely pious life and is said to have read half of the Qur'ān every night. Many of his poems are dedications to the Prophet and 'Alī, such as the following quatrain in praise of the Prophet of Islam:

O Seal of Prophecy! The two worlds belong to thee.  
The heavens, one is thy pulpit and nine thy pedestal.  
There would be no wonder if thou didst not cast a shadow,  
For thou art light and the sun is itself thy shadow.

<sup>1</sup> The title appears specifically in many works, e.g. 'Alī Qulī Khān Dāghistānī, *Riyāḥ al-shu'arā*, MS in the Majlis Library, Tehran.

<sup>2</sup> Iskandar Munshī, trans. Savory, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> An account of his life and teachings is found in nearly all the standard biographies and histories such as *Lū'lu'at al-Bahrain*, *Mustadrak al-vasā'il* and *Rauḍāt al-jannāt*, as well as in more contemporary sources such as *A'yān al-shī'a* and *Raiḥanat al-adab*.

In his Persian work, the *Jazavāt*, he begins with a poem dedicated to 'Alī in which he sings:

O herald of the nation and soul of the Prophet,  
The ring of thy knowledge surrounds the ears of the intelligences.  
O thou in whom the book of existence terminates,  
To whom the account of creation refers,  
The glorified treasure of the revelation,  
Thou art the holy interpreter of its secrets.

The intensity of religious fervour in Mīr Dāmād was too great to permit his being criticised in any quarter for having revived Hikmat and the wisdom of Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardī. To this element must be added the abstruseness of his writings, which veiled their meaning from the eyes of the uninitiated and helped establish the banner of Hikmat firmly, without any opposition from the 'ulamā. No Muslim philosopher or sage has ever written works in such a difficult style and complicated phraseology, which makes access to his works well nigh impossible for all, save for those with a sound training in the tradition of Islamic philosophy and the aid of the oral instructions which accompany the texts. The difficulty of Mīr Dāmād's works is such that many stories have been told about him and it is even said that, during the first night in the grave, when the angels asked him concerning his beliefs he gave an answer that was so difficult that even they did not understand it and so went to God in search of help. The anecdote continues by mentioning the fact that even God did not comprehend Mīr Dāmād's sayings but allowed him nevertheless to enter Paradise because he was a virtuous man.

About fifty works of Mīr Dāmād are known, of which most are in Arabic and a few, including his collection of poems, are in Persian.<sup>1</sup> These include works on theology and jurisprudence, Qur'anic commentary and other religious sciences, and especially Hikmat, which is the subject of most of his writings. The most celebrated of these are *al-Ufuq al-mubīn*, *al-Ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*, *Qabasāt*, which is possibly his most important opus, *Taqwīm al-īmān* and *Taqdīsāt*, all in Arabic, and *Jazavāt* and *Sidrat al-muntahā* in Persian. The lattermost work may have been completed or even written by his student Sayyid Aḥmad 'Alavī, although in the *Jazavāt* Mīr Dāmād mentions it as one of his own

<sup>1</sup> I. al-Ṣiṣī, in a recent Ph.D. thesis at the Faculty of Letters of Tehran University (1967), which involved the preparation of a critical edition of the *Jazavāt*, mentions 52 works by Mīr Dāmād.



writings. He also wrote commentaries upon the works of Ibn Sīnā and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, and the collection of Persian and Arabic poems, *Mashāriq al-anwār*.

Mīr Dāmād revived Avicennan philosophy in ishrāqī dress. He may be considered as an ishrāqī interpreter of Avicennan metaphysics in the spiritual universe of Shi'ism. But his interpretation is very far from the rationalistic Avicennanism with which the occident is acquainted through the interpretation of medieval latin scholastics.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in a conscious manner Mīr Dāmād distinguishes between Yamanī and Yūnānī (Greek) philosophy, the first of which he associates with wisdom derived from revelation and illumination and the second with rationalistic knowledge. The "Yamanī" here refers to the symbolism of the right side (*yamīn*) of the valley when Moses heard the revelation of God. The right side or the east is therefore symbolically the source of illumination and revelation, of light and spirituality, and the left side or the occident, in accordance with the well known symbolism of ishrāqī theosophy, the source of darkness or of purely discursive and rationalistic knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The school of Hikmat thus established by Mīr Dāmād, very far from being a continuation of Muslim Peripatetic philosophy as it came to be known in the West, was a school in which illumination was combined with ratiocination and where the Avicennan metaphysics was transformed from an abstract system of thought to a concrete spiritual reality which became the object of spiritual vision and realisation.

Nowhere is this better seen than in two works of Mīr Dāmād which record two different spiritual visions he had, the first in Ramaḍān 1011/1603 and the second twelve years later in the middle of Sha'bān 1023/1614. The first, which occurred in a mosque in the city of Qum after the afternoon prayers, involved a theophanic vision of the Prophet and his five Companions, Abū Dharr, Salmān, Miqdād, Ḥuḍaifa and 'Ammār – who are so important for Shi'ism – the Twelve Imāms and the host of angels. These figures of light appeared to Mīr Dāmād with such intensity that he wrote that he would have a nostalgia for the vision of this spiritual universe until the Day of Judgment.

<sup>1</sup> On the difference, see Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital*, tr. W. Trask (New York, 1960), pp. 101ff.; Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, pp. 46ff., and *An Introduction*, pp. 185ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, chapter 2, and "Suhrawardī", pp. 381ff., as well as Corbin's many studies on this theme. On the symbolism of the Yemen, see Corbin, "Le récit d'initiation et l'hérmetisme en Iran", *Eranos Jahrbuch* xvii (1949), 136–7.

The second vision, which took place twelve years later at Iṣfahān, came directly from the practice of invocation (*dhikr*) in a spiritual retreat (*khalwa*). As Mīr Dāmād himself accounts in his *Risālat al-khaṭ'iyya al-quḍsiyya al-malakūtiyya*, the vision came when he was invoking the two Divine Names, *al-Ghanī* and *al-Mughnī*. Suddenly he was taken on the wings of the spirit to the spiritual world where he was given a vision of the celestial hierarchies and the various superior states of being. In a most dramatic fashion the vision involved an actualisation of the Avicennan metaphysics and cosmology from what appears as an abstract scheme in Peripatetic philosophy to a concrete reality – in accordance with all true metaphysics, which deals not with theory in the modern sense but with *theoria*, or intellectual and spiritual vision in its original Greek sense. Moreover, the vision took place on the eve of the birthday of the Twelfth Imām, on a night which according to Shī'ī sources is the second most sacred night in the Islamic calendar after *lailat al-qadr* or the night of power. It is a night when spiritual influences descend upon man and when this very descent or deployment of grace (*faḍl*) makes possible the spiritual ascent described by Mīr Dāmād.<sup>1</sup>

The two experiences described by Mīr Dāmād himself are the only witnesses we possess to the spiritual side of his life, a life which was otherwise immersed in religious and philosophical activity. But the very fact that he was able to experience such visions proves the constant presence of a spiritual life and a practice which is the same as sufism in its most universal manifestation. There is nothing closer to ṣūfī spiritual practices than the *dhikr* and the *khalwa*. This may appear strange in a sage who was especially known for his powers of ratiocination and logic and who was such an authority in the exoteric sciences. But one of the characteristics of later Persian theosophy is precisely the fact that philosophy and rational thought are tied to spiritual practices and illumination, and metaphysics becomes not the result of rational thought alone but the fruit of vision of the superior world.

An element that characterises the works of Mīr Dāmād is his concern with time and the relation between change and permanence, or the eternal and the created (*qidam* and *hudūth*). This problem has occupied Muslim theologians and philosophers from the beginning and many

<sup>1</sup> For the Arabic text and French translation, see Corbin, "Confessions extatiques", pp. 367ff.

solutions have been presented for it, although it cannot be solved through rational thought but only through the *coincidentia oppositorum* made possible through metaphysics and gnosis. Mīr Dāmād is known as the author of a novel view on this subject called *ḥudūs-i dahrī*. He distinguishes three realms of being which are as follows: *Sarmad*, or eternity, refers to that reality which does not change, or more exactly to the relation between the changing and the changeless. This concerns the Divine Essence and the Divine Names and Qualities, which are the self-determination of the Essence and themselves immutable. Below this world, which alone is absolutely eternal, stands *dahr* or the world which relates the immutable to the changing. The world is created not directly by the Essence but through the immutable archetypes or "lords of the species" (*arbāb al-anvā'*) and *dahr* represents precisely this relationship between these immutable archetypes and the changing world. Below *dahr* stands time (*zamān*), which represents the relation between changing things. The world was not created in time in the sense that there was first a time and then an event called creation which took place in it. This would be *ḥudūs-i zamānī* which Mīr Dāmād rejects. Rather, according to him this world was brought into being through the archetypes and with respect to *dahr* which stands above *zamān*. Creation is therefore *ḥudūs-i dahrī*; it is *ibdā'* and *ikhtirā'*, not *takwīn*.

This theme is amply treated by Mīr Dāmād in all its ramifications and he comes back to it again and again in his books. His works in fact are not divided into the classical four sections of metaphysics (*ilāhiyyāt*), natural philosophy (*tabi'īyyāt*), mathematics (*riyāzīyyāt*), and logic (*manṭiq*) that we find in the well known works of Islamic philosophy such as the *Shifā'* and *Najāt* of Ibn Sīnā or the Persian *Durrat al-tāj* of Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī. Rather, they treat different themes of metaphysics and philosophy whose axis remains the problem of the relation between time and eternity. Altogether these works show a Suhrawardian interpretation of Avicennan philosophy in the matrix of Shi'ism, in which the most rigorous Peripatetic logic is combined with a Pythagorean interest in number and harmony and an ishrāqī attraction to the illuminative aspect of the angelic world. These are elements that were instrumental in establishing the School of Iṣfahān, which Mīr Dāmād more than any other figure helped to bring into being and which found its culmination in his disciples and students.

Of the intellectual progeny of Mīr Dāmād the most important is

Mullā Ṣadrā, whom Mīr Dāmād held in the greatest esteem and to whom we shall turn shortly. But there are a host of others such as Sayyid Aḥmad 'Alavī who became Mīr Dāmād's son-in-law and is known for his commentary upon the *Shifā'* of Ibn Sīnā and works which elucidate the thought of his master. One must also mention Mullā Khalīl Qazvīnī, a most respected scholar of his day, who has left one of the best known commentaries upon the *Uṣūl al-kāfī* of Kulainī, Zalālī Khunsārī, one of the well known poets of the Safavid period, Quṭb al-Dīn Ashkivarī, the author of the monumental history of philosophy in Persian called the *Mahbūb al-qulūb*, which remains unedited to this day, and lesser known figures such as Aḥmad b. Zain al-'Ābidīn 'Alavī 'Āmilī Jīlī and Mīrzā Muḥammad Qāsim b. Muḥammad 'Abbās Jīlānī. One must mention also particularly Mullā Shamsā Gīlānī (d. 1098/1686-7), who continued the school of Mīr Dāmād, writing a treatise on the problem of the creation of the world, about which he also corresponded with Mullā Ṣadrā, and commenting upon the *Qabasāt* of Mīr Dāmād. The combination of Avicennan and ishrāqī elements seen in Mīr Dāmād is very much present in his works and he is among the most faithful propagators of his master's teachings.<sup>1</sup>

#### Mīr Abu'l-Qāsim Findiriskī

A contemporary and close friend of both Mīr Dāmād and Shaikh-i Bahā'ī, Mīr Findiriskī is much less known and less studied and remains to this day the most mysterious intellectual figure of the Safavid period. In his lifetime he was considered, along with Mīr Dāmād and Shaikh-i Bahā'ī, as one of the great masters of Iṣfahān and was highly revered in religious circles as well as at court. He lived a life of simplicity and asceticism and was a practising ṣūfī whose personal life can be compared in every way with those of the well known classical masters of sufism.<sup>2</sup> He travelled to India frequently and was highly revered by Hindu Yogis and Muslim sages alike. He is said to have journeyed often, but he also lived in Iṣfahān for a considerable portion of his life and taught philosophy, mathematics and medicine in that city. Because of his ṣūfī practices and esoteric knowledge Mīr Findiriskī came to be credited with miracles such as being in two places

<sup>1</sup> See Shīrāzī, *al-Shawāhid*, p. 93 of the editor's introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Tabrizī, *Raiḥānat al-adab* III, 231-2; Hidāyat, *Riyāz al-'arīfīn*, p. 276.

at once and travelling great distances instantaneously. The very attribution of these accounts to him is of the greatest interest in understanding his personality. Even after his death his reputation would not leave him alone, for when he died in 1050/1640-1 in Isfahān he was buried in the famous Takht-i Fülād cemetery, not in a regular grave, but in one which is surrounded within the earth by a metal case. Since he was celebrated as an alchemist, people were afraid that his grave would be dug up by those who sought the philosopher's stone and who would violate the sanctity of his grave in quest of physical gold.

Mīr Findiriskī wrote little. His extant works include the monumental commentary in Persian upon the *Yoga Vasiṣṭha* which had been rendered into Persian by Nizām al-Dīn Pānīpatī and which is one of the major works in Persian on Hinduism, a treatise on motion (*Risālat al-ḥaraka*), another on sociology from the traditional metaphysical point of view (*Risāla ṣanā'iyya*) and the *Uṣūl al-fuṣūl* on Hindu wisdom. Recently his treatise on alchemy, in Persian, has also been discovered in a manuscript acquired by the Library of the Faculty of Letters of Tehran University.<sup>1</sup> But his most famous work is a *qaṣīda* which summarises the principles of Ḥikmat in verses of great beauty, showing Mīr Findiriskī to be an accomplished poet like Mīr Dāmād and Shaikh-i Bahā'ī. The poem begins with the verses:

Heaven with these stars is clear, pleasing and beautiful;  
Whatever is there above has below it a form.  
The form below, if by the ladder of gnosis  
Is trodden upward, becomes the same as its principle,<sup>2</sup>

and continues to discuss the most essential aspects of Ḥikmat. It has been for this reason commented upon by several later ḥakīms such as Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ Khalkhālī and Ḥakīm 'Abbās Dārābī. It is also highly regarded by most of the contemporary masters of Ḥikmat in Persia.

Many later authorities believe that Mullā Ṣadrā studied with Mīr Findiriskī and learned the particular features of his doctrine such as trans-substantial motion and belief in the "imaginal world" from him. This is impossible to deny categorically, for there may have been an oral instruction imparted, but what remains of the written works of

Mīr Findiriskī reveals that in philosophy he was a faithful follower of Ibn Sīnā and specifically denied trans-substantial motion (*al-ḥarakat al-jawhariyya*) and the archetypal world in his particularly philosophical works. Moreover, all of his students except Mullā Ṣadrā – if we do accept that Mullā Ṣadrā studied with Mīr Findiriskī – were more or less Avicennan.<sup>1</sup> Yet his *qaṣīda* affirms the reality of the archetypal world and reveals Mīr Findiriskī as a ṣūfī pure and simple. One must therefore say that Mīr Findiriskī, while a master of Peripatetic philosophy and the sciences such as medicine and mathematics, in all of which he taught the classical works such as the *Shifā'* and *Qānūn*, was a practising ṣūfī and gnostic who was also well versed in the occult sciences such as alchemy and, in addition, Hindu metaphysics. He is yet another of the remarkable intellectual figures of the Safavid period who were masters of several disciplines and expositors of different planes of knowledge.

Mīr Findiriskī trained many students, some of whom became well known figures. These include Mullā Rafī'a Gīlānī (d. 1082/1671-2), the commentator upon the *Uṣūl al-kāfī*, Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzavārī (d. 1098 or 1099/1686-7), author of several important works on jurisprudence such as the *Kifāya* and glosses upon the *Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* and *Shifā'* of Ibn Sīnā, and Āqā Husain Khunsārī (d. 1080/1669-70), who was one of the greatest Shī'ī scholars of his day and wrote *Mashāriq al-nufūs* on jurisprudence and also glosses upon the *Shifā'* and *Ishārāt*. But besides Mullā Ṣadrā, Mīr Findiriskī's most famous student was Mullā Rajab 'Alī Tabrīzī (d. 1080/1669-70), who was the outstanding teacher of philosophy in the second half of the 11th/17th century. Mullā Rajab 'Alī, the author of many works including the *Kilīd-i bibisht* ("Key to Paradise") on eschatology, was opposed to Mullā Ṣadrā and did not accept his views concerning trans-substantial motion and the union of the knower and the known. Also, opposed to the great majority of Muslim philosophers, he had nominalistic tendencies and considered being (*wujūd*) to be shared only nominally by existing things without its corresponding to an objective reality. He taught the books of Ibn Sīnā and trained many well known students, including Qāzī Sa'īd Qumī and Muḥammad Rafī' Pīrẓāda, who under the direction of his master composed *al-Ma'ārif al-ilāhiyya*, assembling therein the lessons given by Mullā Rajab 'Alī.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M.T. Dānishpazhūh, *Catalogue méthodique...des manuscrits de la bibliothèque privée de l'Imam Jum'ah de Kerman donné en legs à la Faculté des Lettres de Tehran* (Tehran, 1965), p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Full translation in Nasr, "The School", pp. 923-4.

<sup>1</sup> See Shīrāzī, *al-Shawāhid*, introduction, pp. 86-9.

<sup>2</sup> For all three men, see Lāhijānī, *Sharḥ risālat*, introductions by Jalāl Humā'ī and S.J. Āshiyānī.

*Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā)*

The philosophical and theosophical movement of the Safavid period reaches its climax with Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, known as Mullā Ṣadrā or Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn ("the foremost among the theosophers"), whom many Persians consider as the greatest Muslim thinker in the domain of metaphysics. His influence has been immense ever since his death and he has in fact dominated the intellectual scene in Persia during the past centuries. The present day interest in traditional Islamic philosophy in Persia also revolves around his name and many works have been devoted to him in the past few years.

Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī was born into an aristocratic family of Shīrāz in 979 or 980/1571 or 1572 and received the best education possible in his native city. Gifted from early childhood with a love for learning and being the only son of a wealthy and influential father, he was placed under the care of the best masters from an early age and was able to learn Arabic, the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and other religious sciences early in life. This was made easier for him because of his intense devotion and religious fervour which he combined with keen intelligence from the age of childhood. At that time, although Shīrāz was a major city, the great centre of learning was Isfahān, to which the young Ṣadr al-Dīn decided to travel in order to benefit fully from the presence of the masters at the capital. In Isfahān he pursued his studies eagerly first with Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn 'Āmilī in the religious or transmitted sciences (*al-'ulūm al-naqliyya*) and then with Mīr Dāmād in the intellectual sciences (*al-'ulūm al-'aqliyya*). It is said that he wrote a work on the order of Mīr Dāmād and when Mīr Dāmād saw it he exclaimed that henceforth no one would read his own works. Some sources have also mentioned that Ṣadr al-Dīn studied with Mīr Findiriskī but, as already pointed out, this has not been established with certainty.

After completion of his formal studies, Mullā Ṣadrā began a new phase of his life in quest of the other kind of knowledge, which comes through intuition and illumination resulting from inner purification. He left the busy life of the capital and retired to a small village named Kahak, near Qum, where he spent according to some seven and to others eleven years in ascetic and spiritual practices. He attained in this way immediate knowledge (*'ilm-i ḥuṣṣī*) as he had perfected earlier his grasp of acquired knowledge (*'ilm-i ḥuṣṣī*). At this moment he was asked by Shah 'Abbās II to come to Shīrāz to teach and train qualified

students. He accepted the call and returned to public life, spending the last thirty years of his life teaching in the Khān school of Shīrāz built for him by Allāhvardī Khān, the governor of Fārs. Due to the presence of Mullā Ṣadrā, the Khān school became a great centre of learning attracting students from near and far. In fact, it became so famous that it attracted the attention of some of the European travellers of the period such as Thomas Herbert, who writes: "And, indeed, Shīrāz has a college wherein is read philosophy, astrology, physic, chemistry, and the mathematics; so as 'tis the more famoused through Persia".<sup>1</sup> It was also during this period that Mullā Ṣadrā wrote most of his works. On returning from his seventh pilgrimage on foot to Mecca he died in Baṣra in 1050/1640 and was buried in that city.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly fifty works of Mullā Ṣadrā are known, most of which were lithographed during the Qājār period and are now being republished in modern editions. Some of these concern specifically religious themes such as his Qur'anic commentaries and the monumental commentary upon the *Uṣūl al-kāfī* of Kulainī, which was left uncompleted. Others deal with Ḥikmat properly speaking, such as *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyya*, in many ways his personal testament and the summary of his teachings, *al-Mashā'ir* on being and *Ḥikmat al-'arshiyya* on the posthumous becoming of man. Yet another group of his writings are commentaries upon earlier philosophical works such as the glosses upon Ibn Sīnā's *Shifā'* and the commentary upon *Kitāb al-hidāya* of Athīr al-Dīn Abharī known as *Sharḥ al-Hidāya*, which became the most famous work on Islamic philosophy in the Indian subcontinent and is referred to as *Ṣadrā* in India and Pakistan to this day.<sup>3</sup> Mullā Ṣadrā also wrote two works in his own defence, one the *Siḥ aṣḥ*, his only Persian work in prose, in which he defended gnosis (*'irfān*) against the attacks of superficial doctors of law and jurisprudents, and the *Kaṣr al-aṣnām al-jāhiliyya*, in which he defended the Sharī'a and the exoteric dimension of religion against some of the extremists who existed within certain ṣūfī orders and to whom he refers as the *mutaṣawwifīn* of his time.<sup>4</sup> Mullā Ṣadrā also wrote a *Dīwān*

<sup>1</sup> Herbert, *Travels in Persia*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> The traditional sources for his life are the same as those mentioned above for Mīr Dāmād and Shaikh Bahā' al-Dīn: for a full discussion of them, see Shīrāzī, *Siḥ aṣḥ*, introduction, pp. 2-8.

<sup>3</sup> Nasr, "Mullā Ṣadrā dar Hindūstān", pp. 909ff.

<sup>4</sup> The term *mutaṣawwif* is perfectly legitimate in most schools of Sufism, where it refers to the person who follows the path of Sufism, but in Safavid and post-Safavid Iran it gained a pejorative connotation as referring to those who "play" with Sufism without being serious, in contrast to the real ṣūfīs who were called *ṣūfiyya*. It thus acquired the meaning of *mutaṣawwif*, a term used by some of the earlier ṣūfīs to designate those who know nothing about Sufism but pretend to follow it.

of poetry, selections of which have been published. But these poems do not compare in quality with those of his teachers Mīr Dāmād and Shaikh-i Bahā'ī or those of his students Faiz-i Kāshānī and Lāhijī.

The outstanding masterpiece of Mullā Ṣadrā is the *al-Ḥikmat al-muta'aliyya fi'l-asfār al-arba'at al-'aqliyya* ("The Supernal Wisdom concerning the Four Journeys of the Intellect"), known in Persia as the *Asfār*. This most advanced text of Ḥikmat is a final summation of traditional wisdom, including, in addition to the most thorough exposition of Mullā Ṣadrā's own vision, a vast amount of material related to the views of earlier gnostics, philosophers and theologians. It is therefore a major source for our knowledge of Islamic intellectual history and at the same time a testament to the author's remarkable knowledge of earlier philosophical, religious and historical texts. The *Asfār*, which is taught only to students who have already mastered Peripatetic philosophy, ishrāqī theosophy and Kalām, is taught in traditional schools over a six year period and is the crowning achievement in the traditional curriculum of the "intellectual sciences" in the madrasas. Numerous commentaries have been written on this work, of which some of the best known include the commentaries of Mullā 'Alī Zunūzī and Ḥājji Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī. The *Asfār* and its commentaries are like a central river compared to which all other streams are peripheral. In such fashion has this work dominated the intellectual life of Persia; and the later philosophical and theosophical schools have been like so many tributaries that have only contributed to its expansion in its onward march.

The work of Mullā Ṣadrā, all of which except for the Persian *Sib asl*, a few letters and the poems are in Arabic, are written in a remarkably lucid style which in fact makes them appear as deceptively easy. There is, moreover, a mixture of logical analysis, mystical gleaming and references to religious sources, especially the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, which characterises all of Ṣadr al-Dīn's writings. He achieved in his own life, as well as in his works which are the fruit of that life, a synthesis of the three means open to man in his quest after truth: revelation (*wahy* or *shar'*), illumination and intellectual intuition (*dhanq*) and ratiocination (*istidlāl* or *'aql* in its limited meaning). His works reflect this synthesis. A most rigorous dialectical and logical discourse, in which type of expression Mullā Ṣadrā was an unmatched master and for which he is especially known in the Indian subcontinent, is often followed by a gnostic utterance received through illumination to which he usually

refers as "truth received from the Divine Throne" (*taḥqīq 'arshī*). In the same manner rational arguments are supported by citations from the Qur'ān, and the commentaries upon the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth are carried out through the process of hermeneutic interpretation (*ta'wīl*) in such a way as to reveal their gnostic meaning. There is but one inner, spiritual reality which manifests itself outwardly in the revealed scriptures, in the soul and mind of man and in the cosmos, or "upon the horizons" to use the Qur'anic terminology. The synthesis achieved by Mullā Ṣadrā aims at bringing man back to this one spiritual reality from all the different modes of perception and knowledge that are open to him, whether it be the given text of revelation, or ratiocination and its analysis of the externally perceived world, or the inward illumination which opens up the inner horizons of the two above modes of knowledge and is at the same time objectivised and regulated by them.

The synthesis of Mullā Ṣadrā and his intellectual progeny is based upon the integration of the four major schools of Islamic thought alluded to earlier: namely Kalām, Peripatetic philosophy, ishrāqī theosophy and 'irfān. In Mullā Ṣadrā we find elements of Ghazālī, Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī and particularly Ibn 'Arabī. Moreover, there is Shi'ism, especially in its gnostic aspect, which serves as the background for this whole synthesis. The *Nahj al-balāgha* of 'Alī and the traditions of the other Shi'ī Imāms are a constant source of inspiration for Mullā Ṣadrā and a major source of his doctrines. Of course, this synthesis could not have been achieved without the work of the sages and philosophers of the two preceding centuries. But their work in turn finds its final meaning and elaboration in the doctrines of Ṣadr al-Dīn.

There are many principles which distinguish the metaphysical doctrines of Mullā Ṣadrā, not all of which can be enumerated here. Some of the most important of these principles include the unity, principiality and gradation of being; trans-substantial motion; the unity of the knower and the known and the reality of "mental existence" (*wujūd al-dhihnī*) as a distinct state of existence which makes knowledge possible; and the catharsis (*tajrīd*) and independence of the power of imagination (*khayāl*) in the soul from the body, and also the existence of a cosmic "world of imagination" which makes possible the theosophical explanation of religious descriptions of eschatology.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of these points, see Nasr, "Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī". Also Corbin: introduction to *Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques*; "Mundus imaginalis"; *Terre céleste*, pp. 257-65.

The doctrine of unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is usually associated with sufism and in fact finds its highest expression in the gnostic teachings of Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī and his school. This doctrine is usually mistaken for pantheism or panentheism by those who cannot distinguish between profane philosophy and a sacred metaphysical doctrine.<sup>1</sup> But in reality it is nothing but the inner meaning of the *shahāda* of Islam, *Lā ilāha ill'Allāh*, made manifest by those who are given the vision of the inner meaning of things. There is nothing more Islamic than unity (*al-tauḥīd*) and *waḥdat al-wujūd* is the essence of *al-tauḥīd* and therefore of Islam. But even this doctrine has levels of interpretation; that is why in Persia a distinction is usually made between the *waḥdat al-wujūd* of the '*urafā* or gnostics, referring to Ibn 'Arabī and his school, and the *waḥdat al-wujūd* of the *ḥukamā* or theosophers, referring to Mullā Ṣadrā and his school. In order to understand this distinction it is necessary to analyse the gradual process by which man comes to understand unity. The first perception of the external world for the untrained mind or for a child is to see multiplicity and only multiplicity. The multiplicity is due to the quiddity (*māhiyya*) of each thing which distinguishes it from others, and to consider this multiplicity as ultimately real is to accept the view of *iṣālāt al-māhiyya* or "principiality of quiddity" for which Mīr Dāmād and Suhrawardī are known, if we do not consider that Suhrawardī held to be true for light what Mullā Ṣadrā held with regard to being. Of course these sages did not negate unity, which for them stands above the world of multiplicity, but in their analysis of the world of multiplicity they stopped short at the quiddity of things without considering their existence (*wujūd*).

The next stage is to hold that within each thing, which according to Avicennan philosophy is composed of existence and quiddity or essence, it is the existence which is ultimately real and not the quiddity, but nevertheless to believe that the existence of each object is totally different from that of another. This view is *iṣālāt al-wujūd* ("principiality of being"), but still falls short of fully grasping the sense of Unity. It is the view of Ibn Sīnā and his followers.

Above this view stands that of Mullā Ṣadrā and his followers, who claim that not only is the existence of each object principal *vis-à-vis* its

quiddity (*iṣālāt al-wujūd*), but also that the existence of each object is a state and grade of Being itself, not a totally independent being. They thus believe that there is only one Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), which possesses grades and stages (*tashkīk*) while it remains transcendent with respect to these states and stages (*marātib*), and it is this being and not the quiddity of objects which gives reality to things. Mullā Ṣadrā and his followers are therefore said to believe in the unity (*waḥdat*), gradation (*tashkīk*) and principiality (*iṣālāt*) of Being (*wujūd*). Above this concept of the "Unity of Being" stands the unity of gnostics, usually called *waḥdat-i khāṣṣa* (special unity), according to which Being corresponds to only one objective Reality, God. Nothing else can even be said to exist. Everything else is the theophany (*tajallī*) of this One Being, not having any being of its own, not even that of being a stage and state of the One Being.

On the basis of the doctrine of the Unity of Being Mullā Ṣadrā created the vast doctrine of the metaphysics of being, which is another version of the metaphysics of essence of Suhrawardī. The interrelation between all stages of existence and the incessant deployment from the Source and return to the Source characterise the whole doctrine of Mullā Ṣadrā. There is a dynamism in his view; but it must not be in any way confused with the type of dynamism found in modern thought, which usually results from a forgetting of the immutable essences of things and terminates in a horizontal and purely temporal and secular evolution that sometimes even appears in a theological garb, as in the case of Teilhardism. The dynamism of Mullā Ṣadrā is "spatial" rather than "temporal". It is directed not towards the achievement of a future state but towards the realisation of a higher state of being that exists here and now. The world of becoming is related to the world of being not by a temporal sequence but in a relation that can be best symbolised by the spatial circumscription of one sphere by another, as we see in the medieval cosmologies based upon the metaphysical symbolism of the Ptolemaic spheres. Interestingly enough, Mullā Ṣadrā in fact described this metaphysical relationship without having recourse to Ptolemaic astronomy: his exposition, therefore, cannot be brushed aside so easily by those who, being unable to distinguish the symbol from the brute fact, discard the medieval metaphysical doctrine of the states of being because it is tied in its exposition to the homocentric Ptolemaic astronomy.

The relationship between being and becoming, which Aristotle him-

<sup>1</sup> Schuon, pp. 56ff. Burckhardt, *Introduction*, chapter 3. M. Lings, *A Moslem Saint of the Twentieth Century* (London, 1961), chapter 5. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, pp. 104-8.

self had also sought to explain, lies for Mullā Ṣadrā in the idea of trans-substantial motion (*al-ḥarakat al-jauhariyya*). Ibn Sīnā and the Peripatetics in general limited motion in the Aristotelian sense of the word to the four categories of position, space, quality and quantity; that is, all gradual change from potentiality to actuality or motion for them occurred not in the substance of things, but in one of the above four accidents. Ibn Sīnā in fact gave reasons in the *Shifā'* as to why the substance of an object cannot change in the process of motion. Mullā Ṣadrā, after answering the difficulties stated by Ibn Sīnā, proceeds to prove the necessity of trans-substantial motion while arguing at the same time for the "Platonic ideas" or archetypes of things which the Peripatetics had negated. It is hardly possible to analyse this difficult doctrine here.<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that for Mullā Ṣadrā motion is the means whereby gradually the substance of a thing changes until it is able to achieve a higher state of being and through man gain access to the world of immutable forms (*tajarrud*) above and beyond all change. In the same way that the cosmos receives its reality through the effusion of being from the Origin and Source of all being, the becoming and change in the cosmos are with the aim of achieving higher states of being and finally states that lie above the world of change and becoming and that lead ultimately to the Source once again. The Universe is a vast system aimed at making possible this catharsis and disentanglement from matter and becoming which the very rich term *tajrīd* implies (an angel being called *mujarrad* in the language of theosophy, that is one who possesses the state of *tajrīd*). This possibility exists here and now, at least for man who stands in an axial and central position in this world. The rôle of Hikmat is to make him realise where he stands and to enable him to achieve the state of *tajrīd*. The doctrine of trans-substantial motion, therefore, in addition to enabling Mullā Ṣadrā to construct a new form of natural philosophy, is a cornerstone of both his metaphysics and his spiritual psychology.

The problem of how we know, or epistemology, which since Descartes's dissection of reality has become both central and insoluble in Western philosophy, also occupies a central position in Mullā Ṣadrā's writings. A good part of the first journey of the *Asfār* is devoted to it. With a rigour which would satisfy a modern analyst Mullā Ṣadrā seeks to analyse the problem of knowledge from a back-

<sup>1</sup> See Qazvīnī.

ground which is again essentially gnostic and is based on the union between the knower (*al-'āqil*) and the known (*al-ma'qūl*). In the act of perception (*idrāk*) man becomes identified with the object of his knowledge; that is, the knower or 'āqil is at the moment of perceiving the known identified with the form of the known or ma'qūl, which is in fact its reality. Knowledge is only possible through this union.

In order to demonstrate the possibility of this union taking place, Mullā Ṣadrā must prove the existence of an independent plane of reality which he calls the mental plane (*ʔanjūd al-dhihnī*). He is the first of the Muslim philosophers to have devoted attention to this question and to have analysed all that the reality of this plane implies. It is true that the union of knower and known had been alluded to by Abu'l-Ḥasan al-ʔamīrī and some of the ṣūfīs, but here as elsewhere it was Mullā Ṣadrā who for the first time provided demonstrations for it and incorporated it into a vast metaphysical synthesis. To have found traces of this and other ideas in earlier books does not at all detract from the genius of Mullā Ṣadrā, for the important question is how these ideas are incorporated into a new intellectual perspective. Otherwise in the domain of metaphysics there is nothing new under the Sun, as Aristotle had already asserted. It is enough to compare Mullā Ṣadrā's treatment of this question with what is found in earlier Muslim sources to realise exactly what he achieved.

For Mullā Ṣadrā the mind is not a *tabula rasa* nor only a tablet on which certain "ideas" are engrained. It has several faculties and powers, one of which is to create forms, and this power is that of "imagination" as the term is understood by the ḥukamā. Mullā Ṣadrā, like Ibn 'Arabī, believes in the creative power of imagination (*mutakabbayila kballāqa*), through which the mind is able to bring forms into being in the same way that the Divine Intellect has given objective existence to things through Its own creative power. Knowledge results, not from the external form "entering" the mind, but in this external form acting as an occasion for the mind to create, in accordance with the immutable essence of the object concerned, its form. This act in turn changes the state of being of the knower itself. Therefore knowledge is inseparable from being and leaves its effect upon the being of the knower.

The catharsis or *tajrīd* of the imaginative faculty plays a major rôle in the eschatological doctrines expounded by Ṣadr al-Dīn. In the last part (*safar*) of the *Asfār* as well as in individual treatises on resurrection and



the afterlife, especially the monumental commentary in the form of glosses upon the *Hikmat al-isbrāq*, Mullā Ṣadrā has expounded in the most complete fashion the esoteric meaning of the Muslim doctrine of resurrection and eschatology (ma'ād).<sup>1</sup> His writings in this domain are probably the most thorough and systematic of any Muslim work in this area, where Muslims, in contrast to Hindus and Buddhists, have been generally laconic. It is only in the works of Ibn 'Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā and their schools that these questions are amply treated.

The intermediate world of imagination or the "imaginal world", which he also calls "purgatory" (*barzakḥ*) and the world of "hanging forms" (*ṣuwar al-mu'allaqā*), is the locus of the eschatological events described in sacred scripture. It is where the events of the Last Judgment occur in a real way because this world is real and has an ontological status. This is a world possessing not only form but also matter which is, however, subtle and celestial (*laṭīf* and *malakūtī*). Man, likewise, possesses a subtle body, or what in the parlance of Western Hermeticism would be called the astral body. In his glosses upon the *Hikmat al-isbrāq*, Mullā Ṣadrā asserts that neither the Peripatetics like Ibn Sīnā nor the theologians like Ghazālī could really solve this problem. The one could only prove spiritual resurrection (*al-ma'ād al-rūḥānī*), and the other believed in corporeal resurrection (*al-ma'ād al-jismānī*) without being able to provide any demonstration for it. Mullā Ṣadrā broke this deadlock and was able to prove corporeal resurrection in accordance with Qur'anic teachings by appealing to this intermediate world where man is resurrected after death not as a dismembered soul but as a complete being possessing also a subtle body.

Mullā Ṣadrā develops fully the theme of the posthumous becoming of the soul and its resurrection beyond the imaginal world to higher states of being and finally to a station before the Divine Presence itself. He makes the science of the soul ('ilm al-naḥs) a branch of metaphysics (*ilāhiyyāt*) rather than natural philosophy (*ṭabī'īyyāt*) as was the case with the Peripatetics, and he develops an elaborate science of the soul starting with the embryonic state of man and terminating in his ultimate beatitude far beyond the earthly life. In this domain no less than in metaphysics he gives an imprint of a powerful genius to a teaching that is by nature timeless and perennial.

Mullā Ṣadrā trained many students, of whom two, Mullā Muḥsin

<sup>1</sup> Corbin, "Le Thème".

Faiz Kāshānī and Maulānā 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhijī, are among the first-rate luminaries of the Safavid period and will be treated below. Others less known but nevertheless significant include Shaikh Ḥusain Tunakābunī, who continued Mullā Ṣadrā's school after him, Āqājānī Māzandarānī, the author of a vast commentary upon the *Qabasāt* of Mīr Dāmād, and Mīrzā Muḥammad Ṣādiq Kāshānī, who went to India to propagate Mullā Ṣadrā's teachings. In Persia the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā were not continued immediately after him due to difficult circumstances. But a century later men like Mīrzā Muḥammad Ṣādiq Ardistānī revived his teachings, and early in the Qājār period Mullā 'Alī Nūrī, followed by his student Ḥājji Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī, established Mullā Ṣadrā's school as the central school of Hikmat in Persia.

#### *The akhbārī – uṣūlī debate*

Almost contemporary with Mullā Ṣadrā there began a debate which had some influence upon the later course of philosophy and a great deal of effect upon the further chapters of religious and theological history. This debate concerned the rôle of reason in the interpretation of religious matters. An 'ālim by the name of Mullā Muḥammad Amīn Astar-ābādī (d. 1033/1623-4) established the *akhbārī* school, which opposed the use of 'aql in religious matters and relied completely on the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet and the Imāms. In his *al-Fawā'id al-madaniyya* he attacked the idea of *ijtihād* or the giving of opinion based upon the four principles (*uṣūl*) of the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth or *sunna*, the consensus of the community (*ijmā'*) and reasoning or 'aql, which in Sunnism is called *qiyās*, and branded *mujtahids*, or those who practised *ijtihād*, as enemies of religion. The opposing school, which came to be known as *uṣūlī* and which finally won the day, continued to emphasise the importance of 'aql within the tenets of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

Usually the followers of the akhbārī school were literalists and purely exoteric and outward interpreters of religion, and came to be identified as *qishrīs* (those who remain content with only the husk rather than seeking the kernel as well). They were usually opposed to sufism and Hikmat and even Kalām. But this was by no means always the case. There were some akhbārīs who became outstanding ṣūfīs and ḥakīms, such as Mullā Muḥsin Faiz Kāshānī, the disciple of Mullā Ṣadrā. Such men, while opposing the use of 'aql on a certain plane, were able to reach the supra-rational domain of gnosis and illumination.



The akhbārī – uṣūlī debate continued into the Qājār period in the form of the *Shaikhī* – *bālāsarī* disputes. Strangely enough, Shaikh Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī, the founder of the Shaikhī movement, was close to the akhbārī position and at the same time an enemy of the ḥakīms and ṣūfīs. He was particularly opposed to Mullā Muḥsin Faiẓ despite the fact that both may be classified as *akhbārīs*. The situation, then, is more complex than classifying uṣūlīs as pro-Ḥikmat and akhbārīs as opposed to Ḥikmat; although the refusal to consider the rôle of 'aql in the interpretation of religious matters naturally led the akhbārīs away from Ḥikmat and gnosis, in which reason serves as the first stage for a knowledge which is supra-sensible and where in any case reason is never opposed on its own plane, but is ultimately transcended.

*Mullā Muḥsin Faiẓ Kāshānī*

Of Mullā Ṣadrā's students the best known is Muḥammad b. Shāh Murtaẓā, known as Mullā Muḥsin Kāshānī or Kāshī, and given the title of Faiẓ by Mullā Ṣadrā himself, who besides being his teacher also became his father-in-law. Mullā Muḥsin was born in Kāshān in 1007/1598–9, studied for a few years in Qum and Iṣfahān, where he belonged to the circle of Mīr Dāmād and Shaikh-i Bahā'ī, and then came to Shīrāz to receive the last phase of his education from Mullā Ṣadrā and to study the religious sciences with Sayyid Mājīd Bahrānī. The last part of his life he spent in Kāshān, where he died in 1091/1680–1 and where he is buried. His tomb is to this day a centre of pilgrimage and is credited with miracle-working powers.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 120 works of Mullā Muḥsin are known, of which most have survived.<sup>2</sup> They are in both Arabic and Persian and have become since his day a mainstay of the curriculum of Shī'ī religious schools. Like Fārābī and Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, Mullā Muḥsin was able to place himself in the different intellectual perspectives and schools of Islam and write outstanding works in each without mixing it with the teachings of another point of view. This, of course, does not mean that he was hypocritical or without a particular point of view himself; rather it means that he observed strictly the hierarchic structure of knowledge that is such an essential element of Islam and Islamic civilisation, and

<sup>1</sup> On his life, see Tabrizī, *Raiḥānat al-adab* III, 342–4; Hidāyat, *Riyāz al-'arīfīn*, pp. 388–9; Khunsarī, *Rauḍat al-jannāt*, pp. 542ff.; Shīrāzī, *Tarā'iq al-baqā'iq* I, 181ff. *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Listed by Mishkāt in his introduction to Kāshānī's *Maḥajjat*.

avoided the “mixing of the arguments of different sciences” (*khalṭ-i mabḥath*), which is so disdained in traditional Islamic learning.<sup>1</sup>

The works of Mullā Muḥsin, of which he himself has left us with three lists, include many commentaries upon the Qur'ān such as the *al-Ṣāfī* and *al-Aṣfā'*; works on Ḥadīth including *al-Wāfī*, which is the most outstanding of its kind in recent centuries; treatises devoted to the principles of religion (*uṣūl al-dīn*) such as *'Ilm al-yaqīn* and *'Ain al-yaqīn*; treatises on the Muslim rites such as the daily prayers and *ḥajj* and their esoteric significance, in which this period is particularly rich;<sup>2</sup> collections of litanies and invocations such as *Jalā' al-'uyūn*; treatises on jurisprudence such as *al-Taṭhīr*; and works devoted to the lives and sayings of the Imāms such as his commentary upon the *Ṣaḥīfa sajjādiyya* of the Fourth Shī'ī Imām. Besides these works in the religious sciences, he wrote many works on sufism and gnosis, of which the *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* with its summary, *al-Kalimāt al-makḥzūna*, is perhaps the outstanding example. This work, which is in Persian, is one of the outstanding expositions of gnosis in its Shī'ī setting and treats a complete cycle of metaphysics.<sup>3</sup> Mullā Muḥsin also summarised and commented upon earlier ṣūfī works such as the *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* of Ibn 'Arabī and the *Maṣnavī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. He also wrote many poems himself mostly on mystical themes and in the maṣnavī form. His *divān* is very well known and contains some fine verses, although all of his poems are not of first rate quality. As to Ḥikmat, he did write a few treatises on the subject, but they are not as well known as his works on religion and 'irfān.

Perhaps the most important work of Mullā Muḥsin outside the domain of Ḥadīth, where he is the undisputed Shī'ī authority of the last centuries, is his *al-Maḥajjat al-baiḍā' fī ihyā' al-ihyā'* (“The White Path in the Revival of the ‘Revival’”), the second “Revival” (*ihyā'*) referring to the *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* of Ghazālī. In the same way that the *Ihyā'* is the outstanding work of ṣūfī ethics in the Sunnī setting, the *al-Maḥajjat al-baiḍā'* must be considered as the most important Shī'ī work of ethics with a ṣūfī orientation. In fact, what Mullā Muḥsin did was to revive the work of Ghazālī in Shī'ī circles by “Shī'ifying” it. He achieved this task by substituting traditions drawn from Shī'ī sources for the

<sup>1</sup> Nasr, *Science and Civilization*, pp. 29ff.

<sup>2</sup> His treatise on the esoteric meaning of the daily prayers has been published in a beautiful edition as *Namāz, tarjumat al-ṣalāt* (Tehran, 1340/1962).

<sup>3</sup> For a summary, see Nasr, “The School”, pp. 926–30.

Sunnī ones which serve as a prop for Ghazālī's book. Otherwise the two works are nearly the same, and of the same monumental proportions. A close comparison of the two would be a most fruitful undertaking to elucidate exactly how the Sunnī and Shī'ī religious and mystical climates are related.

Mullā Muḥsin was one of the foremost esoteric interpreters of Shi'ism. While an outstanding exoteric interpreter of the religion and an undisputed 'ālim of theology and jurisprudence, he was also a gnostic and ṣūfī of high standing and sought throughout his works to harmonise the Sharī'a and the Ṭarīqa. Of the three elements which Mullā Ṣadrā unified in his vast synthesis, namely *shar'*, *kashf* and *'aql*, or revealed religion, inner illumination and rational and intellectual demonstration, Mullā Muḥsin followed mostly the first two. Yet he was of course a ḥakīm well versed in Mullā Ṣadrā's teachings, as works such as the *al-Kalimāt al-maknūna* reveal. In fact, it is with him that the process of the integration of the school of Hikmat into Shi'ism is completed. It is he who identified the "celestial guide" or illuminating intellect of Avicennan and Suhraṣardian metaphysics specifically with the Twelve Imāms, who as heavenly archetypes reflect the "light of Muḥammad" (*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*) which is a sun that illuminates these "spiritual constellations".

*Mullā 'Abd al-Razzāq Lāhijī*

The other well known student of Mullā Ṣadrā, 'Abd al-Razzāq b. 'Alī Lāhijī, entitled Fayyāz, was also a son-in-law of the master and intimately associated with him. His date of birth is not known and several dates are mentioned for his death, of which the most likely is 1072/1661-2.<sup>1</sup> Lāhijī is known particularly as a theologian with several glosses upon different commentaries of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's *Tajrid*, the *Shawāriq al-ilhām*, itself an independent commentary upon the *Tajrid*, as well as the two Persian works, *Sarmāya-yi imān* and *Gauhar murād*, the latter work being perhaps the best known book on Shī'ī theology of the Safavid period. But these works are theology (Kalām) that is deeply impregnated with Hikmat, of which Lāhijī was also a master. In fact, during the Safavid period there is not so much an independent growth of Kalām as the development of Kalām within the framework

of Hikmat. Most of the glosses and commentaries upon the *Tajrid*, such as those of Khafī, belong more to the tradition of Hikmat than Kalām proper, and most of the debates that are truly theological are found within the pages of works on Hikmat, especially those of the school of Mullā Ṣadrā.

Lāhijī in fact developed a form of Kalām which is hardly distinguishable from Hikmat, although at least in his better known works such as the *Gauhar murād* he does not follow the main doctrinal teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā, as on the unity of Being and the catharsis of the faculty of imagination. Yet in other works he confirms these points in such a manner as to indicate that the condition of his times did not allow an open espousal of the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā and that he had to adopt a more "theological" or Kalāmī dress to suit the taste of some of the 'ulamā who were by now severely criticising the ṣūfīs and the gnostics.

Lāhijī, however, has also left us with works that belong more purely to the tradition of Hikmat such as *Hudūth al-'ālam*, the commentary upon the *Hayākīl al-nūr* of Suhraṣardī and *al-Kalimāt al-tayyiba*, which deals with the contending views of Mullā Ṣadrā and Mīr Dāmād on the principality of existence or essence (*iṣālat-i wujūd* and *iṣālat-i māhiyyat*). All these works show Lāhijī to be a master in Hikmat and a true disciple of Mullā Ṣadrā.

Like Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Muḥsin Faiz, Lāhijī also wrote poetry which is of a high order containing many beautiful verses. His dīvān of about six thousand verses, of which the most complete manuscript is to be found in the Kitābkhāna-yi āstāna-yi quds-i raḥavī in Mashhad, reveals a very different aspect of his personality from that revealed by his other works. Here one finds the gentle breeze of realised gnosis and mysticism in which pearls of wisdom are couched in verses of beauty and harmony rather than in rigorous rationalistic arguments. The poems contain many verses in the praise of the Prophet and the Imāms and also long qaṣīdas dedicated to both Mullā Ṣadrā and Mīr Dāmād, with whom Lāhijī also most likely had contacts. These are perhaps the most eloquent and telling poems ever written on these two giants of the Safavid period, and they could have been written only by a person of the stature of Lāhijī, who stood close to them both in time and from the vantage-point of ideas.

Lāhijī had many students, of whom his own son, Mīrzā Hasan Lāhijī, and Qāzī Sa'īd Qumī are perhaps the most important. Mīrzā

<sup>1</sup> See Tabrizī, *Raiḥānat al-adab* III, 233-4, and Shīrāzī, *al-Shawābiḍ*, introduction, pp. 99-102.

Hasan was a very respected religious scholar of his times, revered as an outstanding authority on the religious sciences. But he was also a ḥakīm of much merit and, at a time when Ḥikmat was being attacked by some of the 'ulamā, wrote a work in Persian entitled *Ā'ina-yi ḥikmat* to defend Ḥikmat by appealing to the traditions of the Prophet and the Imāms.

### *Qāzī Sa'īd Qumī*

The other student of Lāhijī, Muḥammad b. Sa'īd Qumī, usually known as Qāzī Sa'īd or as the "Junior ḥakīm" (*ḥakīm-i kūchak*), is as well known as his master and belongs to the rank of the most outstanding figures of the Safavid period.<sup>1</sup> A student of Lāhijī, Mullā Muḥsin and also of Mullā Rajab 'Alī Tabrizī – who represents the more Peripatetic trend of philosophy in the Safavid period – Qāzī Sa'īd was particularly attracted to sufism and gnosis, while at the same time he was the judge or *qāḍī* of Qum from which position he has gained his title. In fact, most of Qāzī Sa'īd's life was spent in Qum. It was in this holy city of Shi'ism and centre of religious studies that he was born in 1049/1639; here he passed most of his active years and also died and was buried in 1103/1691. Besides serving as the judge of Qum, he was also a well known physician in the city and was considered as a real ḥakīm in both senses of the word, as physician and philosopher.

The total attachment of Qāzī Sa'īd to 'irfān has made him the "Ibn 'Arabī of Shi'ism". This is a very apt title for him because he belongs more to the school of pure 'irfān of Ibn 'Arabī than to the school of Ḥikmat of Mullā Ṣadrā, where gnostic themes are provided with rational demonstration. The works of Qāzī Sa'īd bear this out, for they usually deal with esoteric meaning of revealed and sacred texts and rites. They include *al-Arba'ūn ḥadīthan*, which is a commentary upon forty prophetic ḥadīths dealing with divine science; *al-Arba'ūnāt li-kashf anwār al-qudsiyyāt*, which is a collection of forty treatises, again mostly concerned with the esoteric meaning of religion; *Asrār al-'ibādāt*, which deals with the esoteric significance of the Muslim rites; and commentary upon different traditions such as the famous *Ḥadīth-i ghamām*. His largest work in this domain is the monumental three

<sup>1</sup> See *Raiḥānat al-adab* III, 268–9; Corbin, "La Configuration", pp. 79–166; and Qumī, *Kitāb asrār*, introduction by Sabzavāri.

volume commentary upon the *Tauḥīd* of Shaikh-i Ṣaddūq, which remains unedited and is not well known except for the section dealing with rites which has become known independently as the above-mentioned *Asrār al-'ibādāt*. But he also wrote several works on logic and philosophy such as the *Asrār al-ṣanāyi'* on logic; glosses upon the "Theology of Aristotle", which is among his most important works; and also glosses upon the *Sharḥ al-ishārāt* of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī.

The most marked feature of Qāzī Sa'īd's thought is his mastery in revealing the esoteric sense of different aspects of the Islamic tradition in both its doctrinal and practical dimensions. The process of ta'wīl, of spiritual and hermeneutic interpretation of things, which is so central to both sufism and Shi'ism, found in Qāzī Sa'īd one of its greatest masters. In his writings the inner meaning of verses of the Qur'ān, traditions of the Prophet and the Imāms, as well as Islamic ritual practices, gains the transparence and lucidity which result from the purely gnostic and metaphysical point of view held by him. In his exposition of the symbolism of the Ka'ba, he even develops a true philosophy of art, and explains the symbolic significance of forms and spatial configurations with such completeness and thoroughness that it is difficult to find its like in the annals of Islamic thought.<sup>1</sup> In this field also he reflects in many ways the doctrines and teachings of Ibn 'Arabī.

### *The two Majlisīs*

It would hardly be possible to treat philosophy and theology in the Safavid period without dealing with Mullā Muḥammad Taqī Majlisī and his more famous son, Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, although they, and especially the son, have been dealt with elsewhere in this volume. The first Majlisī, who died in 1070/1659–60, was one of the religious scholars of his time who was attracted to sufism and was probably a practising ṣūfī.<sup>2</sup> The reaction against organised sufism in religious circles had not as yet set in so that Mullā Muḥammad Taqī could enjoy respect among Shī'ī scholars and yet openly espouse the cause of sufism. He rendered a great service to both in many ways. He was the first Shī'ī scholar to spread and propagate widely the text of the

<sup>1</sup> Corbin, "La Configuration", pp. 82ff.; Nasr, "The Concept of Space".

<sup>2</sup> Tabrizī, *Raiḥānat al-adab* III, 460–2; also Bihbihānī, *Mir'āt al-ahvāl*, which is devoted to him in particular.

traditions of the Imāms and to encourage their study, so that he must be considered in a way as the father of the science of Ḥadīth in its new development during the Safavid period. He also made the life of sufism in religious circles easier by lending to it the weight of his authority and support.

His son, Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir (b. 1037/1627–8, d. 1111/1699–1700), was in many ways a different type of personality. He was politically more influential than his father and must be considered as the most powerful Shī'ī scholar of the Safavid period. He was also much more austere and exoteric, and openly condemned and opposed organised sufism, to the extent of denying his own father's allegiance to sufism. In fact, he was the most formidable spokesman for the reaction which set in within Shī'ī religious circles during the later Safavid period due in part to excesses within some of the ṣūfī orders. With the same breath he also condemned the ḥukamā, whose teachings he saw as closely wedded to those of the ṣūfīs.

The second Majlisī is the most prolific of Shī'ī writers, and probably wrote his works with the aid of some of his own students. Otherwise these works, numbering over one hundred and including the monumental *Bihār al-anwār*, could hardly have been written by one man. The *Bihār al-anwār* itself, which is over twenty-six lengthy volumes in its modern edition, is a vast encyclopaedia of Shī'ism dealing with different aspects of Islam as a religion as well as the Islamic religious sciences and the history of the Prophets and the Imāms. It remains a treasury of information for all the phases of Shī'ī learning to this day. His other works deal with different religious sciences. Some of the most famous, such as *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn* and *Ḥilyat al-muttaqīn*, both in Persian, and *Ṣirāt al-najāt* in Arabic, are concerned with principles of religion, traditions and theology in the general sense, not in its technical sense of Kalām. In his commentary upon the *Uṣūl al-kāfī* of Kulainī, however, Majlisī turns to the intellectual sciences and seems to have been influenced by the commentary of Mullā Ṣadrā. Likewise, in his *Zād al-ma'ād* there are allusions to Islamic esoteric teachings, which implies that Majlisī was not completely alien to these subjects and perhaps spoke so vehemently against the ḥakīms and ṣūfīs because of the particular conditions of his time, which necessitated such a position for the defence of the Sharī'a and the official religious institutions. In any case Majlisī left an indelible mark upon all later Shī'ī thought while his opposition to Ḥikmat only delayed its new flowering in the Qājār period.

*The later ḥakīms of the Safavid period*

Although the atmosphere was not favourable to the propagation of philosophy and theosophy from the second half of the 11th/17th century to the Afghan invasion, which put an end to Safavid rule, several notable figures continued to propagate the tradition and make possible its renewal in the 13th/19th century. Among these figures one may mention Mullā Ḥasan Lunbānī (d. 1094/1682–3), a student of Mullā Rajab 'Alī Tabrizī, who combined philosophy and sufism and even wrote a commentary upon the *Maṣnavī*. Due to his particular attraction to ishrāq and 'irfān he was accused by some of the exoteric 'ulamā of being a ṣūfī and wrote a treatise in his own defence.<sup>1</sup>

Another figure of the same period, Mīrzā Muḥammad Ṣādiq Ardistānī (d. 1134/1721–2), was more or less a follower of the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā. Like Mullā Ṣadrā, he believed in the catharsis (tajarrud) of the inner faculties of the soul, particularly the faculty of imagination, and offers the same arguments in proof of this view. But on the question of the origin of the human soul, which he considers as a ray of the universal soul (*nafs-i kullī*), he presents a view which is different from that of both Mullā Ṣadrā and Ibn Sīnā. On the question of the unity and principality of being also he follows Ṣadr al-Dīn.<sup>2</sup>

Ardistānī was the foremost teacher of Ḥikmat of his time in Iṣfahān. His *Ḥikmat-i ʿādiqīyya*, which consists of his lectures assembled by his students, is a major work on the school of Ḥikmat during the Safavid period. He was personally revered because of his extremely simple and ascetic life, but owing to the opposition of some of the religious authorities he finally fell out of favour with Shah Sulṭān Ḥusain. Yet he was able to be of much influence and to train a number of students, of whom the best known is Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī Almāsī, a descendant of the first Majlisī. Almāsī was the first person to begin to teach the texts of Mullā Ṣadrā in official lessons of the madrasas and was instrumental in propagating his work. It was his student, Āqā Muḥammad Bīdābādī, who taught Mullā 'Alī Nūrī, the great reviver of Ḥikmat during the Qājār period, and so through him the chain of transmission of Ḥikmat is preserved between the Safavid and Qājār eras. Another of Ardistānī's students, Mullā Ḥamza Gīlānī, was also a well known

<sup>1</sup> See Lāhijānī, *Sharḥ risāla*, introduction by Humā'ī, p. 16; introduction by Āshtiyānī, pp. 40–1.

<sup>2</sup> *Sharḥ risāla*, introduction by Āshtiyānī, p. 42; *al-Shawāhid*, introduction, p. 118.

master of Hikmat and was among the many people who lost their lives in the Afghan invasion of Iṣfahān.

During the last phase of the Safavid period, the school of Mullā Ṣadrā was as yet far from being completely dominant. A contemporary of Ardistānī, Shaikh 'Ināyat-Allāh Gīlānī, who belonged to the school of Mullā Rajab 'Alī Tabrizī, continued the Peripatetic school of Ibn Sīnā and taught the *Ishārāt*, *Shifā'* and *Najāt*. Likewise, there were masters who taught pure gnosis and ishrāq. One of them, Mīr Sayyid Ḥasan Ṭāliqānī, was the outstanding gnostic of Iṣfahān at the beginning of the 12th/18th century and taught the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* of Ibn 'Arabī, as well as works of Suhrawardī such as the *Hikmat al-ishrāq* and *Hayākil al-nūr* along with their traditional commentaries. Yet he too was to some extent under the sway of the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā. Altogether, the general impression one has of the little known history of these last decades of Safavid rule is the gradual spread of the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā, especially in Iṣfahān, while at the same time other schools such as the Peripatetic and the gnostic continue in a climate which became ever more hostile to both Hikmat and 'irfān.

#### *The influence of the school of Iṣfahān in India*

Although interest in Islamic philosophy on the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent goes back to the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries, the real establishment of a school of Islamic philosophy on the sub-continent dates from the Safavid period. During this epoch many Persian philosophers, scholars and scientists migrated or travelled to India, such as Qāzī Nūr-Allāh Shushtarī, author of the well known *Majālis al-mu'minīn* and *Iḥqāq al-ḥaqq*, Muḥammad Dihdār Shīrāzī, author of several gnostic treatises such as *Ishrāq al-nayyirain*, Bahā' al-Dīn Iṣfahānī, known as Fāzil-i Hindī, who summarised the metaphysics of the *Shifā'*, and the already mentioned Mīr Findiriskī. Moreover, the teachings of Mīr Dāmād and especially Mullā Ṣadrā spread far and wide in India. The *Sharḥ al-Hidāya* of Mullā Ṣadrā, to which we have already referred, became the most popular work in the sub-continent. The very large number of glosses and commentaries upon the works of Safavid masters as well as manuscripts of their writings that are found today in the libraries of the sub-continent are a witness to the remarkable spread of the teachings of the school of Iṣfahān in that region. In fact, except for Iraq, which was then as now religiously associated with

Persia, the Muslim part of the sub-continent represents the only other region of the Islamic world where this particular school of Islamic philosophy spread to an appreciable extent. The mystical and theological movements associated with such names as Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī and Shāh Valī-Allāh, as well as the Khairābādī school which is, properly speaking, philosophical and logical, cannot be fully understood without a study of the Safavid schools of thought.

In Persia itself after the interim period of confusion following the downfall of the Safavids, the school of Hikmat was revived again in Iṣfahān. The central figures of this revival were Mullā 'Alī Nūrī, who taught the works of Mullā Ṣadrā for seventy years, and his student Ḥājji Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī, who made the teachings of Mullā Ṣadrā so dominant and central as practically to exclude other schools of philosophy. Through him and other Qājār masters the teachings of the Safavid sages have been transmitted to the present day and continue to exercise an appreciable influence, particularly the doctrines of Mullā Ṣadrā, which have received so much attention in recent years and which act as the axis around which the revival of traditional philosophy in Persia is taking place. Furthermore, they have even attracted the attention of certain thinkers outside the orbit of Persian culture,<sup>1</sup> as the labour of a small group of scholars, foremost among them Corbin, has enabled the Western world to know Safavid philosophy for the first time and to study it not only for its historical interest but also as a living school of wisdom and thought, in which are combined the rigour of logic and the ecstasies of inner illumination.

<sup>1</sup> Corbin, "The Force of Traditional Philosophy in Iran Today", *Studies in Comparative Religion* (Winter, 1968), pp. 12-25.