

A translation and commentary of *Kūāb al- Arbaʿīn fi ʿt-Taṣawwuf* [The Forty Ḥadīth on Sufism] by Shaykh Abū-ʿAbd-al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī (d.412/1021)

Translation and commentary by Fakhrudīn Owaisi

INTRODUCTION

The origins of Sufism (Ar. *Taṣawwuf*), the mystical/spiritual tradition of Islam, has for long been an issue of contention. Muslim reformist critics as well as many non-Muslim researchers (until recently) have contended that Sufism is derived from a variation of pre-Islamic religious forms (or *leftovers* of them), which were inherited by Muslims and incorporated, consciously or unconsciously into Islam.

Thus, Buddhist asceticism, Hindu paganism, Greek pantheism, Christian saint-worship, Persian metaphysical philosophy and even 'Jewish conspiracy', have been claimed to be the origins or probable origins of Sufism.

Muslim reformist/puritanist scholarship had its conscious and subconscious religious, social and political reasons for arriving at such a conclusion regarding Sufism, the explanation of which does not concern us here. To quote Tayob, it was at best, "uneasy with the presence of magic and superstition..... attributed to the effects of a degenerate Sufism which, in local cultures and customs, was believed to have contaminated Islam".¹⁹ In the process of 'cleansing Islam', 'the outlogical hierarchy in pre-modern Sufism of sayyids, sharifs and 'divine poles' (*qutbs*), was rejected".²⁰ The works of the Egyptian and Pakistani puritanist scholars, Ridā (d.1358/1938) and Mawdūdī (d.1399/1979), for example, reflect this tendency.

On the other hand, Western suspicions regarding Sufism and its supposed Islamic nature and origin, can safely be traced back to the image and vision of Islam existing in the European mindset during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the era of great tension between the European colonialists and their Muslim subjects.

¹⁹ Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa*, p.33.
²⁰ Ibid.

At the outset, Islam was generally perceived as an aggressive religion consisting mainly of a set of strict and unbreakable rules. It was an image of a 'dry' religion, very vocal on the exterior, very hollow in the interior. Then, Sufism was discovered, with its elaborate philosophy of deep mystical realities and rich spiritual tradition. The two, Islam and Sufism, seemed so inconsistent that an anomaly was created. The approach most western scholars took was to try to divorce the two, or simply take it for granted that the two were separate philosophies.

Reflecting this sentiment, Nasr states: "The vast majority of Western authors, perhaps because they do not want to admit to the presence of a real spiritual dimension in Islam, have come up with all kinds of theories to explain the origin of Sufism, theories which actually all deal with the outward expressions of Sufism and not with the thing itself".²¹

Nasr stresses that: "Almost always what has existed behind all these arguments has been the *a priori* assumption that Islam is not a Divine revelation and therefore cannot possibly have a genuine spiritual dimension of its own. There is also the age-old belief in the west that Islam is just a simple and crude 'religion of the sword', which has moulded a social order by force, so that everything of a contemplative or metaphysical nature in it must have been borrowed externally".²²

Nevertheless, Sufis themselves and traditional Islamic scholarship have viewed Sufism in a different light. Ibn-Khaldūn (d.808/1406), the great medieval historian of Islam, wrote:

"Sufism belongs to the sciences of the religious law that originated in Islam. It is based on (the fact) that the practices of its adherents had always been present among the forbears of Islamic nations and the eminent ones in it, such as the companions (of the Prophet), their successors and those who followed them (on the way of the truth and guidance. The foundation (of the Sufi way) is upon constant application to divine worship, complete devotion to Allah, shunning of the false splendor and beauty of the world, abstinence from the pleasure, property, and position to which the majority of the people aspire, and isolation from creatures in seclusion and devotion to worship. These things were widespread among the Companions and the forebears (of Islam), but with the pervasiveness of worldliness from the second century (A.H.) and

²¹ Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, p.127.
²² Ibid. p.128.

thereafter, and with the general inclination of the people toward the world, those who remained attached to worship became known as Sufis".²³

Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), one of the most versatile and celebrated scholars of classical Islam states:

"Sufism in itself is a most honorable knowledge. It explains how to follow the way of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and abandon innovation, how to purify the inner self... and submit to Allah truly".²⁴

Sufis themselves have claimed that the ultimate sources of their way are the Book of God and the Messenger of God. Dr. Anṣārī, a contemporary Sufi intellectual emphatically states that: "*Taṣawwuf* is nothing else but the effort to fulfill the mission of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W.) as mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān".²⁵

In any case, this type of approach to Sufism (i.e. that of divorcing it from Islam) has generally been overcome in the last few decades of the twentieth century, both amongst Muslim and Western scholars, an important reason for this being deeper studies of Sufism and Sufi texts. Sufism is being looked upon in a more 'positive' light and its relationship to the Islam more objectively. Today we find statements such as: "The roots of *Taṣawwuf* (i.e. the Sufi path) lies in the Qur'ān. Many years ago Massingon had wrote that it is enough to read the Qur'ān several times to realise that Sufism or the *Tarīqah* issues forth from it. Margoliouth also admitted to the Qur'ānic origin of Sufism and of course Corbin ... has confirmed this essential point many times".²⁶

Nevertheless, due to the above-mentioned reasons, not a lot attention had been given to the deep relationship existing between Sufism and Ḥadīth.²⁷ If Sufis and Sufism were 'far' from Islam, then what would they have to do with the traditions of the Prophet of Islam?

However, now that the Islamic nature and origin of Sufism is being acknowledged by a large number of Muslim as well as non-Muslim scholars, research about the relationship between Sufism and Ḥadīth is not only viable, but also a historical duty.

²³ Ibn-Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah fī al-Tārīkh*, p.328.

²⁴ Al-Suyūṭī, *Ta'yīd al-Ḥaqq al-'Alīyah*, p.57.

²⁵ Anṣārī, *Islam to the Modern Mind*, 248.

²⁶ Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, p.127.

²⁷ The corpus of the sayings, actions and stories narrated from the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).

There is no doubt that the blessed Prophet Muhammad's seclusions in the cave of Ḥirā', his subsequent encounter with the archangel Gabriel and the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān were, more than anything else, events of a highly mystical/spiritual nature and landmarks in the encounter of the human with the Divine.

The many miracles and extraordinary events performed by him and other Prophets as recorded in the Qur'ān and the canonical works of Ḥadīth, also demonstrate how Divine power can directly interfere in the profane world through the intermediary powers of holy individuals.

Modern Muslim scholars, especially those with reformist tendencies, seem to give little importance or even completely overlook these dimensions and their deep spiritual nature, when studying the life of the Prophet. To quote Tayob, for most modern Islamic thinkers:

"Before the Prophet could be a source of ritual guidance or a model for a spiritual quest, he ought first to be an example of statesmanship and revolutionary leadership".²⁸

I do not want to go into a detailed discussion on all the mystical themes of the Qur'ān and the life of the Prophet. It is sufficient however to say that as a whole, they are undeniable from the scriptural point of view, and that they have played a major role in the development of Islamic spirituality and the mysticism of the Sufis. Prof. Carl Ernst has done a very good study of the mystical themes in the Qur'ān and the life of the Prophet in *The Shambhala Guide to Sufism*. I quote him:

"Reducing Muhammad to the status of an influential religious reformer comes at the cost of denying the significance of much of Muslim history. Doubtless there are those who would gladly rid Christian history of all saints, miracles and monks, but such a narrow sectarian point of view hardly does justice to the richness of Christian spiritual life over the centuries. Stripping the Prophet Muhammad of all extraordinary qualities would be equally shortsighted".²⁹

²⁸ Tayob, *Islamic Resurgence in South Africa*, p.30.

²⁹ Ernst, *The Shambhala guide to Sufism*, p.97.

Indeed, while the mystical themes of the *Qur'ān* and the life of the Prophet acted as the basis of the inner philosophy and nature of Sufism; then the otherworldly injunctions of the Holy Book and the ascetic personal lifestyle of the Prophet acted as the basis for the practical aspects of Sufism.

The *Qur'ān* itself had declared:

“And this life of the world is only amusement and play! Verily the home of the hereafter is the (real) life indeed, if they but knew”³⁰

The highly ascetic lifestyle of the blessed Prophet, as well as that of his companions and the early generations of Muslims is well known and well documented. With the gradual decadence of Muslim lifestyles, the Sufis considered themselves and were considered by others to reflect the otherworldly lifestyle of the Prophet and the pious forebears.

All the early handbooks of Sufism, “emphasize the role of the Prophet as the model and exemplar of the mystic in all the ordinary details of life and daily ritual as well as in internal experience”³¹. It is in this sense that one can state that the Prophet (S.A.W) is as much of a source and symbol of mystical Islam as of reformist Islam.

In the light of this, I present the translation of the *Kitāb al-Arba'īn fi 'i-Taṣawwuf* (The Forty Ḥadīth on Sufism) by the most prolific and profound of early Sufi writers, Shaykh Abū-'Abd-al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d.412/1021).

The crucial role of al-Sulamī in the history of Sufism can be ascertained from the the following passage from Prof. Ernst's commendable *Guide to Sufism* :

“The creation of the term *Sūfī* in its prescriptive sense was largely an achievement of the Fourth Islamic century (tenth century CE), though it drew on earlier precedents. If one theorist were to be singled out as the main formulator of this concept, Abū 'Abd-al-Rahmān al-Sulamī (d.1021) would be a good choice. Al-Sulamī, who lived in eastern Iran, wrote numerous works in Arabic, including the earliest major collection of lives of Sufi saints. He conducted a historical interpretation of the Sufis as the heirs and followers of the prophets, drawing a portrait of Muslim spirituality and mysticism that stretched over the previous three centuries. Sulamī like other Sufi writers acknowledged that the term Sufi did not originate at the time of the Prophet

³⁰ The Qurān, 29:64.

³¹ Ernst, *The Shambhala guide to Sufism*, p.49.

Muhammad, but like other religious technical terms later on to reflect the increasing specialization of Muslim religious technical terms (in law and scriptural study, for example), it came into existence later on to reflect the increasing specialization of Muslim religious vocations”³²

Imām al-Sulamī's *Kitāb al-Arba'īn* reflects an early attempt to disprove the alleged disparity existing between the Way of the Sufis and the Way of the Prophet and his successors (which form the basis of orthodoxy). In this work, al-Sulamī attempts to substantiate the Sūfī way of life from the Ḥadīth, the second most important source of legislation in Islam.

It is an attempt that precedes that of major participants in this initiative like Imāms al-Ghazālī (d.505/1111) and al-Suhrawardī (d.632/1234) by more than a century. If the latter can be considered as those who finally reconciled orthodoxy and mysticism once and for all, al-Sulamī can be considered among those who laid the foundations for this welcome endeavor in the history of Islamic scholarship and the crystallization of Islamic thought.

Al-Sulamī's work also reflects what constituted Sufism in the early centuries of Islam as opposed to what it constitutes today. It is hoped that contemporary studies on the history of Sufism will be enriched by this work.

The original *Kitāb al-Arba'īn fi 'i-Taṣawwuf* was written during a period when the relationship between orthodoxy and Sufism was yet to be fully stabilized. In our own times, the relationship between the two has become unstable again, to quite a dangerous extent in fact. Therefore, it is also hoped that the *Kitāb al-Arba'īn* will contribute towards stabilizing the relationship between Sufism and orthodoxy in our present times as it did in its own time.³³

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF AL-SULAMĪ

About al-Sulamī:

*Al-Imām al-Faqīh al-Muhaddith al-Mufasssir al-Zāhid al-Sūfī*³⁴ Abū 'Abd-al-Rahmān ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Mūsā ibn Khālid ibn

³² Ernst, *The Shambhala guide to Sufism*, p.20.

³³ I have given a detailed exposition of the historical context, objectives and the role of this and other works of al-Sulamī in the next section. Please refer to it there.

³⁴ These are some of the complimentary titles that normally accompany the mention of al-Sulamī's name in many classical works. They mean: “The Master, Jurist, traditionist, Exegete, Ascetic, Mystic”

Salīm ibn Rāwiyah al-Azdī al-Sulamī was born in Nishāpūr (a famous city in the Khurasān region of Iran) on the 16th of April in the year 936 A.D. (325 A.H.).³⁵

He was a scion of a prominent scholarly family of Arab decent. His father was descended from Surāqah of the Azd Shanū'ah tribe.³⁶ His mother was the daughter of 'Amr bin Ismā'il bin Nujayd al-Sulamī, from the tribe of Sulaym.

Both his father and grandfather were scholars of the Shāfi'i school of jurisprudence and practicing Sufis. Thus, al-Sulamī was surrounded from his childhood by a strong traditional Islamic Sufi atmosphere and was raised according to its norms. In accordance with the Islamic tradition, al-Sulamī's education started with the memorization of the Holy *Qur'ān*. This was followed by a thorough study of Arabic grammar, a fundamental tool in understanding the *Qur'ān* and Sunnah. Al-Sulamī mastered this from the famous grammarians and literary men of Nishāpūr.

Among his early teachers was his maternal grandfather, 'Amr ibn Nujayd al-Sulamī, who had also taken the responsibility for raising the young Abū 'Abd-al-Rahmān after his ascetic father had left the family and retired to Makkah. It was due to this deep relationship that existed between him and his grandfather that Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān had adopted the surname of his maternal grandfather, 'al-Sulamī'.³⁷

'Amr ibn Nujayd al-Sulamī, considered one of the greatest theologians of his time, always kept his young grandson by his side during his lectures and discussions that he held with other learned men of the time. Al-Sulamī's scholarly credentials were primarily developed in the esteemed company of his learned grandfather. He also benefited from his grandfather's writings, and the vast library he had inherited from him.

After coming of age, al-Sulamī pursued further traditional Islamic studies in *Tafsīr*, *Ḥadīth*, *Fiqh*, *Uṣūl*, *Kalām*...etc, with other prominent scholars of his time such as Abū-Nu'aym al-Iṣbahānī (d.430/1038) and al-Dāraquṭanī (d.385/995). Researcher Nūr-al-Dīn Sharībah counts twenty-eight prominent scholars and mystics as being among the teachers of al-Sulamī.³⁸

³⁵ Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī should not be confused with his namesake from the *Ṭabī'in* (the second generation of Muslims after the blessed Prophet).

³⁶ Ibn-al-Mubārak, *Al-Ibrīz*, vol.2, p.145.

³⁷ Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-Futuwwah*, p.3.

³⁸ Ibn-al-Mubārak, *Al-Ibrīz*, vol.2, p.145.

Besides being a great scholar, al-Sulamī was also a great traveler, the main goal of his travels being the meeting of prominent scholars and saints, the gathering of information from and about them and the visitation of holy sites. Thus, he journeyed to all the leading centers of learning in Khurasān, Turkistān, 'Irāq and the Hījāz. Although there is no record of him visiting Syria or Egypt, he, "seems to have intimately known the countries between Samarkand and Balkh to the east and Cairo and Mecca (sic) to the west."³⁹

Al-Sulamī gathered his intimate and intensive knowledge of the Sufi saints in these travels, especially in the cities of Baghdad and Makkah, where he had resided for a while. Furthermore, besides learning and gathering information only, al-Sulamī also taught and benefited numerous students and seekers as well. At least twenty-three prominent scholars of the 5th/10th century have been counted to have been the students of al-Sulamī, among them some esteemed names such as the famous Ḥadīth scholar, al-Bayhaqī (d.458/1066), the famous jurist, Abū-Ishāq al-Shirāzī (d.465/1083), the famous theologian, al-Juwaynī,⁴⁰ and the eminent Sufi saint and writer, al-Qushayrī.

It must be noted here that al-Sulamī's travels were not only for learning and teaching as such; they were in fact part of his practical training as a Sufi as well. Al-Qushayrī, in his classic manual on Sufism, *al-Risālah*, has a complete chapter named: "Their (i.e. the Sufis') conditions in travel", in the beginning of which he writes:

"When a large number of people from this fraternity (i.e. the Sufis), chose to travel, I have especially devoted a chapter in this treatise, to travel".⁴¹

Although an accomplished scholar in all branches of Islamic learning, it was as a Sufi that al-Sulamī gained his name and fame, and al-Sulamī himself had always identified with Sufism. He was first initiated into the Sufi way during his early childhood by his father, al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn Mūsā, who was a prominent Sufi of the *Malāmātī Ṭarīqah* (also known as "the Way of Contempt"). He also benefited in this regards, from his grandfather as well, who was also a practicing Sufi.

In his travels, al-Sulamī had the opportunity to meet and benefit from a number of Sufis and mystics from nearly every Islamic land. This phenomenon had a tremendous impact on al-Sulamī's understanding of

³⁹ Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-Futuwwah*, p.4.

⁴⁰ Father of the more famous Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī (d.478/1085).

⁴¹ Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risālah*, p.130.

Sufism, as it broadened his vision of it and made him aware of the different tendencies in Sufism. It is probably for this reason that al-Sulamī's works on Sufism bear a balance between Eastern and Western, Arab and Persian, moderate and extreme, orthodox and less orthodox, 'Sufisms'.

Nevertheless, al-Sulamī took formal initiation into the Sufi way from the famous mystic, Abū-'l-Qāsim Ibrahim bin Mahmūd al-Nasrabādī (d.367/977) of Nishāpūr,⁴² about whom al-Hujwayrī (d.464/1071) says: "He was the master of the later Shaykhs of Khurasān.....the most learned and devout man of his age"⁴³

Al-Nasrabādī had taken initiation from Abū-Bakr al-Shiblī (d.334/845) who took it from Junayd al-Baghdādī (d.297/910), who took it from Sarī al-Saqatī (d.253/867), who took it from Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (d.200/815), who took it from Dāwūd al-Ta'ī (d.165/782). Dāwūd was initiated into the Sufi way by Ḥabīb al-'Ajāmī (c. 2nd/8th century) who was initiated al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d.110/728), who was initiated by 'Alī bin Abī-Talīb (d.40/661),⁴⁴ who had received spiritual instruction from the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) himself.⁴⁵

Thus, we see that al-Sulamī was initiated into a chain of illustrious Sufi masters, to whom most of the present day Sufi orders are connected. Among other things, this was also a chain of 'orthodox' Sufi masters, respected by most theologians and jurists as well. Perhaps, the orthodox nature of al-Sulamī's Sufism also stems from his connection with this chain.

Another teacher of his in the mystical path and one who had a profound influence on him was the Persian Sufi Abū-Naṣr al-Sarrāj (d.378/988), the author of the oldest Arabic work extant on Sufism, *Kiṭāb al-Luma' fi 'l-Taṣawwuf*.

⁴² Qādirī, *Mishkāt al-Nubuwwah*, vol.3, p.72.

⁴³ Al-Hujwayrī, *Kashf ul-Malajīb*, p.159.

⁴⁴ Some scholars have denied al-Baṣrī's initiation by 'Alī. However leading Ḥadīth scholars such as al-Suyūṭī (d.911/1505) and Ibn-Ḥajar al-Haytamī (d.974/1567) have confirmed it. (Iṣā, *Ḥaqā'iq*, p.442).

⁴⁵ Iṣā, *Ḥaqā'iq*, p.444.

Prominent Sufi contemporaries of al-Sulamī include Abū 'Alī al-Daqqāq (d.405/1031), who was also a fellow disciple of al-Nasrabādī. Most prominent among his disciples in the Sufi Way were Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī who narrated quite a lot from al-Sulamī in his works, and Abū-Sa'īd bin Abū-'l-Khayr al-Mayhānī, who was originally a disciple of the great mystic Abū al-Faḍl al-Sarakhsī but completed his spiritual sojourn at the hands of al-Sulamī.⁴⁶ Hujwayrī has called him: "The (spiritual) *Sulṭān* of his age and the ornament of the mystic path".⁴⁷

One of the few truly versatile scholars of his time, al-Sulamī spent his life teaching and writing on both legal and mystical dimensions of Islam. He passed away during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph Abū-'l-Abbās Ahmad bin Ishāq al-Qādir Bi'l-Lāh on the 3rd of November 1021 (412 A.H.) in his hometown, Nishāpūr, where his tomb remains a holy site of visitation and contemplation for Sufis.

Subsequent Sufis have held al-Sulamī in a very high rank. The great Andalusian mystic, Ibn 'Arabī (d.638/1240) wrote in his *Futūḥāt* that Shaykh Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī held the spiritual position that is between Prophethood and Sainthood and that he was informed of this by Abū 'Abd-al-Raḥmān himself in a spiritual vision he had of him.⁴⁸ Al-Qushayrī called him, "The unique one of his time."⁴⁹

Al-Sulamī's Era:

The Era of al-Sulamī was one in which the crystallization of the various sciences originating from Islam under an orthodox paradigm had already started. The six canonical Ḥadīth collections had been compiled, plus the collections of Mālik, Ibn-Ḥanbal, Abū Nu'aym, al-Dāraquṭnī, al-Ḥākim and other traditionists.

The theological schools of al-Ash'arī (d.324/935) and al-Māturīdī (d.333/944) had been formulated and the four juridical schools of thought had also been well established. All of these were in the process of becoming part of a wider Sunni orthodoxy, sanctioned, in certain cases, by the state as well. Muslim 'Heterodoxy' was also well established to a certain extent with the Shī'ī, Khārījī, and Mu'tazilī sects considered to be at its forefront.

⁴⁶ Qādirī, *Mishkāt al-Nubuwwah*, vol.3, p.72.

⁴⁷ Al-Hujwayrī, *Kashf ul-Malajīb*, p.164.

⁴⁸ Qādirī, *Mishkāt al-Nubuwwah*, vol.3, p.73.

⁴⁹ Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risālah*, p.31.

Sufism had also 'come of age', but its positioning between orthodoxy and heterodoxy was still to be determined in a definite way. The personal piety and austere lifestyles of the early masters had earned it some respect and reverence among the masses and most scholars. Immediately after the era of al-Junayd (d.297/910), who was considered by some as the "last true representative of Sufism",⁵⁰ Sufi masters started articulating their doctrines and experiences in a comprehensive manner. Sufism was thus moving from its practical phase to its philosophical phase.

Although ascetic Sufi *praxis* was retained, special emphasis was being given to the formulation of Sufi doctrine, with its own exclusive terminology. This new tendency of forming a distinct Sufi 'school of thought' or 'the science of Sufism' (*ilm al-Tasawwuf*) started alarming certain orthodox quarters, lest another distinct heterodox sect should arise. The gulf between the 'Knowledge of the mouths' and the 'Knowledge of the hearts',⁵¹ as per Sufi terminology, was becoming wider, with the Sufis claiming the latter and criticizing the jurists and theologians for possessing only the former.

However, it was the saga of al-Hallāj that raised the tensions between the Sufis and the Jurists to its height.

Abu-'l-Mughīth al-Husayn bin Mansūr al-Hallāj was born in Tus in 244/857. In the beginning, he became a disciple of Sahl al-Tustarī (d.283/896) author of the first Sufi commentary on the *Qur'ān*. Then he left him for 'Amr bin 'Uthmān al-Makkī (d.291/904), whom he left as well. He then attempted to enter the discipleship of al-Junayd who flatly refused him saying: "I do not except madmen".⁵² Al-Hujwayrī describes him as an, "enamored and intoxicated rotary of Sufism ... (who) had a strong ecstasy and a lofty spirit".⁵³

Unlike other Sufi masters, al-Hallāj became notorious for making controversial public statements about his spiritual experiences of the Divine Presence in everything in existence, thus enraging both orthodox theologians and Sufis. The former condemned him for 'uttering blasphemy', while the latter reproached for 'revealing divine secrets.' Al-Hallāj's heretical utterances finally led him to be publicly executed in Baghdad in the year 309/922, sixteen years before the birth of al-Sulamī.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-Futūwwah*, p.4.

⁵¹ Check 'Section 7' of this work regarding the the 'knowledge of the tongue' and the 'knowledge of the heart'.

⁵² Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, p.144.

⁵³ Al-Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p.150.

⁵⁴ Certain scholars have tried to link al-Hallāj with magic and wizardry on the one hand or heretical Shi'ite movements such as the Qarmatians on the other

Mainstream Sufi Shaykhs were at a variance regarding him. His own Shaykh, 'Amr al-Makkī and a few others rejected him; but all later Sufis, among them al-Sulamī's mentor, al-Nasrabādī, have considered him a great saint⁵⁵ but one 'too overpowered' by divine love as such that he could restrain himself from publicly revealing higher spiritual truths. As Ernst states:

"To blurt out something revealing one's intimate experience with God was rash, to say the least; it could also create among foolish people the mistaken impression that everyone is actually God and that law and morality are no longer binding. From this point of view, Sufis like al-Ghazālī could say that Hallāj's statement 'I am the Truth' (*ana 'l-Haqq*) was authentic but that its public expression required his execution for having revealed the secret to the unworthy. Another criticism of ecstatic sayings was that they reveal immaturity and lack of control. The highest goal from the perspective is to experience union with God without losing control of one's words and actions. Hallāj's outburst was in this case the result of his limited capacity; he was a shallow vessel who quickly over flowed."⁵⁶

Prof. Ernst's statement is supported by al-Hujwayrī's observation about the immediate post-Hallāj period. He says: "I have seen at Baghdad and in the adjoining districts a number of heretics who pretend to be followers of al-Hallāj and make his sayings in argument for their heresy (*zandaqah*) and call themselves Hallājīs. They spoke of him in the same terms of exaggeration (*ghuluww*) as the *Rāfiqī*'s (Shi'ites) apply to 'Alī. I will refute their doctrines in the chapter concerning the different Sufi sects."⁵⁷

The circumstances created by the saga of al-Hallāj necessitated that Sufis make their beliefs, and thus their position regarding Sunni orthodoxy

hand (Glasse, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, p.144-146). However, al-Hujwayrī, who lived less than a century after him, flatly denies these claims. He writes: "It is absurd to charge al-Hallāj with being a magician.... Consequently, they (his extraordinary deeds) must have been miracles, and miracles are vouchsafed only to a true saint." He also writes: "(some) suppose that Husayn bin Mansūr al-Hallāj is that heretic of Baghdad who was the..... companion of Abu-Sa'īd the Qarmathian; but this Husayn whose character is in dispute was a Persian and a native of Baydā (i.e. not al-Hallāj)." (Al-Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p.150).

⁵⁵ Al-Sulamī himself had a favourable view of al-Hallāj and even quoted some of his poetry in his works (Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risālah*, p.109).

⁵⁶ Ernst, *The Shambhala guide to Sufism*, p.118-119).

⁵⁷ Al-Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p.152.

clear before it was too late. The execution of al-Hallaj had, "epitomized the violent confrontation between the *Shari'ah* (the orthodoxy that dominated Islam) and the *Tariqah* (mysticism), but did not end the struggle, although this tragedy helped to bring orthodoxy and mysticism closer together."⁵⁸

Al-Sulamī and his contemporary orthodox Sufi Shaykhs were the first to realize this. His own mentor, al-Sarrāj (d.377/997) was probably the first one to take a step in this direction with his treatise on Sufi ethos and praxis called *Kitāb al-Luma' fi-t-Taṣawwuf* (The book of lights, on Sufism).⁵⁹ He was followed by the famous Sufi jurist of Bukhārā, al-Kalābādhī (d.385/995) who authored the *Kitāb al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab ahl al-Taṣawwuf* (The book of introduction to the school of the people of Sufism).⁶⁰

Although, earlier Sufis such as al-Ḥārith al-Muhasibī (d.243/857) and Sahl al-Tustarī (d.280/895) had also written on the Sufi path; these new works were distinguished with a conscious neutralization of what appeared to be the points of conflict between law and mysticism. This was basically accomplished in two ways; firstly the justification of the origins, doctrines and practices of the Sufis by quoting Qur'anic and Prophetic evidences, as well as the practice of the earlier generations of Islam. Secondly, by negating unorthodox beliefs and practices that were supposed to be wrongly associated with Sufism.

It was al-Sulamī however who was destined to be the main pioneer and player in these early attempts to reconcile the letter and spirit of Islam. Being a jurist of the Shāfi'i school and a Sufi proper, al-Sulamī was well acquainted with the parameters of both *Shari'ah* and *Tariqah*, as well as their points of distinction and contention.

Al-Sulamī wrote extensively on every aspect of Sufism, substantiating his explanations with Qur'anic verses and traditions from the blessed Prophet and his companions. Al-Sulamī was not only a pioneer in the synthesizing of orthodoxy and mysticism, but "also of the divergent disciplines within Sufism".⁶¹ Al-Sulamī's legacy influenced generations of Sufis after him.

⁵⁸ Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-Futuwwah*, p.5.

⁵⁹ Al-Sarrāj's work has been translated to English by Prof. Nicholson (London:1911).

⁶⁰ Kalābādhī's work has been translated to English by Arberry (Lahore:1983).

⁶¹ Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-Futuwwah*, p.5.

His work was carried on by his students, most prominent amongst them, al-Qushayrī, who authored the celebrated *Risālah fi 'l-Taṣawwuf*.⁶² 'Alī al-Hujwayrī (d.464/10710), a student of al-Qushayrī, authored the classic Persian manual on Sufism, *Kashf ul-Mahjūb*.⁶³ Both authors relied a lot on al-Sulamī's works and their works became standard Sufi textbooks for posterity. Later Sufi authors like al-Ghazālī⁶⁴ (d.505/1111) and al-Suhrawardī⁶⁵ (d.632/1234) used these early texts as vital sources and references for their own writings.

One can safely claim that the complete acceptance of Sufism as part and parcel of orthodox Islam was due to the hard work of the likes of al-Sulamī and those who carried on with his legacy. Sixteen years before the birth of al-Sulamī, the heresy trial and execution of al-Hallaj had raised great suspicions about the orthodox nature of Sufism, with many openly rejecting it. Exactly sixteen years after the death of al-Sulamī, the great orthodox theologian and heresiologist 'Abd-al-Qāhir al-Baghdādī (d.429/1037) passed away.

In the first chapter of his major work on heresiology, called *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq* (The distinction between the Sects), al-Baghdādī divided the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah* (i.e. the Sunni Muslim Orthodoxy) into eight factions, which together, would compromise mainstream orthodox Sunni Islam. The sixth of these factions were:

"The ascetic Sufis, who have seen things for what they are and therefore abstained. Who have known through experience and therefore have taken heed truly."⁶⁶

⁶² Qushayrī's work has been translated to English by B.R. Von Schlegell (Berkeley: 1990).

⁶³ Al-Hujwayrī's work has been translated to English by Prof. Nicholson (Lahore: 1953) and others.

⁶⁴ Al-Ghazālī's works have been translated to English by various scholars.

⁶⁵ Al-Suhrawardī's major work, *Awārif al-Ma'arif*, has been translated by H.W.Clarke. (Lahore:1991).

⁶⁶ *Al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq*, p.189. Al-Sulamī's influence on him can be ascertained from the following quote from him: "The book *Tārīkh al-Sūfiyyah* (History of the Sufis, more commonly known as *Tabaqāt al-Sūfiyyah*) by Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī comprises the biographies of nearly a thousand Shaykhs of the Sufis, none of whom belonged to heretical sects and all of whom were of the Sunni community, with the exception for three of them." (Al-Baghdādī, *Uṣūl al-Dīn*, p.315-316).

The mission of al-Sulamī had been successful. For much of Islamic history after that, Sufism has been considered a disciplinary science of its own in the framework of traditional Sunni Islam. That Sufism as a whole is an inseparable part of mainstream orthodox Islam was not questioned by any traditional Islamic scholar.

The condemnation of Sufism as an 'unorthodox heretical movement' is a fairly recent phenomenon, which only gained prominence among Puritanist and modernist Islamic circles in the twentieth century. Perhaps, the bitterest pre-20th Century critics of Sufism were the eighth century (A.H.) Hanbali scholar of Syria, Ibn-Taymiyyah (d.728/1328) and the twelfth century (A.H.) religious leader of Najd (central Arabia), Ibn 'Abd- al-Wahhāb (1201/1787).

Both, however, did not claim to denounce the science of Sufism as a whole but only the unorthodox elements in it (although their classifications of what is not orthodox were considered extreme by most mainstream *Ulamā'*).⁶⁷

The Works of al-Sulamī:

Al-Sulamī was one of the most prolific and copious writers of the fourth century (A.H.). He is credited to have authored more than a thousand works. Three hundred of these were based on Ḥadīth, a fact that demonstrates his high standing in and regard for this important branch of Islamic learning. However, it was because of his works on Sufism, which were counted to be seven hundred, that he gained his prominence in the history of Islamic scholarship.

As we mentioned earlier on, Sufis had already started writing about their path from the late second century (A.H.) onwards. Al-Sulamī in particular had the example of his own mentor, Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, who wrote the first classical manual on Sufism, *Kitāb al-Luma'*. Al-Sulamī's objectives in his writings on Sufism can be summed up in three points:

⁶⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah states concerning the Sufis of the first four centuries of Islam, the founders of Sufism: "The great Shaykhs mentioned by Abū Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī in the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, and al-Qushayrī in *al-Risālah*, were adherents of the school of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā'ah* and the school of the people of Ḥadīth." (*Al-Risālah al-Ṣafadiyyah*, vol.1, p.267). 'Abd Allāh, the son of Muḥammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhāb states: "My father and I do not deny or criticize the science of Sufism; on the contrary, we support it because it purifies the external and the internal of the hidden sins which are related to the heart and the outward form". (Al-Nu'mānī, *Al-Da'āyāt al-Mukaththafah*, p.85).

1-To substantially demonstrate the orthodoxy of Sufi belief and *praxis* from the primary sources of Islam. As we mentioned earlier on, the age in which al-Sulamī lived was one in which the need to synthesize between law and mysticism had become incumbent.

Al-Sulamī, being a learned jurist/traditionist and an accomplished Sufi at the same time, was naturally equipped for this job, and as we have mentioned earlier on, he accomplished it quite successfully.

2- To unify the various divergent disciplines within Sufism. By al-Sulamī's time, a large number of doctrines, terms, practices and disciplines had developed within Sufism and were specifically peculiar to it. Sufism had become associated with a large, albeit disparate, number of connotations. The historical period in which al-Sulamī lived was also one in which the crystallization process of the various Islamic sciences and the divergent disciplines within them had already started.

Sufis, especially intellectual ones such as al-Sulamī, were also influenced by this process. The establishment of Sufism as an orthodox branch of Islamic sciences and disciplines also necessitated the definition of what is included (or not) in the parameters of orthodox Sufism. Al-Sulamī's travels had made him well acquainted with most beliefs and practices associated with Sufism in his age. Thus, there is hardly a subject related to pre-fourth century (A.H.) Sufism on which al-Sulamī did not write and preserve for posterity.

3-To preserve the heritage and legacy the early generations of Sufis. This point must be understood in the content of the culmination of early Sufism. Sufism was supposed to have reached its peak with the martyrdom of Mansūr al-Hallaj and started declining after him. As we had mentioned, it was even claimed that al-Junayd, who died in 297/909 was the last true representative of Sufism.⁶⁸ After him, every subsequent generation of Sufis was considered to be lower than its predecessors in spiritual status and disposition.

Al-Shibī, the successor of al-Junayd was asked why Sufis were so called. He replied: "They must still have some ego, otherwise they would not be connected with this term".⁶⁹ Al-Qushayrī, a student of al-Sulamī, complained that Sufism and religion in general were coming to an end. 'Alī al-Hujwayrī lamented that: "[I]n our time, this science has been in reality obliterated, especially in this region; people are all occupied with pleasure, and

⁶⁸ Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-Futuwwah*, p.4.

⁶⁹ Al-Qushayrī, *Al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, p.127

have turned away from satisfying (God). The scholars of the age and pretenders of the day have formed an impression of it that is contrary to its principles."⁷⁰ It was thus declared that: "Today, Sufism is a name without reality, but formerly it was a reality without a name."⁷¹

It was as if the codification and crystallization of Sufism was contradicting its transcendental nature. The science that was supposed to take one beyond conventional forms was itself becoming a form. In this context, it became necessary for the 'true inheritors' of the Sufi way to preserve the traditions of their pious predecessors.

Again, al-Sulamī was well prepared for this job as he had been in the company of a large number of Sufi masters from most Muslim lands. Therefore, he was well acquainted with the past and present Sufi personalities of most lands. In this regard, al-Hujwayrī has justly called al-Sulamī, "The traditionist (*naqqāl*) of Sufism and transmitter of the sayings of the Sufi Shaykhs".⁷² In our modern terms, we could call al-Sulamī, 'The historian of earlier Sufism.'

Some of the most famous works of al-Sulamī and which reflect the above mentioned objectives are:

1-*Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah* (The successive generation of the Sufis): This is probably the most popular and well known of al-Sulamī's works and the earliest major history of the Sufis. The book is basically a history of a hundred and five early Sufi masters. Ernst states: "Sulamī organized the work into five generations extending over two centuries each containing twenty lives of leading Sufis. As far as possible, he represented each Sufi by roughly twenty sayings, and in the majority of cases each Sufi also transmits an Ḥadīth of the Prophet. These symmetrically cast biographies present the saints as models of piety to be imitated by the reader."⁷³

For example, the famous Iraqi Sufi Sarī al-Saqaṭī (d.258/867) is introduced as follows: "One of them was Sarī ibn al-Mughallās al-Saqaṭī, whose first name was Abu'l-Ḥasan. It is said that he was the uncle of al-Junayd, and his teacher. He associated with Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, and he was the first in Baghdad to

speak in the language of Unity"⁷⁴ and the realities of spiritual states. He is the Imam of the Baghdadians, and their master in his time. Most of the second generation of masters mentioned in this book were affiliated with him".⁷⁵

Khawājah 'Abd-Allāh al-Anṣārī (d.481/1088), an Hanbalī jurist and eminent Sufi saint of Herat (Afghanistan) translated the *Ṭabaqāt* into classical Persian and his work was highly acclaimed in the Persian speaking world. The famous Persian Sufi, Nūr-al-Dīn 'Abd-al-Rahmān Jāmī (d.898/1492), produced an updated and enlarged recension of al-Anṣārī's translation called *Nafahāt ul-Uns*, which also gained much acclaim.

Both al-Sulamī's original and al-Anṣārī's translation acted as major reference for later Sufi writers and historians. A lot of what is in early Sufi hagiographical texts such as al-Qushayrī's *Risālah*, al-Hujwayrī's *Kashf al-Mahjūb* and the *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā'* of Farīd-al-Dīn 'Attār (circa.627/1229) is actually borrowed admittedly or not from al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt*.

Al-Sulamī's extensive knowledge of the lives of Sufi saints was largely due to his travels. Shaykh Tosun states: "During his travels, Sulamī collected the wisdom of many saints, and later quoted them in his works, specifically in the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah* (classes of Sufis) where he mentions one hundred and five Sufis and their teachings. In Baghdad and Mecca he methodically interviewed many Sufi teachers, and it was in those cities that he gathered most of his knowledge."⁷⁶

The Egyptian scholar Nūr-al-Dīn Sharībah published his critical and invaluable edition of the *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah* in 1953 (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī), which was reprinted in 1986 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānī).

2-*Zikr al-Niswah al-Muta'abbidāt al-Ṣūfiyyāt* (Mentioning the devout Sufi women): This unique work was actually written as a supplementary to the *Ṭabaqāt* as female Sufi saints had not been mentioned in it. In this work, al-Sulamī narrates the lives of eighty-two female Sufi saints, mostly from central Asia, in a style similar to that of the *Ṭabaqāt*. The historical period covered stretches from the 8th to the 11th centuries (A.D.).

Al-Sulamī's work testifies to the importance attached to female spirituality in the early centuries of Islam, especially amongst the Sufis. A

⁷⁰ Ernst, *The Shambhala guide to Sufism*, p.24.

⁷¹ Al-Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p.44.

⁷² *Ibid.* p.82.

⁷³ Ernst, *The Shambhala guide to Sufism*, p.63.

⁷⁴ Check 'Section 27' of this work for an explanation of 'the Language of Unity'.

⁷⁵ Al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, p.48-49.

⁷⁶ *Ibid. Kitāb al-Futuwwah*, p.4.

detailed study of this work will most likely change conservative and feminist perceptions regarding the public role of women in the early centuries of Islam, especially in the spiritual domain. Rkia Elaroui Cornell of Duke University has translated this important work into English.

3- *Ḥaqqā'iq al-Tafsīr* (The Realities of Qur'ānic exegesis): This is the second earliest Sufi commentary of the Holy Qur'ān, preceded only by a work of Sahl al-Tustarī (d.283/896). Besides original insight, al-Sulamī relied a lot in this work on narrations from earlier Sufis, so much so that it has been said that without his commentary "almost the entirety of the Koran (sic) commentary of the first generations of Sufis would have been lost"⁷⁷.

The contents are more or less related, their focal point being the search for the hidden esoteric meanings of the Holy Book.⁷⁸ Al-Sulamī also authored a minor commentary called *Ziyādāt Ḥaqqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, which was actually a supplementary to the major commentary. The German scholar Bowering published his edition of the *Ḥaqqā'iq* and is currently editing the *Ziyādāt*.

Bowering asserts that, "Sulamī's *Ḥaqqā'iq* is to Sufis what Tabarī's *Tafsīr* is to the Sunni community as a whole", and that, "Sulamī's commentaries are as important to pre-6th/12th century Sufism as Ibn 'Arabī's major works are later Sufism"⁷⁹.

In fact, most pre-Ibn Arabī Sufi commentaries on the Holy Qur'ān were, as Godlas puts it, "deeply indebted to Sulamī."⁸⁰ The most prominent works were that of the North African Sufi Abū-Ishāq al-Tha'ālībī (d.427/1034) and of the Persian Sufi Rūzbihān Baqlī (d.606/1208). The influence of al-Sulamī on both can be borne from the fact that the former had read the whole of the *Ḥaqqā'iq* to al-Sulamī himself and the latter's work became the "primary vehicle for the transmission of much of Sulamī's *Ziādāt* (sic) for nine hundred years"⁸¹.

Indeed, besides being considered the father of Sufi hagiography, al-Sulamī has also been considered amongst the founders of Sufi Qur'ānic exegesis.

⁷⁷ Godlas, *Sufi Koran Commentary: A Survey of the Genre*, p.2.

⁷⁸ Check 'Section 32' of this work regarding the Sufi concept of 'Hidden Knowledge'.

⁷⁹ Bowering, *The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam*, p.56.

⁸⁰ Godlas, *Sufi Koran Commentary: A Survey of the Genre*, p.13.

⁸¹ Ibid.

4- *Kitāb al-Futuwwah* (The book of Sufi chivalry): *Futuwwah* (lit. "Manliness"/ "Noble-heartedness"), according to the Sufis, "is a code of honorable conduct that follows the example of the prophets, saints, sages and the intimate friends and lovers of Allāh".⁸² Furthermore, "The all encompassing symbol of the way of *Futuwwah* is the divinely guided life and character of the final Prophet Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, may Allāh's peace and blessings be upon Him, whose perfection is the goal of Sufism. The Sufi aims to abandon all improper behavior and to acquire and exercise, always and under all circumstances, the best behavior proper to human beings".⁸³ The concept has also been considered as the forerunner of the European concept of Knighthood.

In this work, al-Sulamī explains the *Futuwwah* way of life based on the conduct and sayings of Sufi masters before him, as well as some quotations from the Holy Qur'ān and Prophetic tradition. This noteworthy work has been translated into English by the European Sufi, Shaykh Tosun Bayrak al-Jerrahi under the name, *The Book of Sufi Chivalry*.

5- *Kitāb al-Samā'*⁸⁴ (The Book on Spiritual Audition): This book is an explanation and substantiation of the popular Sufi practice of the audition of spiritual music. It must be noted here that jurists have generally considered all types of music as reprehensible while Sufis have only considered music that incites towards worldly desires as being reprehensible. Music that incites away from the world and towards Divine love has been considered commendable.

Supporting the Sufi audition of spiritual music by citing relating incidents from the companions of the Prophet (S.A.W.), al-Hujwayrī writes: "Many of the Companions have related similar traditions, which Abū 'Abd-al-Rahmān al-Sulamī has collected in his *Kitāb al-Samā'*"; and he has pronounced such audition to be permissible. In practicing audition however, the Sufi Shaykhs desire, not permissibility as the vulgar do, but spiritual advantages".⁸⁵

6- *Tārīkh Ahl al-Suffah* (History of the people of the bench): The "People of the bench" (Ar. *Ashāb al-Suffah/Ahl al-Suffah*) were a group of poor but devout companions of the Prophet (S.A.W.) who used to sit on a bench in front of his house. They had abandoned all worldly aspirations and dedicated themselves to the company and the service of the Prophet (S.A.W.).

⁸² Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-Futuwwah*, p.6.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Check 'Section 39' of this work regarding the Sufi concept of *Samā'*.

⁸⁵ Al-Hujwayrī, *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, p.401.

Many scholars considered them to be "first Sufis." The term '*Ṣūfī*' itself has also been considered to be derived from the *Aṣḥāb al-Ṣūffah*.⁸⁶

Al-Hujwayrī states: "Shaykh Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān Muḥammad bin al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, the traditionist of Sufism and transmitter of the saying of the Sufī Shaykhs has recorded their virtues and merits and names".⁸⁷ The works still awaits publication.

Concerning the Present Work:

The present work is a translation al-Sulamī's collection of forty Ḥadīth (narrations from the blessed Prophet and his companions) regarding Sufism, named *Kitāb al-Arba'īn fī 'l-Taṣawwuf*. The Hyderabad edition of the *Kitāb al-Arba'īn* that I have used for this translation is based on an original Arabic text that was transcribed in the year 867/1463 by a student of the great Ḥadīth master *Shaykh al-Islām al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn-Hajar al-Asqalānī* (d.852/1449) of Cairo. The student had heard the whole text from Shaykh Ibn-Hajar himself, who in turn, through a chain of six narrators, narrates it from al-Sulamī himself.

A copy of the original manuscript was acquired from the al-Azhar University Library (Cairo) by the world renowned Islamic research and publication centre of Hyderabad Deccan (India), Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyyah. The Dā'irah printed its edition of the work in the 1950's which was well received by scholars and researchers. This edition was reprinted by the Dā'irah in 1981, and it is from it that this translation was done.

The *Kitāb al-Arba'īn fī 'l-Taṣawwuf* fulfills the first two objectives of al-Sulamī's writings i.e. the substantiation of Sufi ethos and praxis from the second primary source of legislation in Islam, the Ḥadīth, and the identification/codification of what constitutes Sufism.

Al-Sulamī does this by setting forty headings, each relating to one or more theoretical or practical aspects/expressions of Sufism, then narrating a Ḥadīth which supports it. The first Ḥadīth however, is narrated as a tribute from the Prophet (S.A.W.) to all Sufis.

The choice of forty Ḥadīth is most probably due the famous saying of the Prophet (S.A.W.) that he will be the intercessor of the one who memorizes

⁸⁶ Check 'Section 1' of this work regarding the *Aṣḥāb al-Ṣūffah*.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p.82.

forty of his sayings.⁸⁸ Many traditional Islamic scholars compiled collections of forty Ḥadīth to gain the blessed Prophet's intercession. The contents of these Ḥadīth would normally be related to a theme specially selected by the compiler. Thus, the benefit of compiling forty Ḥadīth would be twofold, to gain salvation in the Hereafter, and to substantiate one's doctrine, emphasize a certain belief or practice, or to pass on Prophetic wisdom on a any selected subject.

Among the most famous collections of forty Ḥadīth have been al-Ghazālī's (d.505/1111) collection on the tenets of faith, *al-Arba'īn fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, and al-Nawawī's (d.676/1274) collection on the essentials of leading on Islamic life, *al-Arba'īn al-Nawawīyyah*. Al-Sulamī's collection however is one of the oldest extant collections. Whether there are earlier collections (extant or not) is still to be determined

The Ḥadīth mentioned in this work are all narrated by al-Sulamī himself, through a chain of narrators (*Isnād*) going back to the Prophet himself. I will discuss this important issue in more detail in a separate section.

My work with this text has been the following:

1-I have done a complete translation of the all that is in the original Arabic text, except for the few editorial footnotes inserted by the Dā'irah editors, as I found them to be of no relevance to the present work. I have tried to keep the English translation as true as possible to the meaning of the original Arabic text. However, certain minor changes in vocabulary and grammatical structure were required to make the work more comprehensible to an English speaking reader. These were done in the boundaries of standard Arabic-English translation practice.

2-The Arabic text does not contain any original work of al-Sulamī besides mentioning the chain of narrators and setting of titles relating to various concepts, practices and issues associated with early Sufism. Much of these needed elaboration upon to make the non-specialist reader gain an understanding of the issue at hand and grasp its significance and relevance from the Sufi as well as historical point of view.

To fulfill this need, I have added a large number of explanatory footnotes based on important early sources of Sufi doctrine and practices. The footnotes, in fact, constitute the larger part of this work and could even be considered as an entire commentary on al-Sulamī's work. It is hoped that the

⁸⁸ Narrated by Ibn-'Adī.

information presented in the footnotes will serve as a valuable aid in apprehending as well as appreciating this translation.

3- Regarding the rest of my editorial work, check the 'Important Note' at the outset.

It is hoped that this work will contribute towards bettering our understanding of the relationship between Sufism and the Sources of Islamic Law, especially from Imām al-Sulamī's point of view.

AL-SULAMĪ'S ISNĀD'S (CHAINS OF NARRATION)

Isnād basically means the chain of narrators between the immediate narrator of any given report and the present narrator. In the period prior to the crystallization of the various branches of Islamic studies, one could not narrate a saying of the Prophet (S.A.W.), or any prominent Islamic personality for that matter, orally or in writing, without mentioning an *Isnād* for it. A narration without an *Isnād* was considered as a tree without roots and rejected.

To quote Shaykh Tosun, also a Sulamī translator: "*Isnād* is extremely important in all Islamic religious texts, for a statement has no value unless it is backed up by a witness who heard it, and is guaranteed by a series of authorities who transmitted the words verbatim to each other at times and places that can be historically verified."⁸⁹

The mention of the complete chain is extremely important as the authority, character, retentive ability and moral integrity of every single narrator plays a role in the verification of the authenticity of a narration. Verification of authenticity was especially important in the first few centuries of Islam, as the *Ḥadīth* were still being collected and compiled, and various 'pseudo' transmitters of *Ḥadīth*, mainly from sects and groupings opposed to mainstream Orthodoxy were engaged in a well-planned 'Ḥadīth fabrication' project. Mentioning the *Isnād* was the only way one could verify whether any 'foreign' hands had interfered in the narration, not to exclude the possibility of mistakes, omissions and errors of retention on behalf of orthodox narrators as well.

In keeping with the tradition of his time, al-Sulamī provides us with full *Isnāds*, usually consisting of six to seven narrators, for all the *Ḥadīth* he

⁸⁹ Al-Sulamī, *Kitāb al-Futuwwah*, p.29.

narrates. For some narrations, he even provides two *Isnāds*, either to demonstrate the strength of the narration or because of the difference of wording in the other narration. The expressions used for narration are the standard traditional *akhbarānā-haddathanā-an*.

I have not conducted a critical analysis (or *takhrīj*) of al-Sulamī's *Isnāds* as to verify their reliability, as this has not been the intent of the present work and would have greatly enlarged this paper. However, I discovered through a non-exhaustive search that most of the *Ḥadīth* narrated by al-Sulamī are mentioned in the well-known *Ḥadīth* collections. I have mentioned these references wherever they apply as per my findings. The purpose of this translation is to display how early Sufis perceived their path to be based on the *Ḥadīth*, regardless of the question if these *Ḥadīth* are historically authentic or not.

Due to the above mentioned reason and for the sake of brevity, I have decided not to mention al-Sulamī's *Isnāds* in this translation, with the exception of the *Isnād* for the first *Ḥadīth* mentioned, which I preserve as a sample of al-Sulamī's original arrangement. The complete *Isnād* for each *Ḥadīth* can be checked in the original Arabic text, which is available in the market as well as on the internet.

Al-Sulamī's lesser-known contemporary *Ḥadīth* scholar and countryman Muhammad ibn Yūsuf al-Qaṭṭān is reported to have accused al-Sulamī of being untrustworthy in *Ḥadīth* narration and of forging *Ḥadīth* for the Sufis. However, al-Qaṭṭān's accusation has been itself been accused of being motivated by envy. Prominent *Ḥadīth* masters such as Sibṭ Ibn-al-Jawzī,⁹⁰ Imām al-Subkī⁹¹ and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī⁹² rejected al-Qaṭṭān's claims and affirmed al-Sulamī's trustworthiness.

⁹⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī, *Mir'āt al-Zamān*, Year 412 (A.H.).

⁹¹ Ibn al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyyah al-Kubrā*, vol 4, p.121.

⁹² Al-Baghḍādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād*, vol. 2, p.284.

TRANSLATION

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In the name of Allāh the most Beneficent the most Merciful

The blessings and greetings of Allāh on our Master Muḥammad

[THE SCRIBE SAYS] *Shaykh al-Islām*, the *Hāfiẓ* of the age, Abū-ʿl-Faḍl ibn Ḥajar may Allāh have mercy on him, narrated to me from Abū-ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī bin Muḥammad bin Muḥammad Abī-ʿl-Majd, through reading to him, who narrates from Abū al-Faḥ Muḥammad bin ʿAbd al-Rahīm ibn al-Nashwī, through (being granted the) permission to narrate, who narrates from Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb bin Zāfir bin Rawwāj, who narrates from *al-Hāfiẓ* Abū-Tāhir Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Silafī, who narrates from Abū-ʿl-Tayyib Tāhir bin al-Musaddad al-Jinī, who narrates from Abū-ʿl-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Naysābūrī, who narrates from [the compiler] Abū-ʿAbd al-Rahmān Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī may Allāh have mercy on him, who narrated:

Section 1: The Proof that the Ṣūfis are the Companions Of The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w)

(Al-Sulamī narrates)⁹³ from Muḥammad bin Muḥammad bin Saʿd al-Anmāʾī, who narrates from al-Ḥasan bin ʿAlī bin Yahyā ibn Salām, who narrates from Muḥammad bin ʿAlī al-Tirmidhī, who narrates from bin Ḥātim al-Balkhī, who narrates from Sahl ibn Aslam, who narrates from Khallād bin, who narrates from Abī-Ḥanzah al-Sukrī, who narrates from Yazīd al-Nahawī, who narrates from Ibn Abbās (r.a.) that he said: "The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) stood one day by the *Ashāb as-Ṣuffah* and upon seeing their poverty, struggle and [yet] contentment of heart, said:

ʿGlad tidings to You, O *Ashāb as-Ṣuffah*!⁹⁴ for whoever of my nation perseveres in the state you are in and is satisfied therein, he will be from my companions on the Day of Resurrection".

Section 2: In the Description of the *Fuqarā*,⁹⁵

⁹³ For the sake of easier reading, I have deleted al-Sulamī's *Isnāds* (chains of narration) to each Ḥadīth. These may be seen in the original Arabic text. However, I have mentioned the full chain of narration for the first Ḥadīth, as a sample of the rest.

⁹⁴ The "*Ashāb as-Ṣuffah*" (lit. "The people of the bench") were a group of poor companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.), who would usually sit on a bench/porch (Ar. *Ṣuffah*) in front of his house, spending their time in worship of Allāh and service of the Prophet. The Prophet (s.a.w.) was once reproached by Allāh on their behalf and informed: "Do not drive away those who call unto their Lord at morn and eve, desiring His Face" (*The Holy Qur'ān*, 6:52). Their sustenance would come, more often than not, from the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself, and the well-off ones among his companions. The following prominent companions were among the *Ashāb as-Ṣuffah*: Bilāl bin Rabāʿ, Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū-ʿUbaydah bin al-Jarrāh, Abū-Hurayrah, ʿAmmār bin Yāsir, Abū-Dharr al-Ghifārī, Abū-ʿd-Dārda, ʿAbd-Allāh bin Masʿūd, Abū- Lubābah, ʿAbd-Allāh bin ʿUmar, Zayd bin al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿUkāshah bin Muḥassin, Miqdād bin al-Aswad, Abū-Kabshah and Thawbān (*Kaṣf ul-Maḥjūb*, p.81). The Persian Sufi writer ʿAlī Hujwayrī (d.464/1071) wrote a detailed book concerning them called *Minḥāj al-Dīn* (The Order of the Religion). However, he was preceded in this by our own compiler here, al-Sulamī. To quote Hujwayrī: "Shaykh Abū ʿAbd-al-Rahmān Muḥammad bin al-Ḥusayn al-Sulamī, the traditionist (*naqqāḥ*) of the Sufism and transmitter of the sayings of the Sufi Shaykhs, has written a separate history of the People of the Bench, in which he has recorded their virtues and merits and names". (Ibid. p.82). Many scholars have considered the word *Ṣūfī* to be derived from the *Ashāb as-Ṣuffah* as they were considered to be the first "Sufis" as such (*Ḥaqāʾiq*, p.11). For details on this matter, check 'Section 29' of this work.

It is narrated by Thawbān (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said :

"My Pool (at the entrance of Paradise) is (the size of the space) between Aden and Oman. Its drink is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey. Whoever drinks from it once will never feel thirsty after that, and the first ones to arrive at it will be the poor/wretched ones among the *Muhājirīn* ⁹⁶.

We said: "And who are they O Messenger of Allāh?" He replied: "(Those) with dirty clothes, unkempt hair, for whom the doors of high ranking (people) are not opened nor can they marry well-to-do women; (those) who give what is due upon them but are not given what is due to them. Verily, many people will come (there) and say 'I am so and so, the son of so and so' and verily I will reply 'You have changed after me'."

Section 3: To Observe Manners, even with the Disbelievers ⁹⁷

It is narrated by Abū-Hurayrah (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"Allāh (s.a.w.) revealed to Ibrāhīm (a.s.) that 'You are my *Khalīl* (friend), beautify your manners, even with the disbelievers. You will (thus) enter (paradise through) the entrances of the pious ones, for my word (of grace) has been decreed for the one who beautifies his manners that I will give him shade

⁹⁵ *Fuqarā* is the plural of *Faqīr*, which literally means 'a poor man'. In Sufi terminology however, it means a person who aspires to "spiritual poverty or detachment which is a *vacare deo*, an emptying of the soul for God". (*The Concise Encyclopedia*, p.121). The origin of the concept comes from the Qur'ānic Verse (47:38) which says: "Verily God is the Rich (one) and you are the poor (*Fuqarā*)". The *Bible* (Matthew 5:3) had also stated: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of God". Sufis have always called themselves and their disciples as *Fuqarā*. Imām al-Qushayrī devotes a complete section to *Faqīr* in his monumental work on Sufism, *al-Risālah*.

⁹⁶ The Companions who had migrated to Madinah to safeguard their Faith and be with the Prophet (s.a.w.)

⁹⁷ The importance of good manners in the way of Sufism can be determined from the following statement of the eminent early Sufi al-Junayd (d.297/910), when asked to define Sufism: Sufism is to apply every good characteristic and abstain from every evil characteristic" (*Haqā'iq*, p.9).

under My Throne, make him live in the courtyard of My Sacredness and draw him near to My Company".

Section 4: About the One who Relinquished of all his Wealth Trusting in Allāh

It is narrated by 'Umar (r.a) that :

"The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) commanded us to donate (towards a certain cause) and it (the order) coincided with (the availability of) money by me. So I said (to myself): 'Today, I will precede Abū-Bakr (in giving donations) if I can'. Therefore, I took half of my wealth (to the Prophet). The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) asked me: 'What have you left for your family?' I replied: 'The same (amount i.e. half)'.

Then Abū Bakr came with all he had and was asked (by the Prophet): 'What have you left for your family? He said: 'Allāh and his Messenger'. I ('Umar) said (i.e. to myself): 'I will never try to compete with you (Abū Bakr) in anything ever' ⁹⁸.

Section 5: About the Possibility of (the occurrence of) *Karāmāt* for the *Awliyā* ⁹⁹

⁹⁸ The famous *Tābi* 'r and "early Sufi" Uways al-Qarnī, who is also praised in an authentic Hadīth, is narrated to have said after giving away all his clothes and food except that which he was utilising at the moment: "O Allāh, if anyone amongst your slaves dies of nakedness or hunger do not blame me" (*Rawd al-Rayāhīn*, p.184). Most Sufis aspire to follow the example of Abū-Bakr and 'Uways'.

⁹⁹ *Karāmāt* is the plural of *Karāmah* which literally means 'an honour'. In Islamic terminology however, it means 'extraordinary acts/miracles performed through divine spiritual power'. These *Karāmāt* are considered a gift of God to his *Awliyā* i.e. friends, the saints of Islam. As the miracles of the Prophets are called *Mu'jizāt*, the miracles of the saints are called *Karāmāt*. The great Imām, Ahmad bin Hanbal (d.241/854) was asked: "Why were the *Karāmāt* more prevalent in the later generations than in the time of the *Ṣaḥābah*?" He replied: "Because their (i.e. the *Ṣaḥābah*'s) faith was strong, therefore they did not need anything to strengthen it by. However, that of others was weaker than them, so they were strengthened through the demonstration of *Karāmāt* for them". (*Haqā'iq*, p.316.)

It is narrated by Ibn-'Umar that 'Umar (r.a.) sent an army under the command of a man called Sāriyah. Thereafter, once while 'Umar was delivering a sermon, he started to shout: "O Sāriyah! The mountain, O Sāriyah! The mountain".

Consequently, a messenger came from the army and said (to 'Umar) "O Commander of the Faithful, we faced the enemy and they defeated us; then suddenly a crier was shouting: 'O Sāriyah the mountain', so we reclined against the mountain, and Allāh defeated them. We (those present with the narrator) said to 'Umar: "You were shouting that".

It is also narrated by Ibn-'Umar that: "One day while 'Umar (r.a.) was delivering a sermon in Madinah, he said: O Sāriyah! The mountain; for he who attracts the wolf is unjust". So, it was said that he mentions Sāriyah and Sāriyah is in Iraq. Therefore, the people asked 'Alī (r.a.): "Did you hear 'Umar saying 'O Sāriyah' while delivering a sermon from the pulpit!". He replied: 'Woe unto you, leave 'Umar, for he does not enter anything except that he comes out of it'. Not long after that, Sāriyah returned, and said: 'I heard 'Umar's voice so I climbed the mountain'.

Section 6: About Displaying Good Manners, Exhorting to Spend (in Charity), the Detestability of Hoarding (Wealth) and to be Cautious of the *Shubuhāt*¹⁰⁰

It is narrated by 'Imrān bin Ḥusayn that:

"The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) held the side of my turban from behind me and said: 'O 'Imrān, surely Allāh loves spending (in charity) and despises misery; so eat and feed and do not tighten it (i.e. your pocket) so much that (the needy one's) appeal (for charity) becomes difficult (matter) for you. And know that Allāh loves the acute eye when dealing with questionable matters and a wholesome mind when dealing with desires; and He loves generosity, even if it is (displayed) with a few dates and loves courage even if it is (displayed) in killing a snake".

¹⁰⁰ *Shubuhāt* or *Mushṭabihāt* are those matters which may be questionable from the Sharī'ah point of view, but it is not clearly known whether they are permissible or prohibited. Sufis are known to take precaution from all such matters and have always advised their disciples to do so also.

Section 7: About the Description of the Believers and the Description of the Learned Ones

It is narrated by Anas (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w):

"Faith is not through (mere) wishing nor through sweetness (in talk) but what has been established in the heart and practice has confirmed it; and knowledge is of two types, knowledge of the tongue and knowledge of the heart; thus the knowledge of the heart is the (truly) beneficial one and the knowledge of the tongue is Allāh's proof on the progeny of Adam"¹⁰¹.

Section 8: About Sufficing in the World with the Least and Disliking Mixing with the Wealthy¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Traditionally, the Sufis have been considered to be the possessors/exponents of the "Knowledge of the Heart", thus being referred to by traditional Islamic scholars as the *Arbāb al-Qulūb* i.e. masters of the hearts, and in the Indo-Persian languages as the *Ahl-e-Dil* i.e. the people of the heart. On the other hand, the scholars of the Law have been considered to be the possessors of the "Knowledge of the Tongue". In this respect, it is narrated that the famous *Qāḍī* (Judge) Ibn-Surayj once attended the gathering of the renowned Sufi al-Junayd. Afterwards, upon being asked what he had comprehended from Junayd's mystical discourse, he replied: "I do not understand what he says but I find his words to have a clear affect on the heart" (*al-Yawāqūt*, p.19). In accordance with the above-mentioned Ḥadīth, the "Knowledge of the Heart" is that which touches the hearts and automatically turns them towards the Divine, while the "Knowledge of the Tongue" comprises of the laws and rules that establish God's authority in this world and will be used against those who do not follow them.

¹⁰² Most Sufis have been known for avoiding mixing with the wealthy lest they also get infected with the love of the world. The Shaykhs of the Chisti Order have been especially known for avoiding to greet even Kings and Rulers. A popular anecdote states that the emperor of India wished to visit and pay homage to the great Chisti Shaykh, Nizām-ad-Dīn Awliyā' (d.725/1325), the patron saint of Delhi. Upon being informed of the emperor's wish, Nizām al-Dīn

It is narrated by 'Āishah (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"If you wish to join me (in Paradise), may the provision of a traveler suffice you for (this) world and beware of mixing with the wealthy".

Section 9: About Contentment

It is narrated by Ibn-'Umar (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"O progeny of Adam, you have what suffices you and you desire that which will make you rebellious (against each other and God). O progeny of Adam, you are not content with little nor satisfied with a lot; (verily) if you wake up well and healthy, safe in your abode, possessing the sustenance of the day, then may the dust be on the world (i.e. you do not really have to be concerned about it)".

Section 10: About Enquiring from Claimants Concerning the Validity of their

Claims¹⁰³

It is narrated by al-Ḥārith bin Mālik (r.a.) that he passed the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) so he asked him: "How (i.e. in what state) did you wake up O Ḥārith?" He replied: "I woke up as a believer truly". So he said: "Consider what you are saying, for every truth has a reality (*Ḥaqīqah*) so what is the reality (*Ḥaqīqah*) of your Faith?"

He replied: "I have turned myself away from the world and it is as if I am looking at the inhabitants of Paradise visiting each other and it is as if I am looking at the inhabitants of Hell-fire bearing rancor against one and other".

So he said: "O Ḥārithath, you have known (*'Araḥta*) so stay steadfast (on what you have realized)" - and he repeated it three times.¹⁰⁴

said: "There are two doors in my lodge, if he comes through one, I will go out through the other".

¹⁰³ Sufis are known to enquire from themselves and others about self righteous claims.

¹⁰⁴ *Ḥaqīqah* is an important term in Sufi vocabulary and is actually derived from this Ḥadīth. Literally, it means 'reality'. In Sufi terminology however, it refers to the 'spiritual wisdom and realities behind everything in existence'. It also refers

Section 11: About Struggling to Equate (one's) External (State) with the

Internal

Ibn-'Umar (r.a.) stated that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"The severest of people in punishment on the Day of Resurrection is that person in whom the people see goodness and there is no goodness in him".¹⁰⁵

Section 12: About persisting in *Dhikr*, *Shukr* and *Sabr*¹⁰⁶

It is narrated from Ibn-'Abbās (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"Four (things), whoever is bestowed with them, has been bestowed with the best of this world and the hereafter; a grateful heart, a remembering tongue, a self which perseveres during tribulations, and a trust in what Allāh has taken responsibility for (i.e. providence)".

Section 13: About the Way of those Occupied with Allāh (s.w.t.)

It is narrated by 'Imrān bin Ḥusayn (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

to, "The Ultimate Reality", by which they mean i.e. "The Divine Presence of Allāh in, above and around everything in existence". According to the Sufis, it is the realization of this Divine Presence of Oneness which makes a person a complete believer or an *'Arif-Bi-Lāh* (Knower of Allāh), also a term derived from this Ḥadīth. Statements such as that of al-Ḥārith have been very common among Sufis, although they have been condemned sometimes by strict theologians and jurists as being ostentatious, false or blasphemous. Yet the Prophet (s.a.w) had approved it.

¹⁰⁵ Sufis produce such Ḥadīth as the evidence for their emphasis on the purification of the inner self and not only the perfection of the outer appearance.

¹⁰⁶ *Dhikr* (lit. remembrance) refers here to the "remembrance of Allāh". "*Shukr*" means gratefulness and "*Sabr*" refers to patience and perseverance. All of these are qualities praised in the Holy Qur'ān and are fundamental principles of the Sufi Way. Most works on Sufism, include whole chapters dealing with detailed explanations of these principles.

“Whoever will occupy himself with Allah then Allah will suffice him from every provision and provide him from (sources) he could never imagine; and whoever will occupy himself with the world then Allah (s.w.t.) will entrust him to it”¹⁰⁷

Section 14: About their (i.e. the Sufis’) Renunciation of the World and Shunning of it¹⁰⁸

It is narrated by Ibn-‘Abbās (r.a.) that:

‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb (r.a.) visited the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) and he was (sitting/laying) on a straw mat and it had made marks on his side, so he (“Umar) said: “O Messenger of Allāh, if you could have a softer mat’.

He replied: “What is with me and this world” or he said “What is with this world and me; indeed the example of me and the world is the like (the example of) a rider who was riding in a summer day till he approached a tree, so he rested under its shade for a while then rode away”.

Section 15: About Love for the *Fuqarā’* and *Faqir*, and the Messenger of Allāh’s (s.a.w.) Request for it¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ The famous Yemeni Sufi biographer, *al-Imām* ‘Aff-ad-Dīn al-Yafī’ (d.768/1366) says after mentioning the extremely ascetic lifestyle of ‘Uways al-Qarrī and other Sufis, and their complete reliance on God for survival: “[A]nd one does not bother about those who revile them (i.e. the ascetic Sufis), saying that it (i.e. their lifestyle) is in opposition to the *Sunnah* (i.e. way of the Prophet); for he (i.e. the criticiser) does not know that the greatest *Sunnah* is to abandon the world, to turn away from creation and turn towards the Lord, and to cut off all relationships except with Allāh”. (*Rawḍ al-Rayāṭ*, p.182).

¹⁰⁸ Although Sufis have generally been criticized by most jurists for their austerity and ascetic lifestyle, they have nevertheless persisted in it claiming that it is the way of the Prophet (s.a.w.), as expressed in this Ḥadīth.

¹⁰⁹ We have explained the Sufi concepts of *Faqir* and *Fuqarā’* earlier on. The poet/philosopher of the East, Iqbal (d.1357/1938), says in one of his Urdu couplets, addressing present day Muslims, Sufis in particular:

Oh! You have lost the secret of *Faqir*
For (even) the lands of Rome and Syria are the possessions of a *Faqir*

True *Faqir*, according to Sufis, is not the abandonment of the world completely, but rather the complete detachment of the heart from materialism,

It is narrated that Abī-Sa‘īd al-Khudrī (r.a.) said: Love the poor, for I have heard the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) say:

“O Allāh, let me live a poor man and let me die a poor man and resurrect me in the company of the poor”.

Section 16: About their Avoiding of those Matters that do not Concern them¹¹⁰

It is narrated by ‘Alī bin Abī-Tālib (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

“(It is) From the perfection of one’s Islam to avoid that which does not concern him”.

Section 17: About their Concealment of Tribulations¹¹¹

and its complete devotion to Allāh Most High. The great Sufi, Shaykh ‘Abd-al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (d.561/1166) is recorded to have stated upon being asked about his being an enormously wealthy man and a Sufi at the same time: “Sufism is to empty the heart of all worldly things, not the pocket”. The poet Iqbal was referring to this fact. Therefore, the Sufi term *Faqir* is not synonymous with a “beggar” as some non-sufis wrongly misconstrue.

¹¹⁰ Sufis have generally emphasized on the minimization of one’s concerns. For Sufis, the only matter that is really worthy of concern for a human being is the relationship with Allāh Most High, who is considered responsible for everything else. One is required to have complete faith in that. This then results in complete contentment and satisfaction.

¹¹¹ Most Sufis have been known to conceal the trials and tribulations they went through. Most of these were revealed after their deaths. They hid these as they considered complaining about them to be a sign of discontent with Allāh Most High, and also due their belief that these trials and tests were actually ‘Divine blessings in disguise’.

It is narrated by Ibn-'Umar (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"Verily, from the treasures of righteousness, is the concealment of tribulations".

Section 18: About the States of Uprightness

It is narrated (r.a.) that Sufyān bin 'Abd-Allāh al-Thaqafī said to the Prophet (s.a.w): "Tell me (something) about Islam that I will not ask anyone after you".

He said: "Say: 'I have believed in Allāh', then stay steadfast (on that)".

Section 19: About Wearing Humble Clothing

It is narrated by 'Umar (r.a.) that the Prophet (s.a.w) saw Muṣ'ab bin 'Umayr coming and he was wearing a girdle of sheepskin, so he (the Prophet) said:

"Look at this (person) whose heart Allāh has enlightened. I had seen him between parents who provided him with the best of food and drink. Indeed, I had seen him wearing a garment bought by him or bought (for him) for two hundred Dirhams; and then, the love of Allāh and his Messenger brought him to (the state) you see now".¹¹²

¹¹² This Ḥadīth is considered a compliment for those Sufis who, following the example of Muṣ'ab, had left their riches and sacrificed the comforts of life for "the love of Allāh and his Messenger". Among the early Sufis, there is the example of Ibrāhīm al-Adham (d.165/782) and Shāh bin Shujā' al-Kirmānī (d.270/884), who were formerly princes from the royal families of Balkh and Kirman. Both ascetics had abandoned their riches and became spiritual Masters of their time. The wearing of sheepskin or wool has also been an established practice of the Sufis, especially the early ones. Therefore, it has been stated that: "Because of their clothes and manners of dressing they were called *Ṣūfī*, for they

Section 20: The Proof that Allāh has *Awliyā'* and *Budalā'* on the Earth¹¹³

It is narrated by Anas (r.a.) that the Prophet (s.a.w) said:

"The *Budalā'* of my nation are forty men, twenty two in the *Shām* (greater Syria) and eighteen in 'Irāq; when one of them dies, Allāh will replace him with another; (and) they will (all) pass away (finally) when the decree (of the day Judgement) comes".

Section 21: About Generosity with Food and always Spreading the Table (for all)¹¹⁴

It is narrated by 'Āishah, the Mother of the Believers (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

did not put on raiment soft to touch or beautiful to behold, to give delight to the soul; they only clothed themselves to hide their nakedness, contenting themselves with rough haircloth and coarse wool (*Ṣūf*)". (*Kitāb al-Ta'arruf li-Madh-hab Ahl al-Taṣawwuf*, p.6).

¹¹³ The 'saints' of Islam are generally termed as *Awliyā' Allāh* i.e. the friends of Allāh. The term is actually taken from the following verse of the *Holy Qur'ān* (10:62): "No doubt! Indeed, the friends of Allāh, no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve". However, not all *Awliyā'* are considered to be equal in status or function. Important in the Sufi hierarchy of the *Awliyā'* are the *Abdāl* (lit. "substitutes", sing. *badal*). It is believed that through their blessed presence, Allāh's punishment is withheld from the earth. They are called *Abdāl* because when one dies, he is substituted by another. (*Al-Ibriz*, vol.2, p.11). Shāfi'ī scholar al-Suyūfī (d.911/1505), and the Ḥanafī jurist Ibn-'Abidin (1252/1836) have authored detailed treatises proving the existence of the *Abdāl* and other categories of *Awliyā'* such as "*al-Qutb*", "*al-Ghawth*", "*al-Nujabā'*", "*al-Nuqabā'*"...etc.

¹¹⁴ Feeding people is an important part of Sufi tradition. Sufi lodges, called *Zāwiyas* or *Khanqāhs* have been well-known, over the ages, for the providing of food to all people, Muslims and non-Muslims, rich and poor, alike. An eyewitness states that 500 "tables would be spread" in the camp of the famous West African Sufi Shaykh of the Tijani Order, al-Hāj 'Umar Tāl (*Kashf al-Hijāb*, p.336). In keeping with the Sufi tradition, most visitors to the tombs of famous Sufi saints make a point of feeding all the people present there or leave food for them. Therefore, the large number of poor people who usually stay around these shrines.

"The Angels continue to pray (for blessings) on you as long as your table is spread".

Section 22: The Proof that the Hand that Abstains from Asking is the Superior One (in the Eyes of Allāh) ¹¹⁵

It is narrated by Ibn-'Umar (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"The superior hand is the one which abstains (from asking) and the inferior hand is the one which asks (i.e. begs)".

Section 23: About the One who Worshipped Allāh Secretly so He Rewarded him for that (secretly) ¹¹⁶
It is narrated by Anas (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"When the Day of Resurrection takes place, Allāh will raise (certain) people with green clothes and green wings and they will land on the walls of Paradise. Upon noticing them, the Guardians of Paradise will ask them: 'Who are you and did not you attend the Reckoning and the Appearance in front of Allāh?'."

They will reply: 'No, we are people who worshipped Allāh secretly, so we wished to admit us in Paradise secretly'."

¹¹⁵ Contrary to general perception, Sufi Shaykhs have always discouraged their disciples from begging, whatever state they are in, but they are permitted to take if given. Some Orders do not allow taking as well. The Sufi is supposed to beg from Allāh Almighty only.

¹¹⁶ There have been many Sufi saints whose elevated status in spirituality and devotion to Allāh Most High was only discovered after their death or through the spiritual comprehension of other saints. In their lifetimes, they were considered by most people to be ordinary (in some cases, even questionable) men. The most famous of these men perhaps was the ascetic *Tābi'ī*, *Sayyidunā* Uways al-Qarnī, who was considered a madman by most of his contemporaries (*Rawḍ al-Rayānīn*, p.181). It is said that had the Prophet (s.a.w.) not informed his Companions about 'Uways' elevated spiritual status, he would have been a forgotten man of history. Sufis have also used the above the Ḥadīth as a proof of the auspiciousness of the color 'green,' which has become associated with them.

Section 24: About Contentment (with what one possesses), Intense Abstinence, Compassion for other Muslims, Goodness to Neighbours and Minimizing of Laughter ¹¹⁷

It is narrated from Abū-Hurayrah (r.a.) that he said, "The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said me:

"O Abū-Hurayrah, be intense in abstinence, (thereby) you will be the most devoted of people (in the worship of Allāh); and be satisfied (with what you have), you will be the most grateful of people (to Allāh); and love for people what you love for yourself, you will be a (true) believer, and be a good neighbour to whoever neighbours you, you will be a (true) Muslim; and laugh little, for too much laughing kills the heart".

Section 25: About Choosing Poverty over Wealth

It is narrated by Umāmah (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

¹¹⁷ I have translated *Qanā'ah* and *Wara'* as "contentment with what one possesses" and "intense abstinence" respectively. Al-Qushayrī (d.465/1072), a student of al-Sulamī, gives a definition of *Qanā'ah* in his celebrated work on Sufism, *al-Risālah* as thus: "The absence of desire for what one does not possess and the satisfaction with what one does possess". (*Al-Risālah*, p.75). *Wara'* is defined as thus: "To refrain from all *Shubuhāt* (i.e. questionable matters)". (Ibid. p.53). Concerning laughing, it is narrated that the famous Ḥasan of Baṣrah (d.110/728), who is counted amongst the early Sufis, was once passing by a group of people who were laughing excessively, so he asked them: "Have you been pardoned from the Fire of Hell?". They replied: 'No'. Then he asked them: "Have you been guaranteed that you will pass on the *Ṣirāt* (the bridge to Paradise, mentioned in the Ḥadīth as being thinner than a hair and sharper than a sword, under which is the Fire of Hell)?" They replied: 'No'. Then he asked them: "Have you received confirmation that your good deeds will outweigh your evil deeds on the Day of Judgement?" They replied: 'No'. He then said: "Then how can one laugh while carrying these concerns?".

"My Lord proposed to make the land of Makkah (into) gold for me, so I said (to him): 'No O Lord, but I (rather) eat for a day and be hungry for a day, so (that) when I will be hungry I will pray to you earnestly, and when I have eaten, I will be grateful to you and remember you'".

Section 26: About Attending to the *Fuqarā'* before Family and Children ¹¹⁸

It is narrated by 'Alī (r.a.) that the Prophet (s.a.w) said to (his daughter) Fātimah:

"I cannot provide you and leave the *Ahl as-Suffah* tuck their stomachs from hunger".

Section 27: About the Permissibility of Speaking in the Language of *Tafrīd* ¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ The *Ahl as-Suffah* and the *Fuqarā'* have been mentioned earlier on (check Section's 1 and 2). Among the major principles and rules for an initiate into the Sufi Orders is to bind with members of the Order in all circumstances and situations, as one binds with family or even more strongly. This is due to the fact that the *fuqarā'* are one's fellow-travellers on the journey to Allāh, which is an eternal journey, while one's family will be separated from one on the Day of Judgement if not in this world already. This is attested to in the *Qur'ān* itself.

¹¹⁹ In the terminology of the Sufis, *Tafrīd* (rt. *Fard* i.e. the unique and sole one) means the complete belief in and realization of the Oneness of Allāh and His unique and sole Being which in Reality (the *Ḥaqīqah*) is the only truly existing Real Being... the Eternal and Ever Living (*Bāqī*)... the Only Independent Being existing by itself. Everything else in existence is dependent on Him for existence and is *Fānī* i.e. vanishing. Nothing is similar unto Him and His Eternal Essence is beyond human comprehension and all that is in the Universe is but the Manifestation of His Qualities and Attributes. For example, the 'poor man' exists as a manifestation of Allāh's Eternal Attribute of *al-Mānī* (The Depriver)... other than that, he is nothing. To speak in the language of *Tafrīd* is to express these realities, concisely or in detail, subtly or 'bluntly'. Most Sufis, especially later ones, were known to speak in the language of *Tafrīd* or *Wahdah Mutlaqah* as it is also termed. This phenomenon reached its peak in the writing of Muhyī-'d-Dīn Ibn-'Arabī (d.638/1240) who was called *Lisān al-Ḥaqīqah* i.e. the tongue of the Divine Reality and *al-Shaykh al-Akbar* i.e. the greatest Master. Other sufi saints who "spoke in the language of *tafrīd*" include Jalāl-ad-Dīn Rūmī, Abd-al-Karīm al-Jīlī, Ibn-al-Fārid, Ahmad al-Allāwī and Sīdī Ahmad al-Tijānī. For the Sufis, *Tafrīd*, is a deeper implication and elaboration of the fundamental Islamic concept of *Tawḥīd* i.e. to acknowledge the Oneness of Allāh. Al-Sulamī produced evidence for this as many jurists and theologians were very critical of the "*Lisān at-Tafrīd*". The fact that al-Sulamī uses the action

It is narrated by Ibn-'Umar (r.a.) that when the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) passed away, Abū-Bakr came and ascended the pulpit and after praising Allāh and glorifying him, said: "If Muhammad (s.a.w) was your Lord who you worshipped, then (know that) your Lord has passed away, and if your Lord is the One in the Heavens, then (know that) your Lord is alive and will never die". Then he recited (the *Qur'ānic* verse, 3:144): "And Muhammad is (not) but a Messenger, and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him."

Section 28: About the (Sufi) Shaykhs' personally serving their Guests And Strangers ¹²⁰

It is narrated by Abī-Qitādah that when the delegation from the Negus (the King of Abyssinia) came to the Prophet (s.a.w), he served them personally. So his companions told him: "We will suffice you for that (i.e. service of the guests)".

He said: "Verily, they (the Abyssynians) were generous to my companions (who had migrated to Abyssinia) and I would like to repay them for that".

Section 29: About the Adopting and Wearing of Patched Clothes ¹²¹

of the first Caliph Abū-Bakr as an evidence for speaking in the language of *Tafrīd* also shows, among other things, the Sunni nature of early Sufism, contrary to certain western orientalist and Muslim reformist claims that the origins of Sufism lie in Shi'ism.

¹²⁰ It has been the tradition of many Sufi Shaykhs to personally serve their guests.

It is narrated by Umm-al-Husayn that:

"I was in the house of 'Āishah (r.a.) and she was patching one of her shirts with patches of various colours, some white, some black and some of other colours; then the Prophet (s.a.w) entered and said: "What is this O 'Āishah?" She said: "I am patching one of my shirts". He said then: "Well done! Do not put away any garment until you have patched it for there is no new (garment) for the one who does not have a tattered one".

¹²¹ Sufis have been known for wearing old patched clothes, especially that of wool because of its roughness. According to some scholars, the Sufis have been called "*Ṣūfī*" for their wearing of wool which in the Arabic language is called *Ṣūf*. (*Husn al-Talaṭṭuf*, p.5). After explaining the various opinions concerning the origin of the term *Ṣūfī*, al-Kalābādhī (d.385/995) concludes: "If, however, the derivation from *Ṣūf* (wool) be accepted, the word is correct and the expression is sound from the grammatical point of view, while at the same it has all the (necessary) meanings, such as withdrawal from the world, inclining the soul away from it, leaving all settled abodes, keeping constantly to travel, denying the carnal soul its pleasures, purifying the conduct, cleansing the conscience, dilation of the breast, and the quality of leadership". (*Kitāb al-Ta'arruf*, p.10). Furthermore, he substantiates this by saying, "Wool is also the dress of the Prophets and the garb of the Saints". (Ibid. p.7). Some scholars had claimed that the term *Ṣūfī* is derived from the *Ahl as-Ṣuffah* (see Section 1), however al-Kalābādhī contends that, "their clothing was of wool, so that when any of them sweated, they gave off an odour like that of a sheep caught in the rain..... al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: 'I have known seventy of those who fought at Badr, whose clothes were only of wool'". (Ibid.). Nevertheless, true to their esoteric inclination, Sufis have been cautious of giving too much importance to externalities such as clothing. Hujwayrī narrates that an eminent Sufi Shaykh was asked why he did not wear a patched frock. He replied: "It is hypocrisy to wear the garb of the Sufis and not to bear the burdens that Sufism entails". (*Kashf ul-Mahjūb*, p.48). Hujwayrī contends: "If, by wearing this garb, you wish to make known to God that you are one of the Elect, God knows that already; and if you wish to show to the people that you belong to God, should your claim be true, you are guilty of ostentation, and should it be false, of hypocrisy". (Ibid.) The writer feels the term *Ṣūfī* is derived from both *Ṣuffah* and *Ṣūf*, for Kalābādhī does mention that the early Sufis were called "*Ṣūfiyyah Ṣūfiyyah*". (*Kitāb al-Ta'arruf*, p.7).

It is narrated by Ja'far (al-Sādiq) bin Muḥammad from his father (Muḥammad al-Bāqir) from his (i.e. Ja'far's) grandfather ('Alī Zayn-al-'Abidin) from his father (*Imām* al-Ḥusayn) from his (i.e. Zayn-al-'Abidin's) grandfather 'Alī (r.a.) that:

"The Prophet (s.a.w) went out for relieving himself, so I took a water pitcher and followed him.... Then he ('Alī) completed the entire Hadith.

Section 31: The *Sumnah* of Eating Together and the Dislikeliness of Eating Alone¹²³

It is narrated by Waḥshī (r.a.) that a man said (to the Prophet): "O Messenger of Allāh, we eat but we are not gratified". He said:

"Maybe you are eating separately; eat together and mention Allāh Most High's Name (over it) and He will bless it for you".

Chapter 32: About the Permissibility of talking about the Inner Knowledge and its Reality¹²⁴

¹²² Among many Sufi Orders, especially the more ascetic ones, the Sufi is not allowed to possess from worldly things except a few necessary objects. Important among them is a pitcher, for without it, it is very difficult to perform ablution for prayer or to clean one's body (check the chapter on 'The Sufis' conditions in Travel' in the *Risālāh* of al-Qushayrī). Many famous wandering Sufis were known for carrying a pitcher with them all the times, among their very few worldly possessions. It should be noted here that contrary to many ascetic Orders in other religions, Muslim saints have emphasized greatly on outward purity and hygiene. Dirtiness has been considered a sin, in accordance with the blessed Prophet's teachings.

¹²³ *Sumnah* can be broadly translated to mean the "Tradition of the Prophet Muḥammad (s.a.w)". Sufi masters over the ages have emphasized on the practice of eating together. Eating alone has been considered a sin in the Sufi tradition.

¹²⁴ The Sufis divide "religious Knowledge" into two categories, the Known/Outward and the Hidden/Inner. Included in the former is the knowledge of Islamic beliefs (*Aqā'idah*) and Laws (*Shari'ah*); the Qur'ān and Sumnah, as understood and taught by most people. The Hidden Knowledge, on the other hand, is the knowledge of the inner deeper meanings and realities of these, which are of a hidden nature, thus not comprehended by most people. As it is of a spiritual nature, with its ultimate goal being to observe the Wisdom of the Divine

It is narrated by Abi-Hurayrah (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh said:

“Verily, there is a knowledge which is of a hidden nature, it is not known (to anyone) save the Knowers of Allāh (s.w.t.); thus when they speak it, it will not be denied (by anyone) except those negligent of Allāh (s.w.t.)”.

Section 33: To Refrain from Overbearance (in hosting) for a guest but to Offer him Whatever is Present¹²⁵

Presence in everything, it is only comprehended by those who have transcended the outer forms of the Faith and have reached its origin, i.e. the Divine Presence. Thus, it is Him (i.e. the Divine Being) who reveals these deeper meanings of everything to their hearts. Traditionally, orthodox scholars have accepted that the doors of *Ilhām* (i.e. Divine inspiration/intuition) are open for all (as opposed to *Wahy* i.e. the Divine Revelation that is specifically for the Prophets). In the course of Islamic history, it has been the Sufis who have ‘utilised’ this ‘opening’ the most. They contended that it is through *Ilhām* that the Hidden Knowledge is revealed to the ‘Saints’. While the scholars of the Exoteric Knowledge have been called *al-Ulamā’ bi-Ḥikām-illāh* i.e. ‘the Knowers of the Laws of Allāh’, the scholars of the Exoteric Knowledge are the ‘Knowers of Allāh’, *al-Ulamā’ Bi-Lāh*, to use the term mentioned in the Ḥadīth. More frequently used, however is the term *al-ʿArifn-Bi-Lāh*, which is of the same meaning. Sufis have generally considered the Hidden Knowledge to play a complimentary, and not a contradictory role, with regards to the Outward Knowledge. The famous mystic Naṣīr Khusraw (d.952/2066) is reported to have said: “To interpret the Scripture by the apparent (meaning) is the body of the Faith, while the deeper interpretation takes the place of the soul, and since when can a body survive without a soul”. (*Madhāhib al-Tafsīr*, p.203). That is why al-Qushayrī affirms in his *Risālah* that: “And know that the *Sharīʿah* is (also) *Ḥaqīqah* because it has been ordained by him (*Allāh*) and the *Ḥaqīqah* is (also) *Sharīʿah* because the Divine realities are also ordained by him”. (*Al-Risālah*, p.43). According to *Imām* al-Ghazālī (d.505/1111), “These mystical intuitions only occur after one gets rid of one’s self and does not look at one’s self with a sense of satisfaction and purification, nor at one’s passion. Then these intuitions become specific in accordance with the mental state of the person receiving them”. (*The Recitation of the Qurʾān*, p.37). The famous Ḥadīth scholar scholar Jalāl-ad-Dīn al-Suyūfī (d.911/1505) authored a detailed treatise proving the existence of the Hidden Knowledge of the Realities called *Ta’yīd al-Ḥaqīqah al-ʿAlīyyah*. His work has been published and is available.

¹²⁵ Among the principles of the Sufi Way is to be satisfied with whatever ones has, as it is God’s Will which is eternally Wise and Just. Sufis train their ‘selves’ to be satisfied with little and they train their visitors also. The Ḥadīth

It is narrated by Abī-ʿl-Bakhtarī that:

“We were the guests of Salmān al-Fārisī in Madāʾin (an ancient city in Persia), so he offered us bread and fish and said: ‘Eat, (for) the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) had prohibited us from over bearing oneself (in hosting a guest), and were it not for that I would have specially prepared for you’ ”.

Section 34: About Avoiding Luxury

It is narrated by Muʿādh bin Jabal (r.a.) that when the Prophet (s.a.w) sent him to Yemen, He said:

“Beware you, of luxury, for verily, the (true) servants of Allāh are not luxurious people” ¹²⁶

Section 35: What has been Narrated Concerning the Confirmation of *Firāsah*¹²⁷

of Salmān proves both their principle of ‘Satisfaction with Little’ as well as their concept of *tarbiyah* (spiritual training of others).

¹²⁶ Although Sufis have often been criticized for their hard ascetic lifestyles, with the claim that Islam does not sanction ‘hermitage’ and ‘monkery’, they have nevertheless supported their path with Ḥadīth such as the one al-Sulamī quoted now.

¹²⁷ *Firāsah*, also termed “*Kashf*”, refers to a godly person’s Divinely inspired sense of perception through which his heart receives intuitions about the hidden nature of things, people and events. The capacity for *Firāsah*, “may be a spontaneous gift in someone, or the result of heightened awareness resulting from spiritual discipline” (*The Concise Encyclopedia*, p.127). The historian Ibn-Khaldūn (d.808/1406) says, while discussing Sufism and Sufis in his celebrated *Muqaddimah (prologomena)*: “And this intense worship, seclusion and *Dhikr* (by the Sufis) is often followed by the uncovering of the veil of (the world of) sense (perception), and with the perception of worlds – with the permission of Allāh – of which the person with sense perception (only) has no perception of, and the spirit is from those worlds. The reason for this unveiling is that when the spirit returns from the external senses to the internal, sensory matters become weak and spiritual ones powerful and it’s (i.e. the spirit’s) authority prevails and it’s growth is renewed; and *dhikr* helps in this (growth of the spirit) for it is like the food (needed) for its growth”. (*Al-Muqaddimah*, p.289). Al-Qushayrī narrates in his celebrated *Risālah* from the famous Sufi Ibrāhīm al-Khawwās (d.291/905) that he once approached a certain strange looking man and greeted him. The man greeted him back with his name, Ibrāhīm. Upon being asked how he knew the name, the man (obviously a saint) replied: “He who knows Allāh, nothing is

It is narrated by Abi-Sa'īd that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"Beware of the *Firāsah* of the Believer, for he sees with the light of Allāh (s.w.t)".

Section 36: To Draw the Love of Allāh (s.w.t) through Serving Him (i.e. with Worship)

It is narrated by Abi-Umāmah (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said that, "Allāh (s.w.t.) says:

"My servant continues to gain nearness to me until I love him, and (then when I love him) I become his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his tongue by which he speaks and his heart by which he reasons, thus if he will pray to me, I will answer him and if he will ask me, I will give him".¹²⁸

hidden from him". (*Al-Risālah*, p.53). In the section concerning *Firāsah* in his *Risālah*, al-Qushayrī also narrates an interesting story regarding the powerful *Firāsah* perception of two of his own seniors in the Sufi way, one of whom is none other than our compiler here, al-Sulamī. I will mention the full incident in my comments on the Fortieth Section.

¹²⁸ According to the Sufis, this *Ḥadīth Qudsī* (i.e. a revelation of God which the Prophet narrates in his own words) points to the state they term as *Fanā 'fi Llāh* i.e. complete annihilation (of the self) into Allāh, son that it does not see itself anymore, but only the Divine Essence of everything in Existence. The one who reaches this state is called, among other names, a *Rabbānī* i.e. divinely inspired and led person. The famous Sufi, 'Abd-al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d.820/1417) says in his celebrated work on the doctrine of the realization of the True Self, *al-Insān al-Kāmil*: "Unity has in all the cosmos no place of manifestation more perfect than thyself, when thou plunkest thyself into thy own essence in forgetting all relationship, and when thou seizest thyself with thyself, stripped of thy appearances, so that thou art thyself in thyself and none of the Divine Qualities or created attributes (which normally pertain to thee) any longer refer to thee. It is this state of man which is the most perfect place of manifestation for Unity in all existence". (*The Concise Encyclopedia*, p.414). Sufis also attribute the supernatural powers of the *Awliyā'* to the state described in this *Ḥadīth Qudsī*. Therefore, while a materialist might find it difficult to believe that a "Wali" can hear or help his disciple from far as has often been claimed by Sufis; the latter will state that such a thing is very much possible for a *Wali* who sees, hears and moves by Allāh, as explained by the Prophet (SAW) in the above-mentioned authentic *Ḥadīth Qudsī*.

Section 37: The Dislikedness of Amassing Wealth lest it may Push the Servant (of Allāh) Towards the (material) World¹²⁹

It is narrated by 'Abd-Allāh (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"Do not acquire land estate (i.e. more than what you necessarily need), lest you may (then) aspire for the (material) world".

Section 38: About the Description of Intelligent People

It is narrated by Abd-Allah Ibn-'Umar (r.a.) that the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) said:

"The intelligent person is the one who understood from Allāh, His Decree".¹³⁰

Section 39: About the Permissibility of Listening (to Song)¹³¹

¹²⁹ Al-Qushayrī narrates in his *Risālah*, that *Sayyidīnā* Abū-Bakr said: "We used to leave seventy permissible avenues (of business) in the fear that we might end up (through them) in an impermissible avenue". (*Al-Risālah*, p.53). He mentions that as an example of the Sufi concept of *Wara'* which we discussed earlier on.

¹³⁰ It is reported that a certain person died leaving his property for 'the intelligent people' (*al-Uqalā'*), so the people differed concerning who they were. The case was then presented to *Imam* al-Shāfi'ī (d.205/820). He immediately said: "Give it to the pious for they are the truly intelligent ones". Although many of the famous ascetic Sufis were considered to be lunatics and madmen by their contemporaries; according to their own kind, they were the real intelligent ones among God's creation, as this *Ḥadīth* demonstrates.

¹³¹ *Samā'* (lit. 'listening to Song') has been and remains one of the most unique and controversial features of Sufi praxis. To quote C.W. Ernst: "No other aspect of Sufism has been more contentious, and at the same time more popular, than the practice of music and dance". (*Guide to Sufism*, p.179). Although the term *Samā'* carries varying connotations in relation to different lands, periods of history and Sufi Orders, it basically means 'the listening to (and enjoyment of) poetry of a spiritual kind, sung in melodious spiritual tones, with or without the accompaniment of musical instruments, solitarily or in a gathering of like minded people'. Sufis have engaged in *Samā'* from the earliest times, as is evident from the earliest works written on Sufism. They have claimed this to be a practice of the blessed Prophet (s.a.w) as he used to enjoy listening to the poetry

It is narrated by 'Aishah (r.a.) that, "The Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) entered (my part of the house) during the days of *Tashriq*¹³² and two maid servants of 'Abd-Allāh bin Salām were beating the *Daf* (i.e. tambourine) and singing by me. When the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) had entered, I said (to them): 'Stop'.

Then the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) went aside to a bed in the house, lied on it and covered himself with his robe. So I said, 'Verily, he will either permit song today or forbid it', so I pointed to them (the maid servants) to start (singing) and they did.

Then, by Allāh, I had not started that yet that Abū Bakr (her father) came in and he was a stern man, and he said: 'The *Mazāmīr*¹³³ of Satan in the house of the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w)!'. So the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w) exposed his head and said:

'O Abū Bakr, every nation has an '*Id*' (day of celebration and joy) and these are the days of our '*Id*'.

Section 40: About the Permissibility of *Raqṣ*¹³⁴

Mevlevi Order is also called *Samā'*. Prof. Ernst says: "Music and dance are by no means universally found among Sufis". (*Guide to Sufism*, p.179). I beg to differ with him if his definitions of music and dance include listening to spiritual poetry without the usage of musical instruments and acts of *Wajd* (ecstasy), as these are universal among Sufis. Indeed, some form of *Samā'* is practiced amongst every Sufi Order. The form of *Samā'* most similar to the *Samā'* of the early Sufis is perhaps the kind that is practiced in the 'hidden' *Zāwiyahs* of Makkah and Madinah, where *Samā'* basically entails the melodious recital of Sufi poetry, usually without any musical instruments, and sometimes with light usage of the Tambourine. This type of *Samā'* was practiced by the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself.

¹³² The 11th, 12th and 13th days of the last Islamic month, which are considered very holy.

¹³³ Music with instruments.

¹³⁴ Literally, *Raqṣ* means 'Dance'. In the Sufi tradition, *Raqṣ* is a natural result of *Samā'*. To quote Glasse: "In particular, [*Samā'*] music is used to create the appropriate state of mind for the performance of the the *Ḥadrah*, or sacred dance". (*The Concise Encyclopedia*, p.351). In early Sufism however, to engage in *Raqṣ* willingly was called *Tawājjud*, while engaging in it unconsciously was termed *Wajd* (lit. "ecstasy"). Although *Wajd* was more condoned than *Tawājjud*, both phenomena came to be accepted (although, not necessarily practiced) by prominent Sufis. Al-Qushayrī quotes the the following *Ḥadīth* of the blessed

of his 'court poet' Hassān bin Thābit and other Companions. The Ḥanbalī scholar al-Safārī (d.1188/1676) says, after mentioning the famous story of Ka'ab bin Zuhayr: "One derives, from Ka'ab bin Zuhayr's reciting of poetry in the presence of the Messenger of Allāh (s.a.w.) and his (the Prophet's) giving him his cloak (as a reward), many traditions: 1-The permissibility of reciting poetry. 2-(The permissibility) Of listening to it in the Mosques. 3-To reward (the reciter) for it." (*Ghizā' al-Albāb*, p.155). The Shāfi'ī scholar al-Nawawī (d.676/1274) says: "There is no harm in reciting poetry in the Mosque if it is in the praise of the Prophet or Islam". (*Sharḥ al-Nawawī*, vol.16, p.45). The Maliki Jurist Ibn al-'Arabī (d.543/1147) states the same in his commentary on Tirmidhī. (*Arīdat al-Ahwazī*, vol.2, p.276). Nevertheless, Music, has generally been perceived to be prohibited or disliked in Islam as it can distract its listeners from God, is generally the pastime of worldly and vulgar people, and is part of the egoistic amusements of the world. It is for these bad connotations that *Samā'* has been an issue of contention between Sufis and strict Jurists over the ages. Nevertheless Sufis have contended that their type of *Samā'* or 'Holy Music' cannot be and is not included in the general dislikeness of Music. Many later Jurists have accepted this premise. The Famous Ḥanafī Jurist al-Ramī states in his *Fatāwā*, after mentioning the different opinions concerning Music generally: "As far as the *Samā'* of the respected Sufis, may Allāh be pleased with them, is concerned, it is not included in this difference of opinion (concerning the permissibility of Music). In fact, it transcends the ruling of permissibility (*Mubāḥ*) to the ruling of being desired (*Mustaḥabb*), as more than one of the acute scholars has clearly stated". (*Ḥaṣṣat*, p.139). For the Sufis, *Samā'* is a means of turning the soul towards God and a natural human expression of love for him. The early Sufi Dhū'n-Nūn al-Maṣrī (d.245/865) said: "*Samā'* is the rapture of God that incites hearts towards God". (*Guide to Sufism*, p.185). Al-Kalābādhī (d.385/995), one of the earliest Sufi authors whose work is still extant, writes: "Audition (of *Samā'*) is a resting after the fatigue of the (spiritual) moment, and a recreation for those who experience (spiritual) states, as well as a means of awakening the consciences of those who busy themselves with other things" (*Kitāb al-Ta'arruf*, p.56).

³⁶ Sufis have differentiated, however, between the types of listeners to *Samā'*. 'Alī Hujwayrī (d.464/1063), author of the oldest Persian treatise on Sufism, wrote: "Music is a presentment of Reality, which rouses the heart to long for God; those who listen with what is real in themselves participate in Reality; those who listen in selfish soulfulness participate in Hell". (*The Concise Encyclopedia*, p.351). Our own compiler here, al-Sulamī authored a treatise on *Samā'* called *Kitāb al-Samā'* from which Hujwayrī and other early Sufis have quoted. Today, *Samā'* takes different forms in different cultures. In the Indo-Pak subcontinent, *Samā'* unanimously refers to the *Qawwālī* music of the Chishtī Order. In Turkey, the *Ilāhī* music sung during the dance of the whirling dervishes of the

Prophet as an origin and justification for *Wajd* and *Tawājjud*: "Cry! And if you do not cry, make as if you are crying" (*al-Risālah*, p.34). He also narrates that *Imām al-Junayd* was asked by the famous Sufi Ibn-Masrūq: "Do you not feel anything in the *Samāʾ*?" *Al-Junayd* replied with the following verse of Holy Qurʾān (27:88): "And you see the mountains solid (in their places), and they are passing as the clouds pass" (*Ibid.*). He was implying that inner ecstasy is more preferable than the outer, and that is the practice of the accomplished Shaykhs. Nevertheless, the story continues that *al-Junayd* then asked the same question to *Ibn-Masrūq* and he replied that he does not move in public gatherings, however he engages in *Tawājjud* while alone. *Al-Qushayrī* states: "And *al-Junayd* did not censure him (for that)", thus concluding that *al-Junayd*, although not engaging in *Tawājjud* himself, nevertheless approved of it (*Ibid.*). This can also be ascertained from the following saying of *al-Junayd* narrated by *al-Kalābādhī* who preceded *al-Qushayrī* by a century: "The Mercy (of God) descends upon the *Faqīr* (i.e. a *Sūfī*) on three occasions: "When he is eating, for he only eats when he is in need to do so; when he speaks, for he only speaks when he is compelled to; and during audition (of *Samāʾ*), for he only listens in a state of ecstasy". (*Kiṭāb al-Taʾarruf*, p.183). However, *Hujwayrī* appears to be quite critical of *Raqs* in his works. He states clearly that: "You must know that dancing (*Raqs*) has no foundation in either the religious Law (of Islam) or in the Path (of Sufism)" (*Kashf ul-Mahjūb*, p.416). In contrast, *al-Sulamī*, on whom *Hujwayrī* relies a lot, has named this chapter '*ʿĪ Ibāhāt al-Raqs*' i.e. 'Concerning the Permissibility of Dancing'. This apparent contradiction between master and student can be cleared if we consider the fact that *Hujwayrī* does not equate *Tawājjud* - which he considers 'permissible' - with what he terms as 'Dancing'. We quote him: "But when the heart throbs with exhilaration, the rapture becomes intense, and the agitation of ecstasy is manifested, and conventional forms are gone, that agitation (*idtirāb*) is neither dancing nor foot-play nor bodily indulgence, but a dissolution of the soul. Those who call it 'dancing' are utterly wrong". (*Ibid.*) *Imām al-Qushayrī* narrates a very interesting personal incident concerning *Raqs* and *ʿIrāqah*. As the story also explains the high spiritual status of our own compiler here, *al-Shaykh Abū-ʿAbd-al-Rahmān al-Sulamī*, I will conclude my commentary on *al-Sulamī*'s work with it. I quote *al-Qushayrī*: "I was once with the Master *Abū-ʿAlī* (*al-Daqqāq*, d.405/1013), may Allāh have mercy on him, and the mention of *Shaykh Abū-ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī*, may Allāh have mercy on him, was brought up and it was said that he stands up during the *Samāʾ* in conformity with the *Fuqarāʾ*. So Master *Abū-ʿAlī* said: 'Someone like him, in his position! Calmness might be more preferable for him'. Then he (i.e. *al-Daqqāq*) told me (i.e. *al-Qushayrī*): 'Go to him (i.e. *al-Sulamī*) now and you will find him sitting in his library and on the top of the books is a small square shaped red book which contains the poetry of *al-Ḥusayn bin Manṣūr* (*al-Ḥallāj*), the extremely controversial Sufi, executed in 309/922). Take

It is narrated by *Ibrāhīm bin Muḥammad al-Shāfiʿī* that *Saʿīd bin al-Musayyib*¹³⁵ passed through some alleys in Makkah once and heard *al-Akhdar al-Jaddī* (a famous singer) singing in the house of *al-ʿĀsh bin Wāʾil*:

The Valley of *Nuʾmān* (a valley in Arabia) becomes fragrant with musk when passes through it (the convoy of)

Zaynab (a name signifying the beloved) with well-perfumed ladies

But when she (i.e. *Zaynab*) saw the convoy of *Numayrī* (a name signifying someone she was wary of), she turned away...

And they (i.e. the ladies) are very cautious of encountering him

So he pounded the ground with his leg for a while and said: "This is what one takes pleasure in listening to", and they used to narrate that the couplet was by *Saʿīd* (himself).¹³⁶

it and bring it to me without saying anything to him'. So I approached him (i.e. *al-Sulamī*) at midday and he was, in actual fact, in his library and that book was placed exactly where I was told. Then, when I sat down, *Shaykh Abū-ʿAbd al-Rahmān* (*al-Sulamī*) started talking and said: 'Some people used to censure one scholar for his movement in the *Samāʾ*', then that person (i.e. the censorer) was seen one day, alone in his house whirling like a person engaged in *Tawājjud* (willful ecstasy). So, when asked about that, he said that he had (finally) discovered the meaning of a certain difficult point and he could not control his joy and had to stand up and whirl. Consequently, he was told that their (i.e. the Sufis who dance) state is the same'. When I (i.e. *al-Qushayrī*) realized what Master *Abū-ʿAlī* had ordered me with and how he had described and said it to me, and (also) the talk that emerged from *Shaykh Abū-ʿAbd al-Rahmān*'s mouth, I became puzzled and said (to myself): 'How should I go about between them?' Then I thought to myself and said: 'There is no way (to go about) except (speaking) the truth'. So, I said to him (i.e. *al-Sulamī*) that 'Master *Abū-ʿAlī* described this book to me and told me to bring it to him without asking the permission of the *Shaykh*, so I am here now and I fear you and cannot disobey him in any matter (as well), so what do you enjoin?'. So, he (i.e. *al-Sulamī*) produced (a volume containing) sextets from the poems of *al-Ḥallāj* and it (also) contained a work of his called *Kiṭāb al-Ṣayḥūr fī Naqd al-Duhūr*, and said: 'Present this to him (*al-Daqqāq*) and tell him that I am (busy) reading that book (i.e. the one he had actually asked for) and copying poetry from it for my works'. (*al-Risālah*, p.108). This eye-witness account suffices to demonstrate *al-Sulamī*'s high status as a *Wālī*.

¹³⁵ The venerated *Ṭabīʿī* and most eminent Jurist of *Madinah* in his age.

[The scribe says]

The book is concluded and praise be for Allāh as He deserves to be praised, and (may) His immense blessing and salutations be on His chosen one from His Creation, and his Family and Companions; and Allāh is sufficient for us and He is the best Protector.

The transcription of this blessed manuscript was completed on the 17th of *Jamādī al-Thānīyah* in the year 867¹³⁷,

O Allāh grant it a good end and improve the state of Muslims.
Āmīn Āmīn Āmīn

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¹³⁶ Al-Sulamī is mentioning the action of Sa'īd bin al-Musayyib, an eminent *Tābi'ī* and Jurist of the *Salaf*, as a proof for the permissibility of listening to the singing of poetry and expression of ecstasy as is common amongst the Sufis.

¹³⁷ Which corresponds with 1465 A.D.

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