

SUFISM AND VEDANTA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Md. Sirajul Islam

The emergence of Sufism is, indeed, a glorious one in the annals of mankind. There is no doubt that Islam is a religion of peace, however, a section of people were very much engaged in luxurious life and winning the territory only. They have taken Islam from their external (*zahiri*) outlook. As a result, a section of Muslims were reacted against the activities of those rulers as well as the luxurious activities of the Muslims. Sufis say, Islam is not for particular community rather it is a message for entire humanity, and the holy Quran depicts that idea in the various verses in its salutation “*yaaiuhannas*” (Oh mankind!) but very few Muslims are aware about it. In the aspect morality Islam is called “*din*” (code of life) which has keen affinity with the term “*Dharma*” (way of life) of Hinduism. Most of the Muslims are seeing Islam from its outer form; however, Sufis seeing Islam from inner side, hence Sufism is called *batini Islam*. Sufi scholars claim, this is an inner path, which originated from the heart of Islam and was established by the people of the platform, *Ahle-Suffa*, in Medina, Arabia, fifteen centuries ago and they were familiar about the Arabic term *Tasawwuf*. They led pious secluded life and purely indifferent in worldly affairs. Later on this has been acquainted as Sufism by the British. It is because of the inner truth of Sufism, a belief system and discipline completely free from the confines of caste, community, time and place, that people from diverse cultural backgrounds and all walks of life, who are, yet, seeking a common pathway to an eternal and transcendent truth, can call themselves Sufis. It is easy to think that Sufism is an open invitation towards all that leads to the garden of truth and peace through the path of unsurpassed love. It is all too easy if we tend to forget that the inner strength of Sufism has been established through and from the personal qualifications, devotion and intellectual ability of those who have defined the quest of truth (Haq), which lies at the heart of Sufism. The people of *AhleSuffa* were coming to hear the teachings of the Prophet Hadrat Muhammad (s). Among these seekers, there were also groups of people, from many lands, nations, cultures and backgrounds, who were united by the inner longing to learn the reality of religion. Prophet said to them, Humanity (*insaniyat*) is one because

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

kullukum Ibn Adama i.e. all you are the descendant of one Adam. These individuals found the teachings of the Prophet close to their hearts. Being inspired by his teachings, they became so enraptured by Divine love that they devoted themselves to meditation, purification and servitude and in search for an inner path called *Tasawwuf*. It is from these enlightened individuals that Tasawwuf came into historical existence. At that time, these enlightened individuals did not call themselves Sufis. The term came into the vocabulary many years later.

Thus, Sufism has been referred to as a path (*tariqa*), a journey of the heart for the service of entire humanity (*khidmat-e-khalq*). Such a journey has a beginning; a point of departure that leads towards a destination. A Sufi takes an inner journey to attain the knowledge of Self (*ma'arifat*), a knowledge that leads towards the understanding the Divine Truth. A journey towards understanding such Truth will necessarily involve steps; one has to pass through some stations and states (*maqam wahaal*) of learning, awareness and understanding. One must learn the rules, disciplines and practices. One does not become a Sufi without honoring the rules of the Path. Being attracted to the teachings of Sufism does not necessarily make one a Sufi. In Sufism, the traveler departs from the station of limited knowledge and understanding and takes the journey towards the destination of greater understanding and Divine proximity. The foundation of such a journey is based on the individual's recognition of his/her own limited knowledge and a desire to expand such knowledge and ultimately surpass its limitation. In passing the successive stages of the journey, the traveler (*salik*) will learn the meaning of Divinity and become aware process of truth, will pass the levels of purification to discover the meaning of unity which lies hidden behind the veils of multiplicity. And s/he will finally arrive at the stages of knowledge and peace in the presence of Divine illumination/consciousness (*marifah*). In the journey of the heart the Sufi, the traveler, becomes enraptured by the magnificent existence of the Divine, the Divine becomes the eternal Beloved and the journey becomes the journey of the lovers towards the Beloved where finally the Sufi declares:

*God is Love, Prophet is Love, Religion is Love
From the smallest grain of sand to the highest heavens
All are enraptured by love.*

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

Throughout the world of Sufism, love has become the eternal theme. Sufis have gracefully glorified this theme in their poetry, in their principles, in their songs and practices, to the point that the Sufi proclaims:

Let love exist

No fear if I exist or not

Let this iron change into gold

Rising from this fire of love.

(Moulana Shah Maghsoud, 20th Century Persian Sufi)

We must understand that it is a human right to be able to find the way towards understanding the reality of the Divine, an understanding which is direct without the need for a medium. One needs to dissolve into the being of the Beloved, the Divine, where there remains no need to refer to You (referring to the Divine) and I (referring to oneself). In such a state the veils of multiplicity will fall and essential unity will remain. The seeker will become the true manifestation of *la illahaila Allah*; there is nothing except one Divine Unity. It is in this state that the seeker becomes a truthful monotheist.

I wonder at this You and I

You are all there is

And I am all annihilated.

There is an I

No longer exists.

Mansur al-Halaj (10th Century Persian Sufi)

In the life story of the Prophet, whose title was Habib-u-Allah, the beloved of Allah, we read of his immeasurable love for Allah. We learn that his love for the Divine was powerful and so complex that it was/is not easy to separate this lover from his Beloved Allah. His state of Unification is beyond words. Such tradition, annihilation in the Divine has remained strong in Sufism; certainly it was strong among the People of Suffa. After the passing away of the Prophet those founders of Sufism went back to their own homelands. They began teaching what they had learned. Students gathered around them and centers were created. Among the most organized and established centers were: Khorasan (northeastern Iran); Fars (central Iran); and Baghdad (Iraq). There were large number of Buddhist resided and the people of that region were familiar about the philosophy of India. Thereafter, the students of these teachers, in turn, traveled to many lands and with them the teaching and message of Sufism was introduced to the hearts of many

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

nations and many people. Over the centuries, gradually two systems of Sufism developed: practical Sufism and philosophical Sufism.

Sufism is established on the essential laws of Being (*wujud*), and the laws of Being are timeless, free from dimensions of time and place and the limitations of human qualities. Individuals do have the ability to understand the laws of Being, yet they cannot change the laws. The same principle applies in Sufism. As a result, the essential principles of Sufism have remained free from the dimensions of time or place, gender or race, cultures or ceremonies, caste, creed and religion. When a traveler of the journey of the heart, a Sufi, passes the stages of Being and arrives at the ocean of infinity, then s/he passes from the world of multiplicity to discover essential unity, when the walls of nature fall, and the manifestation of the Divine reflects into the heart of the seeker where s/he discovers the bounty of the existence after complete annihilation, capable of witnessing Divine illumination, s/he has entered the realm of Practical Sufism. Such essential law does not change as cultures and community rather encompassed everything.

When Practical Sufism has entered different cultures and times, sometimes its surface might have taken the colors of cultures and times, but its essence (*dhat*) has remained secure and unchanged in the chests of its owners. This spiritual journey is not a matter of chance, of following intuition, or trusting empty verbal formula. Rather, it is an expedition carried out in accordance with definite rules. Practical Sufism did not deviate and change from its original mission. Parallel to this school, another line of Sufism has developed since the 12th-13th century. When a few Sufi teachers began to explain the laws and mysteries of creation and governing principles of Sufism within the confines of the philosophical language, so people could better understand, they created, knowingly or not, Philosophical Sufism; a descriptive as well as logical Sufism based more on explanations, philosophy and history. The expansion and development of Philosophical Sufism was faster, since it was easier to understand Sufism logically.

This belief system, founded on the principles of Islam, gradually became an interesting discovery for a few western researchers. These researchers, or Orientalists, focusing on this

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

Middle Eastern mysticism, have translated or written commentaries on the works of Sufis, yet not all those researchers were familiar with those cultures, Sufism and the dominating languages including the language of Sufism itself. Many of these researchers have made the mistake that they have felt the Philosophical Sufism as Practical Sufism and introduced it to their readers. Practical Sufism is based on practice while philosophical Sufism focuses on the verbal explanation of the practice, and argument. Such explanation, even though useful, however, not similar in comparison to the knowledge of realization. It is also quite obvious that Sufic realization is basically ineffable which cannot be perfectly expressed in language and words. As we all know, how the meaning behind the words varies from one culture to another and one person to another as well. Even though these two systems of Sufism are different from each other, it is not always easy for an observer to distinguish between the two, especially since sometimes ceremonies and traditions may become more interesting, therefore easily replacing the quest for the truth which lies in the heart of Sufism. It is necessary for us to remember that the verbal explanation of an experience is different from the experience itself. The word “water” or its description does not quench thirst, its drinking does. Imagining the Divine will not lead to understanding the Divine, inner discovery will. Ceremonies will not open the door towards Unity; Divine unity is attained through passing from the limited self and dissolving in Divinity, without any medium, and becoming the messenger of *la illahaila Allah*, there is nothing except Divine Unity. One cannot confess such truth without being that truth and the truth does not change with the changing of cultures and times.

Vedānta is basically a school of Indian philosophy aspires to attain the knowledge of Brahman and that can be obtained through three stages of practice, *sravana* (hearing), *manana* (thinking) and *nididhyasana* (meditation). Although in reality it is a label for any hermeneutics that attempts to provide a consistent interpretation of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads or, more formally, the canonical summary of the *Upaniṣads*, The names of Upanṣadic teachers such as *Yajñavalkya*, *Uddalaka*, and *Bādarāyaṇa*, the author of the *Brahma Sūtra*, could be considered as representing the thoughts of early Advaita Philosophy. *Advaita*, *Viśiṣṭadvaita*, *Daita-dvaita*, *Shuddhadvaita* and so on are the schools of philosophy those who expressed their understanding about the Reality in their own ways. Advaita

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

Philosophical school propagates “non-dualism” where Reality is one without second (*ek me vadvitiam/ ekam Brahma dvitiya nasy*). Although Śaṅkara is regarded as the promoter of Advaita Vedānta as a distinct school of Indian philosophy, the origins of this school predate Śaṅkara. The existence of an Advaita tradition is acknowledged by Śaṅkara in his commentaries. The essential philosophy of Advaita is an idealist monism, and is considered to be presented first in the Upaniṣads and consolidated in the Brahma Sūtra by this tradition. According to Advaita metaphysics Brahman—the ultimate Reality, transcendent and immanent God of the latter Vedas—appears as the world because of its creative energy (*māyā*). The world has no separate existence apart from Brahman. The experiencing self (*jīva*) and the transcendental self of the Universe (*ātman*) are in reality identical (both are Brahman), though the individual self seems different as space within a container seems different from space as such. These cardinal doctrines are represented in the anonymous verse “*brahma satyamjaganmithya; jīvobrahmaivanaaparāh*” (Brahman is alone True, and this world of plurality is an error; the individual self is not different from Brahman). Plurality is experienced because of error in judgments (*mithya*) and ignorance (*avidya*). Knowledge of Brahman removes these errors and causes liberation from the cycle of transmigration and worldly bondage. Thus, according to Vedānta philosophy, Truth is one but preachers preached it in different forms (*ekam sat viprabahudhavadanti*).

Vedānta or Upaniṣadic philosophy is basically the very essence of Hindu spiritual reality may be considered as the essence of the Veda, which is universal in character and non dogmatic in nature. Its monotheistic appeal and hankering for the knowledge of Reality attracted all people of the globe. The classical Advaita philosophy of Śaṅkara recognizes a unity in multiplicity, identity between individual and pure consciousness, and the experienced world as having no existence apart from Brahman. The major metaphysical concepts in Advaita Vedānta tradition, such as *māyā*, *mithya* (error in judgment), *vivarta* (illusion/whirlpool), have been subjected to a variety of interpretations. On some interpretations, Advaita Vedānta appears as a nihilistic philosophy that denounces the matters of the lived-world.

As we have maintained earlier that classical Advaita Vedānta, Brahman is the fundamental reality underlying all objects and experiences. Brahman is explained as pure existence, pure consciousness and pure bliss (*sat chit ananda*). All forms of existence presuppose

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

a knowing self. Brahman or pure consciousness underlies the knowing self. Consciousness according to the Advaita School, unlike the positions held by other Vedānta schools, is not a property of Brahman but its very nature. Brahman is also one without a second, all-pervading and the immediate awareness. This absolute Brahman is known as *nirguṇa* Brahman, or Brahman “without qualities,” but is usually simply called “Brahman.” This Brahman is ever known to Itself and constitutes the reality in all individual selves, while the appearance of our empirical individuality is credited to *avidya* (ignorance) and *māyā* (illusion). Brahman thus cannot be known as an individual object distinct from the individual self. However, it can be experienced indirectly in the natural world of experience as a personal God, known as *saguṇa* Brahman, or Brahman with qualities. It is usually referred to as *īśvara* (the Lord). The appearance of plurality arises from a natural state of confusion or ignorance (*avidya*), inherent in most biological entities. Given this natural state of ignorance, Advaita provisionally accepts the empirical reality of individual selves, mental ideas and physical objects as a cognitive construction of this natural state of ignorance. But from the absolute standpoint, none of these have independent existence but are founded on Brahman. From the standpoint of this fundamental reality, individual minds as well as physical objects are appearances and do not have abiding reality. Brahman appears as the manifold objects of experience because of its creative power, *māyā*. *Māyā* is that which appears to be real at the time of experience but which does not have ultimate existence. It is dependent on pure consciousness. Brahman appears as the manifold world without undergoing an intrinsic change or modification. At no point of time does Brahman change into the world. The world is but a *vivarta*, a superimposition on Brahman. The world is neither totally real nor totally unreal. It is not totally unreal since it is experienced. It is not totally real since it is sublated by knowledge of Brahman. There are many examples given to illustrate the relation between the existence of the world and Brahman. The two famous examples are that of the space in a pot versus the space in the whole cosmos (undifferentiated in reality, though arbitrarily separated by the contingencies of the pot just as the world is in relation to Brahman), and the self-versus the reflection of the self (the reflection having no substantial existence apart from the self just as the objects of the world rely upon Brahman for substantiality). The existence of an individuated *jīva* and the world are without a beginning. We cannot say when they began, or what the first cause is. But both are with an end, which is

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

knowledge of Brahman. According to classical Advaita Vedānta, the existence of the empirical world cannot be conceived without a creator who is all-knowing and all-powerful. The creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the world are overseen by *īśvara*. *īśvara* is the purest manifestation of Brahman. Brahman with the creative power of *māyā* is *īśvara*. *Māyā* has both individual (*vyaśīti*) and cosmic (*samaśīti*) aspects. The cosmic aspect belongs to one *īśvara*, and the individual aspect, *avidya*, belongs to many *jīvas*. But the difference is that *īśvara* is not controlled by *māyā*, whereas the *jīva* is overpowered by *avidya*. *Māyā* is responsible for the creation of the world. *Avidya* is responsible for confounding the distinct existence between self and the not-self. With this confounding, *avidya* conceals Brahman and constructs the world. As a result the *jīva* functions as a doer (*karta*) and enjoyer (*bhokta*) of a limited world. The classical picture may be contrasted with two sub-schools of Advaita Vedānta that arose after Śaṅkara: *Bhamati* and *Vivarana*. The primary difference between these two sub-schools is based on the different interpretations for *avidya* and *māyā*. Śaṅkara described *avidya* as beginningless. He considered that to search the origin of *avidya* itself is a process founded on *avidya* and hence will be fruitless. But Śaṅkara's disciples gave greater attention to this concept, and thus originated the two sub-schools. The *Bhamati* School owes its name to Vacaspati Miśra's (9th century) commentary on Śaṅkara's *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, while the *Vivarana* School is named after Prakāśātman's (tenth century) commentary on Padmapāda's *Pañcapādika*, which itself is a commentary on Śaṅkara's *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*. The major issue distinguishing *Bhamati* and *Vivarana* schools are their position on the nature and locus of *avidya*. According to the *Bhamati* School, the *jīva* is the locus and object of *avidya*. According to the *Vivarana* School, Brahman is the locus of *avidya*. The *Bhamati* School holds that Brahman can never be the locus of *avidya* but is the controller of it as *īśvara*. Belonging to *jīva*, *tula-avidya*, or individual ignorance performs two functions – veils Brahman, and projects (*vikṣepa*) a separate world. *Mula-avidya* ("root ignorance") is the universal ignorance that is equivalent to *Māyā*, and is controlled by *īśvara*. The *Vivarana* School holds that since Brahman alone exists, Brahman is the locus and object of *avidya*. With the help of epistemological discussions, the non-reality of the duality between Brahman and world is established. The *Vivarana* School responds to the question regarding Brahman's existence as both "pure consciousness" and

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

“universal ignorance” by claiming that valid cognition (*prama*) presumes *avidya*, in the everyday world, whereas pure consciousness is the essential nature of Brahman.

The Advaita tradition puts forward three lesser tests of truth: correspondence, coherence, and practical efficacy. These are followed by a fourth test of truth: epistemic-nonsublatability (*abādhyatvam orbādharāhityam*). According to the *VedāntaParibhāṣa* (a classical text of AdvaitaVedānta) “that knowledge is valid which has for its object something that is nonsublated.” Nonsublatability is considered as the ultimate criterion for valid knowledge. The master test of epistemic-nonsublatability inspires a further constraint: foundationality (*anadhigatatvam*, lit. “of not known earlier”). This last criterion of truth is the highest standard that virtually all knowledge claims fail, and thus it is the standard for absolute, or unqualified, knowledge, while the former criteria are amenable to mundane, worldly knowledge claims. According to AdvaitaVedānta, a judgment is true if it remains unsublated. The commonly used example that illustrates epistemic-nonsublatability is the rope that appears as a snake from a distance (a stock example in Indian philosophy). The belief that one sees a snake in this circumstance is erroneous according to Advaita Vedānta because the snake belief (and the visual presentation of a snake) is sublated into the judgment that what one is really seeing is a rope. Only wrong cognitions can be sublated. The condition of foundationality disqualifies memory as a means of knowledge. Memory is the recollection of something already known and is thus derivable and not foundational. Only genuine knowledge of the Self, according to Advaita Vedānta, passes the test of foundationality: it is born of immediate knowledge (*aparokṣajñāna*) and not memory (*smṛti*). Six natural ways of knowing are accepted as valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) by AdvaitaVedānta: perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), verbal testimony (*śabda*), comparison (*upamana*), postulation (*arthapatti*) and non-apprehension (*anupalabdhi*). The *pramāṇas* do not contradict each other and each of them presents a distinct kind of knowledge. Nonfoundational knowledge of Brahman cannot be had by any means but through *Śruti*, which is the supernaturally revealed text in the form of the Vedas (of which the Upaniṣads form the most philosophical portion). Inference and the other means of knowledge cannot determinately reveal the truth of Brahman on their own. However, Advaitins recognize that in addition to *Śruti*, one requires *yukti* (reason) and *anubhava* (personal experience) to actualize knowledge of Brahman. *Mokṣa* (liberation), which consists in the cessation of the cycle

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

of life and death, governed by the karma of the individual self, is the result of knowledge of Brahman. As Brahman is identical with the universal Self, and this Self is always self-conscious, it would seem that knowledge of Brahman is Self-knowledge, and that this Self-knowledge is ever present. If so, it seems that ignorance is impossible. Moreover, in the *adhyāśabhāṣya* (his preamble to the commentary on the *Brahma Sūtra*) Śāṅkara says that the pure subjectivity—the Self or Brahman—can never become the object of knowledge, just as the object can never be the subject. This would suggest that Self-knowledge that one gains in order to achieve liberation is impossible. Śāṅkara's response to this problem is to regard knowledge of Brahman that is necessary for liberation, derived from scripture, to be distinct from the Self-consciousness of Brahman, and rather a practical knowledge that removes ignorance, which is an obstacle to the luminance of the ever-present self-consciousness of Brahman that does pass the test of foundationality. Ignorance, in turn, is not a feature of the ultimate Self on his account, but a feature of the individual self that is ultimately unreal. Four factors are involved in an external perception: the physical object, the sense organ, the mind (*antaḥkarana*) and the cognizing self (*pramata*). The cognizing self alone is self-luminous and the rest of the three factors are not self-luminous being devoid of consciousness. It is the mind and the sense organ which relates the cognizing self to the object. The self alone is the knower and the rest are knowable as objects of knowledge. At the same time the existence of mind is indubitable. It is the mind that helps to distinguish between various perceptions. It is because of the self-luminous (*svata-prakāśa*) nature of pure consciousness that the subject knows and the object is known. In his commentary to *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, Śāṅkara says that “consciousness is the very nature of the Self and inseparable from It.” The cognizing self, the known object, the object-knowledge, and the valid means of knowledge

As we have stated earlier that Sufism is a spiritual philosophy where devotee/seeker of knowledge is longing for the knowledge of Reality is vital. *Allah/Khuda* here is the non-dual Reality (*la ilahaila Allah*) and the world is considered as *hijab* (veil). A Sufi anchorite works to unveil the veil of both the phenomenal and metaphysical world which is highly mysterious in nature and character. Like Quran, here Allah is the Supreme Reality and nothing is like Him (Quran42:11). Like Vedantic God, in Sufism, Allah has two aspects like- *dhat* (essence) and

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

sifat(attributes). It has been affinity with the Vedantic notion of *nirguna* (attributeless) and *svaguna* (without attributes) Brahman. The ideal perfection in Sufism is called *fanafillah wabaqabillah* (annihilation in God and persistence in Him). In a single term it is called '*Najat*' in Islam, 'Nirvana' in Buddhism, 'Salvation' in Christianity and 'Mukti' in Hinduism. *Baqa* is the highest state of **God** where the devotee and Divinity division is being disappeared. Sufis say, *dhat* of Allah is incomprehensible and similarly inescapable and infinite in nature but *sifat* is apprehendable and we the people worship as well as attained knowledge of this God. When it reaches its zenith then the revelation process begins which is known as "Mukashfa" (the uplifting of veil). At this stage the attainments of the saint (or Sufi) are so exquisite that he emerges his identity in the will of God, the creator, and the reactions are visible and affect the code and conduct of human beings. The effort by which each stage is gained is called '*haal*' (state). It is a state of joy or desire and when the seeker is in this condition he falls into '*wajd*' (ecstasy). Sufism in spite of its loftiness in religious ideals has been less fastidious and more ready to accept alien practices and ideas provided they produced good results. Blended with Sufism the orthodox couch was undoubtedly refreshed and strengthened and in fact acquired a more popular character and attraction in Islam.

'Reality' is beyond the scope of all human conception and is therefore inexpressible and indescribable because human intellect or faculties are restricted to a 'limit and transcend no more. This is the highest and final stage of Sufism in which the aspirant is face to face with the 'Divine Light(*nur*)' and ultimately merges his identity with the Supreme(Allah). It is therefore a state, the secrets of which have never been divulged to the humanity at large without Sufism entitles. A Persian couplet describes this 'state' as follows "*Aanraake Khabar shudKhabarashbaaznayamad.*" i.e. nobody ever heard of them who dived deep into the secrets of God or the mysteries of Nature. Sufis emphasized that ultimate Reality could be grasped only intuitively (*Ma'arifat* or gnosis). It was veiled from the human eye and intellect, and constituted a mystery which could be apprehended by none but the advanced spirits. Although they described in vivid details how *Ma'arifat* could be achieved they never concerned themselves with the nature of the Reality. There are clear traces of belief of pantheism and of monism, although in general they believed in a transcendental omnipotent God as the Creator of the

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

universe. In this stage a devotee feels his ontological status (*martaba*) of imagination (*khayal*) only and phenomenal existence is disappeared. Then he seeing nothing is like Him (Quran 42:11, 2:312). Ibn Arabi, a Sufi Philosopher expressed this stage in using the term as *wahdat al wujud*(Unity in Being), it can be considered as the single Reality existence but this single Reality is purely self-aware (Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver leaman, History of Islamic Philosophy,Part-I, Routledge,London,1997, p.504-5), it finds itself only due to the omniscient capability of God. In this regards the existence (*wujud*) of God is One and many as well. Here existence of One comprehends the reality many.(*ibid*,p.505).Thus, *wujud* /existence in Ibn Arabi's philosophy of God is analogous to light(*nur*) like the holy Quran (24:35) where each and every thing are appeared like his rays.(*ibid*).From ontological standpoint God is necessary Being(*wujud-i- wajib*) while the creatures existence (*wujud*) is contingent (*mumkin*).Hence Ibn Arabi stressed on the Absolute existence of God as well as the absolute nothingness of the world(*al adam al mutlaq*)(*ibid*, 504-5).Therefore, in philosophical aspect is basically a state of imagination(*khayal/mithal*) of the devotee that possesses ontological existence that not only the faculty of mind or reason. This is basically an imaginable reality like the mirror image (*ibid* 505) and which is neither the mirror nor image like Sankara's Advaitic notion of Maya. In Ibn Arabi's outlook it is neither existent nor non-existent, neither known nor unknown, neither affirmed nor denied. (Ibn Arabi, *Fusus-al hikam*,I-304.23;4,408,11).

This philosophical view of Ibn Arabi has been criticized by Shyakh Ahmad Sirhindi, Punjabi Sufi in advocating his view of *wahdat-as-shuhud* (unity in witness).Shyakh Ahmad Sirhindi was born in Sirhind, India in 1564 A.D. his mystico-philosophical acumen has changed the Wujudiya philosophy into the new direction. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi basically discussed upon the philosophy of Being in contrast of "Ibn-Arabi's "wahadat-al-wujud" (Unity of Being) theory. The trend of 'wujudiya' philosophy is very primitive in India. It is said that notable Sufi Abu-Ali Sindi was aware the pantheistic concept of the Upanisad. He was inhabited in Sind region of India.His pantheistic notion was easily transmitted to his disciple Abu-Yazid al-Bistami (d.874 A.D.), who uttered "Subhani-ma-azma-Shani" (glory be to me alone, how great is my majesty!). Shaykh Sirhindi was the disciple of Khwajah Muhammad Baqibillah Berang (b. 1563 A.D.). In the early life he was believed in 'wahdat-al-wujud' theory of God, but in later

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

period he deviated from this theory and propagated the theory of “*wahdat-as-Shuhud*” (Unity in witness/phenomenological monism) in contrast of Ibn-Arabi’s ‘*Wahdat-al-wujud*’ doctrine². His popularity was reached in very high position in India and it is considered that he is the founder of *Mujaddidiya* branch of Naqshbandiya Sufi Silsilah (order). In the initial stage the concept of “*Wuhadat-as-Shuhud*” was preached by Ala-ud-Dawla Simnani (d. 1336 A.D.) which was passed naturally to the posterior generations and finally popularized by Shaykh Ahmad who criticized the ‘*wahdat-al-wujud*’ theory on the ground that Ibn-Arabi’s pantheistic idea of Good/philosophy of Being neglects the “idea of human actions and freedom, because, Ibn-Arabi propagated the view as “*La mawjudilla Allah*” (there is nothing in existence but God)²⁴. After initiation into the Naqshbandiya order Sirhindi has apprehend that all the secret of God or “*tajalli-i-Dhati*” (vision of being) was considered as the highest stage of Sufi journey, beyond which nothing but pure non-entity exists, however, after a title while a Sufi can attain an experience of “*ittihad*” (union) and “*wahdat*” (unity) which seems futile. Hence, the elevation of “*Ihata*” (comprehension), “*Siryani*” (penetration), “*Qurb*” (proximity) and “*mahiyat*” (conjunction) with the essence appeared to him is nothing but a mirage. Sirhindi also says, that the “*Zill*”(effect) is not the “*Ain*” (essence) of “*Asl*” (the real) as propounded by Ibn-Arabi. Thus Sirhindi claims for the stage of “*Zilliyat* (adumbration) after having traversed through the “*wujudiyat*” (pantheistic existence of God) and finally he can be elevated to the state of “*Abdiyat*” (the state of serviceable), which according to him is the highest stage of Sufi journey

In discussion concerning the philosophy of being, Sirhindi refuted Ibn-Arabi’s “*wahdat-al-wujud*” theory on the ground is that, *wujudiya* theory underlying the idea of “*Hama-Ust*” (all is He) which is not satisfactory so he propagates the doctrine of “*wahdat-as-shuhud*” which depicts the idea as “*Hama-az-Ust*” (all is derived from Him): According to Shaykh Sirhindi, the *wahdal-al-wujud* theory of Ibn-Arabi denies the existence of all except Allah (God). Hence, the creation (*makluq*) is identical with Allah. But Sirhindi’s *wahdat-as-shuhud* maintains that Gods exists and He is unique (*Yagana*) in His existence, no created being can be a part of Him, rather all are derived from Him. It does not mean *Khaliq* (creator) and *Khalq* (creation) are same. Thus, he affirms the gradation of Being and opines that the gradation of *Dhat* is higher than the gradation of *sifat*, which does not possess the same status conceptually and they are not

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

independent in their existence. To analyze the philosophical speculation and theology of *wujudiya* and *shuhudiya* Manjan Mole interpreted that '*Tawhid-i-Wujudi*' of Ibn-Arabi is an expression of '*ilm-al-yaqin*' (certitude of knowledge), whereas "*Tawhid-i-Shuhudi*' is an "*ayn-al-yaqin*" (certitude of vision) which accompanied by "*haqq-al-yaqin*" (certitude of Truth) in the unitive state of the mystic. In this way Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi has synthesized between the Shariah and Sufism.

The intuitive or esoteric experience or Reality implied that parallel to the orthodoxy or "external" theology, there was also an "internal" or spiritual interpretation of the Holy Quran and of the actions prescribed by the Law. This spiritual interpretation was necessity subjective, intuitive and esoteric. But this is a very delicate point to be discussed by a layman. Only the advanced Sufis or Saints, who are now rare, can interpret them satisfactorily in the light of their own practical experience. No one in the present scientific civilization can either understand or convince easily the average man on these delicate points.

According to Islamic conception a Sufi is one who is fired with Divine live and who as a true devotee of God and is constantly impatient to seek nearness to HIM. The quest of a Sufi centers round the exploration or probe into the mysteries of the nature. He is whole-heartedly engrossed in seeking out the myriad truths of the TRUTH, and concentrates on the hard task of reconciling his action to his thoughts. This is an extremely difficult process. He has, first of all to suppress or subdue his worldly desires inherent in the soul of man called *Nafs* in order to attain purity and steadfastness in his character. After attaining this stage, he enters the second phase of building up his external and internal character through mental exercises as the result of which the knowledge of the hidden mysteries of Nature or God is revealed unto him. To summarize the whole process of Sufism, the true path of a Sufi's salvation lies through the thorny wilderness of renunciation, self-mortification on and annihilation of the *Nafs* by incessant devotion to God. Thus, a Sufi aspirant has to undergo a rigid test in morals and by acquiring a perfect knowledge of the Quran and Islamic theology. Also strict adherence to the Muslim law of jurisprudence called '*Fiqh*' and '*Hadith*' which deal with the moral, social, economic, and political aspects of Muslim life, he reaches his goal ultimately.

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

The basis of the teachings of the early Sufis was a clear distinction between the real and the apparent, between the external and the internal, between the formal and the spiritual. The codes of beliefs and behavior prescribed in the two were the Shariat which they called ‘external science’ and the Tariqat (the path or way) or the ‘internal’ or “spiritual science”. The starting point of the spiritual progress, they argued was the Shariat but their distinctive contribution to the religious life of the Muslims was the emphasis which they laid on Tariqat. They bypassed the abstract and colourless scholastic discussions of faith and ritual, and supplemented the inspiring orthodox attitude of commands and prohibitions with an “emotive principal and a living religious experience.” In orthodox Islam, these features had become subordinated. By emphasizing them the Sufis sought to restore the religious balance and brought Islam into greater harmony with the prevailing Indian traditions.

References and Bibliography

1. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, Part-1 Routledge, London & New York, 1996.
2. Hamid Naseem Rafiabadi, *Muslim Philosophy and Science – An Introduction*, Cosmos Computres & Publication, Srinagar, India, 1978.
3. Saed Shaikh, *Studies in Muslim Philosophy*, (Adam Publissers, Delhi, 1940.
4. Ibn Arabi, *Fusus, al Hikm*, Cairo.
5. M.M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol-I, Otto Harrossowitz, Wiesbaden, Germany, 1963.
6. A.E. Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhiud Din Ibnal Arabi*, Cambriodge, 1939.
7. Saiyed A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol-ii, MunshiramManoharlal Publication Pvt. Ltd., 1983.
8. Aligarh Journal of Islamic Philosophy, Edited by JalalulHaq, “*Sufism in India – A Revolutionary Movement*” by Zulfiqar Ahmed, July 2003, No. 9, pp. 67, 71.
9. Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mulla Sadra (Sadr al din Shiraji)*, State University of New York Press, Abbany, 1975.
10. Md. Sirajul Islam, *Sufism and Bhakti*, Council of Research in Values and Philosophy, Washington, D.C., 2004.

SKBU JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

PEER REVIEWED

11. Saiyid A.A. Rizvi, *Muslim Revivalist Movement in Northern India*, Munshiram Monoharlal Publication Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1993.
12. Burham Ahmed Faruqi, *The Majaddid Conception of Taawhid*, Shah Muhammad Ashraf, Kashmiri Bazar, Lahore, 1940.
13. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975.
14. Madhusudana, Saraswati. *Gudārtha Dipika*. Trans. Sisirkumar Gupta. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Pubs., 1977.
15. Alladi Mahadeva Sastri (Trans.). *The Bhagavad Gita with the commentary of ŚrīŚaṅkara*. Madras: Samata Books, 1981.
16. *Brahma SūtraŚaṅkaraBhāṣya*: 3.3.54. Found in, V.H. Date, *Vedānta Explained: Śaṅkara's Commentary on the Brahma-Sūtra*, vols. 1 and 2 (Bombay: Book Seller's Publishing Com., 1954).
17. Date, V. H. *Vedānta Explained: Śaṅkara's commentary on the Brahma Sūtra*. Vol. I. Bombay: Book Seller's Publishing Company, 1954.
18. *TaittiriyaUpaniṣadŚaṅkaraBhāṣya*: 2.10. Found in Karl H. Potter, Gen. Ed. *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, Vol. III. 1st Ind. ed. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1981.
19. *Upadesa Sahasri of Śaṅkaracharya*, Trans. Swami Jagadananda. Mylapore: ŚrīRamkrishna Math, 1941.
20. *Dṛg-dṛśyaViveka of Śaṅkara*. Trans. Swami Nikhilananda. 6th ed. Mysore: Śrī Ramkrishna Ashrama, 1976.
21. Potter, Karl H. *AdvaitaVedānta up to Śaṅkara and his Pupils*. Vol. III of *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.
22. Mahadevan, T M P. *Śaṅkara*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1968.
23. Mahadevan, T M P. *Superimposition in AdvaitaVedānta*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985.
24. Dasgupta, Surendranath. *A History of Indian Philosophy*. Vol. I. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975.
25. Radhakrishnan, S. *Indian Philosophy*. Vol. II. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1940.