

## METAPHYSICS AND MYSTIC POETRY OF THE PUNJAB

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The etymology of the word "Sufi" is not an agreed matter but some doxographers have expressed the view that the word "Sufi" is derived from a Greek word "theosophia" meaning divine wisdom. Putting aside the etymological discussion "Tassawuf" or mysticism expresses particular attitude that is not limited to any nation or religion. Like philosophy it is of universal character and it belongs to the common heritage of mankind. A real philosopher takes reason as his guide to the understanding and apprehending of reality while Sufi, on the other hand, is guided by love and passion in his journey to the advanced stages of gnosis. He is allured by the solitude, contemplation and various self-disciplinary exercises and he avoids indulging in the mundane life. He is not interested in the sensuous pleasures because they create hindrances in the process of reaching higher spiritual goals. After undergoing rigorous self-discipline a "Sufi" makes his heart so pure that it becomes capable of receiving divine theophanies. In the process the Sufi's heart undergoes various states and his spiritual journey is comprised of various stations. The Sufis have developed an elaborate terminology to describe these various states and stations, such as love, annihilation, sustenance, Zouqe, Ilmul Yaqeen, Haqqul Yaqeen, Ainul Yaqeen, Wasl, Tajalli, Raghbat, and Wajd etc. For a Sufi everything in the universe is like a mirror which reflects divine reality and produces such a tremendous spiritual effect in his mind which is impossible to be attained through the following of exotic *Shariah* laws.

It is an established historical fact that the first centres of Sufism were "Kufa" and "Basra" from here it spread to the far-flung areas of Muslim world. Afterwards, "Khurasan" established itself as a major Sufi Centre. "Baghdad" being the Centre of all the cultural, literary, intellectual and political activities became also a fertile ground for the movement. Here the Sufis came into contact with the ancient

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wisdom of Iran and Greek philosophy and were greatly influenced. In the later stages "Sufism" came under the influences of "Vedanta" and "Budhism". The various cultic practices of Sufis of later centuries of Muslim era show the extent to which they were influenced by Hindu "Yogies". Christian asceticism and Neoplatonism have also their share in formulating the complex structure of Sufism. When the Sufi movement was in its embryonic stages the Sufimasters stressed that the Quran, the Ahadis of the Prophet, the lives and the sayings of the companions and Tabaeens are their only sources and there is no antagonism between "*Shariah*" and the "*Tariqah*". But in the later stages this antagonism between the "*Shariah*" and "*Tariqah*" was sharpened to the extent that virtually those two were treated as quite different and sometimes opposite ways of reaching the ultimate goal. Upto the twelfth century of Christian era Sufis have established their own orders. Amongst these sufi orders Qadria order is most famous which was founded by Sheikh Abdul Qadir Gillani. Chishtia order takes Sheikh Abu Ishaq Shami as its founder. Khawaja Moeen-un-Din was a follower of the Chishtia order and he made a great contribution in spreading the teachings of this order in the subcontinent. Sheikh Shahab-ud-Din Suhrawardi was the founder of "Suhrawardi" order. Khawaja Baha-ud-Din, his disciple and Khalifa, propagated the ideas of this order in the subcontinent. Khawaja Muhammad Atalvi established Naqsh Bandi order in Turkistan and it was introduced by Khawaja Baqi Billah in the subcontinent. All these four orders gained currency in this part of the world, but Chishtia and Qadria orders enjoyed more popularity and following rather than Naqsh Bandi and Suhrawardi orders. There is another order named "Shattaria" which was started by "Bayazid Bastami". This order gave a tremendous support to the followers of "Malamtia" and it has close affinity with Qadria order.

Sufi tradition in Punjab started with Syed Ali Hajveri (born 1009 AD). He migrated from Afghanistan to Punjab after the invasions of Mahmood of Ghaznah. His book "*Kashfulmahjoob*" is perhaps the first book on the topic written in Persian language and is generally regarded the most authoritative Sufi text. Syed Ali Hajveri has attempted to strike a balance between the conflicting claims of "*Shariah*" and "*Tariqah*". Chishtia order made Sufism popular among the masses of Punjab through their teachings of humanism, love and equality. They were of the opinion that love is the only way on which we can travel to God. In the twelfth century, Chishtia order found the charismatic personality of Baba Farid Ganj-e-Shakar who attempted to integrate Islamic teachings with the local culture. He adopted certain Hindu practices so that the Hindus and Muslims may

come closer to each other and have a better understanding of each other's religion. His synthetic approach became so popular that the "Sultans" of Delhi felt endangered. According to this order, devotion without knowledge is meaningless and knowledge unilluminated by divine grace is absurd. Intellect is the only source of knowledge. To halt the popularity of this order, the rulers of Delhi started establishing contacts with the Sufis of other orders and eventually they succeeded in making Sufis of Suhrawardi order their allies. For establishing the relations with them the Suhrawardi Sufis defended themselves by saying that they wanted to make the rulers subservient to the religious and moral laws. Sheikh Bahauddin Zakaria confronted with the free thinking Sufis and tried to bring "Tassawuf" back to the fold of orthodoxy. This sufi order enjoyed greater popularity to the time of Makhdum Jahanian Jahan Gasht. In the same period Bhagti movement in the region was an attempt to blend "Vedanta" and "Sufism" because the metaphysics of unity of being was the common factor between these two. This movement gave birth to such personalities whose religious identity was most difficult to establish. Bhagat Kabir and Baba Gurunanak are the most well known figures of this movement. They were of the opinion that religious sectarianism and social gradation are the source of misery which mankind is suffering. In fact Bhagti movement is a development of ideas of Chishtia order with Hindu background. In sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Qadri Sufis gained popularity in the Punjab. They were critical of orthodox "Mullahs", and preferred the essence of religion over its outward form.

Shah Hussain was the most creative spokesman who assimilated the influences of Bhagti movement and Chishtia order. The humanitarian Sufism of Punjab effectively expressed itself in the poetry of Shah Hussain. He revived the tradition of Punjabi Sufi poetry which started with "Baba Farid". After Shah Hussain, Sultan Bahu, who was also a follower of Qadria order became very popular in the Punjab. In the meanwhile the doctrine of "Wahdatul Wajood" and "Wahdatul Shahood" were fully developed and had their own groups of followers. Shah Wali Ullah made a bold attempt to reconcile and to reduce these differences but this sincere effort was taken as a transgression and trespassing. In Punjab a reaction started and Bullah Shah was its chief spokesman. He propagated the extremist ideas of the "Unity of Being" and abhorred all divisions of mankind based on religion or social status. With Bullah Shah the creativity of Qadria order came almost to an end. Chishtia order once again was revived and gained fame mainly through the personality of Khawaja Noor Alam Muharvi and Khawaja Shams-ud-Din Sialvi.

Khawaja Ghulam Farid was the other Chishtia thinker who enjoyed immense popularity. He was an enthusiastic exponent of the philosophy of the "Unity of Being" and was greatly influenced by such great Sufi masters as Bayazid Bustami, Hussain bin Mansoor Hallaj and Ibn-e-Arabi. Although he accepts unity of being but he does not consider it necessary to reject the human individuality and the distinct reality of human ego. The annihilation of human ego and submerging it in the vast ocean of unity is not the apex of spiritual realization. He, on the other hand, is eager to establish the human ego as a distinct reality and allows human ego to actualise its potentialities in a free and independent manner. His ideas have close similarity with the ideas of Allama Muhammad Iqbal. After Khawaja Farid, Syed Mehr Ali Shah is a distinguished exponent of the doctrine of unity of being.

Most of the Sufis of the Punjab used the medium of poetry to express their philosophic ideas. Their poetry attracted the attention of masses and they became household names in the Punjab. Amongst these sufi poets Shah Hussain's poetry caught the imagination of the masses because of its lyrical overtones. Shah Hussain's poetry expressed the feeling of self-abstination and divine love. In his eyes everything was perishable except "Allah", and believes in self-annihilation. God and man are the two manifestations of single reality. These two have their own self-subsistent reality. The unification of these two self-subsistent realities is possible but it is only a temporary event. In this unification they do not lose their individuality but remain distinct from each other.

Sultan Bahu tries to reconcile the conflicting doctrines of "Wahdatul Wajood" and "Wahdatul Shahood". Their difference is not essential but only belongs to the various stages in the spiritual journey. At the level of Wahdatul Shahood a sufi remains conscious of his individuality and desires but at the level of Wahdul Wajood he becomes totally oblivious of his self and is only conscious of the Absolute Ego. In his view intellectual institution is the medium through which we can apprehend the divine.

Bullah Shah is another major Sufi poet who is an untiring propagator of "Wahdatul Wajood". His poetry is full of universal love which does not recognize any distinction between the lover and the beloved. Love rather than knowledge is the only way of salvation, and knowledge divides and the love unites. His poetry expressed the metaphysical ideas of divine unity, Wahdatul Wajood, Wahdatul Shahood, Jazb, Zikr, Amal, Ilm, Baqa and Fana etc. His poetry is not a mere pedagogic expression of these ideas but it appears that the

poet has experienced all these stages and has totally submerged himself in the divine unity.

Khawaja Farid is a total personification of sufi ideals and virtues. In his poetry cosmic grief becomes a universal passion which serves as a medium of experiencing the Ultimate Reality. Love is not the result of some nervous disorder but is a perpetual passion which is the source of every activity. Death is not total annihilation but it unites man with the Absolute Reality. Sufi poetry is not only the expression of abstract metaphysical ideas but also expresses the desires of common man, his social relations, and his folk heritage. These peculiarities make poetry a part and parcel of the souls of common folk.

Metaphysics is generally divided into substance, causation and theology. Time and space, absolute or the ultimate reality and alienation are the major metaphysical concepts. When love, desire, feeling, imagination and intellect are integrated in a single whole then we gain the insight that the absolute reality is a simple unity in which there is no multiplicity. It is a dynamic whole. According to our Sufis it is necessary for the apprehension of this whole that the apprehending intellect must transcend all the limitations and the determinations and reach the stage of transcendental intellect. The realm of metaphysics is totally beyond this phenomenal world. Sufis consider the absolute reality as the apex of human life and intellectual intuition is the only way to the apprehension of the absolute. They start with the apprehension of their own selves and gradually they reach the stage where they directly experience the divine presence.

The poetry of the mystic poets of Punjab is so much brimmed with the feeling of divine presence that makes this poetry so appealing to the extent that every layman of this part of earth not only remembers it but also achieves moral and aesthetical goals.

