

**The Origin and
History of Sufism**

an Excerpt from

**Universal
Sufism**

Dr. H. J. Witteveen

Universal Sufism

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The Origin and History of Sufism

The origin of mysticism in the Egyptian mysteries

The name Sufism has been related to the Greek word *sophia*, which means wisdom, and to the Arab word *sof*, which means purity; the latter also refers to the pure white woolen garments worn by certain Sufis. Together these words indicate pure wisdom, the wisdom that arises in the pure consciousness from which all impressions and problems of outer life have been wiped away; the wisdom of the heart, not that of the intellect. Originally, Inayat Khan subtitled his Sufi Order as The 'Order of Purity'. Discipleship, the personal relationship between the spiritual disciple who is searching for truth, the *mureed*, and the spiritual teacher, the *shaikh* or *murshid*, has always been of great importance in mysticism. The spiritual radiance – in silence – can transmit the living essence of truth, the experience of it, much more deeply and purely than explanations in words and theories.

In ancient times spiritual wisdom had been transmitted personally from teacher to disciple and by individual contact with saints and mystics. We can trace the line of this mystical tradition back to very ancient times. European and Islamic views agree in finding the oldest source of such wisdom in the Egyptian mysteries, which found their written expression in the Hermetic scriptures, ascribed to Hermes Trismegistos (Hermes the Thrice-Greatest, the

Greek name for the Egyptian god Thoth). These scriptures are held to have been perpetuated through the so-called Hermetic chain of Pythagorean and Neoplatonic philosophers and mystics. An important link between this old mysticism and Sufism in the time of Islam is the figure of Dhul-Nun al-Misti (ad 830) who, according to the authoritative British Orientalist R A Nicholson – ‘above all others gave to the Sufi doctrine its permanent shape.’¹ This Dhul-Nun was a Nubian, an Egyptian Hermetic and Sufi. It is said that he could read the Egyptian hieroglyphs. The ancient Egyptian esoteric knowledge apparently continued under the surface when Egypt was brought under early Christian and later under Islamic influence.² Dhul-Nun saw God as expressing himself in the whole universe. This realization of the unity of God is central to mystic and Sufi thought. Dhul-Nun put this into words in the following inspiring prayer:

O God, I never hearken to the voices of the beasts or the rustle of the trees, the splashing of waters or the song of birds, the whistling of the wind or the rumble of thunder, but I sense in them a testimony to Thy Unity (wahdaniya), and a proof of Thy Incomparableness; that Thou art the All-prevailing, the All-knowing, the All-wise, the All-just, the All-true, and that in Thee is neither overthrow nor ignorance nor folly nor injustice nor lying. O God, I acknowledge Thee in the proof of Thy handiwork and the evidence of Thy acts: grant me, O God, to seek Thy Satisfaction with my satisfaction, and the Delight of a Father in His child, remembering Thee in my love for Thee, with serene tranquillity and firm resolve.³

Dhul-Nun then sings about his love of the divine beloved, as Rabiya of Basra had done before him and as was to become characteristic of many future Sufis:

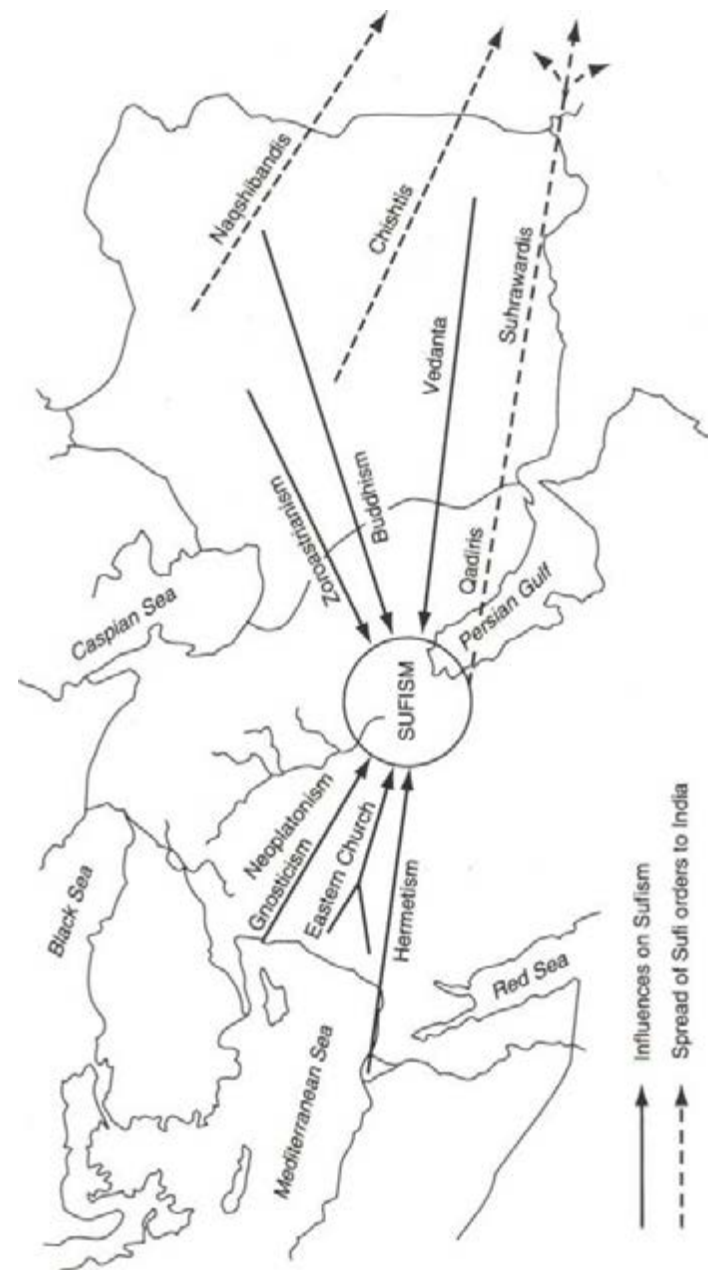


Figure 1: Religious and mystical influences on Sufism

I die, and yet not dies in me
 The ardour of my love for Thee,
 Nor hath Thy Love, my only goal,
 Assuaged the fever of my soul.

To Thee alone my spirit cries;
 In Thee my whole ambition lies,
 And still Thy Wealth is far above
 The poverty of my small love.

I turn to Thee in my request,
 And seek in Thee my final rest;
 To Thee my loud lament is brought,
 Thou dwellest in my secret thought.³

The Hermetic wisdom, which inspired Dhul-Nun, dates back to the time of the pyramids, around 3000 B.C. In Roman times it was known that a secret wisdom was stored by the priests of Egypt. This wisdom was very similar to the later Sufi mysticism. It had the same vision of the unity of God, living in the whole creation, which Dhul-Nun expressed. L Hoyack quotes the following Egyptian text:

God is one and alone, no other is beside Him
 God is the one who made everything
 God is a spirit, a hidden spirit, the spirit of spirits
 God is the eternal
 God is hidden and nobody has recognized his appearance
 Nobody has found his image.
 He is hidden for God and humans
 Hidden remains his name
 God is truth and he lives by truth
 Innumerable are his names
 God is life and all live by Him
 He blows the breath of life into the nose of mankind
 God is father and mother
 God is the being itself

God has made everything
 God is the one who has expressed himself in multiplicity
 God is the creator of heaven and earth, the father of the
 gods
 God is compassion, protects the weak, listens to the prayers
 of those who have been caught, he is compassionate
 He is judge between the powerful and the poor
 God recognizes the one who recognizes Him, who serves
 Him and protects the one who follows Him.⁴

Hoyack comments that this text could have been quoted from the Old Testament or the Qur'an. And Hazrat Inayat Khan sees a direct initiatory link which he describes in the following way:

When Abraham returned from Egypt after his initiation into the mysteries of life, he arrived at Mecca; and the stone was set there in memory of the initiation which he had just received from the ancient esoteric school of Egypt; and the voice that was put into it by the singing soul of Abraham continued, and became audible to those who could hear it. The prophets and seers since that time have made pilgrimages to this stone of Ka'ba; the voice continued and is still existing.⁵

The purpose of these early mystics was also to commune, to unify with God. The way to this experience is indicated in a passage by Poimandres (a Greek rendering of the Hermetic text):

The knowledge that one receives of God, is a divine silence, the closing of all senses; for by losing the consciousness of all sensation, of all bodily movement, the soul (nous) remains in repose; and when the beauty of God has poured its light over the soul . . . by this means the whole man is transfigured by her into the essence of being.⁶

This passage suggests a deep mystical experience, entirely corresponding to explanations by Hazrat Inayat Khan to which we will return later. These quotations suffice to show that Egypt had a unique position in ancient religion; it could be seen then as the esoteric heart of humanity. And Hermetism seems the stem of esotericism. Inayat Khan sees evidence of this in the Egyptian pyramid. He states that this architecture had reached a spiritual stage, and he adds: 'It was a mystical age, and everything they did was not done with mechanical power, it was done with spiritual power; and therefore what they have made will last . . .'⁷

Influences on Sufism in the world of Islam

Besides the oldest tradition beginning in the Egyptian mysteries and the new impulse from the Qur'anic revelation, which stimulated the search for personal divine communication, we can trace different connections between Sufism and mystical currents in the other great religions which met each other in the Middle East. For Universal Sufism – Sufism as it was renewed and inspired by Hazrat Inayat Khan – these connections are of interest, for it is the easy confluence of different mystical currents into Sufism that demonstrates its essentially universal character. In this context it is fitting to mention the towering figure of Sufi Shihabuddin Yahya al Suhrawardi (1151-91) who in a highly creative and personal way aimed at the integration of all forms of and currents in Sufism into one philosophic and esoteric whole. Essentially, Suhrawardi sought to give spiritual and symbolical elements from both the Hermetic and the Zoroastrian traditions a vital role in Sufism.

The struggle between good and evil, light and darkness, plays an important role in the Zoroastrian religion. Suhrawardi built a mystical philosophy of illumination from its principle of divine light. His best known works

are *The Philosophy of Illumination* and *The Temple of Light*. (It is interesting in this context that as a young man Hazrat Inayat Khan felt particularly close to the Parsis, Zoroastrians who were the most modern and advanced social group living at that time in his native Baroda.)

Suhrawardi was searching for a living synthesis based on the perennial mystical tradition, as it was expressed in the course of the centuries, first through Hermes, then by Plato, then by the sages of India and Persia.

In the society in which Sufism has developed, Judaism has a traditional place. It is principally the personality of Moses, the great Jewish prophet, which has inspired Sufis. As Hazrat Inayat Khan says: 'Moses, the most shining prophet of the Old Testament . . . has been the favourite character of the poets of Arabia and Persia, and in the poems of the Persian Sufis Moses is mentioned as often as is Krishna in the poetry of the Hindus.'⁸

Here, the story of Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai is that 'on arriving at the summit he saw a flash of lightning which was so powerful that it went throughout his whole being. Moses fell down unconscious, and when he recovered his senses, he found himself in a state of illumination.'⁹ Inayat Khan explains that this shows that 'it can be possible for illumination to come to a soul in a moment'. And 'Moses falling upon the ground may be interpreted as the cross, which means, "I am not; Thou art". In order to be, one must pass through a stage of being nothing. In Sufi terms this is called *fanā*, when one thinks, "I am not what I had always thought myself to be".

This is the true self-denial, which the Hindus call *layam*, and the Buddhists call annihilation. It is the annihilation of the false self which gives rise to the true self; once this is done, from that moment man approaches closer and closer to God, until he stands face to face with his divine ideal, with which he can communicate at every moment of his life.'¹⁰

Christian influences emanated mainly from an Eastern Christianity that was close to Arabic thought and temper. While Christian monks and ascetics, by example and discussion, provided a model for their aspiring Muslim counterparts, there were long and friendly relations between them. The transition from the austere piety and commitment of early asceticism to a full mysticism was effected by the increasing predominance in spiritual consciousness of the love of God. The rise in importance of this crucial element seems to have run through all the various religious traditions of the period. It cannot therefore be said that any one religion became predominant, but the interaction of expression in poetry and aphorisms between these different religious groups must have exerted a valuable stimulus.

Independently from all this the personality of Jesus exerted his influence on ascetic and mystical idealism. In a unique but outstanding case that ideal had a very powerful impact. Mansur Al Hallaj (as he has mostly been known) has remained one of the greatest names in Sufism throughout the centuries. His celebrated phrase '*Ana' al Haqq*' ('I am the Truth' or 'I am God') led to his execution for incitement to heresy in 922. In his proclamations of God becoming incarnate in man, his great example was Jesus, and he consciously and consistently accepted condemnation and suffering as part and price of his divine destiny. It must be admitted, indeed, that he provoked his martyrdom. Like many others, including his own teacher Al Junayd and the extremist, Beyazid Bistami, Al Hallaj would have escaped unharmed if he had not publicized his convictions so loudly, for the caliphal government in Baghdad persecuted such ideologically unacceptable doctrines only when they led to social or political unrest and agitation. He sought to bear witness in an almost Christian sense, testifying insistently. Both the Incarnation and the suffering of Christ were sources of inspiration to him; and,

of course, Al Hallaj's saying 'I am the Truth' is the essence of Sufi mysticism. It follows from the realization that truth is God and God is one, omnipresent and all-pervading. It is our identification with our limited personality which makes it impossible for us to unite in our consciousness with the divine being. Once that identification has been destroyed one realizes the unity. Al Hallaj prayed for this: 'Oh Lord, remove by thy self, my "it is I" which torments me.'¹¹ And when this unification was granted to him he expressed his experience in this '*Ana' al Haqq*', 'I am God'. But most moving were his noble words at his execution:

Oh Lord, I entreat Thee, give me to be thankful for Thy grace which You have bestowed on me. You have concealed from others what you have revealed to me – the glories of Thy shining countenance. You have made it lawful for me to behold the mysteries of Thy inner consciousness and made it unlawful for others. As for these others, Thy servants, zealous of religion, desirous of Thy favor, who have gathered to kill me, forgive and have mercy on them for if Thou hadst revealed what Thou hast hid I should not suffer this. All praise belongs to Thee in whatsoever Thou dost decree.¹²

Contributions to Sufism from the other main streams of religious inspiration, Hinduism and Buddhism, are more difficult to trace. But it is interesting to see how Beyazid Bistami (9th Century) based his own authentic mystical experience on the Upanishads. It has been shown that this relationship was indeed a reality, probably through a Sufi teacher from Sind well versed in the Vedantic tradition.

Thus, amongst Bistami's ecstatic utterances we find the famous 'Thou art that'; an exclamation, 'Glory to me!', equally to be traced back to the Upanishads; as well as 'I am He'.¹³ These experiences of the realization of unity with God are essential to all mysticism. Bistami also uses other

Hindu contributions; thus he introduces an Arabic term for the concept of *maya*: the illusion of the outer world.

Finally, we know that there was an active Buddhist community in Balkh in eastern Persia (now in Afghan Turkestan); and that this city became known later for its Sufis. One of the most famous of the early ascetic Sufis originated here, symbolizing in his person the link between the *bhikshu* and the *zahid*, the Buddhist and Sufi ascetics. This was Ibrahim B Adham, a prince of Balkh, son of a king of Khorasan. The legend of his conversion to asceticism has often been compared with the story of Gautama Buddha. While out hunting he heard a voice saying to him, 'It was not for this thou wast created; it was not this thou was charged to do'. He looked and saw no one, and said, 'God curse the devil'. But when he continued he heard the same voice again more clearly. This was repeated yet again; and then he obeyed the voice of God.¹⁴

Once Adham was asked for a definition of service and he replied: 'The beginning of service is meditation and silence, save for the recollection of God.'¹⁵ (Meaning the Sufi practice of *dhikr* or *zikar*.) This shows the emphasis the early Sufis put on the inner life.

Sufi poetry

After Beyazid Bistami and Al Hallaj, a further gallery of interesting figures leads on to the 11th-Century teacher, Al-Ghazzali. Then, in the 13th Century, classical Sufism reached its culmination in Ibn al-'Arabi, the Spanish philosopher and mystic, and Maulana Jelal-ud-Din Rumi, the Persian Sufi poet, whose *Mathnavi* forms the poetic counterpart to Ibn al-'Arabi's theoretical work. Sufi poetry flourished in Persia during this period. The poetic imagination of the Persians was a fruitful source for this expression of Sufism. A great number of Sufi mystics preferred to express themselves in

poems, stories and literary symbols, because in this way they could avoid giving offence to the Orthodox; and because it was realized that in any event truth can never be put down exactly in theories. As well as Rumi, Farid-ud-Din Attar, Saadi, Hafiz and Omar Khayyam have become known in the West as great poets. A few brief passages from some of these famous Sufi poets can give an idea of the atmosphere of Sufism that inspired Hazrat Inayat Khan, who often quotes these same poets in his teachings.

Jelal-ud-Din Rumi, whose father was a learned theologian, studied Sufism from an early age and himself became a recognized religious teacher. But inner enlightenment came to him through his meeting with Shams e-Tabriz, a dervish, who behaved in a strange and wild manner, but in whom he saw the perfect picture of the divine beloved. For years they were inseparable. Shams e-Tabriz inspired Rumi to reach beyond his study of books; legend says that it was he who threw away the manuscript on which Rumi had been working for years. In this way Tabriz brought him to the inner light, to spiritual love; and in this way Rumi became an inspired poet who in many forms, symbols and stories expressed the glow of love for the divine beloved. He expressed his mystical inspiration also in a whirling dervish dance which was practised by his Mevlevi Sufi order, a mystical dance which has been continued until the present day.

Often Rumi wrote his poems while in a state of ecstasy, and for that reason they still are living and an eternal source of inspiration, although they are not always easy to understand. One has to listen to them with the inner ear. A few quotations are the best way to give an impression of the wonderful atmosphere of Rumi's poetry. His most famous work, the *Mathnavi*, begins with the well-known comparison to the flute of reed:

Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations – saying,
 ‘Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my lament hath caused man and woman to moan.
 Every one who is left far from his source wishes back the time when he was united with it’.
 ‘Tis the fire of Love that is in the reed, ‘tis the fervour of Love that is in the wine.
 The reed is the comrade of every one who has been parted from a friend: its strains pierced our hearts.¹⁶

Hazrat Inayat Khan says about this comparison of Rumi:

By the flute he means the soul; the soul which has been cut apart from its origin, from the stem, the stem which is God. And the constant cry of the soul, whether it knows it or not, is to find again that stem from which it has been cut apart.¹⁷

And at another place Inayat Khan adds the following explanation:

Man is a piece of bamboo cut away from its stem; that stem is whole, is perfect; the piece is imperfect; life has cut holes to its heart that it may sound all the notes. Once the holes are made, it begins to give the music that wins the souls of men.¹⁸

In another series of poems Rumi points out the delight of this longing:

Sound of the sweet-conversing reed, in your note is the taste of sugar; your note brings me night and morning the scent of fidelity. Make beginning again, play those airs once more; O sun lovely of presence, glory over all the lovely ones!

Be silent, do not rend the veil; drain the flagon of the silent ones; be a veiler, habituate yourself to the clemency of God.¹⁹

The last verse touches on two other important aspects:

1) silence, the flagon of the silent ones that we have to drink; and with which we have to 2) unveil the divine mystery. Another aspect of this veiling is the clemency of God who does not wish to see our shortcomings too much.

The following verse also sings of the silence of the heart:

If your desire from faith is security, seek your security in seclusion. What is the place of seclusion? The house of the heart; become habituated to dwell in the heart; In the heart’s house is delivered that bowl of wholesome and ever-lasting wine. Be silent, and practise the art of silence; let go all artful bragging; for the heart is the place of faith, there in the heart hold fast to faithfulness.²⁰

But we have to follow a road, climb a height, in order to touch the heavenly spheres:

I said, ‘Show me the ladder, that I may mount up to heaven’. He said, ‘Your head is the ladder; bring your head down under your feet’.

When you place your feet on your head, you will place your feet on the head of the stars; when you cleave through the air, set your foot on the air, so, and come! A hundred ways to heaven’s air become manifest to you; you go flying up to heaven every dawning like a prayer.²¹

We have to bow our head, lay down our intellect. In and by that surrender we can ascend. The heart must be opened; then we can become one:

Hark, for I am at the door! Open the door; to bar the door is not the sign of good pleasure. In the heart of every atom is a courtyard for You; until You unbar it, it will remain in concealment. You are the Splitter of Dawn, the Lord of the Daybreak; You open a hundred doors and say, 'Come in!' It is not I at the door, but You; grant access, open the door to Yourself.²²

This short selection from the immense richness of Rumi's poetry can give us a first impression of the fiery warmth of this old Sufi mysticism.

Another great Sufi poet, Hafiz of Shiraz, was the master of the Persian *ghazal*, close to our own sonnet, in which he sings about wine and love; and about forgetting the limited self. Some short passages from Hafiz' poems give an impression of the exaltation in these divine love songs:

Nay, by the hand that sells me wine, I vow
No more the brimming cup shall touch my lips,
Until my mistress with her radiant brow
Adorns my feast – until Love's secret slips
From her, as from the candle's tongue of flame,
Though I, the singéd moth, for very shame,
Dare not extol Love's light without eclipse.²³

The glow of love makes one wish that the ego should eclipse. The comparison with the moth, burning itself because of its love for the candle's flame, is often used in Sufi poetry. This love is above all earthly gain and loss:

Look upon all the gold in the world's mart,
On all the tears the world hath shed in vain;
Shall they not satisfy thy craving heart?
I have enough of loss, enough of gain;
I have my Love, what more can I obtain?
Mine is the joy of her companionship

Whose healing lip is laid upon my lip –
This is enough for me!²⁴

What is important is to overcome the limited self:

Self, Hafiz, self! That must thou overcome!
Hearken the wisdom of the tavern-daughter!
Vain little baggage – well, upon my word!
Thou fairy figment made of clay and water,
As busy with thy beauty as a bird.
Well, Hafiz, Life's a riddle – give it up:
There is no answer to it but this cup.⁵

Another important aspect of Sufism developed in Muslih-ud-Din Saadi's work. His simple stories and comparisons show important spiritual virtues that can be developed in daily life. In this way his accent is on development of the personality. He compares the heart to a flower that blooms in beauty and spreads its perfume. Two well-known works of Saadi are the *Gulistan*, meaning 'rose garden', and the *Bustan*, 'place of perfume'. Gratitude, trust in God and surrender to God are key concepts. In this way he also addresses himself to the king, to governors:

O King! deck not thyself in royal garments when thou comest to worship; make thy supplications like a dervish, saying: 'O God! powerful and strong Thou art. I am no monarch, but a beggar in Thy court. Unless Thy help sustain me, what can issue from my hand? Succour me, and give me the means of virtue, or else how can I benefit my people?

If thou rule by day, pray fervently by night. The great among thy servants wait upon thee at thy door; thus shouldest thou serve, with thy head in worship upon God's threshold.²⁶

This is the ideal attitude for everyone who bears responsibility. Hazrat Inayat Khan quotes a very similar story and relates it to the opening of the heart:

To the extent to which a heart is opened, to that extent the horizon of beauty manifests to his view. It is not only that the awakened heart draws man nearer, but a living heart also draws God closer. It is as in the story of a Persian king, to whom his Grand Vizier said, 'All day long you give your time to the work of the state and at night you are occupied in devotion to God. Why is this?' The king answered, 'At night I pursue God, so that during the day God will follow me!'²⁷

Another story from the *Gulistan* of Saadi introduces the great Sufi Dhul-Nun al-Misri, who has been discussed earlier as a link between Sufism and the Egyptian mysteries. Here he expresses the importance of developing a feeling of dependence and fear of God just as real as in relation to an earthly ruler:

A vizier [a minister] paid a visit to Dhulnun Misri and asked for his favour, saying: 'I am day and night engaged in the service of the sultan and hoping to be rewarded but nevertheless dread to be punished by him.' Dhulnun wept and said: 'Had I feared God, the great and glorious, as thou fearest the sultan, I would be one of the number of the righteous.'

If there were no hope of rest and trouble
The foot of the dervish would be upon the sphere
And if the vizier feared God
Like the king he would be king.²⁸

We find a different aspect again in the story of a vizier who experienced the blessing of being with dervishes (Sufi

mystics) and becomes indifferent to all that a governing position can offer:

A vizier, who had been removed from his post, entered the circle of dervishes, and the blessing of their society took such effect upon him that he became contented in his mind. When the king was again favourably disposed towards him and ordered him to resume his office, he refused and said: 'Retirement is better than occupation.'²⁹

Voyage of Sufism to India

Sufism spread from Persia and the Middle East in the 13th Century, when Sufis from various Sufi Orders travelled to India. Muslim kings, who had conquered parts of northern India, offered them protection and prestige, but these Sufi missionaries worked individually without backing from any central organization behind them. Through their sincere devoutness and spirituality they attracted many followers. Islamic Sufism found a most hospitable home on Indian soil.³⁰ India, with its long spiritual background, was very open to this new faith. The first Sufi Order to come to India was the Suhrawardia Order.³¹ Many teachers from this Order became the spiritual guides of ruling princes; thus, the Nizam of Hyderabad was a spiritual descendant of the Sufis of the Suhrawardia Order. The largest Sufi Order in India now is the Chishtia Order, which was introduced into India in 1192 by Muin-ud-Din Chishti.

It was to this Order that Hazrat Inayat Khan's initiator, Muhammad Abu Hashim Madani, belonged. Its founder, Muin-ud-Din Chishti, was educated in Bokhara and Samarkand. He was initiated by Hazrat Usman Harooni and travelled with his *murshid* to many places in the Middle East. It is said that during a stay in Medina he had a dream

of the holy prophet who told him to go to Ajmer. Chishti did not know where this was; but in another dream he was shown a map marked with the exact position of Ajmer in northern India. He travelled first to Delhi which was then still governed by a Hindu king, Raja Prithwiraja. The governor ordered Chishti's expulsion from Delhi. It is told, however, that

whosoever went to execute the Order, he was so irresistibly over-powered and subdued by the great saint's magnetic personality and affectionate demeanour that he was, on the contrary, obliged to listen to Khwaja Saheb's sermon and embrace Islam instead of evicting him from the city.³²

Thus 'Khwaja' conquered the hearts of Indians by his spiritual realization and a message of peace and love. One great attraction of the Islamic Sufi Orders in India was the ideal of brotherhood, recognizing all members as equal without any of the caste distinctions which so characterized and divided Indian society. In Ajmer, in the beginning, Chishti also faced strong opposition; but he was miraculously protected, attracted many followers and established himself there. He wrote illuminating letters to Qutubuddin Bakhti-yar Kaki, his *khalif* (spiritual successor), who was leading the Order in Delhi. In one of these he writes:

How can one know that one has reached the nearness to God? He [Chishti] replied – 'The best way of knowing it is the doing of good deeds. Know it for certain that on him the door of nearness is opened who is given the power of doing good deeds.'³³

This was apparently typical of him, for he was very often called Gharib Nawaz, meaning the patron of the poor. Another inspiring saying by Chishti, very typical of mystical philosophy, is the following:

Knowledge is comprised unto an unfathomable ocean and enlightenment is like a wave in it, then what is the relation of God and man? While the ocean of knowledge is sustained by God alone, the enlightenment pertains to man.³⁴

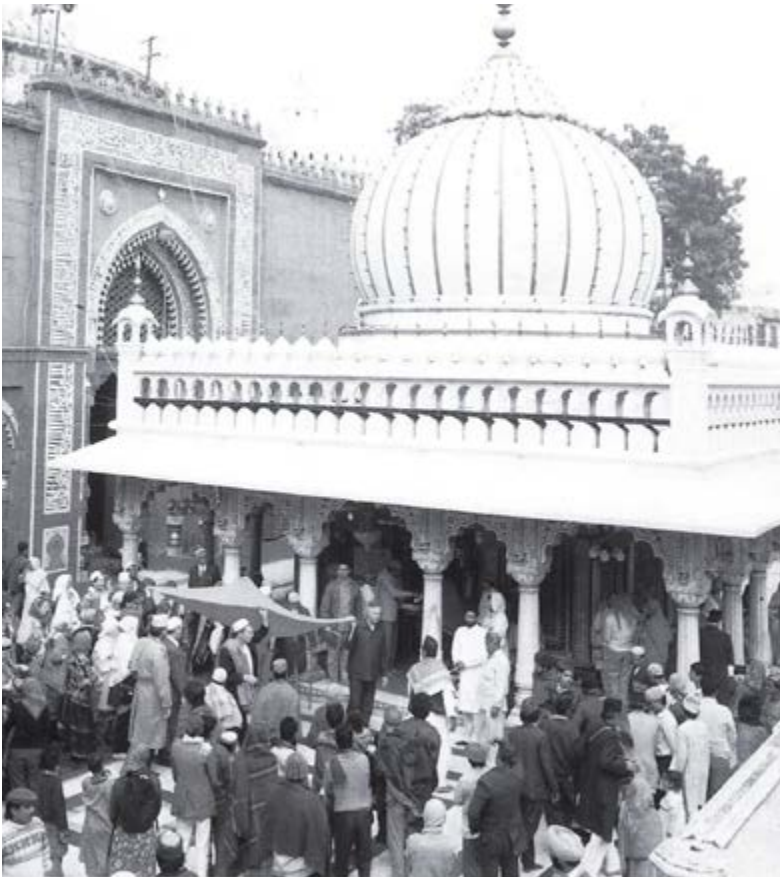
Chishti died in 1236 at the age of 93. His *dargah* (the tomb of a saint) in Ajmer has become a sacred place of pilgrimage that still attracts hundreds of thousands of worshippers every year. When visiting this place one is very touched by the light and inspiring atmosphere. In the *dargah* compound the visitor is also impressed by an enormous cauldron, taller than a man, used for cooking food for the poor. This shows again how good deeds – social work – were bound up with spiritual teaching.

In the teaching and meditation of the Chishtia Order music plays a very important role. It is told of Muin-ud-Din Chishti that, listening to music, he sometimes became unconscious in a state of rapture. His musical concerts stimulated spiritual ecstasy.³⁵ This musical tradition continued over the centuries with the Chishtia Order, which has lived on through a long line of successive spiritual teachers to the present time.

One of the spiritual descendants of Muin-ud-Din Chishti was Nizam-ud-Din Aulia (1238-1325), who was buried outside Delhi in what is now New Delhi. His *dargah*, with the adjoining mosque and *dargah* of Amir Khusrau, the great Indian Sufi poet who was his disciple, has also become a holy place visited by hundreds of thousands of worshippers every year.

In the later part of the 19th Century Maula Bakhsh, Inayat Khan's grandfather and a great musician, became the first director of the Academy of Music (*Gayanshala*) in Baroda. He was very eclectic and brought together many different currents of Indian music. It was from within this tradition in his family that Inayat Khan was raised, to become the great mystic who was destined to universalize

Sufism and to bring the wisdom of Sufism to the Western world. Thus Sufism continues its voyage.



Dargah (grave) of Nizam-ud-Din Aulia

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About the Author

Dr H J Witteveen was born in 1921 in Zeist, The Netherlands, and grew up in a Sufi family. From an early age he was inspired by the wisdom of Sufism. Initiated at the age of 18, he has made a life-long study of the Sufi message combining his inner life with his worldly career. He is one of the Representative Generals of the International Sufi Movement and an economic advisor.

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Sufism in Action: Spiritualising the Economy

The Heart of Sufism:

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