**Analysis of Sufism Through Art of Sufi Poetry.**

Tasawuf, or Sufism is the esoteric school of Islam, founded on the pursuit of spiritual truth as a definite goal to attain: the truth of understanding reality as it truly is, as knowledge. When Sufism speaks of understanding of insight that refers to the perfect self-understanding that enchains the understanding of the Divine. Sufis believe that it is the unique human right and privilege to be able to find the way towards understanding and reality of the Divine.

The origins of Sufism still are a highly debated topic amongst scholars. Some accounts refer the rise of the mystical school during reign of Abu Bakr and later, Usman, other sources point at the flourishing in a sinful abundance of wealth Umayyads’ regime, when Islam ceased practicing spiritual, mental and physical rigors. However, another version suggests the Prophet Muhammad to be the founder of Sufism. The mysterious time he spent in mountains contemplating and, perhaps, meditating before the encounter with divinity along with certain quotations from Hadith, the compendium of stories and sayings of the Prophet, permits a legitimate presumption that Muhammad, at least indirectly correlates to the establishment of the esoteric school of Islam. “An hour of contemplation is better than a year of prayer” (Ch.7, p.92) directly contradicts the custom of traditional praying at mosque. Sufis cultivate the seed of a school of spiritual practice based on knowledge of the self. Avoiding persuasive public prayers, their gatherings were held in private. Instead of preaching in public, these pious individuals were searches of truth and not rhetorical opponents – “the first stage of worship is silence”(Ch.7. p.89.)

As the perceptive tools of ordinary mental logic are limited in their ability to comprehend such a great and all-embracing subject based on language alone cannot open any door to understanding such reality. Instead such a path of understanding demands spiritual striving, the understanding and the knowledge of the heart, in its quest to realize the existence of the Divine.

Become a person of the heart,

or at least the devotee of one;

Or else, you will remain

Like a donkey stuck in the mud.

(Rumi, Ch.9, p.103)

Between God and a human lies nothing, except for artificial obstacles to the unifying created by humanity. This veil hinders a seeker from ascending to the level of Reality (Bayazid Bistami, Ch.10, p.111 top.) If people were free from the limitations of the material and physical tools that humankind possesses; thus, the immense and eternal unity of all the Being, the Creator and His creations would become transparent. According to Sufis, there is a chance for humanity to ascend to such a level of understanding, a path that can be traced through purification and meditation to the realization of its achievement. As al-Ghazzali believes, when one’s heart is purified, the “light of divine secrets” is reflected in the mirror of the heart (Al-Ghazzali, Ch.9, p. 102.) Along with purification of the heart, one has to remember God as the first and only priority in life in order to unify with Reality (Sheikh Muzaffer, Ch.8, p.98 top.) Sufi compare relationship with God as between lovers, who live only by each other and their love. Nothing else exists in their world (Jami, Ch.8, p.99.)

Sufis’ way of life does not exhibit the most accurate instance of severe asceticism and a practice of physical rigors. The perfect Sufi lives in accordance with Qu’ran and “never forgets God for a single moment.”(Abu Sa’id, Ch.1, p.40) The essence of the mystic’s life corresponds to constant remembrance of God. Islamic mystics are aware of the true value and function of everything in the world; thus they accentuate Reality as the major concern of a human life. They advocate moderation in food and physical comforts as a profound condition to liberate hearts and minds from everything that is peripheral and transitory, and stay focused on God (Al-Ghazzali, Ch.1, p.37.) The eternal path of Sufis commences with their approach to daily life. Soul remains the primary tool in search of Reality. Body serves only as means of ensuring physical health, and the care for it is provided as to a camel in a caravan – without adoration and contemplation, for camel is merely a device to reach the destination (al-Ghazzali, Ch.2, p.47.) Sufis’ destination is the unity with God, the truth and knowledge exposed when the “veil” is elevated. Muslim mystics teach that nothing is perpetual and everything is perishable in the world (Attar, Ch.6, p.80.) Everything has a beginning, a purpose and an end, and after completing the cycle returns to its original pattern. “The end is maturity, and the goal is freedom. The circle is complete. Completing the circle of existence is freedom” (Nasaft, Ch.2, p.53.)

Sufis teach that on the path of spirituality one must first learn to draw the fundamental distinction between deception and truthfulness. “You may follow one stream. Know that it leads to the Ocean, but do not mistake the stream for the ocean” (Jan-Fishan, Ch.6, p.81.) It is easy to fall into falsehood by thinking that one may appropriate the knowledge of others as one’s own. Such mere information should not be mistaken for actual knowledge of Reality. The perceptions of senses can be misleading and even more so, the judgements that are derived from them. The superficial knowledge acquired through human senses can not develop into a foundation, from which humankind can ascend to the level of understanding the knowledge of Reality. A Sufi avoids falling into falsehood by learning how not to mistake imagination and assumption for the truth of reality (Dhu-l-Nun, Ch.10, p.110.)

Sufis, similar to Zen masters believe that nothing external should be a source of distraction on the pathway to Reality. One has to concentrate on his/her own within. Sufis strongly oppose influence of a public opinion. “If someone remarks, ‘What an excellent man you are!” and this pleases you more than his saying, “What a bad man you are!” know you are still a bad man” (Sufyan al-Thawri, Ch.3, p. 61.) Also, mystics teach that people should not disguise their deeds as acts done for the cause of God, when in reality they are committed in order to earn applause, seek praise of the people, be called charitable or brave (al-Ghazzali, Ch.3, pp.62-63.) Unless one frees oneself from the lower self, one will not arrive at the gateway, separating humanity from Ultimate Reality. To tame one’s lower self enacts avoiding the inferior qualities that can overcome the heart and mind of the seeker and hinder the person from progressing on the spiritual path (Kashani, Ch.4, top p.68.) Lower self extinguishes the light of divine love in the heart of a seeker. A person searching for a spiritual path has to remain stable and strong so not to become motivated by the lower qualities such as jealousy, greed, and egotism. Instead, one should develop “practice of remembrance, awareness, and heedfulness”(Sheikh Tosun Bayrak, Ch.4, p.71.)

In the mystical traditions of Islam, Sufism, God is immanent versus God being a remote entity in Islam itself. According to Sufis the world itself is a mirror of the divinity. All the beauty and perfection of it, even though temporary, allows humans to sense the impeccable splendor of Paradise, while the hideousness and ugliness of the same world conveys the gloominess of Hell. However, the underlying message of such conception is that “it is God who is real and so forever” (Jami, Ch.5, p.74.) Nature, the earth, which humans behold and feel is the subjective visions of God, suggested to human minds by the Creator. The most beautiful, sensuous and eloquent creations in the world are merely pale shadows of the greatest in its perpetuity beauty of God (Moinuddin, Ch.5, p.78.)

Throughout the world of Sufism, love is an eternal theme, which Sufis in all eras have gracefully glorified in exuberant poetry. It is love that refines, enhances, and brings beauty to the world. In Sufism the treasure of love has been likened to fire: it burns and through such burning longing it purifies and intensified. The metaphor of fire expresses the truth of search for reality. If fire did not burn nor would it purify and illuminate (Sheikh Muzaffer, Ch.11, p.119.) A beautiful and profoundly meaningful narrative about Caliph Harun al-Rashid’s favorite concubine, who refused all the riches when, offered by the Caliph to his mistresses to take the most precious amongst the jewels he presented and to walk away free. She stayed until it was only two of them left in the empty hall. All she wanted was the Caliph himself and no gold or gems could substitute her love for Harun al-Rashid. That was what be, the real Sufi, wanted – not the palace, or power, or any of the jewels and other gifts of the Caliph – but the Caliph himself (Sheikh Muzaffer, Ch.11, pp.123-24.)

Tariqah, the word for mystic path in Sufism means the path in the dessert that the Bedouin takes to travel from oasis to oasis. To find the way in the trackless desert one need to know the area intimately. “Whoever travels without a guide needs two hundred years for a two-day journey” (Rumi, Ch.12, p.145.) Sufi teachers are those who know the area intimately. They are reliable guides to the tariqah that crosses the desert of the Absolute and take their students from oasis to oasis of gnosis and revelation with an astonishing effortlessness. “On all paths of spiritual training, the teacher is of central importance. He or she embodies the teaching as a living representation of the tradition. He or she helps the student to grow beyond the boundaries of self” (Ozelsel, Ch.12, p.128.)

Worship that is based on traditional customs such as praying and meaningless imitations is deprived of truth. It is the heart of the believer that must become open to faith, so that it may see and hear truth until it can believe the reality of the Divine (Rumi, Ch.13, p.152.) Sufis’ practice of Islam is significantly deeper rooted in spiritual practice and mental concentration rather performing prescribed procedures in a common manner. When performing an ablution, spiritual cleansing is paramount. When nothing is available to perform the ritual washing prior to praying, one should “cleanse yourself with intention so that you approach the moment as free of the past as possible” (Reshad Feild, Ch.13, p.154.)

The effect of fanaticism to destroy a person’s sense of humor is well known. The Sufis make use of this, too, in their insistence that those interested in their Way should study and understand jokes and humorous recitals. Even though jokes seem a frivolous device when applied to studying Sufism, the profoundly eloquent jokes help in learning and understanding the concepts of Sufism (Ch.14, p.164, in the middle.) Even though laughter may not seem as a useful tool, yet it provides spiritual awareness and assists in learning (Ch.14, pp.168-169.)

Sufism is a hidden gem, not a jewelry that can be bought or sold in the marketplace. The Sufis have released themselves from the world of mortality, they have passed the stages of purification, have freed themselves from attachment to the realm of appearance, and have striven for the annihilation of their limited “self” into the eternal Being (Ibrahim Adham, Ch.15, pp.182-183.) The Sufi is free from all attachments to material goods and also free from influences of the desires, he/she is therefore poor, possessing nothing and letting nothing possess him/herself (Ibrahim Adham, Ch.15. p.182.)

Patience as it is practiced in Sufism possesses both an outwardly apparent and inwardly essential aspect. A seeker always thinks before he speaks, awaiting the opportune moment, so as not to say what he/she may well later regret (Ibn ‘Arabi, Ch.15, p.184.) Sufis teach that the one who is patient is grateful even in times of difficulties and misfortune through perseverance in God (Sheikh Muzaffer, Ch.15, p.184.), Ch.15, p.184.)

Sufis teach that God with always present with humans, it is humans who are veiled from God. Once a seeker commences the path to knowledge of Reality, he/she approaches closer to God, whereas God is still, already with the seeker (Muhammad, Ch.16, p.199) At the hardest times God is with humanity, however, the duty lies on people to recognize God. “We are always surrounded by the Help of God. The question is to realize it” (Irina Tweedie, Ch.16, p.202.) In Sufism prayer is the most significant element of worshipping. The highest is Divine love, which is the finality of the spiritual journey, and is known only to the truthful (al-Ghazzali, Ch.17, p.204.) When a seeker prays, the mirror of his heart shines pure and clean, and so becomes a mirror of the whole world since God “lifts a veil and opens the gates of the invisible” (Muhammad, Ch.17, p.204.)

The Almighty Lord commanded “Remember me, so that I remember you” (Qu’ran, II, 152.) Remembering does not mean the occasional recollection of God. Rather it means to remember and remind one’s self of His existence at all times. “All creations are calling upon God. You cannot hear or see it on the outside, but the essence in everything is continuously remembering and calling upon God”(Sheikh Muzaffer, Ch.18, p.210.) In remembrance of God, one has to put everything aside, so “he sees nothing but God, [and] nothing moves him but the will of God” (Dhu-l-Nun, Ch.18, p.211.) Service is a very important aspect of Sufism. The significance of it is the sincerity and intentions. In the meaning of service still the preponderance of Love is addressed to the issue. A young man leaving his old father in the mountains because his wife demanded so, a young water carrier whose vow was to give all the money he collected on Fridays for the sake of his parent’s souls, a brother who was so used to give money to his younger brother that when the youngest needed an advice, the older brother, following the habit offered money instead of his ear to listen to, and his heart to comfort (Ch.19, Sheikh Muzaffer, pp.222-223; p.218, pp.2190220.) All these narratives depict moral self-transformation, which is as essential in Sufism as the worship and a sincere prayer.

Although Islam is a monotheistic religion, Sufism as its mystical school slightly drifts away from the monotheistic mold. In Sufism God is not a remote Creative Force that interferes from time to time into human affairs. Sufis regard God in everything.

Rose and mirror and sun and moon – where are they?

Wherever we looked, there was always Thy face.

(Mir, Ch.20, p.228)

Sufi’s monistic interpretation of God also suggests that everything is God, thus assigning every creature in the world a divine shadow. “The eyes that regard God are also they eyes through which He regards the world” (Traditional, Ch.20, p.229.) Contrary to Christian doctrine about Satan as an opposing force to God, balancing on the scale of Good and Evil, Satan in Islam is not a destructive entity within or outside of the Divine Council. Banished for the refuse to prostrate in front of Adam, Satan still loves God, moreover, loves unconditionally. Satan explains it that “so that I would not mix with the sincere ones and worship Him out of passion or fear or hope or craving” (Sana’i, Ch.21, p.237.) To Satan God is still the Friend, even though Satan loves Him without a hope to be loved in return. “From the hand of the Friend it matters not whether it is honey or poison, sweet or sour, grace or wrath” (Hallaj, Ch.21, p.238.)

Those who are free from their ego become united with God at the stage of selflessness. They leave the transient “self” behind and, and will exist through the existence of God (Hallaj, Ch.22, p.246.) The seeker is dissolved into the divine existence and breaks the limitation of the self. The one who truly believes in unity is the one, who has gone through spiritual stages of understanding the truth into the single essence and has broken from the limits of the self (Rumi, Ch.22. p.250.)

Sufis are not afraid of death, for it is not a physical condition as much as transition to the unification with God. “Death is a bridge whereby the lover rejoins the Beloved” (Rabia, Ch.23, p.253.) Death is crushing the bonds of physical existence to become one with a universe beyond the limitations of nature. Death is completing the circle. The goal is reached. Freedom.

When you see my funeral, don’t say,”What a separation!”

It is time for me to visit and meet the Beloved.

Since you have seen my descent, then do see my rising.

Why complain about the setting of the moon and the sun?

Which seed that went under the earth failed to grow up again?

(Rumi, Ch.23, p.256)