

**ESSAYS**  
**IN**  
**ISLAMIC SUFI-ISM**

**Compiled by**

**Dr. Mohammad Ahmad**

Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc.

U.S.A.

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In the name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful

## Foreword

Sufi-ism has become a popular movement in United States, with its followers embracing a variety of concepts, at times quite contrary to the principles of Islam and Islamic Sufi-ism. In this book, the true basis of Islamic Sufi-ism is discussed. The first essay deals with the historical and Quranic perspective. The second essay discusses the philosophy of true Islamic Sufi-ism in the words of the greatest *sufi* of the modern age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. All our esteemed readers are invited to learn more about him and the movement he started for the propagation of Islam, now known as the Ahmaddiya Movement for Propagation of Islam, Lahore (*Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam, Lahore*).

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# 1

## POSITION OF SUFI-ISM (*TASA WWUF*) IN ISLAM

**BY: DR. BASHARAT AHMAD**

### **Misconceptions about Islamic Sufi-ism:**

There are many misconceptions about Islamic Sufi-ism. Some people mistakenly believe that it is some sort of inherent knowledge that has been transmitted from generation to generation, and runs parallel with the recognized laws of the *shariat* (Islamic law). They hold that it was originally secretly taught by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to Hazrat<sup>1</sup> Ali, the fourth Caliph, and then passed on through him to the rest of the Muslim community. Hazrat Ali's name is most often associated with sufism because the leading sufis in many of the sufi orders trace their genealogy to Hazrat Ali. However, it is incorrect to ascribe the origin of Islamic Sufism to Hazrat Ali solely on this ground because the genealogy of sufis from some other orders leads to Hazrat Abu Bakr, the first Caliph.

<sup>1</sup> *Hazrat*: Arabic word, honorific title for a Muslim dignitary or holy person in Urdu and Persian.

**A wrong belief:**

The belief that Hazrat Ali was vouchsafed by the Holy Prophet some secret spiritual knowledge quite distinct from the *shariat* is not tenable. The Quranic injunction to the Holy Prophet on this matter is clear:

"O Messenger deliver that which has been revealed to thee from thy Lord." (5:67)

If the Holy Prophet had kept any of the revelation to himself and secretly conveyed it to one of his relatives (Hazrat Ali), it would be in clear violation of his duty as a messenger.

This belief in the secret transmission of knowledge, however, provided an opportunity to some people for trickery and deceit. In the name of *tariqat* (way) they innovated hundreds of false beliefs, and laid down the basis of another *shariat* besides the Islamic *shariat*. They justified these innovations on the grounds that it was the spiritual knowledge which had been transmitted by word of mouth from generation to generation and constituted a much more efficacious way of communion with God as compared to the known *shariat*.

Given these misunderstandings, my objective, in this essay, is to clarify the correct position of Sufi-ism in Islam. The best way to do this is to search for the answers from the Holy Quran, the repository of all spiritual knowledge.

**Three duties of a Prophet:**

The Holy Quran states :

"He it is Who raised among the illiterates, a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His messages and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the wisdom, although they were before, certainly in manifest error." (62:2)

This verse gives the three duties assigned to the Holy Prophet for guiding mankind and delivering it from error. Firstly, he was to recite the Quranic verses to the people so that the messages of Allah were conveyed to every one. Secondly, he was to purify them, i.e. to cleanse their souls from impurities through his spiritual example and nurturing, thus enabling the development of their spiritual faculties. This would eventually lead to strengthening of their faith in Divine messages, enabling them to act upon them with fervor. Thirdly, the Messenger was to be a teacher, by his words and actions, of the great wisdom in God's revealed verses which he recited to the people so that they could act in accordance with the Divine commands. These verses are called a Book by God. Thus, in summary, a prophet of God who is appointed for the guidance of humanity has a threefold task: (1) Recite revealed verses. (2) Purify humanity. (3) Teach the Book and wisdom.

Certainly, the Holy Prophet Muhammad accomplished this task in an excellent manner. He recited the verses to the people of his time, purified them and taught them the Book and wisdom. As a result of this, these people abandoned their ignorant and evil practices and became true Muslims. They crossed all hurdles on the journey towards nearness to God and completed all stages of spiritual development towards this goal. The religion they practiced was in its entirety called the Islamic *shariat*. It was composed of all the guidelines essential for mankind to achieve communion with Allah and His pleasure. In short, the Holy Prophet conveyed all guidance in open and public announcements.

After the Holy Prophet, his followers became the vicegerents of his prophethood and inherited these three essential duties:

(1) Recitation of the Holy Quran fell to the lot of every Muslim. They all recited the Holy Quran during prayer. Whether an intellectual or a common man, every Muslim considered it his primary duty to recite the Holy Quran and the first education imparted to a child was the recitation of the Holy Quran.

(2) The inheritance of the task of spiritual purification required deeds and devotion.

(3) The inheritance of the task of teaching the Book and

wisdom required knowledge of religion.

Therefore, these last two duties fell to the lot of those who had knowledge of religion, worshipped with humility, and followed their beliefs with actions.

### **Example of the Rightly Directed Caliphs and the Companions:**

In the early period of Islam, the people who had benefitted spiritually from the company of the Holy Prophet performed all of these three tasks. Thus, the first four caliphs, known as the rightly directed caliphs, and the venerable Companions of the Holy Prophet recited the Holy Quran and also purified the people who came in contact with them by their chaste companionship, exemplary lifestyle, and spiritual nurturing. They also taught them the Book and wisdom. This continued for a couple of generations after the generation of the Companions.

### **Lack of practical example in the men of learning during the period of material advancement:**

As time lapsed, the trappings of kingdom, power and wealth diminished the religious zeal of the Muslims and materialism gripped their souls. Extravagances and displays of vanity replaced the simplicity of Islamic teachings. Although the superficial structure of religion was maintained, the true spirit of faith was lost from their daily actions. The pursuit of worldly life made them forget God. The doctors of religion, who used to teach the Book and wisdom and were responsible for the spiritual purification and guidance of the people, became ineffective in performing these tasks because their deeds belied their words. In this crisis, they failed to live up to the great expectation from them to restore the departed spirituality and resuscitate the Muslim nation. Their teachings became mere verbiage and showmanship, devoid of the real essence of spiritual nurturing and purification. Although the recitation of the verses and knowledge of the Book and wisdom was still available through the doctors of religion, the real spirit of

this education, the purification of the soul, was no longer obtainable from them.

**Islamic Sufi-ism is nothing different from Islamic shariat:**

With the erosion of the real essence of spiritual learning among the institutional custodians of religious education, it became necessary for Allah, the Guardian of this Faith, to ordain such persons who were true vicegerents of the Holy Prophet. These persons, along with recitation and teaching of the Book, could also accomplish the task of spiritual purification. The people could sit in their goodly company and cleanse their souls of all dross and impurities by following their practical example. These persons were called *auliya Allah* (friends of Allah) and *mujaddideen* (reformers of religion), by the Holy Prophet. However, because of their Islamic simplicity, high morals and purity of heart, in comparison with prevailing materialism and its false display, they were given the title of those belonging to *sufaya'* (the pure group), or '*sufia*' (the pure). Their striving in the way of Allah and the acts of worship they performed, which were exactly in accordance with the *shariat* law, became known as *tasawwuf* (the way of the *sufis*). In fact, *tasawwuf* (sufi-ism) was no different from the Islamic *shariat*.

The basis of Islamic Sufi-ism is purification of the soul, which is part of the duties of a Prophet or a Reformer. Prophets and Reformers not only purify themselves, but also those who benefit from their company. Every prophet who came to this world, taught and demonstrated with his practical example all the necessary ways of purification of the soul, the acts of devotion and means of striving in the way of Allah, whether by the mind, body, words or wealth. However, to obtain complete purification of the self, mere knowledge and demonstration is not enough because the attractions of the world and the pursuit of one's desires and emotions detract from spiritual progress. These activities cover the human intellect with a veil of ignorance and tardiness so that a lifetime passes away without a person accomplishing anything spiritually.

Therefore, whether it be a Prophet or one of his vicegerents, i.e. an *auliya Allah*, a *mujaddid* or a *sufi* saint, besides their teaching and education, the benefit of their company and spiritual nurturing also serves to accomplish the goal of purification. By these means, the God ordained persons breathe a new spirit that cleanses the soul of all dirt, impurities, and love of worldly life and fills it with the love of Allah. This creates great eagerness and enthusiasm in their devotion, selflessness in their actions, and develops the spirit to strive against their own self with an intensity that is difficult to generate under ordinary circumstances. The higher the spiritual prowess of the purifier, the more intense is the desire for spiritual progress, stronger the struggle generated and greater the spiritual progress achieved in those who keep company with him and benefit from his spiritual nurturing. Correspondingly, faster is the speed with which spiritual depression and rancor is replaced by God consciousness and inner purification. By thus achieving purification of self, mankind inherits the external and internal excellences of the prophetic order. The speed with which the venerable companions of the Holy Prophet traversed the stages of purification of the soul, is unique in the history of mankind. In the span of a few years, a nation involved in all kinds of polytheism and vile practices, far-astay from God, became radiant with the light of monotheism, God consciousness and inner purification, and became near and dear to God. This incomparable spiritual purification testifies to the unique spiritual excellences of the Holy Prophet, of which this is but a minor miracle.

Similarly, the speed and ease with which the stages of spiritual purification can be achieved under the blessings and spirituality of a *mujaddid* or a reformer, who is a perfect follower of the Holy Prophet, cannot be achieved in any other era. The endeavors and acts of worship necessary for purification are known, but the motivating force to put them into practice with great eagerness and enthusiasm has frequently to come from a person of spiritual eminence and possessor of spiritual blessings. The same acts of worship, which in any other time, are performed only ceremoniously and with great effort become easy and are

accomplished with great fervor and enthusiasm by keeping company with these men of God. The soul becomes restless without these acts of devotion, and spiritual progress is achieved with great momentum. Thus the level of spiritual purification that the Holy Quran desires all mankind to achieve becomes easy to accomplish for a Muslim. The hazards and hardships of this spiritual journey turn into a labor of love and a source of pleasure for the spiritual wayfarer.

### **Islamic Sufi-ism as a struggle for self purification:**

Thus Islamic Sufi-ism was another name for the struggle of self purification. As long as there was conformity between the beliefs and actions of a Muslim, he was truly a *momin* (believer) and *wali* (friend of God), just as the Holy Quran states that, "Allah is the friend of Believers". However, when the men of learning lost the ability of righteous action, and those who claimed to be the teachers of the Book and wisdom, did not practice what they professed, they lost their closeness with Allah. A clear distinction then became evident between them and the class of men who, along with knowledge and purity of soul, were excellent exemplars of their beliefs and were radiant with spirituality. These people came to be called *Ulama-e-Rabbani* (the Learned of God), *Auliya Allah* (Friends of Allah) and *Sufiya* (the Pure). They were the true successors of the Holy Prophet because they possessed all three assets of prophetic inheritance, that is recitation of the verses of Allah, spiritual purification and teaching of the Book and wisdom. All their words and actions were in accordance with the Book and traditions of the Holy Prophet, and they were its best exponents. The men of the religious establishment who were only superficially learned and devoid of the real understanding of religion, opposed these truthful souls and labeled them as heretics. However, like the fragrance of musk, the respect and acceptance of these saints spread far and wide in the world and everywhere men of understanding acknowledged their piety and spiritual grandeur.

These saints had rejected the trappings of worldly life, but the world at large revered, honored and respected them. They did not have a desire for such respect, because whatever they did was in answer to the call of duty. However, God created esteem for them in the minds and hearts of the people because of the service they did to humanity.

### **Religious traders:**

There is no dearth of people in this world who are seekers of fame and fortune. Besides the hundreds of ways of acquiring wealth and fame, some selfish people saw an opportunity of setting up shop in religion. Capitalizing on the respect for the *sufiya* that existed in the minds of the people, these exploiters popularized acts of worship and exercises in the name of religion that were totally deceptive, misleading and devoid of any spirituality. Many of these fraudulent and morally depraved people disguised themselves as sufis and set up their businesses in the shrines of the true *sufis* and *auliya Allah*. They started cheating the people out of their money under false pretenses. They realized that in order to deceive the people they needed to resort to cunningness and disguise. The true *sufiya* were distinguished in their outward appearance only by simplicity of their dress and living, but these charlatans started wearing special robes and coverings, made of thick cloth, dyed green or black and sometimes with patches on them. They also adopted special postures to impress the people and sat with their eyes closed, with a rosary called *tasbih* in their hands whose beads they would be pushing constantly. When they opened their eyes to cast a glance at a visitor, their eyes were bloodshot, giving the impression of great anger and strong sentiments. This was a carefully rehearsed play to dupe the unwary visitor. However, these tricksters soon realized that their guises were not durable enough to fool the people for a long time.

**The influence of Magian and Hindu ascetics:**

The Muslim conquests brought them in contact with the cultures of Iran and India. Amongst the Magians and Hindus there was no dearth of ascetics and mendicants called *jogis* and *faqirs*, who had strengthened their inner faculties by appropriate exercises. Through the use of mind concentration and will power, they had learned to perform unusual and extraordinary acts, much like hypnotists and psychics of modern age. These techniques had no relationship to spiritual purification and these people had no concern for closeness to God, His love, good morals and civility of soul. In fact, some of them took undue advantage of their powers to commit acts of moral depravity. The urge for acquisition of knowledge had made the Muslims ardent learners of new disciplines, which they quickly and completely incorporated in their system. They, thus, also became familiar with some of the techniques of the *jogis* and *faqirs*. When the knowledge of these techniques became popular among the Muslims, the true *sufiya*, who were recipient of Divine communion, saw that these experiences had nothing in common with the real objective of religion. They, therefore, did not approve of these techniques and shunned them. However, the charlatan, false Sufis who were seekers of fame and fortune saw a great opportunity to exploit these techniques for furthering their business. They mastered some of these techniques and exploited the poor Muslims to their hearts content. They propagated these techniques of showmanship to such a degree that in the eyes of worldly people these techniques became synonymous with Sufi-ism. In fact, true Islamic Sufi-ism did not have even a distant relationship with this. How could purification of the self have any connection with this self aggrandizement?

**The great service of the reformer of this age:**

The Reformers of every age and the great *auliya Allah* have been forthright in exposing the practices of these deceptors and warning the Muslim public of their danger. In recent times, a debt

of gratitude is owed to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Reformer of the present age and the Promised Messiah. On the one hand, he exposed the narrow-mindedness and illogical literal interpretations of the so-called *maulvis* (religious scholars) and other men of superficial knowledge. On the other, he took the lid off the strange sacrilegious acts and the newly innovated techniques of worship of the false *sufiya* that were totally opposed to the *sunnat* (way of the Prophet). He identified the true way leading to Divine communion for the seekers of truth<sup>2</sup>.

There is no other path of guidance besides the Quran and *sunnat*. In short, what is misrepresented today as Sufi-ism is not in fact true Islamic Sufi-ism. Islamic Sufi-ism means striving in the way of Allah in pursuit of spiritual purification, and is inseparable from the *shariat*. In fact, it is the substance of the *shariat*. It is certainly not secretive knowledge that is transmitted from one generation to another. It is the same knowledge that the Holy Quran and our Holy Prophet has taught.

The honored Companions of the Holy Prophet and those that followed them, all *auliya Allah*, reformers, the true men of learning and all righteous persons have benefitted from and are still taking advantage of this knowledge. There is no path outside the Quran and *sunnat*, everything is included within it. The Holy Quran clearly states:

"This day have I perfected for you your religion." (5:3)

Also it states:

"Say, If you love Allah follow me, Allah will love you and grant you protection from your sins." (3:30)

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<sup>2</sup> This is the subject of the next essay.

## 2

# **PHILOSOPHY OF SUFI-ISM (TASAWWUF) IN ISLAM**

**(From *Aina-Kamalaat-i-Islam*)**

**By: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad**

### **The meaning of Islam and Muslim:**

Before getting into any other discussion, it is essential to set forth some basic realities regarding the religion of Islam, the means for achieving these truths and the fruits of adherence to them. This is essential because the understanding of many fine and subtle points is critically dependent upon a clear comprehension of these issues. Many doubts and uncertainties that beset my co-religionists are directly the result of not pondering over the complete and perfect reality of Islam, adherence to it and its outcome. I am convinced that if they study carefully the reality of Islam and its associated arguments and then read my answers in reply to their objections, they would be relieved of their doubts and apprehensions. Likewise, non Muslim critics of Islam can benefit greatly from this exposition as it can enable them to understand the real meaning and signs of a true religion.

The lexical meaning in Arabic of Islam is paying the price in advance for a thing, or to delegate one's affair to someone, or to seek peace or to give up a matter or an enmity.

The technical meanings of Islam are those indicated in the

following verse:

"Nay, whoever submits himself whole-heartedly to Allah, and he is a doer of good to others, he shall have his reward from his Lord. And there is no fear for such people, nor do they grieve." (2:112)

This means that a Muslim is one who commits his entire being in the way of God, the most High. That is, he dedicates himself completely to Allah, for the pursuance of His will and for the attainment of His pleasure. He then devotes himself to doing good deeds for the sake of God, and employs all his practical faculties in His path. In short, his life is entirely for Allah in both belief and deed.

In terms of belief, it means that he must truly consider his entire being to have been created in order to know God, to obey, love and adore Him, and to gain His pleasure. In terms of deeds, it means that he, only for the sake of Allah, performs acts of true virtue with all the power and God-given faculties at his command. Further, he does this with such fervor, zeal and God awareness as if he is seeing the face of his real Master in the mirror of his obedience.

The meaning of the rest of the verse is that only those people are deserving of a reward whose beliefs and deeds are founded on a personal love of God and for whom the performance of good deeds has become a second nature. Such people have no fear nor grief for they have achieved the state of salvation. In reality, the state which must be called salvation, success and deliverance is the state in which a man is in full accord with Allah, by believing in His person and attributes. His will is in complete conformity with God's will and all his joy is in His obedience. In this state, good deeds are performed by him not through hard effort but for the joy and delight they give. In the next world all perceptions and feelings are in actuality only a projection of the symptoms of a person's state in this world, which will take on a physical manifestation. Thus, the heavenly life begins in this very world, and the torment

of hell, too, has its roots in the filth and the heedless existence of this world.

### **Complete devotion of life in God's way:**

By carefully reflecting on the above referred verse, it would be apparent to any intelligible person that the real essence of Islam can only be established by devoting one's entire being, with all its inner and outer faculties, to God and His way, thereby, returning to the Real Giver all that was received in trust from Him. It is not only through belief, but also in terms of deeds that the full meaning of Islam must be manifested. That is, the person claiming to be a follower of Islam must prove that his hands, feet, heart and mind, his sense, reason, anger, mercy, gentleness and knowledge; all his spiritual and physical powers, his honor and property, his rest and comfort, and all that he has, from the hair of his head to the nails of his toes, both outwardly and inwardly, so much so that his intentions, the fears in his heart, and the feelings in his soul - all these have become as obedient to God as his limbs are obedient to his control. In brief, it must be established that he has progressed to the stage of righteousness where whatever he has truly belongs to God and all his limbs and faculties are so engaged in the service of God as if they were the limbs of God.

A reflection on these verses also makes abundantly clear that a life devoted in the service of God, which is the reality of Islam, has two aspects. First, God alone must be considered to be worthy of worship, the sole objective of life and the most beloved. None should share with Him the totality of a person's devotion, love and fear and on Him alone should one depend. His celebration, glorification and service must come from ones heart and soul. The prescribed manner of His worship, all his commandments, prohibitions and matters destined by Him must be whole-heartedly accepted and practiced with humility. In addition, one must seek to master the scientific truths which create an understanding of His vast powers and the eminence of His domain and which are a powerful guide for recognizing His favors and blessings.

The second aspect of a life devoted to God is its dedication to the service, sympathy and help of His creatures, the bearing of their burdens, and the true sharing of their grief. Hardship is borne to provide relief, and inconvenience suffered to give comfort to others.

This discourse shows that the reality of Islam is very high. The honorable title of "a follower of Islam" is in actuality reserved only for a person who turns over to God the entirety of his being inclusive of all his powers, desires, and will and who, setting aside all egotistical trappings, sets himself to work in the path of God. Therefore, a person can only be called a Muslim, in the real sense, when a mighty revolution overtakes his life of negligence and obliterates once and for all every trace and passion of his lower self. After this death of the lower self, a new life of "doing good for the sake of Allah" is born within him - a life so impeccable that it consists of nothing but obedience to the Creator and sympathy for His creation.

### **Obedience to God and service to his creatures:**

Obedience to the Creator must be such that dishonor and degradation are readily acceptable for the sake of evidencing God's power, glory and unity; a thousand deaths are of no consequence to keep alive the idea of His oneness, and the one hand is happily willing to cut off the other in the execution of His orders. Love for the greatness of His commands and the desire for attaining His pleasure makes sin detestable as if it were an all-consuming fire or a fatal poison or lightening that reduces everything to ashes, and hence a thing to be avoided at all cost. In short, all individual desires are subordinated to His will; infliction of mortal wounds are willingly borne to connect with Him and all human ties are made severable as proof of this connection.

Service of Allah's creation must be such that the needy and those made dependent on others under God's scheme of things are helped, selflessly, and solely for the sake of Allah, with heartfelt sympathy and all the God given powers. This striving for

amelioration must be directed at improving their life in this world and the next.

This devotion in the way of God reaches its fulfillment only when all the faculties are so colored with Divine attributes that they become merely like an instrument of God through which divine acts are manifested from time to time, or like a clear mirror in which the perfect image of the divine will can be seen. When obedience and service in the way of God reaches this perfection, then, by virtue of the Divine coloring, it becomes correct to say, in the sense of the unity of attributes (*wahadat ash-shuhud*), about the limbs and organs of a man of this description, that, for example, these eyes are the eyes of God, this tongue is the tongue of God, this hand is the hand of God, these ears are the ears of God, and these feet are the feet of God. In the divine path, the limbs and powers of such a person are charged by the will of God and become an image of His purpose and, therefore, deserve to be called His manifestation. The reason is that, just as a person's limbs act in conformity with his will and intent, likewise, when the perfect man reaches this stage, he acquires complete conformity with the will and intent of God. God's greatness, unity, kingship and lordship, and every wish and command, are as dear to him as they are to God Himself. Hence, this great obedience and service for the sake of God, filled with love and affection and replete with sincerity and piety, is the real substance of Islam, its reality and gist. It is achievable only after annihilating the baser self, desires and intentions.

### Stages of spiritual progress *Fana, Baqa, Liqa:*

It should also be remembered here that the verse mentioned above, i.e.

"Nay whoever submits himself whole-heartedly to Allah, and he is a doer of good to others, he shall have his reward from his Lord; and there is no fear for such people, nor do they grieve."

refers to the three stages of perfect spiritual obedience: *fana* (annihilation), *baqa* (continuance) and *liqa* (meeting with God). As described above, the phrase "submits himself whole-heartedly to Allah" gives the lesson that the entirety of a person's being with all his faculties must be handed over to God and dedicated in His way. This is the state which is called *fana*. It has been so named by spiritual scientists because of the kind of death (of the lower self) that takes place when a person, acting according to the dictates of this verse, hands over his whole being with all its faculties to God by devoting it to His way, and refrains completely from the urges and comforts of his lower self.

The words of the verse immediately after, "and he is a doer of good to others", refers to the stage of *baqa*. This is the stage when a person, after a complete negation of the self, begins to act under Divine motivation and instigation, and after the cessation of all baser movements is set into motion under Divine inspiration. This is that second life which should be appropriately termed *baqa*.

The words of the verse after this, "he shall have his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such people, nor do they grieve", affirms the certainty of receiving reward, and negates the presence of fear and grief. This is a reference to the state of *liqa*. In this state a person achieves that high status in knowledge, conviction, trust and love, where the reward for his sincerity, faith and fidelity is no longer mere imagination or conjecture, but is as certain, manifest, and perceptible, as if he had received it. He acquires such a faith in the existence of God as if he can see Him. All fears about the future vanish and no trace is left of any past or present grief. He perceives the existence of every spiritual blessing. This state, which is clear of all murkiness, safe from every doubt, and free from the fear of the unknown, is termed *liqa*. The word *muhsin* (doer of good) in this verse corroborates this description of the state of *liqa*, because as explained by the Holy Prophet Muhammad *ihsan* denotes that perfect state in which man forms such a close relationship with God during worship that it is as if he were seeing Him.

The rank of *liqa* is fully attained by the spiritual wayfarer

when the divine hue conceals and covers the human element under it as completely as fire hides the color of molten iron, so that to outward appearance there is nothing but fire. This is the stage at which some spiritual students, when they reached it, have erred and mistaken *shuhud* (the presence of the Divine Being) as *wujud* (unity with the Divine Being). To those saints who reached this rank, or those who attained some measure of it, certain spiritual scholars have applied the term 'sons of God'. This analogy has been made because such persons have completely embraced Divine attributes, and just as a son bears some resemblance in appearance and features to his father, they too, by reflection, bear some resemblance to God's beautiful attributes in which they are molded. Although such a term is not explicitly used in the language of the *shariah*, the spiritual men have, in fact, deduced it from the Holy Quran. As Allah, the Glorious says:

"Remember Allah as you remember your fathers ; nay, with an even stronger remembrance." (2:200)

It is obvious that if the *shariah* had meant to forbid the metaphorical use of such terms then God would have kept His word free from the kind of expression from which the legality of such usage could be deduced.

### **Miracles of the Holy Prophet:**

At this stage of *liqa*, a man can sometimes perform feats which seem to be beyond human strength and have the appearance of divine power. For instance, our Leader and Master, the head of the apostles, the last of the Prophets, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, hurled a fistful of pebbles at the disbelievers during the Battle of Badr. He threw that fistful not accompanied with any prayer but by his spiritual strength. However, this act manifested Divine power and had a miraculous effect on the eyes of the enemy forces. It was as if they had been blinded; confusion and panic overtook their ranks and they started to flee as if they had lost all

their senses. Allah, the Glorious refers to this miracle in the following verse :

"You (O Prophet) did not throw when you threw, but it was Allah Who threw." (8:17)

i.e. Divine power was invisibly working behind it and it could not be the work of human power.

Likewise, another miracle of the Holy Prophet, the splitting of the moon, came about through the same Divine power. There was no prayer accompanying it, for it took place merely by the pointing of a finger which was charged with Divine power. There are many other miracles of this kind which the Holy Prophet performed merely through personal power, without any accompanying prayer. On several occasions, by dipping his fingers into a small amount of water contained in only a bowl, he increased it so much that all the troops, camels and horses drank of it and still its quantity did not diminish. By the blessing of his hand, he mended the eyes of soldiers whose pupils had fallen out due to injury in battle. He performed many other similar acts with the strength of his personal power which had a hidden Divine power mixed in it.

### **The erroneous view of the Christians:**

If today's philosophers and naturalists deny these miracles, it is because they are handicapped in their ability to recognize the spiritual status in which Divine Power is projected into a person. So, if they make mockery of such issues it is only a reflection of their infantile spiritual development and lack of spiritual maturity. Not only are they impaired in their own spiritual condition but are also content to die in a state of impairment. Even more lamentable is the condition of the Christians who on hearing of some similar miraculous acts of Jesus Christ, though of a lesser degree, take it as evidence of his divinity. They claim that Christ's bringing to life

of the paralyzed and the healing of the lepers and cripples was an act of his own power and not the result of prayer. This argument is then given to substantiate the claim that he was truly the son of God and, in fact, God.

### **Holy Prophet's miracles of empowerment greater than all:**

Those putting forward this argument do not realize that if these things could turn a human being into God, then the Holy Prophet Muhammad has a better claim to divinity because his extraordinary feats of empowerment far exceed those of Prophet Jesus. Not only did the Holy Prophet perform these extraordinary feats of empowerment himself but he has also left behind a legacy of such miracles to continue in his followers till the Day of Judgement. The miraculous events of this legacy have been observed in every age occurring according to the needs of the time, and will undoubtedly continue to occur till the end of this world. The degree to which reflected divine power has been received by the pious saints of the Muslim *ummah* (community) is unmatched by any other community. Hence it is absurd to call someone God or son of God on the basis of such miracles. Otherwise, there would be no limit to the number of gods.

### **Miracle of empowerment is lesser in degree than the non-delegated powers of Allah:**

It must be noted here that these extraordinary feats of empowerment, although from God, are in no way equal to acts of God manifested by Him directly without the involvement of an intermediate agency. Neither would such equality be proper. Accordingly, when a Prophet or *wali* (friend of Allah) performs a miracle, unassisted by prayer, which is beyond the power of human stratagem or contrivance, such an act is always inferior to an announced act of God manifested with His complete power. In other words, miracles of empowerment in comparison with acts performed by God without an agency have some imperfection so

that, even those with superficial vision, may not confuse them with acts of creation. Thus the staff of Moses, despite several transformations into a serpent remained a staff. Similarly the birds of Jesus, despite their flight, which is confirmed by the Holy Quran, remained objects of clay. Nowhere has God mentioned that they came alive.

**Recipients of the stage of *Liqā* perform miracles of empowerment:**

The extraordinary feats of empowerment performed by the Holy Prophet Muhammad are the greatest manifestation of Divine power because the person of Holy Prophet was the highest and most complete example of Divine reflection. We are unable to associate these miracles to any level of humanness. However, it is our belief that even here there is a definite difference, though hidden, between the action of Allah and His Prophet.

Our objective with this discussion is to point out that during periods of ecstasy in the stage of *liqā* a person does perform divine acts. Anybody who spends a portion of his life in the close company of a person who has achieved the state of *liqā* will definitely observe some of these extraordinary acts of empowerment. Such a person, during states of ecstasy, reflects some attributes of Allah to the extent that his mercy becomes the mercy of Allah, his wrath is the wrath of Allah, and a number of times he commands a thing to happen, unaccompanied by any prayer, and it does. If he looks at someone with anger, some calamity befalls that person, and if he looks mercifully at someone, that individual becomes the object of God's mercy. In the manner that Allah says "Be", and the desired event occurs without any opposition so too his saying "Be" in the state of ecstasy produces the desired effect. As I have stated, the reason for these extraordinary events of empowerment is that such a person, due to the intensity of his relationship with God, becomes colored, by reflection, in His color and the Divine illumination envelopes him permanently. The beloved God lifts the intervening veil and

embraces him because of the intense intimacy of their relationship. And the way He is blessed Himself, He blesses his words and actions, his food and dress, his dwelling and his time and every requisite associated with him. Then everything that comes in contact with him, without his praying for it, becomes blessed. There is blessing in his house, the threshold of his doors are filled with blessings and blessings are showered at the doorway of his house and their entrances are blessed. He experiences these blessings all the time and smells their fragrance. When he travels, God is with him with all His blessings, and when he returns home, he brings a flood of heavenly light with him. Thus, he is a wonderful person whose real substance is known to none except God.

#### **Experience of the status of *Baqa* and *Liqā*:**

The stage of *fana-fil-Allah* (self-annihilation in the way of Allah), is called *fana* by the *sufis* and is known as *istiqāmit* (uprightness) in Quranic terminology. After this stage becomes a reality of a person's life in line with the meaning of the Quranic verse, "Nay, whoever submits himself whole-heartedly to Allah," (2:12), the stages of *baqa* and *liqa* follow without intermission. The condition precedent for passage into the state of *baqa*, however, is that the state of *fana* be fully established and this does not happen unless a person has acquired complete release from his own nature, desire and will, and made total obedience to God his natural instinct. Thus, the evolution of the state of *baqa* occurs only when all the formal vestiges of submission disappear and the verdant and fresh foliage of true submission sprouts with fervor from the heart and one truly begins to consider all his possessions as belonging to God. Just as other people derive pleasure by fulfilling their desires, this person derives his pleasure from worship and remembrance of Allah. The desire of self-indulgence is replaced by the desire to seek the pleasure of Allah.

When this condition of *baqa* becomes firmly established and permeates the being of the spiritual wayfarer, a spiritual light is

perceived to descend from heaven which lifts all veils (between man and God), and a sweet and pleasurable feeling of love is felt in the heart which was not there before. A feeling of serenity, satisfaction and delight descends upon the heart akin to when one meets a dear and long lost friend suddenly and embraces him. Communication from the Almighty, which is bright and clear, pleasurable and blessed, meaningful and fragrant, and bearing good news is revealed at all times and brings elation and tranquility like a cool, gentle and fragrant breeze which has passed over a garden in the early hours of the morning. Man is drawn to God in such a manner that without His love and contemplation, life is meaningless. Not only is he committed to sacrifice his wealth, honor, offspring, and all his material possessions, but, in his heart, has already done so. He is pulled to God with a tremendous force that belies understanding and he finds his soul lit by spiritual light like the brightness of the day. He experiences overwhelming love, sincerity and truthfulness within himself and feels every moment as if God Almighty has alighted on his soul. When this condition is felt with all its signs, then rejoice and thank the truly beloved God because this is the ultimate stage called *liqa*.

At this stage of spiritual development, a person feels as if he has been washed with an abundance of pure waters, and recreated after being cleansed totally of selfish interests to the minutest fabric of his soul. He senses the throne of the Nourisher unto Perfection of all the universe has been laid inside him and the shining face of the Glorious and Holy God, with all its charm, beauty and attraction is always in front of him.

**Striving of the spiritual wayfarer is only up to the stage of *Fana*:**

It should be noted that the stages of *baqa* and *liqa* cannot be achieved by effort and are, in fact, endowed. Human endeavor can take a person only up to the stage of *fana* where the journey of all the righteous persons and spiritual wayfarers ends as the limits of human capabilities have been reached. And when the purified souls

reach this stage of *fana*, it is the pattern of Allah, and has always been so, that the winds of His bounty blow and propel the traveler to the stages of *baqa* and *liqa*. With this research, it is evident that all the difficulties and deprivations of this journey are up to the stage of *fana* and beyond it effort, endeavor and hard work are not factors for further advancement. In fact, it is the pure love that develops in the stage of *fana* for the Supreme and Generous God which causes a spark from the love of God to automatically fall on the devotee and this is referred to as the stages of *baqa* and *liqa*. And when the love of Allah descends upon the love of the servant, then with the union of both these loves, the bright and complete reflection of the Holy Spirit (Ruh-al Qudus) is generated in the heart of that person. At the stage of *liqa*, the light of that Holy Spirit is very prominent and the unusual feats of empowerment that we have discussed earlier are manifested by these people. This light of the Holy Spirit is always with them and resides within them. They do not separate from it under any condition, nor does the light separate from them. The light emanates from them with every breath and is cast on every object they see and with their speech it exhibits its luminescence to the audience. This light is called the *Ruh-al-Qudus* (The Holy Spirit). This is, however, only the reflection of the Real Holy Spirit which resides in Heaven. This reflection of the Holy Spirit resides in the pure hearts and souls forever, and does not separate from them for even a moment.

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