

Mysticism (*Tasawwuf*) in Islam: Meaning and Some Basic Doctrines*

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ABSTRACT

Mysticism or spirituality is an important dimension of Islam. Its origin and nature has become a subject of much discussion in academics. Some trace its origin from ashab of suffah or those persons who wore wool (suf), an identification of simplicity / zuhad while others call it a later development - 1st century Hijra (period of the successors of companions of the Prophet (SAAS)). Nevertheless, the mysticism became a good legacy of Islam from 1st century Hijra and formed its doctrines and principles in a good deal. This got developed by a number of sufi personalities who delved deep in the mystical / spiritual aspects of life and produced a plenty of treatises resulting followers / orders of this Islamic tradition. Among the personalities mention may be made of Hasan Basri, Junaid Baghdadi, Abu Nasr al-Siraj, Shahab ud-Din Surawardi, Ibn Arabi, Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi, Shah Wali-ullah and Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanavi. The present article makes a descriptive analysis of the meaning and doctrines of mysticism in Islam. Mysticism is here used in the sense of tasawwuf or spirituality. The first part of the article discusses briefly the meaning of tasawwuf which in Qur'ānic words is described as tazkiya and zuhad and in Hadith it is called ihsan (the deeper devotion to attain Allah's intimacy- Qurbah). The second part discusses the basic doctrines of tasawwuf in which niyyah, ikhlas, sabr, tawwakul and shukr are analyzed in the light of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and these doctrines develop a deep gnostic and pious personality of a man. We rely here on the Qur'ān, Sunnah and treatises of the eminent sufi scholars and the doctrines are derived from them and discussed with relation to their bearings on the spiritual and social self of man.

Keywords: *mysticism, tasawwuf, esoterics, tazkiyah, ihsan, sincerity, perseverance, repentance, gratefulness, love, devotion, gnosis, sabr*

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1. Introduction

Islam is the religion that comprises both esoteric and exoteric principles. Esoteric is related to inward life of man called spiritual, mystical or *tariqah* or Sufi way while exoteric is related to man's external life called *zahir*, practical or '*Shari'ah*' way. Hence mysticism or *tasawwuf* deals with inward (*batin*) way/ways of a Muslim. Inward life has central place in forming the personality of man. So both the Qur'an and the Sunnah lay down the instructions and rules for guiding and illuminating this inward self of man. This is also in case of the exoteric life which is more practical and apparent in man and the principles and laws are derived from Islamic sources for its formation. These are called '*Shari'ah ahkam*' while the former domain is directed by '*ruhani*' or '*tariqah*' doctrines. Mystical or Sufi way became specifically identified at the time of the successors of the Prophet's companions and their successors (*taba'in*) who initiated its development that continued down the ages.¹ During the time of the Prophet (SAAS) and his companions no such identification is found about it as these people were more identified with the Prophet's company and discipleship than any other epithet. It is said that *zahid* and *ashab-i- sufah* was given the name of some of them yet it is not validly established.² However, the mysticism or *tassawuf* in Islam is based on certain basic doctrines. Among them include *niyah*, sincerity, *taqwa*, love, *sabr* (perseverance), repentance, gratitude and *tawakkul*. This all is termed in the Qur'an as *tazkiyah*-keeping one's self purified from evils and corruptions and in the Hadith it is described as *ahsan* which is an elevated stage of a Muslim's devotional life to attain the intimacy and pleasure of Allah. The present paper attempts to highlight these essential characteristics of Islamic mysticism which are derived from the valid sources of Islam and sustain the spiritual life of man desirably. This gives the legitimacy to mysticism in Islam. Most of the treatises/addresses of early Sufis rely on these foundational principles of *tassawuf*.

2. Meaning of Mysticism

Mystic is a Greek word that means 'closing ones lips' or 'calmness' and it came into Muslim tradition through European literature.³ In the Muslim legacy *sufi* and *zahid* is more common than mystic. The latter is thought an appropriation of *sufi* or *zahid* in the sense that calmness, solitude, meditation and similar other traits are attributed to them. Without indulging into the

controversy of whether or not mystic is synonym to word ‘sufi’ we take it here in the meaning of what is related to hidden or spiritual in man which in Arabic is called ‘*batin*.’ We shall not also dwell here on what is foreign in Islamic mysticism and what is its original tradition. Lot of work is available already on it.⁴ Two points, however, are worth to mention here. One is that, as mentioned above, Islam is an all embracing system of life. Life of man is complex and multi-dimensional. Islam provides guidance in a perfect way to life. Its dimensions *batin* and *zahir* are equally addressed by the Islamic texts (Qur’an and Sunnah). *Batin* dimension is hidden and called spiritual or internal self of man and more popularly known as *tasawwuf*. *Zahir* is the external self or practical side of human life. Islam never recognises dualism in human life. Both the facets of life are closely related to each other and one is depended upon the other.

Secondly to deal with this spiritual aspect of man is virtually to deal with the Qur’ānic view of *tazkiyah* (purifying) one’s self and which in *Hadith* is termed as *ihsan* (devotional richness). These are two broader concepts of Islamic texts under which the spiritual or internal (*batin*) aspects of life are understood. In the Qur’an *tazkiyah* is being prescribed for a Muslim and it is also described as a mission of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS). Many Qur’ānic verses lay down it as one of the chief purposes of human life:

رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ
أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

O our Lord! Raise up from among them the Messenger who shall recite to them Your Revelations, and teach them the Book and wisdom (logic and good judgment, making them Gnostics of the Divine Secret) and purify and sanctify well. Certainly You alone are the All-Mighty, All-Wise.⁵

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا. وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

Indeed the one who purifies his (nafs) succeeds. But the one who corrupts himself is doomed indeed.⁶

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى

He who purified himself shall prosper.⁷

In the above verses *tazkiyah* is described as the Prophets' main task towards mankind. On the other hand, human prosperity and successes is made dependent upon it. Apart from the Prophet's responsibility of reciting the verses of the Qur'an and transmitting its knowledge and wisdom to this people, the purification of their hearts is described as his fore most task by Allah. Purifying the hearts from the evils and sins and setting human self on the right path is the objective of the above first two verses here. Man is a complex being and he has to encounter a lot of problems in his life. Even after having knowledge of good he needs how to follow it and save himself from the risks and inducements of evil which come in his way. Protection from these risks and hazards is called purification (*tazkiyah*). It guards here the souls from corruption and deviation and its essential purpose is retained. Maulana Sayed Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi gives a precise view of *tazkiyah* in the following words:

Tazkiyah of *nafs* and culture is a wide and healthy system of morality that attained a shape of permanent science and art (in Islam). It indicates the temptations of *nafs* and *satan*, remedy of moral diseases, relations with Allah. It is an explanation of the way of esoteric (*batin*), the means and methods of this way and the reality of it lies in the *Shari'ah* and *mathur* terms of *tazkiyah* and *ihsan* of early days of Islam. In the later centuries it was '*Tasawwuf*' that is an illustrative example of collective intuition.⁸

Further in Hadith this mystic or spiritual conduct is described in terms of *ihsan* which is a higher level of God-consciousness and devotion. In one of the Traditions of the Prophet (SAAS), commonly called Haidth-i-Jabra'il, narrated by Umar bin Khatab (RA) it is reported that the Prophet (SAAS) was asked by Jabra'el (AS) about Islam, *Iman*, *Ihsan* and Doomsday. The Prophet (SAAS) replied them one by one. About Islam the Prophet (SAAS) said:

Islam is that you witness to it that there is no god save Allah and Muhammad (SAAS) is His messenger. Offer *Salah*, pay *Zakah*, have fasting during the month of Ramadan and if you have capacity (of wealth) then offer *Hajj*.⁹

About *Iman* the Prophet (SAAS) mentioned:

It is to have faith in Allah, His angels, Books, Prophets, Life after death (as true) and that all good and evil is under His power (*taqdir*).¹⁰

About *Ihsan* the Prophet (SAAS) said: (*Ihsan*) is that you worship Allah in such a way as if you see Him, it is not so then think that He sees you.¹¹

Three concepts can be derived from this Hadith about human life vis-a-vis Allah or religion. First is that, Islam which means to witness unity of Allah (*Tawhid*) and Muhammad's (SAAS) Prophethood and the observing the pillars (fundamentals) of Islam. This can be described as submitting to Islam's fundamentals as well as laws with rational understanding. *Iman* refers to believe firmly what is Islam particularly its beliefs which are related to unseen domain/transcendental domain i.e., God, revelation, Angels, Hereafter etc. To have a firm conviction of them strengthens Islamic life of man. Third one that is *ihsan* literally 'goodness' 'richness' means to undergo a deeper devotion for Allah in Islamic deeds. This is growth from ordinary devotion or submission to higher devotion of a Muslim. This can also be termed as the aspect or facet which is related to spiritual absorption of man in his deeds. Since it is related to man's hidden and mystic side so it can be called his spiritual development that goes along with his practical or social development. Mysticism or *tasawwuf* owes much to this concept of *ihsan* of the Prophet's famous tradition as it pertains to the higher good and success of human life.

3. Basic Doctrines of Mysticism in Islam

In the backdrop of the Qur'an and Sunnah a scheme of esoteric life of man is shaped that sustains and strengthens it properly. Where there are principles of the exoteric or practical life in the Divine texts there are principles of spiritual or esoteric (*batin*) life as well. Broadly these can be enumerated and discussed as following:

(i) Right Intention (*Niyah*)

Every deed has its initiative from which it stems. So far the deed of a Muslim is concerned its spiritual aspect even has its initiative. It is called intention and this intention should be right one. Whatever man does it is to be judged by his intention. Something is hidden in his heart while taking up initiative of anything. Imam Ghazali has written a separate chapter on intention (*niyah*) that occurs before *ikhlas* in his *Ahya al-Ulum al-Din*. He writes that *niyah*, *iradah* and *qasd* are three words having one meaning and each act is completed after it has three components-knowledge, intention and power. For intention knowledge is needed, for any act intention is required and for an act

power (*qudrah*) is necessary. This knowledge leads to intention that further leads to an act which is dependent upon ones power to act. From this it is understood that when one has to attempt any deed that has its basic motivation or urge which one must know before his commission of it.¹² It is by this factor-*niyah*- the deed is identified. The deeds particularly which are allowed in Islam called *ta'at*, *ibadat* and *mubahat* are judged by their intentions. If they are with right intention they are qualified as good and worthy to reward with Allah. In the Qur'an there are instructions about following the right intentions indeed:

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ

And do not turn away these (run-down and broken-hearted) people (from your company and close circle) who call upon their Lord persistently seeking only His pleasure morning and evening.¹³

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ

Satan seeks only to breed enmity and spite among you by means of wine and gambling and hinder you from remembering Allah and observing Prayer.¹⁴

In the first verse the deeds of those people are approved who do it with the intention (*zuruduna*) to please Allah. While the second verse mentions the intention of *satan* to induce among men enmity by means of wine and gambling and it is a prohibited act.

There are also many Aḥādīth which mention clearly that intention characterises the nature or value of a deed. Whatsoever a great act is still it is dependent on right intention. The famous Hadith that is narrated by Umar ibn Khattab reports that the Prophet (SAAS) said:

Deeds are dependent upon intentions. Everyone will receive the result (of his deed) as per his intention. One who migrated (to Madina) for the cause of Allah and His Prophet, his migration will be towards Allah and his Prophet. One who migrated for any worldly purpose or to marry any woman, his migration will be treated towards that (purpose).¹⁵

(ii) Sincerity (*Ikhlas*)

By sincerity or *ikhlas* is meant to do a deed with exclusive devotion to Allah. There should not be any sign or inclusion of other being in it in terms of the latter's

pleasure. In *shari'ah* it specifically means that all beliefs (*aqaid*), ritual worship (*ibadat*) and adhering to laws be safe from polytheism, infidelity and hypocrisy.¹⁶ They should be uncontaminated from petty worldly gains. All the beliefs and deeds in Allah are dependent upon ones sincerity-*ikhlas*. Associating others in its devotion-*shirk* or having hypocrisy (*nifaaq*) is directly opposite to sincerity. In the absence of belief in *tawhid*, *risalah* and hereafter no act of a man has moral value and it cannot be accepted by Allah. *Ikhlas* is a prime moral foundation of acts. It is apparent that when there won't be sincerity in beliefs and deeds then the question of goodness of *maqam* (station) and *ahwal* (states) too does not arise. It is because of this principle of sincerity that gives the meaning to the deeds of a 'sufi.' In the Qur'an this principle of sincerity is repeatedly asked to follow:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ

Whereas they were commanded to worship only Allah, making their Din (faith and devotion) sincerely His (dissociating from every falsehood).¹⁷

فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ. إِلَّا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ

So worship Allah for His sake alone in sincere obedience. Sincere obedience and worship is only Allah's due.¹⁸

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

Say: 'My Prayer, my Hajj (Pilgrimage) and sacrifice (together with the entire worship and servitude) and my life and my death are for Allah alone, Who is the Lord of all the worlds. He has no partner and of this have I been commanded and I am the first Muslim (in the entire creation).¹⁹

In Hadith the deed alone with solely worldly purpose is disapproved in clear terms. In a Hadith-i-Qudsi it is mentioned: Allah does not approve the deed that is not performed for Him. It is reported by Abu Hurairah (RA) and the decree of God is that: 'I (God) am free from that deed (in which others are associated with Him) and it is (left) to him for whom it has been actually performed.'²⁰

It is in this context that Shiekh al Islam Zakaria Ansari writes in his commentary on *Risalah Qushariya* about it:

It is by dint of *ikhlas* that a Muslim knows that whatever deed in which he seeks good in this world and the Hereafter depends on Allah. It is again through *ikhlas* that he attempts to secure himself from Allah's punishments and seeks the higher status among the men of Paradise.²¹

Sufi way is obviously much concerned with the performance of deeds with sincerity and honesty. *Riya* (show) of the deeds for people is the destruction of ones deeds. In the Qur'an and Sunnah *riyah* is disapproved as well as condemned. When the act is with the aim to please other than Allah it is not *ikhlas* and will be disapproved by Allah. It is subject to severe punishment in Hereafter. Sufis of Islam also highlight *ikhlas* in their sayings, Ustaz Abu Ali Diqaq says that the perfect sincerity (*ikhlas*) is to observe Allah's laws and worship only for the sake of his intimacy (*taqarub*). Besides this nothing is to be made desirable.²² Another sufi, Abu Uthman says that *ikhlas* means that in all the good deeds one should gaze upon only Allah's bounty (*fazl*) and forget it that people do see him.²³ Dhu'n Nun al- Misri while commenting on it says that 'Sincerity is complete only by being truthful in it and having patience for it. Truthfulness is complete only by sincerity in it and constantly throughout.'²⁴

Hence sincerity (*ikhlas*), becomes a basic reality of sufi or spiritual way of life in Islam. It is a bed- rock of a good deed otherwise the latter will be of no value. Sincerity should always be the hall mark of deeds which are instructed in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Islam cannot be without *ibadah* (submitting to Allah) and *ibadah* cannot be without *ikhlas* (sincerity).

(iii) Repentance (*Tauba*)

Repentance –*taubah* - is also a basic doctrine of *tasawwuf*. Some say that in the journey of spiritual path *tauba* has a key position. It is first milestone of a traveler (*salik*) and the states and stations (*ahwal* and *maqamat*) are attained through it. *Tauba* literally means turning to any other thing in place of one thing. In Shari 'ah it means Muslim's turning from what is legally condemnable (*madhmum*) to what is commendable (*mahmud*). It is turning towards submission to Allah from falling into His deviation and displeasure. The grave deviation is commission of polytheism and infidelity (*shirk* and *kufr*) and thus returning to Islam is must. This is the actual goal of a servant of God. To attain it and retain ones true status is through *tauba*. Many verses of the Qur'an emphasize it much:

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ

(Even) then if they repent and establish Prayer and pay Zakat (the Alms-due) they are your brothers in Din (Religion).²⁵

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا

Then I said: ‘Seek forgiveness from your Lord. Surely He is Most Forgiving.’²⁶
In Suran al-Tahrim Allah says about heartfelt *taubah* as:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا

O Believers! Turn towards Allah’s Presence in perfect and most sincere repentance.²⁷

In the Ahadith *tauba* is also advised to be observed in a good deal: Aqr bin Yasar al-Muzni (RA) narrates that the Prophet (SAAS) said ‘O people! Seek repentance and forgiveness from Allah because I myself seek repentance hundred times from Allah.’²⁸

In a Hadith-i- Qudsi the Prophet (SAAS) says that Allah has directed him to convey this message:

Oh my servant! You do commit errors day and night and I do forgive them so you seek forgiveness from Me and I will forgive you.²⁹

Repentance is an important characteristic of each servant of Allah and in Sufism it is specially underscored. Of course, man becomes sometimes subject to sins and errors and to purify himself from them *tauba* (repentance) is the best means. Sins have been categorised in two types. One is of grave nature and other is of minor nature. In Allah forgiveness undergoes through the repentance of these sins. Many sufi scholars like Imam Qushari and Imam Ghazzali while referring to the Qur’anic verse – إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ النَّوَائِبِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ – (He loves those who keep themselves thoroughly pure and clean.³⁰) hold that the verse renders great value to physical and spiritual purity of man. They add that to man there cannot be anything of such sort as by means of *taubah* not only his sins get forgiven but he is also loved by Allah.³¹ Repentance if gets broken by man he can return again to Allah for his forgiveness and this is kept open by Allah and one should not delay in it. The more one is in repentance the nearer he becomes to Allah.

(iv) Perseverance (*Sabr*)

Sabr literally mean to keep away from anything. In Shari‘ah terms it is that capacity and condition of man which makes him to keep away firm selfish or evil desires, to which he gets tempted by the *satan*. According to Imam Ghazalli ‘*sabr* is one of the stages of *Din* and a goal for those who want to follow the path of *Din*. The stages of *Din* are conducted by three matters – *ma‘arifa* (gnosis), *ahwal* (states) and *a‘mal* (deeds). *Ma‘arif* serves as a principle to produce states which finally result in *a‘mal* – deeds. *Ma‘arif* are just a tree whose branches are states (*ahwal*)

and a 'mal (deeds) are its fruits. By similar processes *sabr* is formed. Its prerequisite is knowledge of things that stabilises the position of man and its fruit is *sabr*. *Sabr* is the trait exclusively of man and not of other creatures.³² Ghazzali further says *sabr* is the firm holding of religious motivations as against the motivations of indecency (*shahwat*). When religious motivations dominate the indecedent and evil motivations then a man is placed among the people of perseverance (*sabirin*).³³ Most of the sufis like Imam Qushari, Imam Ghazzali, Shiekh al-Islam Ansari and Syed Mustafah Urusi do refer to many verses of the Qur'an to explain importance of perseverance. For example:-

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا ۖ وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ

And We made from among them authorities and leaders who kept disseminating guidance by Our Command when they persevered with patience. And they believed in Our Revelations with certitude.³⁴

In *al-Nahl* its reward is stated as:

وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُنَّ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

And those who remain steadfast We shall certainly pay their recompense for their righteous deeds which they used to do.³⁵

In a following verse *al-zumr* this reward is described as uncountable:

إِنَّمَا يُؤَفِّقِي الصَّابِرِينَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

So the steadfast will certainly be given their reward without measure.³⁶

The Prophet (SAAS) says that the best gift from Allah is the gift of *sabr* (perseverance). However man has to pray for it as is the case even in attaining the *iffah* (sanctity of character) and contentment³⁷. Perseverance is described as half of Iman. Hazrat Ali (RA) says that *Iman* consists of four pillars - belief, perseverance, Jihad, and Justice. And perseverance has the same place in it as a head has in one's body. One who has not head has not body and one who has not perseverance has not faith.³⁸

Perseverance is said to be of three types. One is to observe *sabr* in following God's laws and worshipping Him. Second is while confronting the miseries and calamities and the third is to observe perseverance in avoiding prohibitions and unlawful acts.³⁹

It is this perseverance that becomes means of salvation in the Hereafter, Allah's pleasure and going ahead in the religious path. In attaining the spiritual stability *sabr* is to be strengthened through ones attempt towards learning knowledge, understanding the divine texts and constant acts.

(v) Gratefulness (*Shukur*)

As per *Mufardat* of Raghīb Asfahānī *shukr* (gratefulness) means expression about the blessing which one gets from different sources. Even strength of an animal is described as the expression of master's kindness and goodness with him. It is to feel and speak about ones *muhsin* – one who renders kindness upon others.⁴⁰ Both these meanings imply that *shukr* is related to Allah. Here one expresses gratefulness for His blessings. As Allah says:

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ

And proclaim (well) the bounties of your Lord.⁴¹

When *na'mah* (blessing) is received from Allah, His gratefulness is to be offered by man. This should be shown both through one's heart and tongue. *Kufr* (ungratefulness) is described as its opposite. Imam Raghīb says that opposite of *Shukr* which is to forget as well hide the blessing received from Allah. One who wants to put himself in the service or devotion of Allah he needs to observe gratitude whole heartedly. This is desirable in Allah. If one becomes arrogant Allah is disassociated from him. In surah Zumar Allah says:

إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَإِنْ تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَهُ لَكُمْ

If you disbelieve then surely Allah is Self-Sufficient and He does not like disbelief (and ingratitude) for His servants and if you give thanks, (so) He likes it for you.⁴²

Gratitude-*shukur* is of three types. One is gratefulness from ones heart. It is to feel deeply about the blessing. Second is *shukur* through ones tongue. It is praising and admiring the bestower (*muhsin*). Third the gratefulness of one's other organs of human body. This is to be observed as per the nature and level of blessing bestowed upon the person. This implies that to the level one receives blessings to that extent their gratitude is to be realised. The Qur'an instructs about the whole some gratitude repeatedly which is due to Allah from his servant. In Surah al-Nahal Allah states as:

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاشْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ

So always eat of that clean and lawful sustenance which Allah has given you and thank for the favour of Allah if you worship but Him alone.⁴³

In al-Baqarah, Allah says about this gratitude in the following words:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِن طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ

O Believers! Eat of those pure and clean things which We have provided for you and give thanks to Allah if He is the One Whom you worship.⁴⁴

Gratefulness is to be observed towards Allah and His servants. Among the people the parents are specifically mentioned to whom special treatment is to be made.

Parents did render kindness of gratitude at one's stage of weakness and is to be returned back.⁴⁵

The Prophet (SAAS) says that:

One who does not become grateful to the people cannot be grateful to Allah.⁴⁶

In another tradition⁴⁷ of the Prophet (SAAS) saying words of prayer (*Jazak allahu Khaira*) in favour of one who has shown kindness is actually observing gratitude of his bestower. The kindness is to be reciprocated with kindness is the universal principle of Islam. It has wide implications and even the other creatures of the world show the gratefulness towards those who are kind to them.⁴⁸ And whenever it cannot be perfectly done then saying few good words serves as praise for the bestower.

Imam Ghazzali holds that gratefulness is with knowledge, states (*ahwal*) and deeds. Without acquaintance (*ma'rifah*) of the blessing there can hardly be genuine gratefulness and states evolve accordingly in man to form his personality A *salik* visualizes both comforts and calamities from Allah properly and observes his gratitude towards Him.

So at both levels transcendental level- God – and at the temporal level gratitude is desirable. Moreover, it goes sometimes with perseverance (*sabr*). *Shukr* is in terms of receiving good and *sabr* is in terms of receiving trials. Both are a combined act with double aims one is result of blessing and other is result of trials. No *salik* in Islam can ignore this conduct of gratefulness towards Allah and his servants. It, simultaneously, strengthens tawhidic basis of his character towards Him.

VI. Trustfulness (*Tawakkul*)

Tawakkul literally means to trust anybody with humility. That is why *wakil* is called one who is trusted and a work or task is entrusted to him. When it is said to trust in Allah, it is to trust in Almighty with humbleness. The truth, however, is that although there are causes and facts about a task yet one has to depend and trust more in Allah.

In Sufism truthfulness is of much importance. It is given the place which it has in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Imam Ghazali mentions about *tawakul* in his *Ahya* as following:

Tawakul is one of the milestones of Din. It is one of the stations (*maqamat*) of the men of knowledge and faith and one of the higher stages of *muqarabin* (devotees of Allah).⁴⁹

He adds by saying that Tawhid is the essence of tawakkul and it is one of the chapters of Iman. In his commentary on *Risalah Qushairyah*, Shiekh al-Islam Zakiriya Ansari writes:

Tawakul is the necessity of *iman*. If there is no trust in Allah there won't be iman. It is because *iman* is name of Allah's Tawhid. One who trusts in other than Allah he is not in reality a *muwahhid* (believer in Allah) although he agrees to it by tongue.⁵⁰

There are ample verses in the Qur'an which emphasizes the importance of the *tawakkul* in Islamic life. In Surah Aal-i-Imran Allah says:

فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ. إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمْ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ ۗ وَإِنْ يَخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

But once you make up your mind, then place your trust in Allah Surely Allah loves those who trust Him. If Allah helps you, none can overpower you; but if He abandons you taking away all support, then who is it that can help you after Him? And the believers should rely on Allah alone.⁵¹

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

The believers are only those whose hearts, when Allah is mentioned, are filled with awe. And when His Revelations are recited to them, they increase their faith, and their their trust in their Lord alone.⁵²

In one of the Traditions of the Prophet (SAAS) the people who place their trust in Allah are called '*raqiq al-qalab*' (humble hearted) and their abode is Paradise *Jannah* (Paradise)⁵³

In another tradition narrated by Umar who reports that the Prophet said that if you trust in Allah as it ought to be trusted then He will bestow upon you sustenance like those of the birds which leave out in morning hungry and return back to their nests with their bellies filled.⁵⁴ Scholars have discussed amply about this tawakkul in sufi context and called its locus in the heart. If there is trust in Allah in a Muslim, his hardship and increase in sustenance is always from Allah. If it is made dependent upon other means than Allah it is negation of *tawakul*. It does not, however, mean that factors (*asbab*) are of totally ignorable but are to be used reasonably in forming an event. Similarly the causes even if seem self-sufficient yet these get sustained by Allah's trust. Divine hand is powerful in determining the events which is *tawakkul* and it forms the essence of *iman*. Although some sufis emphasized that *kasb* is of least importance in ones living and *tawakkul* is sole source of success yet many give due place to *kasb* and *tadbir* as *Shariah* is in favour of human initiative. Even al-Ghazzali also writes 'that to be away from

multiple factors (leading a deed/event) is against wisdom and tantamount to the ignorance of Allah's law (Sunnah) ⁵⁵

In addition to these doctrines many other principles are propounded by the scholars (including the sufi scholars). These include love of Allah (*ishq-illahi*), His fear (*taqwa*), *muraqabah* (meditation), *mujahadah* (striving) and prayer. Some of them serve directly as complementary to the above mentioned doctrines while others from a distinctive character in the total system of *tasawwuf* in Islam. Allah's love is goal of spiritual life of man. It is attained through the principles of *tawakkul* and *sabr* and man gets communion with God. Similarly fear of Allah – *taqwa* – makes him God-conscious and *muraqabah* goes subsidiary to it as one becomes vigilant towards the presence of Allah and *mujahidah* becomes practical dealing with the affairs of life. Prayer is a silent cure of all spiritual and practical problems when it is made with its proper requisites.

4. Conclusion

From the above discussion on the meaning of mysticism in Islam and its basic doctrines we can conclude that mysticism is related more to esoteric – *batin* – of man. It is the spiritual or internal self-sustained by Divine guidance of Islam. It goes closely with exoteric – *zahir* – aspect of man. No practice of Islam relating to *ibadat* and *ta'at* (social laws) is meaningful till it is not rooted in the spiritual basis of Islam. Islam in essence is an organic whole integrating both spiritual and social in a balanced (*a'tidal*) way. Although various epithets are attributed to this spiritual aspect of life like mysticism, *tasawwuf*, *tariqa*, *saluq* and internal self yet its legitimacy can be safely found in Qur'anic concept of *tazkiyah* (purifying oneself) and *hadith* concept of *ahsan* (richness in devotional life). *Zahir* or practical finds firmness and stability in it. The practical becomes superficial and meaningless if it is not supported by *batin* element of Islam. That is why basic doctrines of it are laid down in Islam. Right intention (*niyah*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), repentance (*tawbah*), perseverance (*sabr*) and gratefulness (*shukr*) form some basic doctrine of this way of life. These don't only set sound foundation of life but also evolve it to its desirable goals. Right intention makes a sound initiative of an act and *ikhlas* (*lillahiyat*) evolves its good character creatively. Whenever an act is affected by wrong temptations or deviation the doctrine of repentance (*tawbah*) safeguards it. Repentance is, in fact, a returning back to the true character of a deed. Many hazards and hardships come in the way of a Muslim's life and it is the resorting to *sabr* (perseverance) that overcomes them. *Sabr* renders a balance and harmony in one's life and protects him from becoming the victim of ill temptations. Similarly *tawakkul* (trustfulness in God) and gratitude

(*shukr*) serve to evolve a deep communion with God by putting exclusive trust in His power (*qudrah*) which implies *tawhid* and is essence of *iman*. *Tawakkul* is to use the means as per one's understanding and capacity in performing deeds and then firmly trusting Allah's power which is its ultimate determining factor. In its broader sense the *tawakkul* is psychological and social solace of human beings otherwise they will indulge in chaos and confusion. Gratitude is both with humans and God. It is a sort of cognition and recognition in humans to render the due of others as well. Hence these doctrines are actually the foundational bases of spiritual life of man. They shape the spiritual character of man that sustains his social and practical (*zahir*) with sound and stable way. Whatsoever it be termed as mysticism, *tasawwuf* or *tariqa*, yet this *batin* (spiritual) side of human life is per se an Islam related concern and development and can hardly seek inspiration and influence from other religions and cults in terms of its basics. No doubt in its chequered history if alien things are found in it these are to be understood in their proper context to promote revival of the true nature or spiritual or mystical life in Islam. In this direction recourse to the study of basic texts of *tasawwuf* in the context of the Qur'an and Sunnah and the *Athar* (sayings) of the Companions are of special importance and the misconceptions and confusions about this esoteric aspect (*tasawwuf*) of Islam can be easily removed. Furthermore, it can lead to reform in *tasawwuf* thought and practices wherever necessary so that it can become widely appealing and acceptable in the contemporary times.

Endnotes and References

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