

Some Essential Concepts of Islamic Spirituality: An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Spirituality is the quality or state of being actively attached with and sensitive towards religion or religious matters; the quality or state of being spiritual. Spirituality is related to the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things. The technical part of spirituality is to understand the concept of spirit and soul which are both abstract and complex to put into words. We do, however, try to make an effort to reach within, too deep into the subject to extract the meanings based on both rationality and experience. Human experience about the soul is subjective. One cannot reify it. We understand the limitations with social sciences, primarily with the abstract concepts. They scarcely permit decisive definitions. This may be the reason why elaborations and comprehensive explanations related to these abstract ideas give more comfort to academicians. In the following pages, a humble attempt has been made to elucidate these concepts and mankind's progress to realize the spirituality that lies in comprehending human soul and the questions that arise with it which primarily includes the problem of defining 'soul'.

Keywords: *Īmān, Itā'ah, Taqwā, Ihsān, mahabbah, shukr, khushu', Sharīah, Tariqah, Haqiqah, Ma'rifah, Hāl, Maqamāt, Tawbah, Wara', Zuhd, Faqr, Šabr, Tawakkul, Riḍa'.*

1.1 Philosophical and Religious Perspectives of the 'Soul'

There are both philosophical and religious definitions of the 'soul'. Both these knowledge traditions perceive it differently. The former perceives it rationally through theological discussions and the latter as part of belief. From the very beginning scholars have made assumptions regarding the concept of soul. Greek scholars like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle considered it as incorporeal, eternal and

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divine aspect of human being. Socrates is said to have advised the fellow Athenians to work for progress in the soul than in body organs because bodily goods are dependent on such excellence. Almost in all religious traditions, humans are portrayed as beings with souls, except that of Buddhist tradition which is silent about the concept of God and soul.

In Islam, soul is something which humans can neither see nor understand, yet we believe in it for we see its effects. The soul is one of the greatest proofs so of the existence of God. It also serves as refutation of the materialists and naturalists who always desire tangible evidence so that they may perceive with their senses to believe in the soul, although they cannot perceive it with their senses, rather through its effects. The soul is one of the heavenly secrets. No one knows its true reality save Allah, and any attempt to investigate it is futile.¹

Allah says in the *Qur'an*:

“And they ask you (O Muhammad) about the soul. Say, ‘The soul is of the affair [i.e., concern] of my *Rabb*. And you [i.e., mankind] have not been given of knowledge except little.’”²

There is a *Hadith* reported by Abdullah ibn Mas‘ūd:

“Verily the creation of every one of you is brought together in the mother’s womb as a drop of semen for forty days, then it becomes a clot for the same period, then it becomes a blob of flesh for the same period. Then the angel will be sent unto it to blow into it a spirit, and the angel is ordered (to carry out) with four instructions, to write down its livelihood, the span of life, its deeds, and whether it is wretched or fortunate.”³

1.2 Four Essential Components of the Soul

i) *Qalb*⁴: It is connoted in two parts. The first part is a piece of flesh in the chest cavity called heart, which is hollow in interior, filled up with blood and which is a source of *Rūh* or life. The second meaning of *Qalb* is the soul in its immaterial aspect of formlessness.⁵

ii) *Rūh*⁶: It is a material thing within the heart, which vibrates the whole body like the current of electricity, and runs through the veins of the body. It is called life. It is the processing unit of bodily capabilities like the power of touch, hearing, sight, smell and the power of the other limbs.⁷

iii) *'Aql*: The first meaning of *'Aql* is the intellect by which the true natures of material objects are known. The second meaning of *'aql* is the power to understand esoteric phenomena.⁹

iv) *Nafs*¹⁰: In its unrefined state, “the ego (*Nafs*) is the lowest dimension of man’s inward existence, his animal nature.” *Nafs* is an important concept in the Islamic tradition, especially within Sufism and the discipline of gnosis. *Nafs* means inner self- the evil side of our soul.¹¹

It has two interpretations. The first interpretation is passion or baser and lower self. Passion is a comprehensive word consisting of greed, anger and other evil attributes. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: Your greatest enemy is your passion lying by your two sides. The second meaning of *Nafs* is the ‘soul’.¹²

1.2.1 Three Principal Stages of *Nafs*

They are specifically mentioned in the *Qur’an*. They are stages in the process of development, refinement and mastery of the *nafs*.¹³

- i) *Nafs-i-Ammārah*¹⁴: This is the castigated soul; it will by its very nature direct its possessor towards vice. None could be rid of its evil without assistance from Allah. The Quran says: “Nor do I absolve my own self (of blame), the (human) soul is certainly prone to evil, unless my Lord bestow His mercy, but surely my Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”¹⁵
And also it says: “And were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah upon you, not one of you would ever have been pure.”¹⁶

In its Primitive Stage, the *nafs* incites us to commit evil. This is the *nafs* as the lower self, the base instincts. Islam emphasizes the importance of fighting *nafs* because Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, after returning from a war, “We now return from the small struggle (*Jihad-i-Asghar*) to the big struggle (*Jihad-i-Akbar*)”. His Companions asked, “O! Prophet of God, what is the big struggle?” Prophet ﷺ replied, “The struggle against *nafs*.”

The *Qur’ān* enjoins the faithful, “to hinder the *nafs* from lust”¹⁷ and the *Hadīth* warns that, “The worst enemy you have is (the *nafs*) between your sides.”

- ii) *Nafs-i-Lawwāmah*¹⁸: In *Surah al-Qiyāmah*, the *Qur’ān* mentions, “The self-accusing *nafs*”¹⁹. This is the stage where “the conscience is awakened and the self accuses one for listening to one’s ego. One repents and asks for forgiveness. Here, the *nafs* is inspired by our heart, sees the results of our actions, agrees with our brain, sees our weaknesses and aspires to perfection.”²⁰

This stage is when the person makes mistakes, but continuously questions his actions and feels guilt. He is weak but he has faith. He struggles to control his desires and whims.²¹

The struggle with one's soul is the biggest struggle for a believer. The believer has to check upon himself to decide which of his emotions and wishes are acceptable and which are evil. He had to stand against the evil instigations of his soul such as selfishness, jealousy, arrogance and greed.²²

The *Qur'an* says, "I do call to witness the Resurrection Day, and I do call to witness the self-reproaching spirit (*Nafs al-Lawwāmah*)."²³

iii) *Nafs-i-Muṭma'innah*²⁴:

In *Sūrah al-Fajr*, the *Qur'ān* mentions, "O! the *nafs* at peace."²⁵

This is the ideal stage of ego for Sufis. At this level, one is firm in one's faith and leaves the bad manners behind. The soul becomes tranquil, at peace. At this stage, all Sufis have relieved themselves of all materialism and worldly problems and are satisfied with the will of God.²⁶

This is the satisfied Soul. This is the noblest state. The satisfied soul finds its peace and consolation in the *Qur'an*, prayer and the company of the righteous. The *Nafs-i-Muṭma'innah* has such a deep conviction in Allah and the Last Day that it is never upset by the sorrows of this world.²⁷

The *Qur'an* says:

"To the righteous soul will be said, "O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back thou to thy Lord, well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him! "Enter thou, then among My devotees! "Yea, enter thou My Heaven!"²⁸

1.3 Islamic Spirituality

The concept of Spirituality in Islam is based on the principle of God-realization. It is from God where all virtues emerge. And when man's contact with God is established, in the world of his feelings, at the psychological level, an unseen, inner revolution is brought about which is called Spirituality.²⁹

This finds expression in the *Qur'ān* in these words:

"God is the light of the Heavens and the earth. The metaphor of His light is that of a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, the glass like a brilliant star, lit

by a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would well-nigh glow forth even though the fire did not touch it. Light upon light! God guides to His light, whom He wills. And God sets forth parables to men, and God has knowledge of all things.”³⁰

This verse makes it clear that on the one hand, God is the source of inspiration, and on the other, He is the consciousness of Spirituality (God-consciousness) with which man is born. In this way when these two things come together, Islamic Spirituality comes into existence. This is indeed another name for the awakening of God-consciousness. When it reaches its highest stage the believer’s realization of God comes to that point where he begins to feel consciously in his worship, that he is seeing God and that if he is not seeing God, God is seeing him. If the first type of experience is called direct spiritual experience, the second-type may be termed indirect spiritual experience. As the *Qur’an* tells us, “For God is always close to us—closer than the life blood in the Jugular vein”.³¹

By total surrender to God, the soul can realize nearness to God. Due to his high state of receptivity, he reaches the stage where he is enabled, in the words of the Prophet ﷺ: “To see with God’s eye, to speak with God’s tongue, to walk with God’s foot, to hear with the ear of God.” Then, all limitations vanish and his day and night are spent in God’s neighborhood. All this can be felt, not described in words.³²

The beginning of all sorts of spiritual activity is in fact the process of *Tafakkur*³³ and *Tadabbur*.³⁴

Man possesses a double personality. Therefore, two types of provision are to be constantly supplied for him to survive; one being physical provision, the other being spiritual provision. The center of the acquisition of physical provision, according to the *Qur’an*, is this earth³⁵ and the center of the acquisition of spiritual provision is the Being of God. That is why this provision is called ‘Lord’s sustenance’³⁶ or ‘spiritual provision’ is, in actual fact, the result of a contact with the external source of sustenance – that is, God. This goal is achieved entirely through mental action. This mental activity is called *tafakkur* and *Tadabbur* or contemplation (remembrance of God, thoughts of God) in the *Qur’an* and this is the basis of receiving Spirituality or *Rabbaniyat* in Islam.

Contemplation is the source of Islamic Spirituality—contemplative Spirituality—which is received through a thinking process rather than the cessation of intellectual activity. In fact, the process of contemplation or *tafakkur* and *tadabbur* as mentioned in the *Qur’an*, is the beginning of any spiritual activity.³⁷

*Tawassum*³⁸: The universe according to the *Qur'ān* has been fashioned by God in a way that it may become a source of spiritual inspiration for man. According to the *Qur'an*, it is the quality of *tawassum*³⁹ that enables one to find inspiration in the universe: Surely in this are signs for those who examine. That is, to observe the phenomena of the universe in order to draw lessons from them and receive spiritual nourishment—*Rabbaniyat*—from the physical events.

A truly religious person is able to convert physical events into spiritual lessons through the process of contemplation and reflection—*tafakkur* and *tadabbur*. The *Qur'an* has described how godly people continuously derive such sustenance from their environment, thus maintaining their intellectual and spiritual well-being. This is elaborated in the *Qur'an* as follows:

In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are signs for men of understanding; those that remember God when standing, sitting, and lying down, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth (saying): ‘Lord, You have not created these in vain. Glory be to You! Save us from the torment of the fire, Lord.’⁴⁰

The *Qur'an* further enlightens that this intellectual process has two different directions — *Al-Anfus* and *Al-Āfāq*. *Al-Anfus* literally means soul, that is, inner world; *Al-Āfāq* literally means the universe, that is, external world.

When a believer sees the universe functioning in a perfect manner and finds that all the events in this vast universe always lead towards a meaningful result, he realizes that man’s life too must have a meaningful end. This makes him exclaim: “O our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose. Glory be to you! Give us salvation in the life to come.”⁴¹

Thus, the universe is a manifestation of God’s attributes. Hence, it is a source of spiritual nourishment for those who want to lead a divine life on earth. For them, the whole universe becomes an important means of reaching spiritual perfection. This spiritual development continues throughout their earthly life till a time comes when they attain that degree of Spirituality, which the *Qur'an* calls the *Rabbani* soul. Therefore, a believer is not supposed to shun his normal life in order to lead a life of observation and contemplation. Islam does not advocate withdrawing from the world. What is desired from him, according to Islam, is that while fulfilling all his duties, his heart should not be attached to worldly affairs. In this way he continues to gain spiritually.⁴²

Apart from the parts of the soul, and the spiritual activity of *tafakkur* and *tadabbur*, there are some important aspects of Islamic Spirituality which are pivotal for attaining the goal of Spirituality.

1.4 Aspects of Islamic Spirituality

*Tazkiyah*⁴³: It means abandoning a life of ignorance and wretchedness and leading a life ruled by the conscience.⁴⁴ The *Qur'an* says, "*Tazkiyah* alone can lead one to the Heaven."⁴⁵

Allah took a covenant from all humans before they came to earth that they would worship Him and Him alone⁴⁶. *Tazkiyah* is fulfillment and return to the first covenant between humans and Allah. Allah got a covenant from all human souls before they were created that they would obey Him. When humans commit sins they are breaking that covenant. *Tazkiyah* is a process that helps humans stick to their part of the covenant.⁴⁷

*Dhikr*⁴⁸: It means living with divine consciousness. When you have attained this state of consciousness, at every moment you will be in a state of *dhikr*, even though you may not be uttering any specific words. The *Qur'an* repeatedly tells us to remember God. This is what is known as *Dhikrullah*. One should remember God as often as one can. When your own divine feelings, your remembrance of and love and praise for God take expression in words that is *dhikr*.⁴⁹

Remembrance is a powerful support on the path to God (Glorious and Majestic). Indeed, it is the very foundation of this (Sufi) path. No one reaches God save by the continual remembrance of Him. There are two kinds of remembrance: that of the tongue and that of the heart. The servant attains perpetual remembrance of the heart by making vocal remembrance. It is the remembrance of the heart, however, that yields true effect. When a person makes remembrance with his tongue and his heart (simultaneously), he attains perfection in his wayfaring.

The greatest source of pleasure is in the remembrance of God. It is this reality, which finds expression in the following verse of the *Qur'an*: "It is only in the remembrance of God that hearts are comforted."⁵⁰

God Most High says, "O you who believe, make remembrance of God abundantly"⁵¹ On the authority of Abu al-Darda, the Messenger ﷺ of God is reported to have said: "The best of your good works, the purest of them in your Lord's sight, the highest of

them in your ranks, that which is better than giving gold and silver in charity and fighting your enemies and striking their necks is the ‘remembrance of God’”.

There are various methods of performing *Dhikr* and *Muraqabah*, for instance, (i) Some sit and repeat the word Allah by inhaling breath from left side; (ii) Others fold the legs and repeat the word mentally from right and then from left; (iii) Some inhale, meditating on ‘la (not) from navel and draw the breath up to the left shoulder, then think on Allah (God) in memory (brain) and exhale saying ‘illallah “but God” from the left side; (iv) Some close the eyes and the lips and mentally repeat Allah, the hearer Allah, the seer, Allah, the knower; (v) First, from the navel to the breast, then upward; then imagine it in an abstract sense beyond the body, (vi) Allah, from the right side, then from the left; (vii) *la ilāha*, exhaling, and *illallah* inhaling; and (viii) By counting a number of times on a rosary, while meditating or repeating a sacred word. The attention must be fixed on that word so much so that all other thoughts and sensible images disappear from the mind. Among the words selected for recitation are *la ilāha illallah* (there is no God but Allah).⁵²

*Khuluq*⁵³: God Most High says, “Verily you (O Muhammad) are upon a noble character”.⁵⁴ On the authority of Anas, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is reported to have said, “The one among the believers who has the greatest faith is the one of the finest character.”

It is clear, then, that fine moral character is the most excellent virtue of the servant and the one by which his inner nature is known. Man is veiled by his body, revealed by his character.

Khuluq forms an important aspect of Spirituality and finds practical implication in the Sufi literature. To mention some, Al-Wasiti stated, “God described him as being upon a noble character because he sacrificed this world and the Hereafter, being content with God Most High.” He also said, “Noble character means that one neither disputes with others, nor is disputed by them because he possesses complete inner knowledge of God Most High.”

Al-Ḥusayn b. Mansur explained: “The meaning of noble character is that the harshness of men does not affect you once you have become attentive to God.”

Abu Sa‘īd al-Kharraz noted: “Noble character means that you have no aspiration other than God Most High.”

Al-Kattani asserted: “Sufism is moral character. Whoever surpasses you in moral character has surpassed you in Sufism.”⁵⁵

Ṣīdīq⁵⁶: The word *Ṣādiq* (truthful one) is derived from *Sidq* (truthfulness). The word *Ṣiddīq* (exceedingly truthful, veracious) is the intensified form of it, being he who is pervaded by truthfulness. The lowest degree of truthfulness is that one’s inner being and outward actions are in harmony. The *Ṣādiq* is one who is truthful in word. The *Ṣiddīq* is one who is truthful in all his words, deeds, and inward states.⁵⁷

God Most High says, “O you who believe, fear God and be with the truthful ones”⁵⁸ Truthfulness is the supporting pillar of this path (path of sufism / guidance). By acquiring it, comes the perfection on the path, and through it comes its order. It comes after the degree of Prophethood, as God Most High says, “those who obey God and the Messenger are in the company of those God has blessed – the Prophets and the veracious.”⁵⁹

On the authority of ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd, the Prophet ﷺ stated, “If a servant remains continuously truthful and is intent on truthfulness, it will be written with God that he is veracious, and if he remains continuously deceitful and is intent on deceit, it will be written with God that he is deceitful.”

Khawf⁶⁰: God most High says, “They call on their Lord in fear and hope.”⁶¹

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah the Messenger of God ﷺ is reported to have declared, “One who weeps out of fear of God Most High will not enter the fire. [Moreover], dust from the path of God will never combine in the nostrils of a servant with the smoke of Hell.”

Anas bin Malik reported that the Messenger of God ﷺ asserted, “If you knew what I know, you would laugh little and cry much.”

Abu ‘Ali ad-Daqqāq explained the different stages of *Khawf*, “Fear has differing stages: *Khawf*, *Khashiyah*, and *Haybah* (fear, dread, and awe), *Khawf* is one of the conditions of faith and its criterion, for God Most High says, ‘Fear Me if you are believers’⁶². *Khashiyah* is one of the conditions of outer knowledge, for God Most High says, ‘Truly they fear God, among His servants, who are learned’⁶³. And *Haybah* is one of the conditions of inner knowledge, for God Most High says, ‘God bids you beware (only) of Himself’.⁶⁴

Further, Abu al-Qāsim al-Hakim noted, “Fear is of two types: terror (*Rahbah*) and fear (*Khashiyah*). The possessor of *Rahbah* takes refuge in flight when he is afraid, but the possessor of *Khashiyah* takes refuge in the Lord.” It is correct that it is said that

the words *Rahbah* (to stand in terror) and *Haraba* (to flee) have one meaning, just as is the case with *Jadhaba* (to attract) and *Jabadha*. When one flees (*Haraba*), he is attracted to his own desire, like the monks (*Ruhban*) who follow their desires. But if their restraint is the rein of knowledge and founded on the truth of the law, then it is fear (*Khashiyah*).⁶⁵

Mujāhadah⁶⁶: God Most High says, “And those who strive for our sake, we will certainly guide them to our paths. God is with those who do right.”⁶⁷

On the authority of Abu Sa’īd al-Khudri it is reported that when the Messenger of God ﷺ was asked about the best kind of striving (*Jihad*), he answered: “It is a just word spoken to a tyrant ruler.”

Further, great Sufis stress upon striving as:

Abu ‘Ali ad-Daqqāq declared, “God will beautify the inner faculties with contemplation for one who adorns his outer being with the striving, for God Most High says, ‘And those who strive in us, We will certainly guide them to Our paths’” (*Al-Qur’an*-29:69).

Al-Sirri said, “O young men! Strive earnestly before you reach my age, when you will become as negligent as I.”

Ibrahim bin Adham observed, “A man attains the rank of the righteous only after passing through these six steps: (1) He must close the door of bounty and open the door of hardship. (2) He must close the door of dignity and open the door of humility. (3) He must close the door of repose and open the door of striving. (4) He must close the door of sleep and open the door of vigilance. (5) He must close the door of wealth and open the door of poverty. (6) He must close the door of worldly expectation and open the door of preparedness for death.”⁶⁸

Wilāyah⁶⁹: Allah uses this word to refer to Himself in the verse: “Allah is the *Wali* of those who believe and takes them from the darkness into light....” (*Al-Qur’an*- 2:257).

“... Allah is the *Wali* of those who have faith” (*Al-Qur’a:n*-3:68). “... Allah is the *Wali* of the righteous” (*Al-Qur’a:n*-45:19).⁷⁰

The word *Wali* (saint) has two meanings. One of them derives from the paradigm *fa’il* with a passive meaning. That is, God (May He be exalted) takes possession (*Yatawalla*) of the saint’s affairs. He does not give him charge over himself even for an instant. God takes over caring for him.

The second meaning derives from *fā’il* with an intensified active sense. This applies to the one who actively undertakes worship of God and obedience to Him such that

his acts of worship constantly succeed each other without any intervening rebelliousness. Both meanings must be present for the saint to be a true saint; his fulfillment of God's rights over him must be performed fully while God's constant guarding and preserving of him, in good times and bad, must also be present. Anyone who acts in a manner objectionable to the divine law is deluded and deceived.

One of the attributes of the saint is that he has no fear, for fear is anticipating some disagreeable event that might come or expecting that something beloved might pass away in the future. The saint is concerned only with the present moment. He has no future to fear. The saint also feels no grief because grief is a hardship of the heart. How could one who feels the glow of contentedness and the pleasures of being in harmony with the divine law grieve? God Most High says, "Behold! There is no fear upon the saints of God, nor do they grieve."⁷¹

On the authority of 'A'isha the Prophet ﷺ stated, "God Most High says, 'Whoever harms a saint has called forth My battle against him. A servant, best draws near to Me by performing the obligations I have enjoined on him. He continues to draw near to Me by means of supererogatory acts of worship until I love him. I hesitate in doing nothing as I hesitate in taking the spirit of My believing servant, for he abhors death, and I abhor offending him, but there is no escape from it.'"

Sainthood further finds mention in Sufi literature of great Sufis. Yaḥyā bin Mu'ādh declared, "The saint is a fragrant plant placed in the earth by God. The truthful takes in his fragrance and it comes into their hearts so that they long for their Master. Then they increase their worship according to their different natures."

1.5 Methods of Spiritual Training

The methods that Islam lays down for spiritual development rest, in addition to faith (*Iman*), on five pillars.

Ṣalāh⁷²: The first is the *Ṣalāh*, which brings man into communion with Allah five times a day, reviving his remembrance, reiterating his fear, developing his love, reminding him of this divine command again, and thus preparing him for obedience to Allah. Five obligatory prayers are offered in congregation so that the whole community and society may be prepared to journey on the path of spiritual development.

Ṣawm⁷³: The second is the *Ṣawm*, which for a full month, every year trains each man individually, and the Muslim community as a whole, in righteousness and self-restraint; it enables society, the rich and the poor alike, to experience hunger, and prepares people to undergo any hardships in their search to please Allah.

Zakāh⁷⁴: The third is *Zakāh*, which develops the sense of monetary sacrifice, sympathy and cooperation among Muslims. There are people who wrongly interpret *Zakāh* as a tax; in fact, the spirit underlying *Zakāh* is entirely different from that of a tax. The real meaning of *Zakāh* is sublimity and purification. By using this word, Islam seeks to impress on man the fact that inspired by a true love of Allah, the monetary help which he renders to his brethren will uplift and purify his soul.

Hajj⁷⁵: The fourth is the *Hajj* which aims at fostering the universal brotherhood of the faithful, based on the worship of Allah, and which results in a worldwide movement of responding to the call of Truth.⁷⁶

Jihād⁷⁷: The last is *Jihād* that is, exerting oneself to the utmost to disseminate the word of Allah and to make it supreme, and to remove all the impediments to Islam through tongue or pen or sword. The aim is to live a life of dedication to the cause of Allah and, if necessary, to sacrifice one's life in fulfilling this mission. This is the highest Spirituality, rooted in the real world, which Islam wants to cultivate. Life-affirmation based on goodness and piety, and not life-denial, is what Islam stands for. And this lends a unique character to Islam.⁷⁸

1.6 Way to Spirituality

In addition to the above mentioned methods to develop Spirituality, the way to Spirituality includes:

Īmān⁷⁹: The first necessity for progression along the path of spiritual development is *īmān*. The mind and heart of a man should always be aware of that Allah alone is His master, Sovereign and Deity. Seeking His pleasure should be the aim of all his endeavors. This should be a firm conviction, based not merely on the intellect, but also an acceptance by will. The stronger and deeper this conviction, the more profound a man's faith will be.⁸⁰

Itā'ah⁸¹: The second stage is that of *Itā'ah*, meaning that man gives up his independence and accepts subservience to Allah. Man should not only acknowledge Allah as his Lord and Sovereign but should actually submit before Him and fashion his entire life in obedience to Him.⁸²

*Taqwā*⁸³: The third stage is that of *Taqwā*. It means, fear of God. It consists in a practical manifestation of one's faith in Allah in one's daily life. Among the community of believers, some are superior to others; and this superiority is a direct result of their own strivings. It is a superiority linked to *īmān*, the strength and depth of faith. A living faith drives the one who possesses it to shield himself from whatever displeases Allah. This shield in Arabic is called *Taqwā*. It has been variously translated as "Fear of God", "piety", as well as "God-consciousness", and it carries all these meanings and more.⁸⁴

Taqwā also means desisting from everything which Allah has forbidden or has disapproved of; man must be in a state of readiness to undertake all that Allah has commanded, and to observe the distinctions between lawful and unlawful, right and wrong, and good and bad in life. God most High says, "Verily the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most God-fearing."⁸⁵

Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī declared, "The God-fearing person is one who does not taint his outward being with resistance or his inwardness with superfluous matters. He stands with God in a station of harmony."

*Iḥsān*⁸⁶: The last and the highest stage is that of *Iḥsān*.

Iḥsān means "Perfection" and "Excellence". It is a matter of taking one's inner faith (*īmān*) and reflecting it in both deed and action, a sense of social responsibility borne from religious convictions.⁸⁷

Iḥsān, meaning "to do things beautifully", is one of the three dimensions of the Islamic religion, the other two being *Islam* and *Īmān*. In contrast to the emphases of *Islam* (what one should do) and *Īmān* (why one should do), the concept of *Iḥsān* is primarily associated with intention. One who "does what is beautiful" is called a *Muḥsin*. It is generally held that a person can only achieve true *Iḥsān* with the help and guidance of God, who governs all things.

Ihsan is the highest stage of spiritual advancement. At this stage the devotee has such a realization of the religious truths which amounts almost to their direct vision. This quality of *Ihsan*, which was later termed as *Mushāhadah* (direct seeing) by the Sufis, is described in the tradition by the Prophet ﷺ as: "*Iḥsān* is to adore Allah as though thou do see Him for even if thou do not see Him, He, nonetheless, sees thee."⁸⁸

Such a person thus begins to like what is liked by the Lord and to dislike what God dislikes. The man should then not only avoid evil, for it displeases his Lord, but should use all his powers to eradicate it from the face of the earth; he should not be content with adorning himself with the good which Allah wants to flourish but should also strive to attain and propagate it in the world, even at the cost of his life. A man who reaches this stage attains the highest pinnacle of Spirituality and is nearest to Allah.⁸⁹

This path of spiritual development is not meant for individuals only, but for communities and nations as well. Like individuals, a community, after passing through the various stages of spiritual elevation may reach the ultimate stage of *Ihsān* a state also, through all its administrative machinery, may become *Mu'min* (faithful), *Muslim* (obedient), *Muttaqi* (God-conscious) and *Muhsin* (godly). In fact, the ideals aimed at by Islam are fully achieved only when the whole community accepts them and a *Muttaqi* and *Muhsin* state comes into existence. The highest form of civilization, based on goodness, is then reached.⁹⁰

The Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, '*Ihsan* is that you should Worship Allah as though you are seeing Him.

1.7 Concept of Islamic Spirituality

The concept of Spirituality in Islam promotes that God is the treasure house of all virtues. There are the three important concepts which further strengthen the Islamic Spirituality. The three concepts are chosen not only because they are theoretically important, but also because they are practically rewarding. If we want to grow spiritually, we can easily do this by developing these qualities in our lives.⁹¹ These include:

Mahabbah⁹²: Love for Allah is a very important concept which can help us practically develop our spirituality, and become closer to Him.⁹³

God's love for the servant is His desire to bestow blessings specifically on a given servant, just as His mercy for him is His more general desire to bestow blessings. So mercy carries a more specific meaning than desire, and love carries a more specific meaning than mercy. God's desire to extend rewards and blessings to the servant is called "mercy," and His desire to confer nearness and exalted states on him is called "love." God's desire is one attribute that takes on different names according to the different acts to which they are connected. If it is connected with punishment, it is

called “wrath.” If it is connected to universally bestowed blessings, it is called “mercy.” If it is connected with particularly bestowed blessings, it is called “love”.

God Most High says, “O you who believe, whoever among you turns away from his religion, [know that in his stead] God will bring forth a people He loves and who love Him”⁹⁴.

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “He who loves to meet God, God will love to meet him. And he who does not love to meet God, God will not love to meet him.”

Abu ‘Ali al-Rudhbari finds importance of *Mahabbah* in Spirituality and states, “Love is conformity (to the wishes of the Beloved).”

Further, Abu ‘Abdullah al-Qurashi declared, “The inner reality of love means that you give all of yourself to the One you love until nothing remains of you for you.”

Abu ‘Ali ad-Daqqāq asserted, “Love is sweetness, but its inner reality is bewilderment.” He also said, “Passionate love [*ishq*] is exceeding all limits in *Mahabbah*.”

Shukr⁹⁵: It is a very significant concept. It is a primary issue related to the core of *Īmān*. It is also practical and uncomplicated. Moreover, if we are thankful, we can achieve many things as Allah says in the *Qur’an*:

When Moses said to his people, ‘Remember Allah’s blessing upon you when He delivered you from Pharaoh’s clan who inflicted a terrible torment on you, and slaughtered your sons and spared your women, and in that there was a great test from your Lord.’ And when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are grateful, I will surely enhance you (in blessing), but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe.’ *Al-Qur’an*- (14: 6 - 7).

The real nature of thankfulness, in the view of the people who have attained the truth, is recognition of the bounty of the Bounty-Giver, in an attitude of submissiveness and in accordance with this saying, “God (May He be exalted) is described as thankful (*Shakur*.) in the sense of widely extending His favors, not in a literal sense.”

This means that He rewards the servant for thankfulness. So, He has designated the recompense for thankfulness as thankfulness (on His part), just as He has stated, “The recompense for an offense is one equal thereto.” *Al-Qur’an*-(42: 40).

Thankfulness of the servant, in the true sense, includes both mentions by the tongue and affirmation by the heart of the Lord’s bestowal of blessings. Thankfulness is

divided thus: thankfulness by the tongue, which is recognition of blessings with a degree of submission, thankfulness of the body and limbs, which means taking on the characteristics of fidelity and service, and thankfulness of the heart, which is withdrawn to the plane of witnessing by constantly observing respect. It is said that the learned are thankful with their words, the worshippers are thankful in their deeds, and the Gnostics are thankful in their steadfastness toward Him in all of their states.

“Thankfulness is attributing the blessings to their proper owner with a quality of submission.” God Most High says, “If you are thankful, I will give you more.”⁹⁶

Al-Junayd observed, “Thankfulness is that you do not regard yourself as worthy of blessings.” Ruwaym, a great Sufi saint explained, “thankfulness is that you exhaust all your capacities [in the effort to give thanks].” It is said, “the thankful one [*Shākir*] is he who is thankful for what is, and the very thankful one [*Shakur*] is he who is thankful for what is not.” It is said, “the *Shākir* is thankful for a gift, and the *Shakur*, is thankful for rejection.”⁹⁷

*Khushu*⁹⁸: God Most High says, “Successful indeed are the believers, those who humble themselves in their prayers”⁹⁹

On the authority of ‘Abdullah bin Mas‘ūd the Prophet ﷺ declared, “The one who has even the smallest amount of arrogance in his heart will never enter Paradise.” Then a man observed, “O Messenger of God, man dearly wishes that his garments should be beautiful.” So he said, “God Most High is beautiful and loves beauty; arrogance is turning away from God, and scorning man.”

Humility is submission to God, and submissiveness is surrender to God and forswearing objection to divine wisdom and is a guiding tenant of all Sufis.

Muhammad bin ‘Ali at-Tirmidhi explained, “Humility is this: if the fires of a man’s passions abate and the smoke of his breast subsides and the light of glorification shines in his heart, then his passion dies and his heart lives and all his limbs are humbled.”

Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī noted, “Humility is constant fear accompanying the heart.”

When al-Junayd was asked about humility he replied, “(It is) that the hearts abase themselves before the One who knows the hidden matters.”¹⁰⁰

Thus, in Islamic Spirituality it is very important to be humble, not just as a claim that we may utter without firm belief, but as a deep sense of nothingness.

1.8 *Tasawwuf*

The Spiritual training for the progression on the path of Spirituality is achieved through *Tasawwuf* which is the science of Islamic Spirituality and it can be explained from the perspective of the three basic religious attitudes mentioned in the *Qur'an* and discussed above: *Islam*, *Īmān*, *Ihsān*. The attitude of *Islam*, which has given its name to the Islamic religion, means submission to the will of Allah. This is the minimum qualification for being a Muslim. Technically, it implies an acceptance, even if only formal, of the teachings contained in the *Qur'an* and the traditions of the Prophet ﷺ. *Īmān* is a more advanced stage in the field of religion than *Islam*. It designates a further penetration into the heart of religion and a firm faith in its teachings. *Ihsān*, the third quality, is the highest stage of spiritual advancement. At this stage the devotee has such a realization of the religious truths which amounts almost to their direct vision. This quality of *Ihsān* is described in the Tradition by the Prophet ﷺ as: “*Ihsan* is to adore Allah as though thou do see Him for even if thou do not see Him, He, nonetheless, sees thee.”

According to these three stages of religiosity, Sufism may be defined as the spiritual progress of a devotee from the initial stage of *Islam* to the final stage of *Ihsān*.¹⁰¹

1.8.1 Stages of *Tasawwuf*

There are four stages of practice and understanding in *Tasawwuf*; *Sharī'ah*, *Īrīqah*, *Haqīqah* and *Ma'rīfah*.¹⁰²

Sharī'ah¹⁰³: It is the basic foundation for the next three stages. In Arabic, *Sharī'ah* means “road/ path; it is a clear track, a well-travelled route that anyone can follow”. It is the stage wherein a devotee has to follow strictly the rules of religion. At this stage, the devotee learns how to annihilate himself. This is also called *Fana fi al-Dhaat*. This happens in the natural state of every human being living in the world, technically called '*Alam-i-Naasut*. But the Sufi *Fana* means self-mortification before actual death.

The *Sharī'ah* consists of teachings of *Islam*, basically the morality and ethics found in all religions. It provides guidance to us for living properly in this world. Trying to follow Sufism without following the *Sharī'ah* is like trying to build a house on a

foundation of salt. Without an ordered life built on solid moral and ethical principles, mysticism cannot flourish.

*Tarīqah*¹⁰⁴: It literally means the path in the desert that the Bedouin would follow to travel from oasis to oasis. This path is not clearly marked like a highway; it is not even a visible road. To find your way in the trackless desert, you need to know the area intimately, or you need a guide who knows the destination and is familiar with the local landmarks. Just as the *Sharīah* refers to the external dimension of religion, the *Tarīqah* refers to the inner practices of Sufism. The guide you need in order to find your way is the *Shaykh*, or Sufi teacher. The *Sharīah* makes the outer day-to-day life clean and attractive. The *Tarīqah* is designed to make the inner life clean and pure. What is lawful at one level may not be lawful at another level of understanding. For example, the outer practice of fasting is required by religious law, but according to the Sufi path, one of the essential reasons for fasting is to develop self-discipline and to control the insatiable ego. If a person is proud of fasting, the fast is still technically lawful, but in terms of the Sufi path, the fast is a failure.

Tarīqah is the stage wherein a devotee has to follow blindly the commands of his mentor which is termed as *Fana fi al-Shaykh*. Herein, the aspirant starts traversing the path of spiritual journey leading to the world of angels, technically called '*Ālam-i-Malakut*.

*Ma`rifah*¹⁰⁵: It is the stage wherein a devotee follows rigidly the teaching of the holy Prophet. ﷺ In the language of the Sufis it is called *Fana fi al-Rasūl*. Here, the devotee attains some power; divine knowledge dawns on him; his soul is strengthened enabling him to take strides further toward the "world of pre-destination," called '*Ālam-i-Jabarut*.¹⁰⁶

God Most High says, "They have not estimated God as He deserves to be estimated"¹⁰⁷.

In the usage of the scholars, *Ma`rifah* is *`ilm* (knowledge). Thus, in their opinion all *`ilm* is *Ma`rifah*, all *Ma`rifah* is *`ilm*, and everyone who is *`ālim* (knowledgeable) with respect to God is an *`arif* (Gnostic) and vice versa. But among the Sufis, *Ma`rifah* is the attribute of one who knows God (May He be exalted) by His names and attributes and is truthful toward God by his deeds, who then purifies himself of base qualities and defects, who stands long at the door, and who withdraws his

heart continually (from worldly matters). Then, he enjoys a goodly nearness to God, who verifies him as true in all his states. The temptations of his soul stop, and he does not incline to any thought that would incite him to other-than-God for, when he becomes a stranger to men and is free of the calamities of his soul, when he is purified of joy in, and concern for, other-than-God, when his intimate prayers with God Most High in secret are constant, when he is sure in every glance of Him of his return to Him, and when God inspires him by making him aware of His secrets concerning his destiny, he is, at that time, called a “gnostic” (*‘Arif*) and his state is called “gnosis” (*ma’rifah*). In short, the degree of gnosis he will reach is determined by the degree to which he is estranged from his self.¹⁰⁸

*Haqīqah*¹⁰⁹: In Sufi terminology, it is called *Fanā fi Allah*. The goal of the journey is reached and the aspirant unites with truth. This state of the world is called *‘Alam-i-Lahut*. It may also be noted that *Haqīqah* is also named as *Wasl*.¹¹⁰

1.8.2 Main Stages of *Ma’rifah*

Among the given four, *Ma’rifah* is concerned mainly with immediate experience and forms the path of Sufis. This path is described as a journey by Sufis. The path is known as “path of *ṭarīqah*.” It has seven stages which are called *maqamat*.¹¹¹

There are differences in Sufis in regard to “stages” but the main stages are explained below.¹¹² These stages constitute the ascetic and ethical discipline of Sufi. Each of the stages is the result of the stage preceding it. The path of Sufi is not finished until he travels all the stages. In each stage, he is to make himself perfect before advancing to the next. After completing all the stages the seeker becomes Gnostic, *‘Arif*.¹¹³

These Stages are as follows:

Tawbah.¹¹⁴ Allah says in the holy Quran, “Turn all together toward God (in repentance), O Believers, that you may attain bliss”¹¹⁵

It is reported on the authority of Anas bin Malik that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “The one who repents from sin is like one without sin, and if God loves a servant, sin does not adhere to him.” Then he recited, “Verily God loves those who turn unto Him [in repentance], and He loves those who purify themselves” *Al-Qur’an* (2:222).

On the authority of Anas bin Malik the Messenger of God ﷺ is reported to have said, “There is nothing more loved by God than the youth who repents.”

Therefore, repentance is the first degree among the degrees of the wayfarers and the first station among the stations of the seekers. The inner meaning of repentance in Arabic is “return.” It is said, “He repented,” meaning, “He returned.” So, repentance is to return from what is blameworthy in the law of Islam to what is praiseworthy in it. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Remorse is an act of repentance.”

Therefore, those well versed in the fundamentals of religion among the people of the *Sunnah* have said, “There are three conditions of repentance (which must be fulfilled) in order that it be sound: remorse for the violations that have been committed, immediate abandonment of the lapse, and firm resolve not to return to similar acts of disobedience.”

One must apply these principles to make repentance effective.

As God Most High says, “Turn (*tūbū*) all together toward God in repentance, O Believers” (24:31).

Inabah is the quality of the saints and those drawn nigh unto God. Allah Most High says, “And those who brought a heart turned in devotion (*munīb*) (to Him)” (Al-Quran, 50:33).

Awbah is the quality of the Prophets and Messengers. God Most High says, “How excellent a slave! Ever did he (Solomon) turn (*Awwab* to Us)” (Al-Quran, 38:30 and 38:44).

Al-Junayd stated, “Repentance has three senses. The first is remorse; the second is the resolve to give up reverting to what God has forbidden; and the third is the righting of grievances.”

Sahl bin ‘Abdullah declared, “Repentance is giving up procrastination.”

Al-Ḥārith asserted, “I never say, ‘O God, I ask You for repentance.’ I say, ‘I ask You for the longing for repentance.’”

*Wara*¹⁶: On the authority of Abu Dharr the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “Part of the goodness of a man’s practice of Islam is that he abandon whatever does not concern him.” Ibrahim bin Adham explained, “*Wara*’ is abandoning whatever is dubious, and the abandonment of whatever does not concern you means abandoning whatever is superfluous.”

Abu Bakr as-Ṣiddīq reported, “We used to forswear seventy categories of the permitted, fearing to fall into a category of the forbidden.” The Prophet ﷺ told Abu Hurayrah, “Be abstinent and you will be the most worshipful of mankind.”

Yahya bin Mu‘adh, a great Sufi asserted, “There are two kinds of abstaining: Abstaining in the external sense is that there be no outward movement except for

God Most High, and abstaining in the internal sense is that nothing other than God Most High enter your heart.”

*Zuhd*¹¹⁷: It means that one should give up voluntarily those things which give physical enjoyment. It has itself three stages: (a) Renouncing something which may bring name and fame (b) Investigating what to be given up and what not to be given up. (c) Not possessing nor wishing to possess any worldly thing.¹¹⁸

On the authority of Abu Khallad, the Prophet ﷺ said, “If you see a man who has been endowed with renunciation of the world and speech, then draw near to him, for he is infused with wisdom.”

Sirri as-Saqati asserted, “God (May He be exalted) withdraws the world from His saints, denies it to His pure ones, and removes it from the hearts of those whom He loves, for He has not approved it for them.”

Al-Junayd said, “Renunciation is emptying the hand of possessions and the heart of attachments.”

Ahmad bin Hanbal further explained the concept of *zuhd* as:

There are three kinds of renunciation: forswearing the forbidden is the renunciation of the common people; forswearing excess in the permitted is the renunciation of the elite; and forswearing whatever diverts the servant from God Most High is the renunciation of the Gnostics.¹¹⁹

*Faqr*¹²⁰: God Most High says, “(Alms are) for the poor who are in need for the cause of God, who cannot move about in the land (seeking livelihood). The ignorant one thinks them wealthy because of their restraint (in asking). You will know them by their mark: they do not beg from men in a demanding way. Whatever wealth you give, God is well aware of it.”¹²¹

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, “The poor will enter paradise five hundred years before the rich. In the reckoning of paradise this equals one half of a day.”

Poverty is the distinguishing trait of the saints, the adornment of the pure, and God’s chosen quality for His elect, the righteous and the prophets. The poor are the elect of God (Glorious and Majestic) among His servants. They are the vessels among His creation for His secrets, by whom God safeguards creation and by whose blessedness nourishment is spread among men. The patient poor ones will be the companions of God Most High on the Day of Resurrection, as it is told in the tradition on the authority of ‘Umar bin al-Khattab who said that the Messenger of God ﷺ said, “There is a key to everything, and the key to paradise is love of the

indigent. The patient poor are those who will be very near to God Most High on the Day of Resurrection.”

Al-Shibli commented on poverty as, “The very least sign of poverty is that if all the wealth of this world was given to one man and he spent it all in charity in one day, but then it occurred to him that he should have saved enough for one day’s food, he would not be truthful in his poverty.”

Ṣabr¹²²: God (May He be exalted and glorified) said, “And be patient, and your patience is only by God”¹²³

God Most High says, “Verily God is with the patient ones”.¹²⁴

On the authority of Abu Hurayrah, ‘A’ishah related this tradition from the Prophet, ﷺ, “patience is at the time of the first obstacle.”

Patience is, then, of different kinds: patience with what the servant acquires (through his deeds) and patience with what is not by his acquisition. As for patience with acquired things, it is of two kinds: patient perseverance in what God commands and patient perseverance in shunning what He prohibits. With regard to patience with things not acquired by the servant, his patience is enduring a decree of God that results in hardship for him.

Junayd al-Baghdadi said about patience that, “It is drinking down bitterness without a frowning look.”

Abu ‘Abdullah bin Khafif remarked on patience that, “Patience is of three kinds: that of the one who strives to be patient, that of the patient one, and that of the very patient one.” ‘Ali bin Abi Talib observed, “Patience is a mount that never stumbles.”

Tawakkul¹²⁵: God Most High says, “Whosoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him.” “Let those who believe trust in God.”¹²⁶ He also says, “Put your trust in God if you are believers” (Al-Quran, 5: 26).

As Dhu al-Nun al-Miṣrī has said, “Trust in God is abandoning the stratagems of the soul and stripping off power and strength, for the servant is only capable of trust in God when he knows that God (May He be exalted) knows and sees all of his states.”

Rida¹²⁷: In this stage the Sufi does everything to please God. It is binding on the servant that he be satisfied only with the destiny with which he has been commanded to be satisfied, because it is neither possible nor necessary that he be satisfied with all parts of his destiny, such as acts of disobedience and the numerous

trials of the Muslims. Satisfaction is the greatest gate of God.” They mean that whoever is honored with satisfaction is met with the most perfect welcome and is honored with the highest favor. God Most High says, “God is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him.”¹²⁸

When Abu ‘Uthmān was asked about the saying of the Prophet ﷺ “I ask You to grant me satisfaction after the decree has been decided,” he explained, “This is because satisfaction before the decree has been decided would mean there is a resolution to be satisfied, but satisfaction after the decree has been decided is (true) satisfaction.”¹²⁹

Abu ‘Ali al-Daqqāq, a great mystic declared, “Satisfaction is not that you experience no trials; satisfaction is only that you not object to the divine decree and judgment.” Further ‘Abd al-Wahid bin Zayd explained, “Satisfaction is the greatest gate of God and the paradise of this world.”

Abu Sulayman al-Darani declared, “If the servant rids himself of the memory of passions, then he will be satisfied.” Al-Nasrabadhi stated, “Whoever wishes to reach the place of satisfaction, let him adhere to that in which God has placed His satisfaction.”

Al-Fudayl bin ‘Iyad declared, “Satisfaction is better than asceticism in this world because one who is satisfied never wishes for anything beyond his station.”

1.9 Sufi Ethics

As every phenomena/process has a set of rules and regulations to be adhered to so has the Sufism too some ethics to follow. Among the cardinal tenets of Sufism, the following find the role to play:

*‘Ubudiya*¹³⁰: A novice must submit himself to the will of God and live in perfect harmony with the divine Will.¹³¹

God Most High says, “Serve your Lord until (the Day of) Certainty comes to you”¹³²

The Messenger of God ﷺ remarked, “Wretched are the slaves of money; wretched are the slaves of fine clothing.”¹³³

It is related on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of God ﷺ said,

“Seven are the ones God will shade in His shade on the day there will be nothing but His shade: a just *imam*, a youth who grew up in service to God Most High, a man whose heart is attached to the mosque from the moment he leaves it until he returns,

two men who love one another for the sake of God and who meet and take leave of one another for this purpose, a man who makes remembrance of God without restraint so that his eyes overflow with tears, a man who answers a beautiful woman who would seduce him by saying, 'I fear God, Lord of the worlds,' and a man who gives charity in secret such that his left hand knows not what his right hand gives."

Dhu al-Nun al-Misri explained, "Servitude is that you be His slave every instant, just as He is your Lord every instant."

1.9.1 *Ikhlas*¹³⁴

Sincerity is having God as one's sole intention in worship. It means that one desires nearness to God by one's worship, to the exclusion of all else, whether it be making a show before men, trying to earn their praise, or loving to receive glory from them — anything other than desire for nearness to God, Most High. Sincerity means purifying actions of any awareness of fellow creatures. "Sincerity means protecting oneself from (concern for) the regard of men."

God Most High says, "Is it not to God that sincere devotion is due?"¹³⁵

An authentic tradition states that the Prophet ﷺ related, on the authority of Gabriel, who related about God (May He be exalted) that He said, "Sincerity is a secret taken from My secret. I have placed it as a trust in the hearts of servants I love."

Anas bin Malik relates that the Messenger of God ﷺ declared, "Rancor will not invade the heart of the Muslim if he conforms to three things: sincerity toward God in actions, giving honest counsel to those in command, and keeping to the community of Muslims."

Abu 'Ali al-Daqqāq while observing sincerity has stated, "Sincerity is guarding oneself from (concern for) the opinions of men and truthfulness is cleansing oneself of awareness of self. The sincere one is not hypocritical, and the truthful one is not conceited."

Furthermore, Abu Ya'qub al-Susi observed, "When they perceive the sincerity in their sincerity, their sincerity is in need of sincerity."¹³⁶

1.9.2 *Kashf*¹³⁷

The uncovering of anything covered; manifestation. A mystic term used for a revelation of any secret truth to the mind of man, by the grace and power of God.

This is classified into: (a) *Mahazerah*, in which intellect is the means of reaching to a conclusion; and (b) *Mushāhadah*, in which personal knowledge is a proof of ecstasy

(*wajd*) and the condition attained (*hal*). By ecstasy, Sufis mean the true state of yearning or momentary absorption in the divine beloved. The state of ecstasy is higher than prayer when the divine will is revealed. A constant state of ecstasy leads to complete submission to the divine will.

1.10 Spiritual Knowledge

This is of three kinds: (a) Normal or Certain (*Ilm ul-yaqin*), reaching to a proof by intellectual reasoning; (b) Abnormal or the essence of certainty (*Ainu al-yaqin*), loss of worldly consciousness in a state of ecstasy, or knowing a spiritual secret by perceiving it and (c) Super-normal or the truth of certainty (*Haq ul-yaqin*), union with the truth or seeing and feeling the quality of a thing. These three stages of knowledge are illustrated by saying that a fruit may be known by its correct description, and better known by seeing it and perfectly known by seeing and tasting it.

*Hal*¹³⁸: It is a mental state gifted momentarily by divine grace. In this state, one is either in the form of *qabz*¹³⁹, or depression of the heart or by *bast*¹⁴⁰ expansion of the same. The *Qur'an* says: "Allah contracts and expands the (spiritual) food." When it is gifted continuously, it is called *milk* (or possession), and when it becomes permanent, it is named *maqam* (or station).

*Muraqaba*¹⁴¹: It is watchfulness over the innermost being because of awareness of the Unseen with every glance and utterance. God Most High says, "God is watchful over all things"¹⁴²

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "Vigilant awareness is the servant's knowledge of the Lord's constant awareness of him."

Al-Junayd declared, "One who achieves a vigilant awareness, fears only the loss of reward from his Lord."

Dhu al-Nun al-Misri, one of the great Sufi saints observed, "The sign of vigilant awareness is choosing what God Most High chooses, making great what God Most High makes great, and belittling what God Most High belittles."

Further, al-Nasrabadhi asserted, "Hope impels you to obedience, fear removes you from disobedience, and vigilant awareness leads you to the paths of inner truths."

And Al-Jurayri explained, “Our way is founded on two parts: that you compel your soul to a vigilant awareness of God Most High and that this knowledge be visible in your outward movements.”¹⁴³

*Fanā*¹⁴⁴ and *Baqā*¹⁴⁵: The end of the Sufi path is *Fanā* followed by *Baqā*. These are the two highest stages of spiritual development. *Fanā* means passing away of the individual self. By *Fanā* or annihilation the Sufi means self-negation of earthly tendency. *Fanā* is a state of losing or forgetting self-consciousness in a state of ecstasy. In the highest stage of *Fanā*, even the consciousness of attaining *Fanā* disappears. This stage is known as *Fanā* which marks the beginning of the final stage. He lives, acts and does everything as a second person without selfish interest. *Baqā* means passing from the phenomenal self to the real self.¹⁴⁶ and *Baqā*, retention of spiritual existence, or extraction of evil qualities and retention of virtue or permanency of mind from sensible objects to spiritual reality, the extinction of material desires and the loss of selfish consciousness.¹⁴⁷

1.11 Conclusion

To conclude, it is pertinent to place here that the idea of Islamic Spirituality has remained the pivot of human thought and deed. Spirituality is related to the soul. The soul is the king of the body through which man acquires the knowledge of Allah and His attributes. *Qalb*, *Rūh*, *Aql* and *Nafs* are the important aspects of the soul that help to attain Spirituality. Among these, *nafs* holds an important position in the process of achieving the Spirituality. The development, refinement and mastery of *nafs* are obtained in three stages: *Nafs-i-`Ammārah*, *Nafs-i-Lawwāmah*, and *Nafs-i- Muṭma'innah*. The beginning of all sorts of spiritual activities is in fact the process of contemplation and reflection. Apart from the parts of the soul there are some important aspects of Islamic Spirituality which are pivotal for the achievement of goal of Spirituality. These include: *Tazkiyah*, *Dhikr*, *Khuluq'*, *Ṣidq*, *Khawf*, *Mujāhadah*, *Wilāyah*.

Islam has prescribed a mechanism of spiritual training for the individuals and society to prepare in the achievement of the same. The training starts with the five pillars of Islam viz., *Ṣalāh*, *Ṣawm*, *Zakāh*, *Hajj*, *Jihād*.

The first necessity for progression along the path of Spiritual development is *īmān*, the second being *Itā'ah*, the third being, *Taqwā* and the fourth being *ihsān* (meaning

to do beautiful things) and this is the highest stage of spiritual advancement. Further, *maḥabbah*, *shukr* and *khushu‘* strengthen more the Islamic Spirituality. The spiritual training for the progression in the path of Spirituality is achieved through *Tasawwuf*, which is the science of Islamic Spirituality. *Tasawwuf*, can be explained from the perspective of three basic religious attitudes mentioned in the *Qur’an* which include; *Islam*, *īmān* and *Iḥsān*. There are four stages of practice and understanding *Tasawwuf*, which are: *Sharī‘ah*, *Tarīqah*, *Ḥaqīqah*, *Ma‘rifah* wherein the devotee follows rigidly the teachings of the holy Prophet ﷺ. Among the given four, *Ma‘rifah* denotes the path of Sufis. It has seven stages which are called *Maqamat*: *Tawbah*, *Wara‘*, *Zuhd*, *Faqr*, *Ṣabr*, *Tawakkul*, *Rida‘*.

References and Endnotes

¹Al-Sheha, Abdurrahmaan, *The Beginning and The End*, tr. Abu Hashim, ed. Abu Ayoub Jermoe Boulter, Abdurrahmaan Murad.

²*Al-Qur'ān*- 17:85.

³*Sahih al-Bukhari*; Vol. IV, Hadith No., 3208, p. 111.

⁴It is an Arabic word which means heart: a hollow muscular organ that pumps the blood through the circulatory system by rhythmic contraction and dilation.

⁵Ibid. p.4.

⁶ It is an Arabic word which means spirit: the non-physical part of a person which is the seat of emotions and character; the soul.

⁷Ibid.

⁸The faculty of reasoning and understanding objectively, especially with regard to abstract matters.

⁹Ibid., p.5.

¹⁰It is an Arabic word which occurs in the *Qur'ān* and means self, psyche, ego or soul.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²See, e.g., *Al-Qur'an* 38:72; 15:29; 32:9.

¹³*The Purification of Soul*, compiled from the works of Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali, Ibn al-Qayam al-Jawzi and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, Ahmed Farid, Al-Firdous Ltd., London.

¹⁴The inciting *nafs*, the *nafs* that urges evil.

¹⁵*Al-Qur'an*- 12:53.

¹⁶Ibid., 24:21.

¹⁷Ibid., 79:40.

¹⁸The self accusing *nafs*, the *nafs* that blames.

¹⁹Ibid., 75:2.

²⁰*The Purification of Soul*, Op. cit., p.57.

²¹*Imam Ghazzali's 'Ihya 'Ulum-Din*, Op. cit., p.5.

²²Yahya, Harun, *The Moral Values of Qur'an*, Good wood Books, New Delhi, 1999.

²³*Al-Qur'an*- 75:2.

²⁴The *Nafs* at Peace.

²⁵Ibid - 89:27.

²⁶*The Purification of Soul*, Op. cit., p.53.

²⁷*Imam Ghazzali's 'Ihya 'Ulum-Din*, Op. cit., p.5.

²⁸Ibid., 89:27-30.

²⁹Khan, Maulana Wahiduddin, *Centre For Peace and Spirituality*, U.S.A, Good wood Books, Nizammuddin, West Market, New Delhi, 110013.

³⁰*Al-Qur'an*- 24:35.

³¹Ibid., 50:16.

³²Op. cit., *Centre For Peace and Spirituality*.

³³*Lit.* Contemplation or thought. According to the *Kitabu al-Ta'rifat*, it is the lamp of the heart whereby a man sees his own evils or virtues.

³⁴It is Arabic word which means reflection of thoughts.

³⁵*Al-Qur'an*: 14:32.

³⁶*Al-Qur'an*: 20:131

³⁷Ibid., *Taffakur and Tadabbur*.

³⁸It is an Arabic word which means "the ability to understand the signs of nature."

³⁹*Al-Qur'an*- 15:75.

⁴⁰Ibid., 3:191.

⁴¹*Al-Qur'an*, 3:191.

⁴²Op. cit., *Centre For Peace and Spirituality*, (*Taffakur and Tadabbur*).

⁴³It is Arabic word which means purifying. It means purifying the individual of unfavourable elements, so that he may reach the point of perfection in a favourable environment.

⁴⁴Op. cit., *Centre For Peace and Spirituality (Tazkiyah)*.

⁴⁵*Al-Qur'an*- 20:76.

⁴⁶*Al-Quran*, 7:172-173, 36:60.

⁴⁷Op. cit., *Centre For Peace and Spirituality (Tazkiyah)*.

⁴⁸An Arabic word which means remembering, the religious ceremony, or act of devotion, which is practised by the various religious orders of *faqirs*, or *darweshes*.

⁴⁹Op. cit., *Centre For Peace and Spirituality (dhikr)*.

⁵⁰*Al-Qur'an*- 13:28.

⁵¹Ibid., 33:41.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³It is an Arabic word which means moral character, disposition; temper; nature.

⁵⁴*Al-Qur'an*- 68:4.

⁵⁵*Al-Qushayri's Epistle on Sufism, Al-Risala al-Qushayri fi'ilm al-Taṣawwuf*, tr. Prof. Alexander D. Knysh, Garnet Publishing Limited, South Street, U.K, 2007.

⁵⁶It is an Arabic word which means truthfulness, telling or expressing the truth; honest or candid.

⁵⁷*Principles of Sufism, al-Qushayri*, tr., B. R. Von Schlegell, Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 2004.

⁵⁸*Al-Qur'an*- 9:119.

⁵⁹Ibid., 4:69.

⁶⁰"Fear." generally used for the fear of God. Abdu'llah ibn Mas'ud relates that Muhammad ﷺ said: "There is no Muslim whose eyes shed tears, although they be as small as the head of a fly, from fear of God, but shall escape hell fire." (*Mishkat*, book xxii. ch. xxix. pt. 3.)

⁶¹Ibid., 32:16.

⁶²Ibid., 3:175.

⁶³Ibid., 35:28.

⁶⁴Ibid., 3:28.

⁶⁵*Al-Risala al-Qushayri fi`ilm al Tasawwuf*, Op. cit., p.142.

⁶⁶ It is Arabic word which means striving or spiritual struggle: to make every effort to combat and overcome one's desires whenever they lead one away from the commands of Allah.

⁶⁷*Al-Qur'an-* 29:69.

⁶⁸*Principles of Sufism*, Op. cit, pp. (12-15).

⁶⁹Sainthood, the term saint has been used to translate the Arabic word *wali* (pl. *Awliya*) which Allah used to designate those who are close to Him. But, a more appropriate translation is "close friend" because *wali* literally means an "ally".

⁷⁰Philips, Dr. Bilal, *The Fundamentals of Tawhid (Islamic Monotheism)*, Maktaba As-Sunnah, Dargah street, Mahim, Mumbai, 2008.

⁷¹*Al-Qur'an-* 10:62.

⁷²Prayer, the act of communicating with a deity (especially as a petition or in adoration or contrition or thanksgiving).

⁷³Fast, abstain from drinks and foods, as for religious reasons.

⁷⁴Almsgiving, the fourth pillar of Islam, an act of worship.

⁷⁵Pilgrimage, a Journey to a sacred place, *Ka'bah*.

⁷⁶*The Spiritual Path in Islam, (An Article)*, Maududi, Abul-'Ala,

⁷⁷*Jihad*, a holy struggle or striving by a Muslim for a moral or spiritual or political goal.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Faith, a strong belief in a supernatural power that control human destiny.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Obedience, the trait of being willing to obey.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³ It Is an Arabic word which means God consciousness. It also means protection and shield from what is harmful.

⁸⁴*The Fundamentals of Tawhid (Islamic Monotheism)*,Op. cit., p.172.

⁸⁵*Al-Qur'an-* 49:13.

⁸⁶ It is Arabic term which means godliness. *Lit.* "To confer favors, or to perform an action in a perfect manner." A term used in the traditions for the sincere worship of God.

⁸⁷Maqsood, Ruqaiyyah Waris, *Teach Yourself Islam, Teach Yourself World Faiths*, p.41, 1994.

⁸⁸Schimmel, Annemarie, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975.

⁸⁹Op.cit. *The Spiritual Path in Islam*.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Shomali, Muhammad Ali, *Key Concepts in Islamic Spirituality*, Message of Thaqalayn: A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Studies, Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly, Tehran.

⁹²Love, a noble state that God has confirmed as a quality belonging to the servant, and He has made known His love for the servant. So God (Glorious and Majestic) is characterized as loving the servant, and the servant is characterized as loving God.

⁹³Ibid., p.18.

⁹⁴*Al-Qur'an*- 5:54.

⁹⁵Thankfulness. The virtue of thankfulness is very much related to love for Allah. If you are thankful you will certainly love Allah because of all His favours and if you love Allah you will believe in Him and obey Him. Thus, thankfulness is the core of *Iman* (faith).

⁹⁶*Al-Qur'an*- 14:7.

⁹⁷*Principles of Sufism*, Op. cit, pp. 190-191.

⁹⁸Humbleness, it is the ultimate humbleness or spiritual poverty. This means to strengthen our understanding of the need for Allah and achieve a sense of complete reliance on Him.

⁹⁹*Al-Qur'a:n*- 23:1-2.

¹⁰⁰*Principles of Sufism*, Op. cit, pp. 85-86.

¹⁰¹*Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Op. cit, p.9.

¹⁰²*Essential Sufism: Selections from the Saints and Sages*, ed. James Fadlman and Robert Frager, Suhail Academy Lahore, Pakistan, 2004.

¹⁰³ The religious law, the law including both the teaching of the *Qur'an* and of the traditional sayings of Muhammad. ﷺ

¹⁰⁴The mystical path, a legacy, a request, an inheritance which refers to the practice of Sufism.

¹⁰⁵It is Arabic word which means gnosis (Lit., knowledge). It is the term used by Sufi Muslims to describe mystical intuitive knowledge of spiritual truth reached through ecstatic experiences, rather than revealed or rationally acquired.

¹⁰⁶*Sufism, Evolution and Practice*, ed. Mohamed Taher, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1997.

¹⁰⁷*Al-Qur'an*- 6:91.

¹⁰⁸*Al-Risala al- Qushayri fi ilm al Tasawwuf*, Op. cit., p. 319.

¹⁰⁹Truth; sincerity. "The stage in the mystic Journey of the Sufi when he is supposed to receive a revelation of the true nature of the God-head, and to have arrived at "the truth."

¹¹⁰*Sufism, Evolution and Practice*, Op. cit.p.10.

¹¹¹The word *maqamat*, is the plural of *maqam* which means [the act of] "being placed", in the same way as the word *mudkhal* ("entry") may mean the act of being entered or the word *mukhraj* ("exit") may mean the act of being driven out. For one cannot enter a station unless one witnesses God – Most High – placing him into that station. Then and only then can one build one's affair on a sound foundation.

¹¹²Khan, Mohammad Sharief and Saleem, Mohammad Anwar, *Muslim Philosophy and Philosophers*, Ashish Publishing House, Delhi, 1994.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p.47.

¹¹⁴Repentance, it means, the sins are abandoned and it is resolved never to return to them. A novice should think of his sins with deep regret. Others should repent for forgetting God. They should forget their sins because the thought of the sins comes between them and God.

¹¹⁵*Al-Qur'an- 24:31.*

¹¹⁶Abstinence, it means one should refrain himself from indulgence. In Sufi sense, it may be of three types: (a) Abstaining from acts which are doubtful (b) Abstaining from whatever one's consciousness does not allow (c) Abstaining from anything which diverts attention from God.

¹¹⁷Renunciation, abstinence; a religious life, exercising oneself in the service of God; especially being abstinent in respect of eating; subduing the passions.

¹¹⁸*Muslim Philosophy and Philosophers*, Op. cit., p. 47.

¹¹⁹*Principles of Sufism*, Op. cit., pp. (40-41), (43-45).

¹²⁰Poverty, it means to be stripped of every wish that can turn one's thought from God. It may be of three types: a) neither to possess nor seek anything. b) Not to possess anything but not to decline if offered. c) Not to possess anything but to seek the help of friends in extreme need.

¹²¹*Al-Qur'an- 2:273.*

¹²²It means to keep mental equilibrium in adversity in distress and in trials from God. It may be of three types. (a) Patience in God. (b) Patience in and for God. (c) Patience in, for and with God. The first type is of one who can endure distress at one time but loses patience at another time. The second type is of one who is not moved and who does not complain of his bad circumstances, the third type is of one whose equilibrium of mind is not lost in any adversity.

¹²³*Ibid.*, 2:273.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, 2:153, 8:46.

¹²⁵Trust in God. It means complete dependence on God in all affairs. It is of two types: (a) Renunciation of every personal initiative such as seeking food, taking medicine, etc. (b) Admission of some personal initiative such as working for the purpose of subsistence etc. Trust in God is reliance on what is in God Most High's hand and despairing of whatever is in the hands of men, trust in God is emptying the innermost being of [even] the thought of demanding fulfillment in one's search for sustenance."

¹²⁶*Al-Qur'an- 65:3.*

¹²⁷It is an Arabic word which means "the fact of being pleased or contented; contentment, approval or satisfaction."

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, 98:8.

¹²⁹*Principles of Sufism*, Op. cit., p.167.

¹³⁰It is Arabic word which means servitude. It is the state of being completely submissive to and controlled by someone more powerful.

¹³¹Shustery, Prof. A.M.A., *Early Sufis and their Sufism*, Adam Publishers and Distributors, Delhi, 199.

¹³²*Al-Qur'an*- 15:99.

¹³³*Al-Risala al- Qushayri fi`ilm al Taṣawwuf*, Op. cit., p.210.

¹³⁴Sincerity, it is the quality of being honest, true and real. This indicates the effort of moving towards the divine Being and keeping this ideal of movement above all other desires. It is opposite to *riya*, which means hypocrisy or pretended love without the putting forth of any effort to gain the beloved. *ikhlas* demands self sacrifice and indifference to all other ideas. When *ikhlas* becomes perfect, self-consciousness also is lost.

¹³⁵*Al-Qur'an*- 39:3.

¹³⁶*Principles of Sufism*, Op. cit., pp. 186-187.

¹³⁷Unveiling of the spiritual mysteries.

¹³⁸A state, or condition, a term used by the Sufi mystics for those thoughts and conditions which come upon the heart of man without his intention or desire, such as sorrow, or fear, or pleasure, or desire, or lust. If these conditions are stable and transient, they are called *malkah* or *maqum*; but if they are transient and fleeting, they are called *hal*. or The mystical state (*hal*) is something that descends upon the hearts [of the mystics] regardless of their intentions, their [attempts to] attract it, or their [desire to] earn it. This can be [the states of] joy, grief, expansion, contraction, passionate longing, vexation, awe or need.

¹³⁹Contraction is caused by an experience that descends upon one's heart. It may imply censure or indicate that one is liable for chastisement. As a result, contraction enters the heart and it contracts. For the divine gnostic contraction is the same as the state of fear is for the beginner.

¹⁴⁰When, an experience is caused by closeness or by [God's] turning [to the servant] with gentleness and hospitality, then what enters the heart is expansion for the gnostic, expansion is the same as the state of hope is for the beginner.

These two states (*qabz* and *bast*) come after the servant has advanced above the state of fear and hope. [Likewise]. In general, one's contraction corresponds to one's expansion and one's expansion to one's contraction.

¹⁴¹Vigilant awareness, meditation, contemplation, an act of devotion performed by the Sufis.

¹⁴²*Al-Qur'an*- 33:52.

¹⁴³*Al-Risala al- Qushayri fi`ilm al Taṣawwuf*, Op. cit., p.202.

¹⁴⁴Annihilation, extinction, this is the last stage in the Sufistic journey.

¹⁴⁵Affirmation, this is the highest stage in the spiritual development.

¹⁴⁶*Muslim Philosophy and Philosophers*, Op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁴⁷*Early Sufis and their Sufism*, Op. cit., pp. 26-27.

