

SUFISM:

Major Schools: Basic Variations:

Lecture 2:

The Schools of Purification of the Soul (*tazkiya-e-nafs*):

To begin I would like to request your indulgence with a few verses from eminent Sufi Poets. Sufi poetry is the highest form of mystic tuning to the Divine. This highly grandiloquent and elevated expression is perhaps sufficient testimony to the sincerity of the Sufis. The “Muse” has often visited these Sages and left behind a veritable treasure of guidance, lore and inspiration that uplifts humanity from drab existence to the transcendental planes of Cosmic Consciousness.

“If sipping has thy fancy led.
The wine shop is the place for thee.
Besides the wine jar lay thy head.
And yielding it in bargain fee.
Quaff many cuyps of wine instead.”

Hazrat Omar Khayyam (RA) (Persian poet and mystic).

“See where the tulip grows. In upland meadow;
How in balmy spring. It decks itself, and how amidst its thorns;
The wild rose rends its garment and reveals; It’s loveliness.
Thou too, when some rare thought; Or beauteous image or deep
mystery;
Flashes across thy soul, canst not endure; To let it pass but holdst
it;

That perchance; In Speech or writing, thou mayst send it forth;
To charm the world.

Hazrat Jami (RA) (Persian poet and mystic).

At the very outset, I must pay my compliments to the person who suggested the title of today’s topic. A topic that I find myself at a loss to come to grips with, a topic that is worthy of research and one that has had little attention paid to. I refer to the “Basic variations”, thus far I have come across many a book on historical facts about various Schools of Sufism. True, they contain reference to the fact that there is no conflict between these schools. There is no rivalry and no difference of opinion. Apart from this there is little to describe the inner differences in teaching and practice. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that much of the lore is secret and kept within a tightly knit circle of disciples, initiates and elect. However, let us start a process of analysis, we drew the conclusion in the earlier Lecture on the Origins of Sufism that the main aim of the

Sufi is to engage in The Supreme Inner Holy War (Jihad) in order to fight with the Base Self, Commanding to evil and persuade it by rigorous abstinence and self-abnegation, to convert this self into a steed that carries the human consciousness swiftly towards cosmic consciousness. Please note that the self is not to be crushed, rather it is to be broken in towards obedience in order to provide the human being with an interface that is capable of interactive communication with the Divine. Also please recollect the extract from “Vaulting Aspirations”: The main aim of this book is to educate the disciples of The Way, Sufism, in the Gnosis of Allah and to provide those who are **attracted towards Allah**, with food for thought. Secondly, it is meant to instruct **those who love Allah** in the manners to be observed in His Holy Court.

In the words of Annemarie Schimmel, “Mystical Dimensions of Islam” (p228-9) “the most pleasing aspects of the movement, namely, to fraternal love that first came into existence among the Sufis of one group and was then extended to include humanity in general. It was a behavior quite different from that of earlier ascetics, who stressed individual salvation through austerity and supererogative works of piety.

Service to men (humanity) has always been one of the first stages in the preparatory steps of the path, but it remains the true Sufi’s duty throughout his life.” For Sufism is nothing but love: for the Creator and for His creation.

In the words of Khalil Gibran, the Christian poet from Lebanon:

“When Love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you yield to him,
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.”

Khalil Gibran “The Prophet” (p 10).

Now each disciple is a microcosm in her or his self. Each is the result of millions of years of evolution. Each has been granted a unique genetic makeup and then experienced the conditioning of race, culture and society. There is as much diversity as they are human beings. Yet broad type casting can be achieved, people can be made to fall into various categories in accordance to their psyche and persona. This is what is the major difference between the various schools of Sufism. For some the path is narrow, for some it is difficult, yet again some find sorrow and some find joy. Some are made to sing and some to hold their peace. Khalil Gibran says:

“Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts.
For they have their own thoughts.”

Khalil Gibran “The Prophet” (p 20).

Another manner of looking more closely at the subject involves yet another dive into the Ocean of Islam. The direct message of Islam is for **tazkiya-e-nafs**, purification of the soul. For those attuned to the Message this is achieved through **zuhd** (asceticism); self-abnegation and constant awareness of God through **salaat** (prayers) and **zikr** (loosely translated as remembrance). In the very first century after the **Hijra** (The Date reckoned after the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) left Mecca for Medina), there was a tremendous power struggle that resulted in shattering the Islamic ideals and rent the world of Islam asunder. People increasingly turned inwards to remove themselves from the broken fragments of a dream. This served to develop various methods of attaining unto the ideal through spiritual development and abstinence from the affairs of the world. This was not the ideal as the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) imparted it. The way of the Prophet calls for ordering society in such a manner that there is harmonious inner and outer development. In the face of temporal power that was subverted to Family and Clan interests, it was not possible to replicate the society of the Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam (Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique, Hazrat Omar, Hazrat Usman Ghani, Hazrat Ali (KAW) (RAA).

As a result renunciation of the world and asceticism (*zuhd*), as a reaction against worldliness and materialism in society, increased dramatically. Derived in principle from the order of Allah to His Righteous Apostle to purify people [Qur'an 2:129, 2:151, 3:164, 9:103, 62:2], the adherents of this "Pure Religion" held firmly to the Prophetic way of life as reflected in the lives of his Companions and their Successors, in the ways they employed to purify their hearts and character from bad manners and to inculcate in their own selves the manners and upright moral stature of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SWAWS). Through slow evolution, this regimen ended up as a school of practical thought and moral action endowed with its own structure of rule and principle. This became the basis used by Sufi scholars to direct people on the Right Path. As a result, the world soon witnessed the development of a variety of schools of purification of the ego.

Tariqat thus came to be a term applied to groups of individuals belonging to the method pursued by a particular "shaikh," as such a person is called. Let us further this lecture with the statement that there is but one school and that is Sufism, the outward characteristics that mark basic variations are different classes held within that school for different pupils, at different times and at different places. The era wherein a class is established, the particular character of the pupils and their level of understanding and primarily the differences in stimuli that are required by different individuals in order to achieve the same results, are all determinants of that particular class. However, there is one major difference that lies across the broad expanse of Sufism. This is the lineage of spiritual guidance. One major lineage descends from the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) to Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (RA), the first of the Orthodox

Caliphs. This Silsilah or Continuity was subsequently called the Nakshbandiya. The second is called the Uwaisiya and comes through the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) to Hazrat Uwais Qarni (RA) through non physical means. This is due to the fact that Hazrat Uwais Qarni was unable to meet the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) during his lifetime as he was engaged in looking after his aged mother. Never the less the spiritual attraction to the Holy Prophet was so great that he transcended limitations of space and successfully made contact through spiritual means. This is authenticated through the fact that a Robe of Permission was dispatched to him upon instructions of the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) upon his demise and that too through Hazrat Ali (KAW). Thus any form or direct spiritual contact either with the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) or his Companions (RAA) or the holders of Robes of permission who succeeded the Holy prophet (SWAWS) are called Uwaisiya. All other Silsilahs run through the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) to Hazrat Ali (KAW) the nephew of the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) and first male convert to Islam. These Silsilahs, in turn, are many and hold center place for the vast majority of Muslims.

By the 14th century followers of Tariqat were grouped in congregations, called after some eminent Sheikh, who was regarded as the founder of the tariqa or rule, including the ritual litany (Zikr, remembrance).” (Selections from The Travels of Ibn Battuta: Travels in Asia and Afrika). Further: “Round the convent of the founder rose a girdle of daughter houses”. At this point some mention must be made of the basic difference and clash between the theologians and the Sufis. “To the theologians there was but one road to the apprehension of truth, ilm or savoir, the science of theology, with all its scholastic appurtenances involved in the study of the Quran and the Traditions of the Holy Prophet (SWAWS). The darwish (Seeker of the door), on the other hand, sought ma’rifa or connaissance, that direct knowledge of God.” Between the two there has been a long history of disagreement, sometimes leading to the death and prosecution of eminent Sufis.

Sufi orders (turuq) crystallized as institutions beginning around the 6th century AH/ 12th century CE. Now we might safely cruise the waters of the various “Schools”, let us then begin with the first and foremost, as the **Nakshbandiya** are accorded this privilege throughout the Sufi tradition. The Naqshbandiya are named after Hazrat Baha-ud-Din Naqshband (d. 791/1389). The Naqshbandiya developed basic Islamic practices and principles into the eleven principles of the Naqshbandi Order.

1. Awareness of breath, mind always attuned to the Sheikh.
2. Travel in one’s own land, remembering that he or she is a traveler on the Path.
3. Watching the feet, being aware of where you are going.
4. Solitude in Company, thoughts centered on the task.

5. Remembrance, never forgetting that you are a dedicated person.
6. Restraint, short prayers used to punctuate Zikr.
7. Awareness, being aware that there is always distraction and combat it.
8. Recollection, using words and without.
9. Pause of time, during pause in thoughts to recapitulate actions and examine them.
10. Pause of numbers: Awareness that the required number of repetitions of Zikr phrases have been completed.
11. Pause of the Heart: Training the mind to visualize the heart with Allah written upon it during this pause.

Imam Amad relates in his *Musnad* the following hadith (Saying of the Holy Prophet (SWAWS)) with a rigorously authentic (*sahih*) chain of transmission:

"Abu Bakr does not surpass you for fasting much or praying, but because of a secret that took root in his heart."

The Prophet (SWAWS) alluded to this secret when he said, in the following hadiths mentioned respectively by Suyuti in *al-hawi li-l-Fatawa* and by Bukhari in his *Sahih*.

"Whatever Allah poured into my breast I have poured into the breast of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq."

"Allah has expanded my breast for what He has expanded the breast of Abu Bakr and 'Umar to receive."

This knowledge is again alluded to in the following authentic hadith related by Tirmidhi:

"I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is the Door."

This knowledge is the heavenly knowledge possessed only by prophets and their inheritors, the saints. The latter are defined thus by Sayyidina Ali (KAW):

"They are the fewest in number, the greatest in rank in the sight of God. By them does God protect His creation. They are His proof on earth, until they bequeath it to their likes, and plant it firmly in their hearts. By them knowledge has taken by assault the reality of things, so that they found easy what those given to comfort found hard, and found intimacy in what the ignorant found desolate. They accompanied the world with bodies whose spirits were attached to the Highest Regard. They are the vicegerents of Allah, the Exalted, in His land. How one yearns, how one yearns to see them!"

Historically speaking, the Naqshbandi tariqah can be traced back to the first of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (RAA), who succeeds the Prophet (SWAWS) in his knowledge and in his role of guiding the Muslim community. Allah said in the Holy Qur'an "He was

the second of two in the cave, and he said to his friend: 'do not be sad, for God is with us'" [9:40]. Of him the Prophet (SWAWS) said, "If I had taken to myself a beloved friend, I would have taken Abu Bakr as my beloved friend; but he is my brother and my companion."

The Naqshbandi school has been influenced by six great figures who were: Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, Salman al-Farisi, Ja'far as-Sadiq, Bayazid Tayfur al-Bistami, 'Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujdawani, and Muhammad Baha'uddin Uwaysi al-Bukhari, known as Shah Naqshband--the eponymous Imam of the tariqah.

The word "Naqshband" means: *naqsh* "engraving" and suggests engraving the name of Allah in the heart, and *band* which means "bond" referring to the link between the individual and his Creator. This is characterized by the Constant Silent Zikr (remembrance) of the Naqshbandi Silsilah. All other Silsilahs or Tariqahs hold onto the Loud Zikr, this is probably due to the fact that Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddique (RTA) accompanied the Holy Prophet (SWAWS) on his flight from their native City of Mecca towards Medina and is called the Hejira (Flight) as referred to earlier. During their secret journey, pursued by their enemies the Meccans from their own tribe (Bannu Quraysh) they had to take recourse in hiding in a cave. The Silent Zikr and other hidden practices arise from this occasion.

Hazrat Abu Bakr as-Siddique (RAA), was followed by Hazrat Ja'far as-Sadiq (AS), descended from the Prophet (SWAWS) paternally through Hazrat Ali (KAW) and of Hazrat Abu Bakr (RA) maternally, he rejected all positions of honor in favor of retreat and spiritual learning and practice. He was called "The Inheritor of the Prophetic Station (*Maqam an-Nubuwwa*) and the Inheritor of the Truthful Station (*Maqam as-Siddiqiyya*). The first recorded reference to the term *safa* was used for his student, Hazrat Jabir ibn Ayyan (RA), in the middle of the second Hijri century. Hazrat Bayazid Tayfur al-Bistami (RA) was another precursor of the Naqshbandi Silsilah, he said that the ultimate goal of the Sufis is to know God in this world, to reach His Divine Presence, and to see Him in the Hereafter. Hazrat Abdul Khaliq al-Ghujdawani (RA), set down the code of conduct (*adab*) that the students of the Naqshbandiyya were expected to follow, It consists in maintaining the highest level of conduct and leaving absolutely all innovations and all free interpretations in public customs and private behavior. It begins with the attraction of Divine Love (Jazab), which was granted to the first friend of the Prophet, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq(RAA) and is characterized by the Silent Zikr. In all it would not be incorrect to state that The Naqshbandi Silsilah is strict in outward and inward observances. It is particularly suited to finely balanced personalities and is sober in mein.

One of the first orders was the **Yasawi** order, named after Hazrat Khwajah Ahmad Yasavi (RA) (d. 562 AH/ 1166 AD), from the city of Yasi, where his tomb is located. Today it is called Turkestan and is situated in Kazakhstan. A few generations after Khwajah Ahmad, an important Yasavi shaykh was Isma'il Ata. He was from a village in the vicinity of Tashkent. One of his sayings to his disciples was as follows: "Accept this advice from me: Imagine that the world is a green dome in which there is nothing but God and you, and remember God until the overwhelming theophany (*al-tajalli al-qahri*) overcomes you and frees you from yourself, and nothing remains but God" (Al-Khani, *Hada'iq al-wardiya*, p. 109).

Hazrat Abul-Qahir Abu Najib as-Suhrawardi (RA) (d. 1168) was the founder of the aristocratic **Suhrawardiyya**. He is characterized by strict observance of the manners to be observed in the Holy Court and is the author of "Adab al Muridain" "The good conduct and manners of the Seekers." His nephew, Hazrat Shihabuddin Abu Hafs Umar as-Suhrawardi, the famous author of the book on Sufi theories "Awarif al-Ma'arif" gained immense popularity and served to enhance the prestige of the Silsilah tremendously. The followers of this Silsilah were not averse to dealing with the ruling aristocracy. A practice that was shunned by most other Major Silsilahs. The Kubrawiya, Qalandriya and Firdausi Silsilahs take their inspiration from this Tariqah.

The **Qadiriya** Sufi Tariqah, found throughout the Muslim world, is named after Hazrat Abd al-Qadir Jilani (RA) (d. 1166). al-Ghawth al-Azam or the Great Helper, was an eminent jurist of the Hanbali school. He was the disciple of eminent saints, such as Hazrat Abu al-Khayr Hammad ibn Muslim al-Dabbas (d. 525 AH) and Hazrat Khwaja Abu Yusuf al-Hamadani (d. 535 AH) (RAA). One of Hazrat Abd al-Qadir's (RA) *karamat* or miracles was the gift of guidance, manifest in his speech, through which untold thousands entered Islam or repented. The loud Zikr and aversion to music are the hallmarks of this great silsilah. Mainly sober in outlook, this Silsilah has served to legitimize Sufism throughout the Islamic World and enjoys the greatest popularity.

The founder of the **Chishti Silsilah** was Hazrat Abu Ishaq Shami Chishti (RA) (d. 329/940-41), whose Sheikh was a well-known Sufi Sheikh, Hazrat Mumshad, al-Dinawari (RA) (d. 299/911-12). The Chisti Silsilah gained pre eminence in the Indo Pak Sub Continent, where it continues to flourish as a popular and living Silsilah. Hazrat Khwaja Muinudin Chishti Ajmeri, Hazrat Qutbuddin Kaki, Hazrat Baba Farid ud-Din Ganj Shakkar Hazrat Nizamudin Awliya and Hazrat Ali Alauddin Ahmad Sabir Kalyari (RAA) are some of the most prominent Saints of

the Chistiya Silsilah of India. Most people are of the opinion that Hazrat Khwaja Muinudin Chishti Ajmeri (RA) was the founder of the Chistiya Silsilah and also that Sama or Religious music (Qawalli) was initiated by him to meet the cultural requirements of India. However, this is not true as stated earlier Hazrat Abu Ishaq Shami Chisti (RA) was the founder and reference to Sama can be found as early as Hazrat Abu Said IbnAbi'l Khair (RA) (b. 967) along with the very difficult ascetic practice of hanging by the feet into a well for 40 nights while reciting the Quran. This Chilla Makhuus as it is known was also adopted by Hazrat Farid Ganj-e-Shukker (RA) in India. This has led to the mistaken conclusion that Sufism borrowed this practice from Yoga. However the very early adoption by a Saint in Khurasan, central Asia belies this claim. This Silsilah is characterized by Jazb or Divine attraction and devotional music in the form of "Qawalli" or sayings. A fusion of intellect and emotion with decided attraction towards the emotional aspect of humanity is the quintessence of the Chisti Silsilah.

“Love thrilled the cord of love in my soul’s lute.

And changed me all to love from head to foot.

Twas but a moments touch, yet shall time ever.

To me the debt of thanksgiving impute.”

The Chistiya Silsilah, like many others has a number of important offshoots or daughter Silsilahs. **Chistiya Nizami**, after Baba Farid Ganj-e-Shukker (RA) prominent disciple Hazrat Nizamuddin Awliya (RA). **Chisti Sabri**, after Baba Farid Ganj-e-Shukker’s nephew and disciple Hazrat Ali Alauddin Ahmad Sabir Kalyari (RA) (d. 1291). The **Guddar Shahi**, **Chisti Taji** and other offshoots are all centered around the Chistiya Silsilah. The Chisti Sabri Silsilah is typified by imposing and fiery personalities (Jalali) in the pattern of Allah’s Awesome Majesty (Jalal). The Chisti Nizami are completely devoted to love and music. The Chisti Sabri practiced complete withdrawal from society and made few disciples even going to the extent of denying the building of imposing Dargahs (Shrines) for their Spiritual masters at their express command. Hazrat Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829-1905) and Hajji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki (1818-1899) are two important Chisti Sabri Saints of the nineteenth century. An interesting claim of the Chisti divines is the holding of the Spiritual Kingdom of India by Saints of the Chistiya Silsilah, alternating between the Sabri and Nizami branches.

The **Shadhiliya** Order is named after Hazrat Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili (RA) (d. 656 AH/1258 CE), and has branches throughout North Africa and the Arab world. The Shadhiliya Tariqah is derived from the Tariqah of Hazrat Abu Madyan Shu'ayb (RA) (d. 594 AH/1198 CE), whose tomb is in Tlemcen, Algeria. A disciple of Hazrat Abu Madyan's (RA) was Hazrat Muhammad 'Ali Ba-'Alawi (RA), from whom the **'Alawiya** Order stem. Hazrat Abd al-Salam ibn Mashish (RA) (d. 625 AH/1228 CE),

another disciple of Hazrat Abu Madyan (RA), transmitted his teachings to Hazrat Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili (RA). One of Hazrat Al-Shadhili's (RA) most prominent disciples was Hazrat Abu-l-'Abbas al-Mursi (RA) (d. 686 AH/1287 CE). Another Moroccan branch of the Shadhili order is the **Darqawiya**, founded in the late 18th century (CE) by Hazrat Mawlay al-'Arbi al-Darqawi (RA). Apart from these facts, I have little knowledge about this group of Silsilahs.

The **Tijaniya**, named after Hazrat Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani (RA) (1737-1815 CE) is an important Sufi order primarily in Africa. One of the most significant Tijani shaykhs was Hazrat Hajj 'Umar Tal al-Futi (RA) (1794-1863), a brief summary of the principles of the Tijani path, the most important of which are; Asking God for forgiveness; Saying *La ilaha illa 'llah* (There is no god but God), and Offering prayers of blessing upon the Prophet Muhammad (SWAWS).

The **Muridiyya** Silsilah was established by Hazrat Sheikh Ahmadu Bamba (d. 1927) is an order of major importance in Senegal and has a presence in various other countries, including France, England, and the U.S.

The **Bektashiya**, which originally derived from the Yasaviya, took its name from Hazrat Haji Bektash Veli (RA).

The **Malamatiya** (the blameworthy) can be considered a proto-Sufi order that arose in the 3rd century AH / 9th century CE before the crystallization of the Sufi orders. Malamati principles became integrated into later Sufism.

Qalandariya as a term is used in two ways: 1) it may refer to any wandering Sufi, who may be called a Qalandar, or 2) it may refer to a specific Qalandar tariqah.

I feel that I have not done justice to the topic and also recommend that a detailed study be carried out in order to satisfy a decidedly important question. I close with another verse:

“When first the saki my lonely heart befriended.

Wine fired my bosom and my veins filled up.

But when His image all mine eye possessed, a voice descended,

“Well done O sovereign Wine and peerless cup.””

Any Questions?