

SAI BABA AND SUFISM

(Journey of Love)

by

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*At The Divine Lotus Feet
of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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To the Reader ...

- This work is meant for an understanding of the reader, chiefly, the Muslims.
 - The central theme of this composition is UNITY, the outlook: a Muhammadan concept of spirituality.
 - The format is formal. Like any other academic work it is a thesis and Baba has correctly called it so. Except here and there, for the sake of variety, strategies like description and narration are also used.
 - This "thesis" is founded on personal experience, in terms of the study of Sufism of the author.
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CHAPTER I

DARSHAN

"Darshan"¹ in Prashanthi Nilayam always brings to the mind the great opening verses of the Quran:

Praise be to the Creator of the World
Most Gracious, most Kind,
Lord of the Day of Judgement.
Thee we worship and Your help do we seek.

Make us follow the Straight way,
The way of these who have
Your Grace, these whose portion
Is not wrath and who go no astray²

Leaving aside the theological interpretations of those lines, one can see that they contain an apt image of mankind of today. Here is man in quest of his higher self. History and mythology have confirmed many a time to this wonderful search. Darshan of Baba, therefore, is yet an added dimension of this quest.

In the age of science and technology to see thousands of people morning and evening, from different nations sitting and waiting silently for the physical appearance of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba shows the eternity of the Quest. No one has sent them an invitation, there was no advertisement in the newspaper yet they all have responded to an inner urge. Reason? Somewhere along the line of time they have loved God, have wished to be near Him. And of course, God has always loved his Creation. Therefore both have come together, here, in this place.

The gathering has its own psychological and transcendental echoes but one thing is common to all present in the place... This coming gives them its own personal, inner experiences.

First of all to a casual observer, it is a lesson in human ability to unite, to tolerate and to discipline themselves. It is quality that is a part of the inner urge of man, perhaps learnt from the past suffering. There are men in the gathering

who are wearing simple white dresses but in the outside world they hold power and positions, or are highly educated. Here they mix with the rustics and the uneducated. Young or old, male or female, they wait quietly to have a glimpse of an Orange Robe, that is their own self and gather a flower meant for him/ her only. Learning, tolerating, help in each other, wherever possible, is a basic education they all acquire here. A symbol of this human unity and culture can be seen in the greeting with folded hands, raised to the level of the heart. Baba has also explained it and Joseph Campbell has commented on its spiritual significance in the following words: "This we used when we pray, do we not? That is greeting which says that God is in you and recognises the God in other."³.

One word here that explains this attitude of sacredness for each other during **Darshans**, It expresses that all who have come to this place, are "seekers" of Truth. In the dim past, as object of vegetation, or animal soul or human beings each one must have **sacrificed** oneself for others spontaneously or else has ruminated on the mystery of life and must have graduated from the plane of that existence to a higher level of consciousness. Rumi, the Persian poet, in a passage also has similarly pointed to this principle of life.⁴ In Sufism as in Baba, forms change with time but the progress of the soul continues, till it merges in the source: The Divine Self. Now these people in their search for Truth must have stumbled and struggled, faced discomforts or defeats, even delays but they have braved all for the sake of an Inner Light. Still as a planetary community, they have found the Reality. Beyond all physical concerns they now sit together signing the name of One, who they love most unknowingly calling It differently. Only It as well as they know who they have been really addressing.

BABA AND SUFISM

"They loved Him and He loved them" says a line in the Quran. This is essence of Sufism. There are many similarities between what Baba has expounded and Sufism teaches. In fact they are not two trends but only one and therefore the same. Scholarship may demand example. Throughout this work these are suggested.

Here it is enough to indicate that Sufism and Baba's teachings formulate the esoteric knowledge, and they belong to a treasury that is both wise and old. It is a human heritage though Muslims have given it the name SUFISM. After the passing away of the body of Prophet Mohammed's, his followers have been divided into two groups.⁶ The group with love of God as their aim of life later on call themselves as Sufis. One meaning therefore of the word is a person with a pure heart. In the holy Gita, so Sai Baba tells us, there has been one with a pure heart, and he is known to the world as Arjuna. The prerequisite of a Sufi, apart from having a pure heart, is that he must care more for the welfare of the society than his own gains. When that attitude predominates grace saves that group from worldly pitfalls. **Darshan** is one such example.

The earliest men, who have exercised this knowledge of "Heart to Heart (Sufism)", are the Rishis. Composing beautiful songs of the Rig Veda for the posterity, they left a tradition for the human race to follow. It is called Straight Path in the Quran and in Tao (PATH) of ancient Chinese tradition. Now, in the 20th Century those who assemble at Prashanthi Nilayam follow this same way. It raises the individual man at the end from his earthly position to that of a Divine being and Rumi has called them "Angles". It can be said that this path to Immortality is hard. The question, "Are they all going to be liberated?" is apt, therefore. In answering it Shirdi Baba, has used a beautiful image. Pointing to a tree full of blossoms, he has remarked, that if all the flowers can bear fruit it will be a splendid crop. But do they? This, alas does not happen. Some flowers fade away; some are destroyed by the wind and the rain; others are nibbled by the birds; many fall, unripped. Only a few fulfil the trust of the Gardener. However, the chance, the opening of the door, is given to all. "The breath of the Compassionate" (Quranic phrase for the Spirit) forever is present, blows over the cosmos as it has done with Adam, giving a new life to a cage of mud. Also in history Lord Jesus Christ is yet another example, when his breath has made alive clay-birds. Similarly, Baba today turns one object into another by blowing His breath or by a mere touch of his. The human race may call these "miracles" and often clap their appreciation, but these are examples of the same "Breath of the Compassionate" infusing one inert object with a new life of its own. It recalls the ancient tradition of heart to heart that is well known in Sufism. However the Quran names man Impatient (LXX19-21) in Judgement and this is true even today.

As earlier, now too men fail to understand. Some come as a social duty, some to interpret Divinity psychologically, others arrive to fulfil their selfish ends. Many, after a trail and test turn away. Alas they are the real losers! However, the opportunity is given to all. It finally depends on the development of their consciousness to accept or reject. The Breath of the Compassionate keeps on shedding its benedictions. It calls for an Adam to take its advantage or a Satan (evil/ego) to rebel against it. The voice of the Divine through Baba will keep on declaring: "You are all Divine" (*Divya Atma Swarupulara*), after the fashion of the Upanishads. It has the same echo as the first principle of Islam, which declares:"

"La-illaha-illa Allah" (God alone Is)

One may argue that Sufism does not relate to modern times, and Sai Baba's reference is Indian. But this is a superficial reading. With confidence one can say that Sufi wisdom and Sai Baba's knowledge are Divinely perceived. The source of Sufi dispensation is the heart and not learning in the worldly sense.

A story from 'Last Barrier' aptly illustrates it. The Turkish Sufi Master tells his Christians devotee that every morning he sends a message of love to no one particular; whoever is ready, listens to it, responds.

If, then, one observes deeply into the situation one can understand how Baba is the best of communicator, as He distills commonsense from the history of humanity into the minds of present day's man, brings out the symbolic aspects from the ancient myths, so that the Upanishad stories and their relevance come alive to us. One such example can be seen in the divine discourse during Ganesh Day and Onam Day in 1998. One may claim that this is done by many recently. However, there is difference, Like Sufism, Baba drives home the object of righteousness. It is not done for the sake of doing it but to purify the human heart, so that it may become worthy instrument for the Divine reflection. Also, whatever Baba says or does is God-like, in the sense that there is utter selflessness. Perhaps the similarity becomes more obvious when one observes that in Sufism and for Baba the arena of operation is human psyche. Only recently Jung and his school have shown light on this aspect in social sciences, but the knowledge is very ancient. In the Vedic lore and Sufism we see examples of how man is forced to go in, view his subconscious, recognise the play of ego, especially in dreams. The effect is shown in the slow transformation of man to an elevated level. With Baba, also a person changes, these changes begin in the subconscious, and it takes years to flower these seeds that are planted deep into human psyche. The conscious mind knows nothing of what happens in the inner darkness but it amazed to see that gross bloom into gold one day.

Only at Darshan time sometimes one gets a glimpse of it. One observe the mixture, the human broth, as one may term this as a international gathering. Perhaps that has been the broth Shiridi Baba has been cooking in His pots. Also, one sees the numerous lights increasing day after day in Prashanthi Nilayam in Sai Kulwant Hall and associate their effulgence with the lights in the hearts that now wait for a glimpse of Divinity -yearning, glowing, waiting - just waiting. And has not the Quran enjoined?

"LIGHT UPON LIGHT".

Ends Notes:

1 DARSHAN : In Sanskrit it means seeing / vision of God. Depending on human perception it has many interpretations. However, its root in Sanskrit is *Dru* (To see).

2 Yusuf Ali (trans) The *Quran* publications of Presidency of State of Qatar, 1946, pp.14-15.

3 Joseph Campbell *The Power of the Myth*, New York: Doubleday, 1988, p.53.

4 Every individual soul progresses making death a stepping stone to a higher life. - That is what Rumi has meant in the following lines:

I died as a mineral and become a plant.
I died as a plant and rose to animal.
I died as animal and I was a man.
Why should I fear less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die as Man to soar among angles;
And when I sacrifice my Angel soul
I shall become what enters not imagination.

5 Sai Baba's famous saying:

There is only one God and He is Omnipresent.
There is only one Religion; the Religion of Love.
There is only one Caste; the Caste of Humanity;
There is only one Language; the Language of the Heart.
(S.S.S., Vol. VII p.366)

Note : This also forms the essence of Sufism from Adam down to the present age.

6 Javad Nurbaksh *Sufi Women* New York: Khaniquahi - Nimatullahi publications, 1990, pp. 2-3.

Following is the quotation:

"The final group that emerged from among the companions (ashab) and the ascetics (Zahid) of the Prophet's day consisted of those who remained aloof all these external concerns... Their attention was focussed not upon the social problems of Islamic community, but upon the spiritual dimension of Islam, upon the worship of Allah and Devotion to One Reality (AI-Haqq)."

7 Sri Sai Sachitra, Bombay: Sai Sansthan, 1996.

8 Upanishad: (sitting near the Guru) is the correct term used in its original meaning. The Book of Wisdom is the Divine knowledge that is kept in the heart of every man. The other implication of the Upanishad as explained in Brihadaranyaka-bhashya is " the secret word" or "secret doctrine", (p.xii, B.U.).

CHAPTER II

THE RELIGION OF LOVE

"There is only one Religion: The Religion of Love."

- Baba

In Sufism this religion of love, between man and God, is stated in the Quranic terms. The Lord, Allah, takes a promise from the souls of the unborn children of Adam :

Allah said: "Am I not your Lord?"

"Yes, You are." They all replied.

This ancient covenant, before the world is created, forms the beginning of a relationship that is to be fulfilled in every age, in various ways. Recently, one is reminded of it on the eve of 22nd of November, 1998, when the students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute with voice have thundered "Yes" to the question: "Are you ready?" In Indian tradition it is called Bhakti Marg. "Baba has also proclaimed that "offering of total love is Bhakti." (Discourse - 11.10.1998.) In Islam it is known as Sufism. Bhai Sahib, Irina Tweedi's teacher, has pointed out that in this whole world there are only two: God and His devotee. (Daughter of Fire) The Quran also affirms it by indicating "They love him and He loves them". Baba has further elaborated on this relationship; and one has to open the 99 names of the Divine in a Panjsura¹. and the similarity may be obvious. Baba speaks of them in terms of family relationships:

Truth is the mother... Wisdom the father... Righteousness is the brother... Compassion the true friend...Peace is the wife, Forgiveness the son... therefore for every individual the true relations are Truth, Wisdom, Righteousness, Compassion, Peace and Forgiveness. (*Discourse : 25.9.1998, pp 2-3*)

One can infer that what have been called the Divine Names in Islam are emphasized here. The stress is on the Unity or the Identity of the Divine and the human. This forms the second principle of the religion of Love, the first being the element of love itself. It is also obvious that this unity is perceived and preserved in the innerworld of spirit, not in the outer world of external multiplicity. The outer world of mankind is dominated by the attachment, ego, pride, lust, jealousy and greed. The arena of the inner world is what Baba and sufism have termed as the "Heart". "Hridaya: heart", Baba states, "is the centre of Love and Peace" (*Dasera Discourse - 25.9.1998 p.7*). The word Love must not be interpreted in human language. In Sanskrit there are 95 aspects of love whereas with us only one meaning is prevalent. This not only shows the paucity of our communication but reflects on the limitations of our minds.

Love, however, is a vaster term. It suggests a sacred aspect of Man. "Love is God" (Baba) and this holy quality is at the inner core of every created object. Indeed it forms the identity of man who is the vice-regent of God and specially is destined to receive this Love. On the contrary man has developed the opposite:ego, as a reflex of love. The opposition between the two is related through a story from the Quran:

At a place where the two seas meet Mosses (mind) met Khidr (heart, inner world), one whom Allah had given knowledge of Himself. Moses asked Khidr 'May I follow you so that you may guide me that which you have been taught...' Khidr said 'If you want to follow me you must not ask any question about anything, until I myself speak to you about it.'

The two set out... they embarked on a boat. (Khidr bored a hole in it and Moses objected to it that the passengers would be drowned. Next, during the journey, Moses's companion killed a young man. Again Moses protested. They journeyed further. Finding a wall in a town, the fellow-traveller with Moses repaired the wall because it was about to fall. Again Moses said that his companion could have asked for payment for that work.) "The time has come when we must part" said Khidr. "But first I will explain to you the meaning of those acts. The boat belonged to a poor fisherman I damaged it because if it had gone to the sea it would have been captured by the King by force.... The young man was a criminal... who would have brought sorrow to many people, including his parents. As for the wall, it belonged to two orphaned children... Beneath it their father had buried a treasure. Allah has decreed in his Mercy that when older they should dig out this treasure. What I did was not my own will, that is the meaning of my acts which you could not bear with patience. ²

What Khidr has done refers to the religion of Love. The modern man has to relearn its language. The fall of man that has started with Adam continues further. Our language bears a witness to it. Today if we look intelligently at the key words we would realise that their meaning now contains the outer husk of what they have earlier meant. It simply indicates that man has reduced himself to body only, that he is attached to this body and has forgotten his inner potentials. Hence the realm of reason, mind or external world are totally different from the religion of Love where the heart predominates. This fact is recognized by the Sufis. In the words of Attar (a Sufi from the 11th century) "When Love comes reason disappears.... Love has nothing to do with reason," (*Conference of Birds* Ch-39 "The Valley of Love"). Other Sufis have echoed the same sentiment.

In the Religion of love the seeker is for the spiritual excellence in man. These are found in qualities like Unity, Truth, Compassion, Self - the Divine spark in man. In his quest for Love the seeker undertakes a "journey", empties himself of outer qualities and is endowed with an energy which creates a vacuum in his mind and prepares him / her to feel the inner reality of self, which in the final analysis is **Love**. It is the experience of many that in Baba's direct presence their thoughts are stilled, their minds do not work; they become suddenly blank. They are unable to find a reason for it. Perhaps they have to know that they are facing their own self, which in popular language is called "God". It is said that in the depth of each "heart" there lives this "**Self**". They confront the same self for whose presence Sufis have been starved and which the Upanishad has described as "size of the thumb, moving in the cavity of the heart".

Therefore, let us know at least what Baba is repeating several times, and considered them as the important words as "Heart", "Unity", "I", "Self" They are, one can find out same as have often been used in Sufism. Love, for instance, differs from; human intelligence according to Rumi. His poetry in *Masnavi* and *Diwan-e-Shams* glorifies the different aspects of love of which miracles from a part of, for they represent Divine Love. Further more Baba has thrown light on aspects of love in its true essence. They can be listed as follows:

Aspects of Love: Baba

- * Love gives and never receives.
- * Selfless Love is only with God.
- * You have gathered here to experience that Love.
- * Love never diminishes.
- * Liberation (Moksha) can be attained through Love.
- * Only through Love transformation of the so called wicked ones is possible.
- * Any incurable disease can be cured through Love.
- * Love is essential to become a complete human being.
- * Love is your true form.
- * Love cannot be expressed in words.
- * Love is Atma; Love is Wisdom; Love is Truth; Love is all five human values.

* Love is principle of God and it is seen only in Avatars.

* Baba exhorts all to follow the Path of Love.

Seen from this point of view Love is not static. It is the dynamic energy that one finds everywhere as the guiding principle of life. Looking at it more closely one can observe how the Mystic Path in Islam follows Baba in this respect. In the few chapters that detail this similarity (chapters like Sufi tradition and Immortal Journey deal with these aspects.) show how correctly Baba has indicated the processes of Love in life and how rightly He has suggested : Love is a manifestation of Atmic Principle and hence it is an "all-encompassing", "intimate relationship" (Unity of all life). The human angle of the above listed saying can be seen among the leading Sufis. Following are their quotes:

** Love is the essence of the Divine Essence. (AI-Hallaj: Louis Massignon (ed) *The Passion of Al Hallaj*, Vol. III).

** Love is the basis of all forms of worship of which Abraham was the human prototype, (Ibul Arabi : *Fusus-al-Hikam*).

Like Baba, Ibnul-Arabi puts love as the highest, and stresses that man must love God, first in creation. To Rumi, who is the Prophet of love of God in Sufism, love emerges from devotion and is the agent of transformation of man. According to Rabia (7th Century woman mystic) human love for God must be totally selfless. AI-Junaid and following him all mystics of Sufism consider the relationship between man and God as that of a servant and Master translating it in terms of lover and the Divine Beloved. Zun-Nun of Egypt (12th Century) calls this relationship as heart's illumination. To these sufis the end of this journey of love is merger (Fana) in God where externally the body remains but the heart becomes one with God. This stage after merging is known as Existence (Baqā) in Islam.

Like Baba, to the Sufis the love for God has to be pure, unsullied and subtle (Attar). It is a source of intoxication (Bliss) as many others have pointed out (AI-Quraishi: *Risala* p.59 and Shibli: *Risala*, p.189-90 and Abu Yazid p.4.)

In fact the terms and incidents of Sufism and Baba are so amazingly the same that one is forced to consider them as one, only difference is in time and place. Moreover, they are a chance given by the divine to the common man. If one is unable to care for it the loss is his/hers. There is no need to plough into the sufi books; one can witness a Birthday occasion in Sai Kulwant Hall. The very air vibrates with love that is obvious between God and his devotees. Not caring for food, leaving aside the physical comforts people from all over the world sit for hours, silently, to have a *Darshan*. Another occasion is to see the crowd thronging the concrete passage as they arrive at Prashanthi Nilayam. It is touching sight to witness human beings walking to accommodation, carrying their luggage in one hand and with the other holding their children, bodies tired but faces all aglow, dishevelled but content, having reached the destination. That in true sense is the religion of Love. It relates to heart. The physical aspect is only a outward show. Also, this "Heart to Heart" aspect is the care of love and can be realised by many as by this author too. Pray in the heart for anything and it is fulfilled by Baba, quietly unknown to others. And has it not been affirmed by the Quran? That Allah listens to every supplicant's prayer, for He is nearer to man than his juglar vein.

Nevertheless, Baba and Sufism demand certain qualities that man must essentially develop. Katho-upanishad has termed them as things "preferable than pleasurable". They are concentration, selflessness and yearning, burning wish to be near the Self, discover It and be free from the traps of the life and death. All these ideas repeated again and yet again imply two things: (a) God loves His creation and wants it to return to Him through the growth in consciousness; and (b) the religion of loves is Divine Wisdom given to man through God's grace. For a believer it is yet another "Sign" of Divinity. Baba very lovingly has summed it up in the following verse:

Let us grow together, enjoy together;
Let us perform heroic deeds by working together;
Let us live without any conflict. (Discourse : 20-11-98, p.8)⁴

VIEWS ON HEART:

To Baba the spiritual heart has following facets:

* Heart is the seat of God.

* Heart is consciousness, "I" is Baba (Conversation with Baba: by Hislop p.118)

- * Heart is the centre of Love and peace.
- * Installing loving God in the pure heart is compared to Padukas (Discourse: 11.10.98)
- * Pure heart is compared to the Himalayas, to the ocean of Milk, to a chariot for the Divine.
- * Purity of the Heart is essential.
- * God dwells in (man's) pure heart that is why he is called "Indweller of the Heart".

(Here it is important to note a dream of a devotee. She witnessed that in a room (her heart) there is a cluttering of many things. Baba is made to sit in a corner of that room, uncomfortable. The room also has a parked jeep inside it. The lady is asked to cook certain things for Baba but the fire of the stove is not strong enough to finish the required items. This, of course is the interior glimpse of her heart.)

All the Sufis agree to what Baba has often stressed and insisted on the purification of the heart. The journey to immortality which the Sufi undertakes (see chapter in this book: *Journey to immortality*) is possible only when the heart is pure.⁵

Unity and "I": For Baba and for the Sufis Unity is a comprehensive term. It joins together the material and the spiritual kingdom, man and God, It sets forth a vision of Oneness". Brotherhood of man and Fatherhood of God". (Baba) For the lack of an appropriate term the scholars call it Advaitic.

For Baba and the believers in Sufism, God essentially is formless. Therefore all names are His and all forms are His. This is one dimension of Unity (Oneness). There is no peace where there is no God. For Rumi this oneness is not only the essence of religion but is called *Ishq* (immediate Intuition) of God for man. Therefore man's identity with God is a part of the uniting process in *Diwan-e-Shams*, collection of poems by this apostle of Love. Other Sufis have called this aspect *sirr-Allah* and it is found in the first part of the first principle of Islam (LA ALLAHA ILLA ALLAH) It means **God alone is**. The second part which identifies the seeker with God (MOHAMMED RASULUL ALLAH) considers the realised man of this perception as the glorified one (one should not give this vast perception a narrowed meaning by identifying **Mohammad** to the historical figure known to the Muslims only). The medieval mystics have also agreed to this unity and called it as the Divine Spark (EKHART, and GERSON).

In Sufism and with Baba this unity has a sign. It is signified by "I". "All is one", Baba has often remarked (Hislop: Conversation with Baba p.39-40). In the Quran the "I" is spoken by Allah at place where most intimate relationship is viewed. In Hadis this maxim is expressed in the following words; "The person who has become God's own, God becomes his own." And Rumi uses an image, from the old mystic stock. He The Soul, he points out in his *Masnavi* (Vol: I 2293-95) is "a drop of the ocean of God"... It cannot be cut, burnt, melted... is changeless, all pervading, immovable and eternal. Does that not remind us of the holy Gita?

Another expression for a believer of this unity is seen in the miracles. They, whether by Muslims or saints of any other area, are "visiting cards" of Divinity. They may be a source of wonder for the modern man, who visits Prashanthi Nilayam, but these miracles, they are accepted by the Sufis to 'be a source that is transcendent. They know that Jalaluddin Rumi has walked on the air or seen at several places at the same time by his devotees. He has also admonished a believer after death by saying that Believers of God after giving up their body merely depart from one habitation to another (Arberry: *Classical Persian Literature*)

From Indian lore, Baba, to convince the common man, has also given many instances to stress the need for unity. The Pandavas are united but not so the Kauravas. Vibhishana and Ravana have differed in their approaches and therefore in the worldly dealings also.

Commonsense states that when in the human heart there is real love and not much ego, it (heart) expands and this unity becomes an expression of Divine Love. Baba goes further and indicates that "If you conduct yourself with peace, love and compassion then you are God" (Discourse: 25.9.1998). Here a new perception of unity emerges (It will be dealt in the last chapter of this book). Here it is enough that one believes with the Sufis who point out that the physical form becomes meaningless when unity in this aspect exerts itself. The expansiveness of this indirect Unity is seen in the following lines of Ibn-Arabi:

My heart has become capable of every form.

It is a pastural for gazelles,
And a convent for Christian monks,
A temple for idols, and a pilgrim's Kaba,
The tablets of Tora and a book of the Quran.
I follow the religion of love : whatever way
Love's caravan takes that is my religion and my faith.

(Poem 11 - *Tarjuman-ul-Aswaq*:
Interpreter of Ardent Desires).

Finally one may conclude that this unity is observed in the cumulative vision of Love, heart, expressed through Sufi lore and Baba in the Letter "I" [as Atmic Principle].⁶

End Notes

1. Panjsura: Selected Quranic Verses in print, which Muslims use for prayers daily.
 2. The Quran XVIII, 62-82, C.G. Jung has used this story for psychological interpretation in his *Collected Works* (para 243-58).
 3. Vide 14 *Discourses* given from Sept.-Nov., 1998.
 4. There is an amazing similarity in Baba's perception of love and Rumi's writing on the same subject. A few instances are listed here :
 - * Five Elements (Masnavi 1:1053).
 - * Concentration on God only (Masnavi: 1:1175, 1784)
 - * Unity of God and man / world (Masnavi 1:633).
 - * Light, Sugar in different sweets, oceans and waves (Discourses translated by Arberry and Masnavi).
 - * Evils of the mind: Greed, lust, pride, anger etc., (Masnavi 1:475-76).
 - * Manta part of the whole (Masnavi 1:1798).
 - * Unity of man and God. (Masnavi 1: 2022-2026).
 - * Inferiority of scholar knowledge and superiority of intuitive (heart) knowledge (Masnavi): 2479, 2488-90)
 - * Everything praises God (Masvani: 2449-90)
 - * Unity in God: (Masnavi: 1 : 2082)
 5. Sufi concepts on the Heart:
 - * "Heart knows neither duality nor the limitations of space and time. (L. Vaughan Lee : *Paradoxes of Love*, p XV-California : Golden Sufi Centre, 1996)
 - * Expansiveness of the heart of mystic is unlimited. (AI-Junaid and Bistami).
 - * For sufis the heart is identified with being. The concept is based on a Quranic saying which indicates that the unbeliever's hearts and not their-eyes are blind.
 - * In a *Hadis-e-Qudsi* by the Prophet, following example is given: "My (God's) heaven and earth cannot contain Me but the heart of my believing servant contains Me."
 6. Unity of "I" principle in Sufi ideas and Baba. "I" is the recollection of Self (AI-Huwyah). This expression is based on the Quaranic verse: LVI : 59-60.
- This Unity of Atmic Principle, Baba and Sufism is seen when in a mystic bliss Baba, like many Sufis proclaims "I" is Baba, Hislop: *Conversation with Baba*, p.118).

CHAPTER III

BABA AND SUFI TRADITION

If one observes from the historic angle one will realize that Sufi tradition which leads up to Baba can be divided into two categories. These two dimensions, from the point of growth and gradual developments are divided into (a) Major Sufi thoughts that from the basics of the present day Sufism and to Indian Sufi tradition that leads upto the modern concepts, in every expanding circles. Both are needed to comprehend the Oneness of Divinity as well as the perception that God is not restricted to one people or one area. The conclusion of this chapter again asserts that Sufism is one way, from times immemorial, has led man to God and that it is folly to limit it, calling it a religion, or a philosophy. It is only an attitude of the mind.

In the previous chapter it is shown how this wisdom, (named by Muslims) Sufism is an ancient and a perennial knowledge that is given to human heart by God's grace like the dew to thirst earth or, like a conversation, beyond words between God and man - Such instances are common in all spiritual literatures of the world, such as the Gita, the Vedas and the Quran. To limit these instances to a Form or a text is limiting perception itself. Only the sound predominates and human mind translates it into words. Also when the mind further goes to the visual level and concentrates on the form of a Christ, a Buddha or a Krishna it is the divine that is concentrated on. It is therefore, the message that is to be focussed on and remembered. The believer / the devotee has to practise it, or interpolate or reject. However, he has to reap the rewards of his choice. Hence with regards to Baba and Sufism one has to consider the following eternal verities:

* Oneness of the Divine. It may be given a thousand names such as The Primary Cause / God / Energy / I. All that is created has its Self this Oneness.

* The cementing factor of this unity in multiplicity is **Love**.

* There is a loving relationship between the Creator and the Creation. If man loves God, it is God, who has first loved Man. Through this relationship man further extends it this idea to the whole existence. In Islam it has been given the name of Wahdat-ul-whjud, a principle advocated by Spanish mystic, Ibn-ul-Arabi. Though among the Indian Sufi traditions one finds much discussion on it, it is only essential for the modern man to follow its practical aspect: the Ways of Love (Bhakti Marg) as this is the advice given by Baba.

* In the way of Love, Heart demands not only intuitive knowledge but a universal understanding. This enlists two rules of operation.

a) Expanding and emerging from and merging into the same Oneness.

* The growth of ego (otherness) hinders man's potential development. This ego works through six basic qualities, called by Baba "enemies" (lust, greed, Jealousy, pride, attachment and anger). They live and work through the mind and draw a man into multiplicity.

Like a pebble (Being) thrown into the water, forming expanding circles, the sufi tradition too is seen in its basic teaching during 7th.-13th. centuries; and 14-19th. centuries in India. Thus the mystical tradition, forms the core of sufi teaching observed as "the apprehension of a ... unity in all things" (Stace: *The teaching of the Mystics*, New York: 1960, p.p.14-15) The Veda calls it "One Reality". The Sufis term it as Hadiqatul-Haqiqa and stress how man distorts it into fragments (Senai: excerpts found in Browne *Litrary History of Persia*, II Cambridge: 1964, pp.319-20) Seen from this point of view Sufi tradition is heart's view. The sufi therefore agree that the paths that lead the Seeker to God are as many in number as there are souls of men. Mohammad, so says a modern assessment has been a sufi first before he became a prophet. Infact he has been a sufi throughout his life.¹

The Sufi tradition in Isalm marks its origin from the life of Mohammad. It includes the first four *Caliphs*, and a few ascetics who are called *Ahl-al-Suffa*. Their lives are dotted with what Baba calls "love of God and fear of sin". Added to these is the third quality of a Sufi "Hands in Society", Baba has termed it. In Baba's language these early Sufis may be called as those who have "heads in the forest and hands in the society".

Their lives have been outlined by a knowledge of the Quran and *Hadis* [Prophet Mohammad's sayings], for them

knowledge and not the world became the primary motive of this newly discovered tradition. They have known "who ever knows God turns his back on everything else".²

To Hasan, the grand-son of the Prophet, patience, which Baba terms as *forbearance*, has been an important quality as much as wearing wool is considered an outwardly trait.³

The second group of Sufis belong to Islamic esoteric tradition of Hasan Basri [642-728], who has emphasised on repolishing of the hearts, for they very quickly grow rusty.⁴ In the same tradition are Habib Ajami and Malik Dinar [D.744]. Both have led a secular life but later have renounced their ways. Does it not confirm to what the Quran and Baba express that God is most forgiving to those who repent and give up to their evil ways and has it not be observed in the life of Valmiki too. Perhaps the most significant to this rediscovery-group, is a woman saint, Rabia (d.752/801). From the devotee's point of view she has preached to have a selfless love for God. This love must not be tinged with a reward of heaven or a fear of hell.⁵ Here is an apt prayer of Rabia that really forms a one-to-one relation with the Creator :

In two ways have I loved thee: selfishly
And a love that is worthy of Thee.
In selfish love my joy I find...
But in that love which seeks Thee worthily,
The veil is raised that I may look on Thee...
In this and that the praise is wholly Thine.⁶

Another Sufi, Sufian (d.778) shows us his compassion for the human as well as for the animal world.

A deep Christian, Buddhist and Hindu mystic influence marks the thinking of spiritual discoveries of great Sufis from the 8th. to 1000 centuries.⁷ It is indicated in A.A.Razvi's book, *A History of Sufism in India* (Vol.1, New Delhi-1975, pp.32-33.) To these centuries the sayings of two Sufis, Abraham bin Adham, and Shaiqi, can be given importance. Both preached trust and resignation to the Divine Will. This can be seen in the conversion of a bandit. One day when a caravan has reached his place of ambush he hears one of the guides with the way farers reciting a Quranic verse:

Is not the time come to those who believe, that their hearts should submit to the admonishing of God. (The Quran:L6:6).

These verses are impressed Fuzayl (The robber) that a change for being good has occurred in his life. How many lives Baba have not saved in this manner? One has to read the accounts of these lives to see this innate oneness-Similar has been the case of Bishr who has been an alcoholic. One day while returning home, dead drunk, he has seen and picked up a paper on which has been written "In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate. Bishr reverently has placed it in niche in his house. On the same night the Divine Will absolves him of his previous life and he becomes an ascetic and a God-loving man. What do we do if we come across such an example? We argue or explain. (Our own egos prevent us from looking to the face of unity between written words or Form, and the power that they can bestow on a human being.

Not through sudden mercy and mercy is the attribute of God, but in the absence of thought unification with the God can take place. This has been preached by Abdul Abbas Qusaim (d.954) and has influenced the Sufi tradition since then. Through books and scholarship of mysticism the heart can be influenced. This is accomplished by Tirmizi and later formulates the principle of Unity of Being in Sufi Tradition. He basically believes in the purification of the heart through a sincere love of God. It is important to note here that the emphasis is on the inner dimension and not so much on the outer behaviour. Junaid and Bistami, later on, through their behaviour have indicated to their followers that only through total destruction of the empirical self can unity with God be possible. This is similar to the teaching of the Upanishad. Bistami also has propagated the exercise of controlled breathing, which is a gift of yogic teaching. The Indian Sufis of all four groups have made it a part of their efforts to Divine Unity. To this advanced view of man's efforts to reach the Divine also belongs Zun-Nun of Egypt (d.860). He is the first in Sufi tradition to teach the real nature of genesis. "The gnostic", he asserts, "needs only his Lord in all states. "He loves what God loves."⁸ Muhasibi writes the following words of Zun-nun that echo Baba's expression: God here speaks to this followers: "Ye are My (saints) and ye are my beloved - Ye are Mine and I am yours."⁹

Important in this respect is Kharraz and saying in his *Book of Truthfulness*. They contain all these qualities that man must develop to know who he really is. These characteristics are "godliness abstinence, patience, sincerity,

truthfulness, trust, confidence, love all is with them (men) dwelling in their natures, hidden in their souls.¹⁰

The Sufi, who has shown to the world that this union really exists in Mansur, Al Hallaj (858-913). His theopathic cry "I am Truth" (Anal Haq) has been misunderstood by the ordinary admire men and he has to pay for it with his martyrdom. Today, though one admires him for his reaches and understands the relationship between Man and God one feels, one is too weak to make such an effort. One also can see in his concept the identity with St. John of Cross's sayings as well as that of the four *Mahavakyas* of Upanishads. Nicholson in 20th Century, though only known to a few, has explained it in the following words:

*The essence of God's essence is love.... (So) He brought fourth from non-existence an image of Himself.... This Divine image is Adam, in whom God is manifest Divinity objectified in humanity.*¹¹

Like Hallaj al-Shibili also has believed in this concept (D.946) He, by his contemporaries, is called mad. One day he has been seen running to set fire to Kaba. When questioned he replies that he wants to do so that man henceforth may care for the Lord of Kaba. By the 10th century the formulative state of Sufi tradition has been completed and two major ideas have become a part of gnostic tradition. 1) The significance of the Heart as an instrument of illumination is recognised and it is compared to a mirror 2) Losing of the individual self in the universal Self is essential for a Sufi for it indicates perfection. Both these points are stressed by Baba in his discourses and in his actions.

Another controversy always has risen between the Sufi and the *Ulmās* (the priestly class) over a number of issues, among them the most important one has been the unification of Being. Also the Sufis have always taken care of the common people and their problems and in India thousand throng round a Sufi-shrine. On their part, the Sufis have an insight into the common man's life. The ulma have resented this popularity. In short, this has as its centre the human ego on both sides, perhaps.

Yet another facet of the Sufi aspect has is education. During early 12th century Gazalli's name is worth mentioning. In Sufi tradition being a teacher and a writer he has reconciled education. Gazalli (1058-1111) has extoled the superiority of spiritual knowledge to secular knowledge in his book *Ihya*. He is thus a worthy pioneer of the cumulative Divine knowledge which Baba states to be the chief aim of education.

However, dis-interested love of God is non-controversial through out Sufi tradition. Examples of its are restressed by Ansari and Abu-Khair in the 12th century and Abu-Khair's total absorption in Divinity marks his statement's like "there is none other than God in this robe." This may have shocked his contemporaries but like many Indian Sufis, he is noted for his miracles and disciplining of Sufi life.

Nevertheless, the Prophet of Divine love is found in the person of Jalaluddin Rumi (13th century). Much of his saying recorded in his *Masnavi* and the collection poems *Diwan-e-Shams Tabriz*.¹² Many of them have a remarkable similarity with Baba's statements and are quoted in this collection.

Apart from Rumi, Ibnul-Arabi has intellectually influenced the Sufi thought with his theory of Unification of Being. To us he not only reflects Islamic thoughts but forms a link in the ancient wisdom and Baba's concepts human race. The central idea of his formulates that the Absolute Being and Absolute Existence are inseparable and taken together form the meaning of unity. On this idea is based formula of the perfect Man by Jili (1365-1428.) It will be discussed in relation to Avatarhood and Baba in the last chapter of this book. But it must be remembered that this concept has not become a living reality for most Sufis and has not seeped into the hearts of common Muslims. A few Sufis, who have believed in it, are Iraqi and Jami of 15th century. To many writers of Sufism, like Corbin, Louis, Massignon and Titus Burkhardt this concept remains controversial. We are not concerned with the scholastics but with the mystical aspect of the question. Affifi, a 20th century writer, has wisely remarked that the One and the many are two aspects of the *One*. This view is earlier accepted by Gazzali when he indicates that his God is not the transcendental God of the orthodox but one who manifests himself in every form of existence. This line of Sufi tradition is also found in the ancient wisdom of the rishis too. In connection with these though it is important that Baba's analogy of the sea and the waves not only illustrate the ideas of ancient rishis but is also used by most great Sufis who have believed in the cosmic centrality of man. Jili's Perfect Man like the Avatar is the epitome of all understanding and mediates by Divine Consciousness and cosmic self (*Fusus al Hikam*, p.82). Like Baba, Ibnul Arabi discredited human ego as a growth of the otherness. Between God and man the union is the realization of an already exiting bond and therefore God is worshipped as Love. Hasn't Baba stated: "God is Love"?

Indian Sufi Tradition

Do not cage God in a picture frame,
Do not confine him in an idol,
He is all forms; He is all Names.

- Baba (Blackstone edicy at PN Campus, The Institute, Prashanthi Nilayam)

This idea is central to Indian Sufi tradition and its contribution. Chronologically it spans over 5 centuries (14th-19th), till the advent of Shirdi Sai. At the outset it is important to note that in India the Sufi trend spread over four major Silsilas (chain of mystic perception). The main idea is quoted in Baba's saying at the beginning of Indian Sufism. Though veiled some times by their conflicts with each other or with the priestly class, *Ulma*, among the Muslims they show, however, a steady trend of expansion and unity. These four groups of *Sisilas* are 1) The Qadriyas, 2) the Shauttarya 3) The Naqshbandya and 4) the Chistiya. In getting unity in the population so vast as India's one admires the efforts of the Sufis who have concerned the heart of so indigenous a population as they have to face during their earthly stay in the country. Establishing a *Khanquah* (community building), living and doing constant social service to their devotee, many of whom were non-Muslims, show what Baba essentially has called three marks of a Divine personality. They are PURITY, PATIENCE and PERSEVERANCE. These leaders of the Sufis are also known for their scholarly writings, most of them are circulated among the elites or read in the companies of other sufis at their gathering.

From the historical point of view the Qadriyas are the oldest group to be settled in India during the 14th century. They are pioneers in advocating *Zikr* (Namasmara) which Baba also extols. Each disciple, after completing his spiritual education is asked to establish his separate establishment in another place, therefore the forms of *Zikr* vary and are numerous. In terms of their progress, spiritually, one can see the Shuttarilya, the Naqshbandya and the Chistiyas Sufis fusing their theories and continuing their efforts with the local Indian saints. This interaction, in detail can be studied in Riziniv's *History of Sufism in India* (Vol. 1: 322-400). Though marred by personal prejudices and conflicting hypothesis, their ideas are pre-occupied by the relationship of God and man. Examples of a far reaching influence on them are seen of Kabir and Guru Nanak, especially on Indian Sufi poetry and on the writings of Abdul Oddus Gangohi (in the 17th-century) The Nath Yogi theory had been recognised as a replica of Ibnul-Arabi (*Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, pp.154-155). Shaik Abdui Quddus finds the teaching of Naths identical with Whadat-ul-Whujd (Unity of Being). In fact his teaching is far from being theoretical. In several ways he has found the ascetic exercise of the Yogis compatible with Christly practises. A description of these can be observed in his disciple's book, Latafi-i-Quddusi (Delhi 1894, p.15-16). The writer tends to indicate that a type of repetition of Divine Name. (Sultan-ul-zikr) is comparable to Nath Siddha's *nad* and that fana-al-fana (total absorption of individual self in the Divine Self) is a state experienced by Jivan Muktas. Earlier there have been interactions between Baba Farid of Punjab and Shah Abdul Latif of Sindh with the Yogis. The Kashmiri Sufi order known as Rishi Sufis has been influenced by "Lalla" or Lal Did, a shaivite mendicant of 14th century. Other similar examples are found in the writings of Prince Dara Shokh¹⁴ which, though scholarly, have been written under the impact of the Vedas, the Upanishads and his own *Pir* (guru) and a well known mystic, Mian Mir. Kabir's influence is already famous to be recounted here. In Bengal also the effects of Yogic thoughts are felt in the Baul movement and the books written by the Sufis during 15th century.¹⁵ The influence of Chaitanya on the sufi songs is obvious among the Baul. The Vaihnava Sufi, Bauls have termed them and "Men of Heart" in book *Obscure Religious Cults* (p. 174) Many Indian classical tunes and musical instrument (Sitar) are attributed to sufi discipline during the 12-14 centuries and chistiya order.

In Punjab the interaction is observed in the Sufi poems of local origin and infused the concept of love between God and man through worldly love. Such Narrative poems are *Hir Ranjah*, *Sasi Bunu*, *Madhu Malati* and *Shohini Mahinval*. A note, in this respect must be added for the lyrics of Bhulle Shah, called *Kafis* as well as songs in Deccan, called *Chakki Nama* (song of the hand mill) and *Shadi Nama* (Marriage Song). In the folk tradition even today they are popular. Above all, in this tradition the image of Shirdi Sai in Bombay province like of Kabir is well known to all Indians. The apparel of Shirdi Sai is that of a Sufi saint just as His life of simplicity reminds one of Indian Sufi tradition. Other practises common to Baba Shirdi Sai and Muslim saints is the emphasis on *Zikr* (Divine name) and singing of Divine praises in the from of Bhajan and musical instruments. A close study may also show other similarities. However, it must be remembered that when a man of God rises above religion level he becomes free of those ties that bind ordinary men. Only one has to be convinced of one fact that God is never tired of loving His creation and there fore the basic tie between them is LOVE. It may be expressed through any language, it never fails to impress people that he is essentially ONE.

End Notes:

1. Macdonald *Development of Muslim Theology*, New York: 1909, p 227.

2. Hujwari *The Kushf-e-Mahjub* translated by Nicholson, London: 1936 p. 78.
3. Wearing of wool by the Sufis not only forms a link with Christian and Buddhist monks about outwardly indicates purity.
4. *Encyclopedia of Islam* (new edition) III, p.374.
5. Arberry *Sufism: An account of Mystics of Islam*, London, 1950, p.51.
6. Margatet Smith - *Rabia the Mystic*, Cambridge, 1925, p104.
7. The author feels that esoteric knowledge as Baba has suggested is conveyed from "Heart to Heart" and therefore is not restricted to any historical scholarship or personal effort.
8. *Encyclopedia of Islam* (New Edition) II, p.242.
9. Margaret Smith *An early Mystic of Bhagdad* pp.81-82.
10. Arberry (trans) *The Book of Truthfulness*, Oxford: 1937, pp61-62.
11. Nicholson *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* 1967, p.80.
12. A detailed study of Rumi and Baba is to be in chapter II of this book, entitled "*The Religion of Love*".
13. For a detailed study of the Silsilas one can check Rizvi *The History of Sufism in India* Vol. II, New Delhi: 83.
14. Dara Shokh, Sultan Mohammad: His major writing are collected in four books their names are:
 1. SakinatuI Auliya
 2. SafinatuI Auliya
 3. Risala-e-Huq Numa
 4. Sirr-e-Akbar.
15. a) *Adya Barichar* is the basis of Shaik Zahid's *Bharul Hayat*
- b) Shaik Chands's *Haraqauti Sanobad* exhorts Nath Yogis exercises especially their control of breath which they use during Zikr.
- c) Syed Sultan (17th century) *Ganga Pradip* attempts to reconcile Hath Yoga to Sufism.
16. *Journey to Immortality*, from Sufi angled is the main concern of Chapter IV of this study.
17. Lyrica of Deccani Sufis are also collected by Syeda Jaffar: in *Sukh Anjan* (Urdu) with a commentary and are based on the manuscripts found in Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad. (20th century studies).

CHAPTER IV

JOURNEY TO IMMORTALITY

*Lead me from untruth to Truth,
From darkness to Light,
From death to Immortality
(Rig Veda)*

This idea of human evolution is as old as the wisdom of Vedic Rishis. Meher Baba in his concept of spiritual evolution of man echoes it in *God Speaks* as recently as 20th Century. In simple language it consists of the fact that human soul, conscious of the gross world, develops a sense of homeward journey to Truth / God and finally is united with the Overself. Baba also hints at it when He indicates "Turn within". It is a mystic truth and all religious texts affirm it in their own way.

So as does each religious leader,
Christ has said: "You must be born again".

Mohammad has stated: "Die before your die."

The Kathopanishad has narrated it in the form of a story.¹ The Quran has often reminded that : "All is from Allah and to Him is the return of all." Two hundred hymns are in praise of Agni in the Rig Veda which represents human self. The Sufi calls it light or the Self within Man, the Light of Consciousness as it is generally understood. This journey or transformation takes place within man. It may be slow or sudden due to the gift of grace. The form of man remains the same outwardly, but the inner change is obvious in his / her personality. In Sufism many have spoken of this Journey. A few examples are given below:

a) To Avicenna, and Shuharwardi showing the influence of Zoroaster this journey takes the form of man travelling to the city of Emerald, with the help of his higher intelligence. (*Creative Imagination* of Ibnul Arabi). The same idea is found among Manicheans, Hermetists, Sabians of Harran the early Christian gnostics and Buddhist of Central Asia.²

b) Ibnul Arabi letter to his disciple describes it as the Journey to Lord of Power, now translated and published by the East-West publication, London: 1960.

Rumi, speaks of it in his evolution of the soul through man to the kingdom of the Divine, in one of his famous lyric in the *Diwan-e-Shams*.

c) This journey to immortality is also indicated by Najam Kubra, a Persian mystic in terms of appearance of seven coloured lights. They are called Latifa, and are the same as 7 chakras of Yoga. They are found in the 7 heavens of Ziggurats in ancient Babylonia and 7 structures of the stupa of Barabodour d) Faird Uddin Attar in his composition of 7000 couplets, *Assembly of Birds* speaks of the 7 valleys which are cleared by the birds to reach their Emperor.³ The emperor finally tells these birds; I am the very essence annihilate yourself gloriously and enjoy in Me. In Me you shall find yourself (true self).

Falconer : *Sufi Literature and Journey to immortality* p.98

It is also suggested by the image of "Dying to Yourself" or the word "Poverty" as Prophet Mohammed had quoted "Poverty is my pride." In Sufi terminology it means that God only remains.⁴ The use of the word '*faqir*' by Shirdi Sai indicates the end of this journey.

STAGES OF THE JOURNEY :

Prof. Hislop in his *Conversation with Baba* (pp.60-67) has suggested 10 stages in *Sadhana*, of this spiritual growth. They also conform to ten rules in Sufi terminology which are listed by Syed Ali in his *Risala-l-Dah Qaida*. Today one need not go into the details of these ten rules. It is enough to believe by the beginner that these stages are centered in the form of man. Rumi relates it in the form of a story in his *Masnawi*. In a conversation between Bistami and an old man, the aged Faqir tells the mystic not to go to Kaba but go round him.

"My form too... is the house of His (God's) consciousness. Thou mayest behold the light of God in Man" (verse 2231, II) The faith by the Sufis that God resides in the Self on man is based on a Hadis-e-Qudsi where God indicates that His heaven and earth cannot hold Him but the heart of His believing servant contains Him. Later Mansur's statement "Anal-Haq" (I am Truth) has been termed as the essence of *one Life* by Rumi. Baba has often elaborated on this One Life in many places.

In Hislop's *Conversation with Baba* it is stated that "with correct and steady sadhana in course, actual experience of one will naturally come about (and). The unity of life must be experienced (not verbalised) (pp.69-70).

Similar to Baba and Sufism are the remarks that these stages of the Journey consist in crossing the five Sheaths (Koshas) They can be viewed as :

Annamaya - *Nasut* (gross of material sheet)

Pranamaya - *Alame Msasal* (psychological sheet)

Manomaya - *Jabrut* (mind)

Vignanamaya - *Lahoot* (intuition)

Anandamaya - *Hahoot* (Divine)

These are, nevertheless mystic symbols and must be taken as such.

The question here arises whether this Journey necessitate a guide. Many Sufis have elaborated on the concept of a guru (teacher) and especially Rumi has confirmed of this requirement. Shirdi Sai in *Satcharita* has stated that Bhakti Marga (Journey of Love Devotion) is filled with Dangers. It is like passing through a dense forest where all kinds of animals abound. Therefore a guide is necessary. In this early life he is supposed to have a guru (teacher), *Venkusa*, perhaps when one is well on his way one can follow one's own conscience. That is what Baba has meant when he tells prof. Hislop "Guru is the light to show the road but God is the destination. Really Guru is only God and God is within."⁵ Buddha has also said the same thing: "By yourself must the effort be made; the Buddhas are only teachers. (Falconer: *Sufi Literature and Journey to Immortality*, p.149). The stages of this journey are already related in Kathopanishad. but for the sake of clarity can be marked as follows:
(into four stages)

1. Withdrawing light of consciousness from the sense objects and remove the self projection (Detachment from them, according to Baba).
2. Discriminating Self's light even form the thoughts.
3. Dissolving the mind in Buddhi / higher intelligence / intuition.
4. Dissolving the higher intelligence into Atma / Overself.

This in what platinous has also meant when he has said: We have all the vision that may be of Him and ourselves but it is of a Self wrought to splendor, brimmed with spiritual Light, become the very light, pure buoyant, unburdened, raised to Godhead.

This, of course is the description of the last stage (number four in the listing). In the first three one has to struggle himself /herself. Often the last stage is compared to an "eternal summer sea" or "Blue sky". A channel to it is discovered in the heart of every living creature. To many holes (distractive tendency) often at present, cause the draining off of this light, so Baba has indicated in a interview. Among the Indian Sufis only the Shuharvardiya claim to have enabled the devotees to get self-realisation in the shortest possible time.

BABA'S STATEMENT REGARDING THE JOURNEY:

1. The whole creation is emerged from the Truth and merges back into it. (25-9-1998, p.3) (It is like the Quranic sentence already quoted)
2. There is no separate path other than knowing one's self... (25.9.1998, p.6)
3. All are children of Bliss (The seeker of bliss) has emerged from bliss and he wants to return to bliss (27-9-1998, p.8)
4. Love helps you to know yourself... turn your vision inward (28.9.1998, p.6).
- God wants only one thing - you should know your self. Only then you will know God. (28.9.1998 p.5)
5. One has to develop attachment to Self (19.10.1998, p.4)
- Removal of immorality is the only way to immortality. (19.10.98, p.8)
- You are the son of immortality. Understand and experience this (11-10-98, p.8)
6. The sense are above the body, mind is above senses, intellect is above the mind, and Atma is above the intellect. Man does not travel even up to the level of the mind. (24.11.98, p.3)
- When you are one with the self, there is no scope for birth and death. Body attachments, educational and monetary attachments reduce the Self to the present state of man. Man thus forgets his true nature (he) has to regain his resplendent, pristine purity. (24.11.98, p.6)

Both in Sufism and by Baba the Self is equated with light. It therefore is incumbent to see its wide implication as suggested in the next chapter, before one see the ideal of a perfect man seen in the person of an Avatar and consider a good luck that one is a contemporary of Baba.

End Notes :

1. Process of immortality in Kathoupanishad: 111-13 following is the elaboration of symbolism in the text based on words and phrases:
 Vajashravasa: (the father) vaja - food and strength, shravasa - loud voice, fame.
 Nachiketa - that which is unperceived, is latent in all things.
 Old cows - hypocrisy of rituals, real sacrifice is that of gross self.
 Faith - The first step of the union of higher mind and higher intelligence.
 The boy repeating three times the same question - shows he transcends the three worlds mentioned in the Gayatri Mantra.
 Nachiketa Fire - scared fire of the alchemists known to ancient men.
 The boy entering the hall of Yama - Getting rid of one's ego, and hence qualifying to know the self (Commentary by Prem in *Sufi literature: Journey to Immortality*).
2. Falconer *Sufi literature Journey to immortality*, Motilal Banarasidas, (1991, pp129-147).
3. These 7 valleys, well known to all Sufis are 1. Quest, 2. Love, 3. Understanding 4. Detachment / independence 5. Purity, 6. Astonishment, 7. Poverty and nothingness.
4. Sabistri *Enclosed garden of truth* trans. J. Stephenson. Samuel Weiser Inc.
5. Hislop *Conversation with Baba Prashanthi Nilayam*, pp.161-162.
6. "He who known himself, known Allah". Phophet Mohammad, Hadis-e-Qudsi.

CHAPTER V**THE LIGHT*****"God is the Light of Heaven and Earth"***

(The Quran, The Verse of Light)

On Significant dimension, without which any study of Baba and Sufism may be incomplete, is the multi-faceted aspect of Light. For this any living person can observe the symbolism of Light and its play in Prasanthi Nilayam. In the Sai Kulwant Hall everything from the porcelain-studded pillars to the black-marbled floor reflects the light, in the form of thousands of bulbs that decorate the ceilings. Specially during the early morning hours it is a marvel to see these lights. A silent glimmering of these lights impends one to recognize their significance, for, they seem to tell a story in term of time and space. They create a pristine wonder to their own with an aura that hangs in the air, and a crystal lining and the chandeliers in the ceiling enhance the effect further. Along with the chanting of the hymns and the songs in praise of God they add to a sense of adoration of the Almighty and make the darkened heart recall the Divinity that is always present.

They, also inform, at least, suggests another link : the art - between sufism and Baba's teaching. One, later on is reminded of this mystic perception that is common in architecture, painting and sculpture. For example, the colour scheme that dominates Prashanthi Nilayam buildings is pink and sky blue. Soft pink stands for selfless love of the heart and light blue is the colour of spirituality. Many high reliefs and paintings from Indian epics and myths remind one of the divine myths and their meanings. An analogy is created in the mind of sufi calligraphy and floral designs of the prayer rugs and the carpets.¹

Similar is the case of light symbolism in *Khanknas*² and shrines³. Nature in the form of garden form a part of whole complex and thus a garden is included in this scheme of universal light.

One must also remember that lights have been very dear to Shirdi Sai, as also they are seen in the form of *Chiragan* (illuminations) every Thursday in Sufi Shrines (especially the major ones in Hyderabad South). Thus an extension of this symbolism is observed in Sai Kulwant Hall also.

In Baba's and Sufi tradition light assumes a continued and multi-dimensional symbol. It may indicate following points.

- a) Change and permanence as well as unity in diversity,

b) The flame imagery, in Baba and Rumi, shows the relationship of the divine and mankind. The semblance in these two passages may help one to contemplate on this aspect 6. The art, in Islam based on the Quranic passages, is always comprehended as the breath of the Compassionate and the light is one visual indication of this Mercy.

This concept of the light is fully contemplated in the form of an Avatar, and its implication and continuity can be expanded in the last chapter (VI) of this collection of ideas.

Finally in sufi tradition light stands for Logos, which indicates a centre. As such it manifests 4 aspects of the Divinity:

- i) An uncreated or pre-existent dimension with things.
- ii) As Light it removes the darkness and ushers order and wisdom
- iii) The light suggest the creative principle in all things. iv) It is a prototype of human form.

Therefore, its purpose in Sai Kulwant Hall is to be fully grasped. Mankind through rites and rituals and written words in the revelations practises these symbols but the heart of a sufi knows that man cannot create them. He can only recognise and use them to transform himself, for a sufi believes in a quranic statement :

"So God citeth symbols that (14:31) may remember".

Following the Quranic injunctions and Baba's orders the students and Balvikas children used light in their meditative practices. For a better and vaster vision and implication the passage in the Quran, known as the verse of Light is quoted here:

The likeness of His Light is a niche, wherein is a lamp.
(The lamp is in a glass,
The Glass as it were a glittering star)
Kindled from a blessed tree,
An olive that is neither of the East nor of the West; whose oil well night would shine, even if no fire has touched it. Light upon light

(The Quran 24:35)

First of all associated with art-image, this analogy reminds one of the wick, and oil that are essential to make the lamp burn words are remembered "your body is the lamp, and your mind the oil, the tongue the wick" Thus in the final analysis, "Man is a spark of the Divine. The one Parama Jothi shines as wisdom in a million heart".

End Notes:

1. Martin Lings and H.H. Safadri (Comp) *The Quran* London: British Library, 1976.

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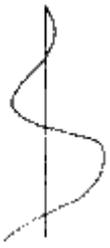
2. L. Bakhtiar *Sufi*, Singapore, 1979, pp. 49 and 62.

3. *Ibid*, pp. 92.

4. It means *enlightenment* one example of it is seen in a shrine, called *char taq* (Four niches) a Mandala in design, it is an architectural symbol for transformation (*Sufi*, p. 86).

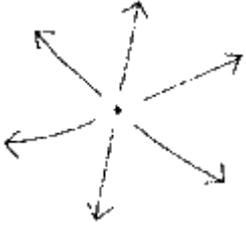
5. Its main features are given in art form as below:

a) Change and permanence, seen as a wavy and a straight line.

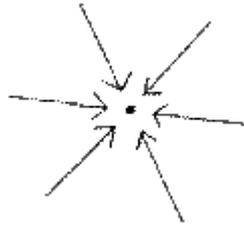


b) Two aspects of Unity seen in i) and ii)

i) Unity in Multiplicity



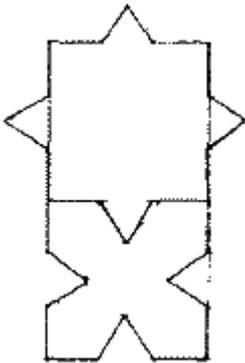
ii) Unity in Diversity



6. a) The lamps are different; But the light is the same It comes from beyond... ..fix your gaze upon the light and you are delivered from Dualism. Inherent in the finite body (Rumi : Masnavi :111 : 1259)

b) All lamps shine alike since they are all sparks of Param Jyothi, The universal luminosity that is God. Lamps are many but God is ONE.... The one Paramjyothi as wisdom shines in a million hearts, whether noticed or not. (Baba: Prasanthi Nilayam Notice Board 1.9.87).

7. Berth of the compassionate (A Quranic image for Mercy)



CHAPTER VI

AVATAR:

"MY LIFE IS MY MESSAGE"

How important is Baba's statement (My life is My message) can be realised from the human angle if one sees it (a) intellectually, (b) in the light of the principle of the perfect man in Sufism found in Jili's book *Insan-e-Kamil* and (c) Baba's views on this subject.

The Quranic statements of this subject are equivocal. On one hand they warn man not to assume the lordship and relate of the fate of those, like the pharaohs of Egypt, who claim it. On the other side there are lines like "Wherever you see there is the Face of God" the lines fit into Baba's description of man: "all are children of immortality" (27-9-98, p.8). The mission of the Avatar / Prophet / Revelation, it appears, is to guide mankind, to self-realization.

However it is always possible for humanity to forget the main road and go an alley-left, then to our own resources one can assume that the central factor in an Avatar's life and message is Love / Atma. Only through these one can recognize oneself. Faced with the mystic relation and ineffectuality of one's own mind, the Sufis have adopted two attitudes. Majority, remain satisfied with the concept of duality: God and the Devotee. Others, who may have known the truth and have reached the high state of self-realization preferred to remain silent, for the ordinary devotee cannot comprehend this great truth. Both the groups exemplify, their stand from the person of Mohammad. The first group sees in him the ideal of a perfect "servant" (*Abd*) as it is suggested in the Quran. The other sees in him Logos (centre of the universe) and quote as an example of his unity of the ascension (Me'raj) to the Divine and as his claim in the *Hadis*. I was a prophet when Adam was the in the form of clay (pre-existence). Also all the Sufis, except a few, reject the idea of *Hulul* (Divine Incarnation. Yet Sufis like Junaid, Bistami and Abul-khair have uttered sentences the are popularly attributed to a condition of *sukur* (intoxication). An interesting incident relates how Junaid has ordered his disciples to kill him if they hear words of Divinity spoken by him. When next time in a transcendental state he has said certain sentences his companions have taken out their weapons to assassinate him. To their bewilderment they end in injuring themselves. In fear, they resort to leaving the place. Similar incidents of a state of unification are observed in the life of Nizamuddin of Delhi and *Baba Farid* of Banjab, who have helped their devotees after their physical demise (Ram Gopal: *Baba Farid* (Urdu) Same can be said of Shirdi Sai, in this century. The common person may not comprehend the unity or perfection seen in the life of as Avatar. It is enough that they believe as faith in the principle of Unification. As time goes on they can only pray like Abdul Arabi: "Enter me, O Lord, into the deep ocean of Thine Infinite Oneness." British Museum Manuscript, Or. 13453 (3) This ocean as often Baba has reminded "is within and without." The seeker who fails to find it does injustice to his own heart. As a clarification, for the intellectuals satisfaction a scholar may satisfy a scholar myself from a passage of Martin Ling:

The Islamic doctrine of *Rasul* (Prophet) is the same as.... that of an *Avatar* The difference is that of perception rather than the fact.... The divinity of the *Rasul* is veiled.... to safeguard the doctrine of Oneness.... Whereas in the case of an Avatar, as it were 'Folded up lest it should blur the identity of self with the self. This identity is also the essence of sufism (like Advaita).

(M.Ling: *What is Sufism*, London: George Alien and Unwin, 1975, p.33)

This extract points to a state of the mind which Baba has also described with an image: The mind fixed in the awareness of the One is like a rock, unaffected by doubts, stable, secure."

The state of such a mind is nearer to Jili's idea of the Perfect Man. Though this state is as old as humanity it is Abul Karim Ibrahim al Jili (1366-1417) who was given it a written form. He has been to India in 1388, and being a scholar more than 20 mystical books are associated with him. Needless to say that the origin of this doctrine is Ibnul-Arabi's idea found in his Unity of Being. To Jili, the pure Being has neither name nor attributes. Only when it gradually descends from this state of Absoluteness and enters a state of manifestation that it is called the Perfect Man. To Jili the permanent state of perfection / immortality (Atmic state) is very rare. Here every human attribute vanishes and in the heart only an awareness of unity remains. Hence only in the heart there is perception of Divine essence. Jili finds for his examples the utterances of al-Hallaj. He, nevertheless, contends that while at the supreme moment a man may lose himself in God he can never be identified with God, the Divine, absolutely.² Thus Jili's statements fail to satisfy the doctrine of Avatar. Rumi to satisfy the common intellect gives a number of reasons in his *Masnavi* (I: 181-183).

A blade of grass cannot cope with the weight of a mountain, sun for its original distance will burn the world.

A moth may bask in the candle's light

But burns when it embraces it.

Moses insisted on God's reply

(Ilan tarani = you cannot see Me)

but fainted when the been was given of only one illumination.

One has to accept the fact that thick veils cover the Avatar, reality, only faith may help in this respect. Two statements of Baba confirm to this idea a) "Thick waves of *maya* make the recognition of the Avatar almost impossible." b) The Avatar is beyond the five elements. (*Conversation with Baba*, pp.90, 154)

Quiet are the prophets and the saints on this question. Since the doctrine of reincarnation is not accepted by the Sufis the question becomes more of a puzzle. Only Bhulle Shah (Punjabi poet) has said that the type of perfection demanded by Jili is not possible in one life-time. One has to agree with Bhulle Shah if one observes the few examples in Baba's life as the guiding lines:

- a) Constant, untiring service to humanity. This is based on an idea that the Avatar never rejects a devotee.
- b) Equanimity of treatment to all who came to Him.
- c) Soft polite speech to all though, seen at the Darshan, it may results in physical discomfort for Himself.
- d) Simplicity - a yogic / Sufi trait - of personal habits.
- e) Facing pain or pleasure with a smile.

These are a few jewels that each common man can perceive and cherish in his own life. Thus one may observe the reality of the statement" My Life is my message."

Those who may forget that they are given this chance may remember a few quotations at least.

BABA'S QUOTATION ABOUT AN AVATAR

1. If you conduct yourself with peace love and compassion, then you are God. (25-9-98)
2. At the age of 73 I look so young the reason is I have 3 p's in Me. One is purity, second is patience and third is perseverance. (11-10-98)
3. Why does god incarnate? To enable man to understand and experience his latent divinity... The goal of spirituality is to realize oneness with Atma in all (24-11-98).
4. Expect for one I do not ask for anything. That which I ask in for is your love (24-11-98) That I gave to you before time began, as your sole possession (*Prema Dhara* p.4) One may be reminded here of the ancient covenant in the Quran that is mentioned in this manuscript earlier.
5. Let me tell you, I have never suffered nor will ever suffer ... only when I take upon myself the suffering of others do I appear to the suffering. (24-11-98)⁴
6. The whole world is governed by God, and God is governed by Truth; Truth is in hands of noble souls and noble souls and nobel souls are verily Divine (1-10-1998)

Bewilderment is a quality of a soul as it faces God, so has Attar the Sufi, has observed in his *Assembly of Birds*. As a conclusion, one may express at the inability of the intellect and merely look at the strange fusion of Nirguna and Saguna aspect in an Avatar. Remembering one's good luck observing this Ocean and recall the following lines of Baba:

I am not the body, a mass a flesh, bones and blood.
 I am not the mind : bundle of wasteful desires, manifest, unmanifest,
 I am not the feeling of infatuation that obstructs my way to liberation.
 I am that external Paramatma who is aware of the power that I am.

(*Prem Dhara* 7 pp. 68)

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3. Hislop *Conversation with Baba*, 1985, pp.90 154.
4. One such example is seen during the sports meet of January 11th, 1999. While travelling in the chariot to attend the function, Baba fell due to sudden jolt of the car; injuring His left arm, shoulder and the spinal cord very badly. Blood has trickled throughout the five hour stay with the devotees. Pain must have been excruciating, yet none has been allowed to observe, let alone to interfere He, later has explained (Discourse 14-1-99) that He has taken upon Himself what a particular student had to suffer that day. Such is God's love for humanity.

5. The image of name or form of the individual slowly dissolving like the rivers merging into the sea is common among the Sufis. While writing the last chapter it has been given to understand that this ocean is here, now, it is yet another symbol of God. A glimpse of it is seen at the Darshan time when this huge sea of humanity swells. One look at it, engulfed and explain" Many are the gifts of Grace" and be drowned in it totally.

Appendix - I

A POEM

Children of Humanity! Remember that you are created in
My image and likeness. PERFECT!

Live up to this image, in every way, in all planes Live like masters!

Walk this earth with your heads held high Your spirits soaring...
Your hearts open to love...
And believe in yourself and God within you
Then all will go well.

Earth is but a manifestation of My Being,
Made out of My LIFE!

Wherever you look, I am there, wherever you walk I am there.

Whomsoever you contact,
I am that person.
I am in each, in all My Splendor.

See Me every where
Talk to Me and Love Me Who am in each.

Then, from each, I will respond
And bring you into Glory.
You cannot see me in one place
And not in another, for I fill all space.

You cannot escape me
Or do anything in secret,
For there are no secrets with Me.

Live... Live... Live...in perfect accordance with
My laws and wonders will ensue I

Think now. Does error clog, the free flowing
Essence of My Being through you?
Ask me this moment to reveal to you your errors,
In the silence of your meditation.

Let old memories will up in you,
From My subconscious in you...
Old patterns old forgotten feelings and thoughts.

Now plunge them into the ocean of Light,
Burn them from the consciousness,
So that you may be True emblems of My being.

Right now, Visualise My burning Flame

Rising higher and higher as it burns through you.
It is a flame that is cooling, cleansing and healing;
That soothes the hidden sorrow... and leaves you calm and quiet.

Rest in My love. Let all that you have been through
In your many lives up to this day,
Melt away in My Redeeming light

Children of My being, Dissolve your sorrows and fears in Me.
Let me efface All your Karma.

Come back into my consciousness, which is
Your own true consciousness
Let your petty human self fade away, right now,
As you come to me, who am your Inner self.

You are My radiant Glorious self... No longer separate from Me
Melt with Me... merge with Me! BECOME ME

(-Baba : *Prema Dhara*, pp 6-8)

Appendix - II

THE LONGING OF THE HEART

I am calling to you from afar :
Calling to you since the very beginning of days,
For aeons of time....
Calling calling since always...
It is part of your being, My voice,
But it comes to you faintly and you hear it sometimes;
"I don't know" you may say, "What is it , and where?"
But some where you hear, and deep down you know.
For I am that in you which has been always,
I am that in you which will never end.
Even if you say, "Who is calling?"
Where will you run? Just tell me.
Can you run away from yourself?
For I am only ONE for you;
There is no other,
Your promise, your Reward am I alone...
Your punishment, your Longing
And your goal

(Anonymous *Sufi Quotations*, compiled by V. Lee, California: Golden Sufi Center, 1996)

DEARLY BELOVED!

I have called you so often and you have not heard me,
I have shown myself to you so often and you have not seen me.

I have made myself fragrant so often, and you have not smelt me,
Savourous food and you have not tasted me.
Why can you not reach me through the object you
Touch or breathe through sweet perfumes?

Why do you not see me? Why do you not hear me?
Why? Why? Why?

For you My delights surpass all other delights,
And the pleasure I procure you surpasses all other pleasures.
For you I am preferable to all other good things.
I am Beauty, I am Grace.

Love me, Love me alone. Love yourself in me, in me alone.
No one is more inward than I, Others love you for their own sakes,
I love you for yourself, and you flee from me.

Dearly beloved! You cannot treat me fairly,
For if you approach me, It is because I have approached you.

I am nearer to you than yourself,
Than your soul, than your breath.
Who among creatures would treat you as I do?
I am jealous of you over you,
I want you to belong to no other, Not even to yourself.
Be mine, be for me as your in me,
Though you are not even aware of it.

Dearly beloved! Let us go toward Union.
And if we find the road That leads to separation,
We will destroy separation
Let us go hand in hand. Let us enter the presence of Truth.
And imprint its seal upon our union For ever.

(Nizami: trans: R. Gelpka Quoted by L.V. KEE in The call and Echo, pp.94-95)

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