

Nothing But The Truth: The Sufi Testament of 'Aziz Nasafi

Lloyd Ridgeon

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
PhD.

Leeds University, Department of Modern Arabic Studies.

March 1996

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and
that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been
made to the work of others.

Lloyd V. J. Ridgeon. "Nothing But The Truth: The Sufi Testament
of 'Azīz Nasafī." PhD, March 1996.

'Azīz Nasafī is among the most important Islamic mystics of the medieval period. His achievement was to integrate various ideas, including those of Ibn 'Arabī and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā into a coherent whole, providing Persian speaking Sufis with an introduction to the speculative and practical dimensions of Sufism.

This thesis is an attempt to present Nasafī's main teachings. After introducing his life, times and works, the second chapter focuses upon ontology. This is the spine of Nasafī's treatises and it is based upon the Sufi interpretation of God's incomparability and similarity (*tanzīh wa tashbīh*) and His infinite self-disclosure which occurs within a form processed by the imagination. The second chapter investigates the different forms of knowledge available to Sufis, which includes sense perception, reason and mystical knowledge. Nasafī's presentation depicts all three in a hierarchical structure with Sufi knowledge at the pinnacle. Having discussed the theoretical nature of Sufism, chapter four deals with the practical element of Sufism and how it is able to contribute to felicity in this life. Having followed the Sufi path, it is possible that a wayfarer may experience unity with God. This is examined in chapter five, and Nasafī's description is compared with that of other Sufis in an attempt to show his "orthodox" position within Sufism. It is also argued that modern models of mystical experience do not fit Nasafī's depiction of *tashbīh-tanzīh*, and that one also needs to re-think the idea of perennial philosophy. Finally, the perfection of man is considered through examining the relationship between Prophecy and Friendship of God. Sufis interpreted Friendship as the interior element of Prophecy and were able to offer new insights to Islamic doctrine.

2:3:1	Similarities between Islam and Classical Neoplatonism	87
2:3:2	Differences between Sufism and Classical Neoplatonism	91
2:3:3	Conclusion	105
Chapter 3:	Epistemology	106
3:1:1	<u>Attaining Knowledge</u>	106
3:1:2	The Knowledge of the ' <i>Ulamā</i> '	108
3:1:3	The Knowledge of the Philosophers	111
3:1:4	The Knowledge of the People of Unity	115
3:2:1	<u>The Convergence of Hellenistic and Islamic Epistemological Thought</u>	117
3:2:2	The Outer and Inner Faculties of Perception	118
3:3:1	<u>Mystical Knowledge</u>	127
3:3:2	<i>Dhikr</i> (remembrance)	127
3:3:3	<i>Fikr</i> (reflection)	129
3:3:4	Inspiration (<i>ilhām</i>)	131
3:3:5	Contemplation (<i>'iyān</i>)	133
3:3:6	The Two Varieties of Mystical Wayfarer	135
3:3:7	Conclusion	136
Chapter 4:	The Sufi Journey	138
4:1:1	<u>Introduction: Felicity, the Goal of Sufism</u>	138
4:1:2	Felicity and Heaven	139
4:1:3	The Path of Felicity	143
4:1:3 (I)	Abandonment	144
4:1:3 (II)	Gnosis of God	147

4:1:4	Conclusion	152
4:2	<u>The Sufi Path</u>	153
4:2:1	The Order (<i>ṭarīqa</i>)	153
4:2:2	The Sufi Shaykh	158
4:2:3	Devotional Practices	166
4:2:4	Contemplative Discipline, the Mastering of One's Soul and Other Sufi Practices	169
Chapter 5:	Visionary Experience and Unity with God	176
5:1	<u>Types of Vision and Mystical Experience</u>	176
5:1:1	The Journey to God Represented Through Symbols	176
5:1:2	Visions of the Next World	179
5:1:3	Encounters with Spirits, Future Events and Dreams	179
5:1:4	The Different Levels of Mystical Experience as Manifested Through Visions	182
5:1:5	Conclusion	184
5:2	<u>The Vision of God</u>	186
5:2:1	Variegation (<i>talwīn</i>), Stability (<i>tamkīn</i>) and Creative Power (<i>takwīn</i>)	188
5:3	<u>Spiritual Perfection and Creation</u>	197
5:4	<u>Describing the Mystical Experience</u>	204
Chapter 6:	The Perfection of Man:	214
	The Concepts of <i>Walāyat</i> and <i>Nubuwwat</i>	
6:1:1	<u>Introduction: The Spiritual Ascent</u>	214
6:1:2	Qualities of the Perfect Man	218
6:2	<u>The Superiority of Friendship Over Prophecy</u>	224

6:2:1	Knowledge and Friendship	225
6:3	<u>The Superiority of Prophecy Over Friendship</u>	230
6:4	<u>Conclusion</u>	235
6:5	<u>The Friends of God as Heirs to the Prophets</u>	237
6:5:1	The Custodians of the Universe	238
6:5:2	Nasafi and Shī'ism	244
6:5:3	The Political and Social Significance of Perfection	253
	Conclusion	258
	Bibliography	263

Introduction

For more than three hundred years there has been an academic interest within the western world in a Persian speaking Sufi named 'Azīz Ibn Muḥammad al-Nasafī (known simply as 'Azīz Nasafī). In 1665, a Turkish version of Nasafī's *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* along with a Latin translation was published¹ and this was followed in 1821 by F. Tholuck's handbook on "the pantheistic theosophy of the Persians."² The first English work on Nasafī appeared in 1867 when E.H. Palmer paraphrased the *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* under the title *Oriental Mysticism*³ and this book has been reprinted several times since then. During the twentieth century scholarship on Nasafī has improved somewhat, spearheaded by the efforts of Fritz Meier whose German articles were the first to concentrate upon Nasafī's ideas and writings.⁴ The baton was taken on by M. Molé who edited two of Nasafī's treatises entitled "The Perfect Man" (*al-Insān al-kāmil*) and "The Waystations of the Travellers" (*Manāzil al-sā'irīn*).⁵ Molé also included a fifty-seven page introduction in which he discussed some of the themes in Nasafī's theosophy as well as continuing Meier's investigation into manuscripts of Nasafī's works.

Despite the auspicious beginnings in studies on Nasafī, until the middle of the twentieth-century, there was little development in the analysis of his theosophy, and no adequate translation of any of his works. Since Molé's studies, western scholars have only made brief references to Nasafī as an interpreter of Ibn 'Arabī⁶ and this does not do

¹ A. Mueller, *Excerpta manuscripti cujusdam Turcici*. (Coloniae Brandenburgicae: 1665).

² F.A.G. Tholuck, *Ssufismus sive theosophia Persarum Pantheistica*, (Berlin: 1821).

³ E.H. Palmer, *Oriental Mysticism: a Treatise on Sufiistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians*, (London: 1867; second edition, 1938).

⁴ See "Das problem der natur im esoterischen Monismus des Islams," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 14 (1946), and "Die Schriften des 'Azīz-i Nasafī," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 52 (1953). The first of these has been translated into English, see "The Problem of Nature in the Esoteric Monism of Islam," *Spirit and Nature: Papers from the Eranos Yearbook*, ed. J. Campbell, (New York: 1954).

⁵ Nasafī, *Kitāb al-Insān al-kāmil*, ed. M. Molé, (Tehran-Paris: Institut Franco-Iranien, 1962). This work also includes Nasafī's *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*. Nasafī's *al-Insān al-kāmil* has subsequently been translated into European languages several times. The first of these was Isabelle de Gastines's French rendition entitled *Le Livre de l'Homme Parfait*, (Paris: Fayard, 1984). My own English version was called *The Perfect Man*. (Niigata, Japan: The Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 1992). There also exists an unpublished translation by W. Thackston, which I happened to see during a research trip to the United States in 1995. Both S.H. Nasr and W. Chittick showed Thackston's work to me.

⁶ For example, James Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986), pp. 745-51. Also W. Chittick, "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," *The Heritage of Rūmī*,

justice to one of the greatest of Kubrāwī shaykhs of thirteenth century Central Asia and Iran.⁷ This thesis is an attempt to redress this situation by providing a guide to the major themes in Nasafī's theosophy.

Recently, the aim of research in Sufism was defined by C. Ernst who said, "The most urgent tasks in Sufi studies are to produce readable and reliable translations of important texts, along with analysis of their contents which link them up with current discussions in the field of religious studies."⁸ This thesis has attempted to provide all three of Ernst's qualifications. Although this is not a translation of one whole text, included are extensive quotations from seven of Nasafī's known treatises. In fact it would have been possible to submit a thesis which consisted of an edited and translated version of one of Nasafī's treatises (such as *Bayān-i tanzīl*). This is of course would have been a worthy task, however, this present thesis has attempted to include as many quotations from Nasafī's various works in order to provide a comprehensive guide to Nasafī's main ideas (which may not come out by editing only one treatise) and also to give the reader some idea of Nasafī's literary style and usage of Sufi technical terms. In addition, it is hoped that this thesis explains the meanings of such technical terms which some translations tend to gloss over.

So the general aim of this thesis is to give a comprehensive picture of Nasafī's Sufism, rather than concentrating upon one particular item, such as Nasafī's ontological descriptions. Indeed, it would be possible to write a whole thesis on the major themes which appear as chapters within this thesis. Such specific research on Nasafī is the task of future generations, but it is hoped that this thesis will provide a general plan which

eds A. Banani and G. Sabagh, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See also S. Murata's passages on Nasafī in her *Tao of Islam: a sourcebook on gender relationships in Islamic thought*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992). L. Lewisohn has also focused upon Nasafī, although not merely as an interpreter of Ibn 'Arabī, see *Beyond Faith and Infidelity*, (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995), pp 219-228.

⁷ During the period of writing this thesis, several articles of mine about Nasafī have been published. See L. Ridgeon, "The Life and Times of 'Azīz Nasafī," *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism*. XXII (1994): 31-35. "'Azīz Nasafī and Visionary Experience," *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism*. XXIV, (1995): 22-28. "The Felicitous Life in Sufism," *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism*., XXVIII, (1996): 30-35. These articles have been incorporated in one form or another within this thesis.

See also "'Azīz Nasafī's six ontological faces," *Iran*, 1996 forthcoming, (this is included as part of chapter two in this thesis).

⁸ C. Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī*. (Richmond: Curzon, 1996), p. ix.

scholars may then use as a diving board for their more specialised research on Nasafī. Finally, the linkage with current discussions in the field of religious studies is made by comparing Nasafī's ontology and epistemology with the research of several twentieth scholars of mysticism. Due to the limits of this thesis however, it has not been possible to investigate this last aspect as thoroughly as I would have liked. Nevertheless, this also may be task for future scholars.

The first chapter describes the background to the era in which Nasafī lived, looking at certain factors which must have contributed to his outlook on life. This is followed by a list of the known treatises that Nasafī composed. Chapter two is by far the longest in this thesis, since Nasafī's preoccupation was of an ontological nature, concerning the relationship between the existence of God and that of man. Once man comprehends the theoretical ontological position, he may then attempt to acquire knowledge of God. This is the theme of chapter three which examines the different ways of obtaining knowledge, a particularly difficult concept to consider because the ultimate method of acquiring knowledge is neither through the five senses nor is it rational or intellectual. Many twentieth century critics may be sceptical about a form of "mystical" epistemology but it is still worthy of consideration even for such critics on the basis of historical and sociological study. Perhaps one cannot give an answer as to whether claims of an ineffable knowledge are genuine or not, but one can describe what an individual mystic says and how that knowledge is to be acquired. Chapter four moves away from the ontological and epistemological theory and concentrates on how the Sufi is able to perfect his life. This is the Sufi spiritual journey which is the practical application of Sufi disciplines and devotion, such as abandonment (*tark*), prayer and isolation (*'uzlat*). It is through such practices that the Sufi comes to realise the truth of the ontological and epistemological theory. As a result of ascetic discipline and religious effort, the Sufi may be rewarded with "visions," in other words, God may manifest Himself to the Sufi. Chapter five focuses upon this point in addition to investigating the nature of the ultimate experience or vision of God that one can enjoy, which is the pinnacle of man's perfection. Towards the end of chapter five, it is asked what sense can one make of the

claims of individual mystics, and this is undertaken with reference to the works of several scholars in the field of mysticism. The tentative conclusions are compared with Nasafī's ontological theory which is explained in chapter two. Finally in chapter six the final spiritual station is examined. This was a major issue in the Islamic world for the question that concerned mystics was whether the sealing of Prophecy through Muḥammad meant that nobody else could ever reach such perfection and realise God to the extent that Muḥammad did. The question can be reformulated as how does one understand the relationship between Prophecy (*nubuwwat*) and Friendship of God (*walāyat*). This discussion introduces questions of a political nature because it may be proposed that the individual who perfects himself should exercise power. Another issue related to Nasafī's discussion on Prophecy and Friendship of God is that of the Sunni - Shī'ite divide. Several twentieth-century scholars have commented on Nasafī's Shī'ite tendencies, and this problem is re-examined towards the end of chapter six.

Another general aim of this thesis is to situate Nasafī in the mystical milieu of the mediaeval Muslim world. Of course it is not possible to trace all the influences that played upon Nasafī's thought, however the least that can be done is to give suggestions and indications concerning where his ideas and beliefs may have originated. As stated earlier, many modern scholars speak of Nasafī as an interpreter of Ibn 'Arabī,⁹ yet the nature of their works has not permitted them to explicitly demonstrate the areas of similarity. In this thesis, chapters two, five and six (which deal with ontology, the vision of God and perfection), compare Nasafī's ideas with those of Ibn 'Arabī. Of course one may also find similarity in Nasafī's ideas and those of other Sufis such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ Suhrawardī, and this is perhaps an indication of Nasafī's "orthodox" position within Sufi circles. Yet Nasafī's conscious use of the kind^{of} terminology used by the school of Ibn 'Arabī and also the connection with this school through Nasafī's spiritual guide, Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā, leads one to conclude that Nasafī shelters under the umbrella of Ibn 'Arabī's school of thought.

⁹ For example, S. Murata describes Nasafī's treatises as a "simplified and more or less popularized version of the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī." *Tao of Islam*, p. 30.

It is highly unlikely that this thesis would have been completed in its present shape had it not been for the recommendations and comments of several leading scholars in the field of Sufism. Firstly, I should express my gratitude to Professor A. Matsumoto of Eichi University in Japan, who not only read through Nasafī's *al-Insān al-kāmil* with me while I was studying at the International University of Japan for my M.A., but has continued to take an interest in my research in this field. My study of Nasafī's texts lead me to the State University of New York at Stony Brook from October 1994 - May 1995, where Dr. W. Chittick was generous enough to read through Nasafī's *Kitāb-i tanzīl* with me (in manuscript form). Aside from this, Dr. Chittick kindly consented to review an early draft of 2:1:1, and he unstintingly drew my attention to many of the facets of the *wujūdī* interpretation of Sufism, which would otherwise have been omitted in this thesis. In England, my understanding of Nasafī's theosophy was nurtured under the guidance of Dr. L. Lewisohn who clarified numerous problems related to Sufi terminology and belief. He has looked at several chapters of this thesis, suggesting various ways in which it could be improved, which I appreciate very much. Moreover, Dr. Lewisohn not only inspired me to seek assistance in New York but was also instrumental in obtaining several microfilms of Nasafī's treatises. Another great debt is to Prof. I.R. Netton who has listened patiently to my ideas and plans for three years. He has not only provided numerous contacts and given me adequate academic freedom to pursue my studies on Nasafī, but he has also been an infinite source of motivation.

In addition to the aforementioned scholars, I would like to thank Prof. C.E. Bosworth for reviewing 2:1:1. During the course of writing this thesis, I have been fortunate in meeting and conversing with several leading researchers and I am especially grateful to Dr. S. Murata, Prof. P. Morewedge and Prof. H. Landolt for sharing their insights and ideas about Sufism and Nasafī with me.

The financial burdens of undertaking a Ph.D deter many capable students from commencing this three year period of study. I was fortunate enough to receive considerable assistance during two years of my research from the British Academy and

the British Institute of Persian Studies. I am extremely grateful to these two institutions because this thesis would definitely not have been completed without their help.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to my parents who were prepared to support my studies financially from the very start three years ago. Fortunately, this was not necessary, but more important and valuable than any monetary help has been their general understanding, sympathy and support during the whole of this study.

CHAPTER 1

The Life, Times and Works of ‘Azīz Nasafī

If Sufism in its beginnings, had been an “outspoken elitist form of religion,”¹ then it had matured by the middle of the twelfth century by means of the establishment of orders in to a mass movement which had penetrated all sections of society in the Middle East and had made great inroads in Central Asia. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were indeed a vibrant age for Sufism and one can not speak of a uniform version of Islamic mysticism, rather it would be more correct to describe the Sufism of this age as unity in multiplicity. The diversity in the voluminous speculative thought of Ibn ‘Arabī (1165-1240), the poetic subtleties of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) and the manuals interpreting visions of light by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 1221) had the common theme of devotion and service to God which could lead to an intimate and private relationship with Him based on love. From Andalusia to Bukhārā one can find individual Sufis whose experiences reflect this unity in multiplicity. One such mystic was ‘Azīz Nasafī, who was born in Central Asia and gathered a circle of followers in Bukhārā and various locations in Iran. His works are representative of thirteenth century Sufism because they contribute a particular vision to the standard interpretations of Sufism, yet they never stray from the orthodox position adopted by the celebrated Sufis of the age. This orthodoxy is perhaps best expressed by the famous Persian expression “Everything is He,” (*hama ūst*). In other words, God (known to the Sufis as the Truth) can be witnessed in all things at all times. To use an everyday idiom, there is “Nothing but the Truth,” which encapsulates a theme occurring frequently in Nasafī’s treatises:

¹ A. Schimmel, “Sufism and the Islamic Tradition,” *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. S. Katz, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 137.

O dervish! God alone always was, and God alone always is. But the wayfarer imagines and fancies that God has an existence and he [also] has an existence other than God's. Now he comes out of this imagining and fancying and he knows for sure that there is not more than one existence. That existence is God Almighty and Holy.²

The general aim of this thesis is to provide an over-view of Nasafi's theosophy, and in order to do this it is necessary to know something of his life and times which inevitably influenced his thought. This first chapter then will include two sections; the first will concentrate on the political-social milieu of Iran and include what little information that we have concerning Nasafi's life: the second section provides a list of Nasafi's works.

1:1 The Life and Times of 'Azīz Nasafī

As Nasafi's name indicates, he was born in Nasaf, a town that was situated some four days travelling distance from Bukhārā.³ This being the era of knowledge seeking, the city of Bukhārā was the centre of learning and it had achieved the reputation of being one of the great cities not only of the region, but of the Islamic world. Juwainī, a contemporary historian, described Bukhārā as "...the cupola of Islam and is in those regions like unto the City of Peace. Its environs are adorned with the brightness of the light of doctors and jurists and its surroundings embellished with the rarest of high attainments. Since ancient times it has in every age been the place of assembly of the great savants of every religion. Now the derivation of Bukhārā is from 'bukhar' which in the language of the Magians signifies centre of learning."⁴ Whether Nasafi was in Nasaf or Bukhārā or even in Khwarazm among the circle of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā in 1220 when the Mongols appeared is not known, but since his date of birth

² *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 45-46.

³ V. Minorsky, art. "Nakhshab," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Leiden, E.J. Brill), Vol VII, p. 925.

⁴ 'Ala al-Din 'Ata al-Malik Juvaini, *The History of the World Conqueror*, trans, J.A. Boyle, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958), Vol. I, p. 97-98.

probably occurred around 1200,⁵ he would certainly have been old enough and aware of the events that were to follow.

In 1220, the security and civilised environment of Central Asia and Iran was shattered. One contemporary historian commented: “Who would find it easy to describe the ruin of Islam and the Muslims? If anyone were to say that at no time since the creation of man by the great God had the world experienced anything like it, he would only be telling the truth.”⁶ In February 1220, the Mongol hordes descended upon Bukhārā, and from the pulpit of the Friday mosque, Chingiz Khān declared; “O people! Know that you have committed great sins and that great ones among you have committed these sins. If you ask me what proof I have for these words, I say it is because I am the punishment of God. If you had not committed great sins God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you.”⁷ One survivor of the destruction described what had happened: “They came, they sacked, they burned, they slew, they plundered, they departed.”⁸ Juwainī believed that Bukhārā had escaped lightly, Chingiz Khān being satisfied with slaughter and looting only once, but not going to the extreme of a general massacre.⁹

Having captured the major cities of Transoxania, Chingiz Khān rested during the summer just outside of Nasafī’s birthplace on the plains of Nasaf. His forces then proceeded to conquer all the major cities; Khwarazm was taken in 1221; Najm al-Dīn Kubrā refusing to flee the advancing Mongol armies was killed in the vain defence of the city. Those cities that surrendered escaped with little damage, but those which resisted suffered a terrible retribution. The case of Nishapur is perhaps the most horrific, for the command was given to destroy the town completely and kill all life including cats and dogs.¹⁰ A daughter of Chingiz Khān had lost her husband during a

⁵ The problems surrounding the dating of Nasafī’s birth will be discussed later in this section.

⁶ Ibn al-Athir, cited by C. Irving, *Cross-roads of Civilisation*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979), p. 123.

⁷ Juvaini, trans. Boyle, p. 105.

⁸ Ibid p. 107.

⁹ Ibid, p. 96-97.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 177.

preliminary skirmish at Nishapur, and once she entered the town with her escort, she had all the survivors slain (save four hundred artisans who were valued for their crafts, and who were carried off to Turkestan). They severed the heads from the slain and proceeded to construct three huge mountains of skulls; one for men, another for women, and one for the children.¹¹ It was estimated that 1,747,000 people were killed in the massacre at Nishapur,¹² and although this is an exaggeration, at least one can begin to see the proportion of the destruction and terror that the Mongol invasion left in its wake.

Chingiz Khān's hordes were diverted by other issues and departed from the Middle East, however, the Mongols returned to Transoxania in 1254 under Hulegu. Hulegu Khān was the younger brother of Kubilai Khān and he entered Central Asia and Iran to crush the Ismā'īlīs. Having achieved this, he advanced to Baghdād, the capital of the decaying Abbasid Caliphate. The city was sacked and looted and the Caliph was taken prisoner but his ambassadors warned Hulegu that if they killed the deputy of God's messenger "... the whole world will be disorganised, the Sun will hide its face, the rain will cease to fall and the plants will no longer grow." In addition, it was said that "... if Hulegu spills the blood of the Caliph on the ground, he and his infidel Mongols will be swallowed up by the earth. He must not be killed ... the accursed Hulegu feared that if he let the Caliph live, the Muslims would rise up in revolt, and that if he slew him and his blood was spilled on the ground, there would be an earthquake."¹³ Hulegu settled the matter by having the Caliph rolled up in a carpet and trampled to death.

The second Mongol invasion in fact turned into an occupation, Hulegu being the first of the Il-Khān dynasty. Of course this had important consequences for Muslims since Chingiz Khān and the Mongols had no special respect for Islam, (indeed, during the sacking of Bukhārā, the Mongols had used Koranic stands in the Friday Mosque as

¹¹ Ibid, p. 178.

¹² Saifi, *Tarikh-nama-yi Harat*, cited I.P. Petroshevsky, "The socio-economic conditions of Iran under the Il-Khans," *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. V, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 485.

¹³ A. Bausani, "Religion under the Mongols," *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. V. p. 539.

mangers for their horses, and worse still was the fact that the leaves of the Koran were trodden underfoot). Yet the Mongols were generally tolerant of all religions, and Chingiz Khān had decreed the freedom of religion: "Kubilai pursued the traditional Mongol policy of toleration for all creeds, whose priests, imams and bonzes continued to be exempt from taxation, and he allowed but two partial exceptions, by suppressing the literature of Taoists and banning the propaganda of the Muslims,"¹⁴ and this policy was generally followed by subsequent rulers. However, the placing of all religions on a level par with Islam, coupled with the murder of the Caliph, must have thrown Muslims into paroxysms of fear that the end of the world was drawing nigh. It was the first time that Islam had suffered the indignity of sharing the same status as Christians and Jews, which also meant that non-Muslims were no longer obliged to pay the *jizya* tax. Moreover, Muslims must have felt greater indignation and humiliation since their religion was reduced by the Mongols to the same degree as the "idol-worshipping" Buddhists and Shamans. The Mongol rulers themselves embraced a mixture of Buddhism and Shamanism, for example, at Hulegu's death, several beautiful young women were chosen as "his bed fellows" for the journey to the next world which may have been an old Mongol religious custom.¹⁵ Aqaba (Hulegu's son and second Il-Khān), "followed the path of the Buddhists"¹⁶ and at the same time remained attached to native Mongol beliefs, as he is known to have enjoyed the company of a magician named Baraq.¹⁷ Shaman influence remained existent under the fourth Il-Khān, Arghun (1284-91), who practised an exorcism of purification by fire, which involved walking by two fires while those around him recited incantations and sprinkled water.¹⁸ It was also suggested by some Mongol advisors to the Il-Khān Oljeitu (1304-1316) that he undertake this ceremony (although it is not known if it was performed). In fact Arghun combined Shamanism with his interest in Buddhism, for it is known that he had priests

¹⁴ J.J. Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 137.

¹⁵ See J.A. Boyle, *The Mongol World Empire*, (London: Valorium Reprints, 1977), XXII, p. 8.

¹⁶ J.J. Saunders, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁷ Bausani, *op. cit.*, p. 540.

¹⁸ J.A. Boyle, "Turkish and Mongol Shamanism in the Middle Ages," *The Mongol World Empire*, p. 184.

brought from India to conduct Buddhist ceremonies. An interesting account by the famed Kubrāwī Sufi, ‘Alā’al-Dawla Simnānī reveals the nature of religious interaction during Arghun’s reign. Simnānī was a member of the Mongol court but had a vision which made him embrace Sufism. After attempting an escape from the court, he was captured and brought back by the Mongols to the city of Sultaniyya. “There, he (Arghun) had assembled Buddhist priests from India, Kashmir, Tibet and Ighur, along with the ascetics and the religious leaders of the idolaters around him, to engage in disputation with me. So I discussed and disputed with them. But God Almighty lent me strength, and I was able to refute all of them, and to disgrace and humiliate them.”¹⁹ Arghun was delighted and begged Simnānī to stay with him, permitting him to remain in his dervish clothing. Nevertheless, the true extent of Buddhist influence can not be evaluated, although as Bausani has commented, “Iran must have been full of Buddhist temples - we hear of them only when they were destroyed in 1295-6.”²⁰

One interesting point concerning religion under the Mongols is their favourable attitude towards Nestorian Christians. This position may well have been a result of the political dynamics of the time, for Hulegu suffered a defeat at the hands of the Mamluks at ‘Ayn Jalut in 1260, and subsequently the Il-Khāns found themselves facing enemies on several fronts; the Mamluks to the west, the Golden Horde in the north and the Chagatai Mongols in the east. Therefore the well-disposed attitude towards Christianity on the part of the Il-Khāns may have been directed at the Byzantine Emperor who was a rival of the Mamluks in the Mediterranean. The extent to which Christianity had penetrated into the Il-Khān court is illustrated by the fact that both Hulegu and his son Aqaba had Christian wives (Aqaba’s wife being none less than the daughter of the Byzantine Emperor). Indeed, a Christian named Rabban Sauma,²¹ was Aqaba’s envoy to Rome and at the Vatican he claimed that many Mongols had converted to Christianity. Rabban Sauma’s disciple, named Mark, became the supreme

¹⁹ See. L. Lewisohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity*, pp. 63-4.

²⁰ A. Bausani, *op.cit.*, p. 541.

²¹ Rabban Sauma is said to have given communion to King Edward I in Bordeaux, see T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 12.

head of all Nestorians in Asia (under the protection of Aqaba) and later he was to baptise Arghun's son as Nicholas (in honour of Pope Nicholas IV). It is also during this period that the Gospels were translated in to Persian, but the extent to which the Sufis and Muslims were aware of Christian doctrine is unclear. Although some mystics including Nasafī quoted passages which bear striking resemblance to those in the Gospels,²² these may have been little more than popular idioms that were generally used at the time.

The displacement of Islam as the official religion of Iran and central Asia lasted until the reign of the Il-Khān Teguder, (1282-1284) who converted to Islam and adopted the name Aḥmad. Although his reign was brief and this changing of religion did little to affect the lot of the Muslim, it is perhaps indicative of the influence that Islam, the belief of the populace, was having upon the Il-Khān court. Islam finally regained its predominant position in the region when the Il-Khān Ghazan (1295-1304) accepted Islam. His conversion is of particular interest because the ceremony was performed by Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ḥammuyā (1246-1322) who was the son of Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā (Nasafī's Sufi master). In addition, it appears that Ghazan was initiated into Sufism in this ceremony.²³

Ironically, the religious policy of the early Il-Khāns may have contributed to the strengthening of Islam, in particular of Sufism, in the whole region of Central Asia and Iran. The sheer terror, fear and difficulties of life subsequent to the Mongol invasions may have directed people towards hope in the next world and not in this world. Such a perspective is so pervasive in Nasafī's works:

O dervish! Know for sure that we are travellers and certainly we pass the
time hour by hour. If there is wealth it will pass, and if there is affliction it will pass.
If you have wealth do not put your trust in it because it is unclear what will happen in

²² *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, in Jāmi's *Ashi'at al-lama'āt*, ed. H. Rabbānī, (Tehran: Kitabkhāna-yi 'Ilmiyya-yi Hāmidī, 1973), p. 238, "One can not enter (*lā yaliju*) the Kingdom of the Heavens and earth unless one is born again," reflects John 3:3, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he can not see the Kingdom of God."

²³ See C. Melville, "Padshah-i Islam: the conversion of Sultan Mahmud Ghazan," in C. Melville (ed). *Pembroke Papers I: Persian and Islamic Studies in honour of Peter Avery*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

the next hour. If you have affliction, do not be excessively sad because it is not clear what will occur in the next hour. You should try not to cause harm to anyone and as far as possible you should try to bring comfort.²⁴

Sufism provided a relief for the general Islamic populace, in all probability, many individuals found solace in meetings at the *khānaqāh*, and in *dhikr* and *samā'* gatherings. Whole communities were affiliated to particular Sufi masters: "At the beginning of the thirties of the thirteenth century, the majority of the population in Balkh were *murids* (followers) of Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn Walad."²⁵ This factor, aided by the Mongol tolerance of religion may help explain why Sufism flourished during the Il-Khān period, to which the mystical works of 'Azīz Nasafī, Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, Sayf al-Dīn Barkhāzī, 'Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī and Awhād al-Dīn Balyānī (d. 1288) all testify. Moreover, the region of Central Asia and Iran under the Il-Khān's was still free and open enough to receive the intellectual and spiritual inheritance of great mystics such as Ibn 'Arabī²⁶ and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī who lived outside of the Mongol regions.

Aside from the religious policies of the Mongols, life in Central Asia and Iran was affected in a whole number of ways. Mongol influence was felt predominantly in the north, for Aqaba had fixed the capital at Tabrīz.²⁷ Concerning the influence of the Mongols in the north, one scholar commented "under the system set up by Hulegu and his immediate successors, Mongol rule was direct only in Khurāsān and elsewhere in northern Iran, except in Gilān and in parts of Iraq. Fārs, Kirmān and Shabankara, with Hurmūz and Qais on the Persian Gulf in the south, Luristān in the west and Hirāt in the east, all contained within the Mongol framework under the native ruling families, who suffered little interference and in some cases outlasted the Il-Khāns."²⁸ By all accounts,

²⁴ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 228-229.

²⁵ Petrushevsky, "The socio-economic conditions of Iran under the Il-Khans," p. 509.

²⁶ This influence can be witnessed in the works of Nasafī and Balyānī in particular. One of Balyānī's works was for many years attributed to Ibn 'Arabī and was published under the title of "*Whoso Knoweth Himself*," (London: Beshara Publications, 1976), although Chodkiewicz has shown this is not a work by Ibn 'Arabī.

²⁷ D. Morgan, *The Mongols*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p. 163.

²⁸ D.E. Philips, *The Mongols*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 118.

the Mongols in the north were rapacious in extorting and appropriating everything and anything from the native peoples who had survived. Finding any source of income must have been difficult enough for as a result of the destruction of two invasions and also due to fear and terror, it was estimated that in 1295, five out of every ten houses in the sacked cities of Iran were uninhabited.²⁹ Tax collecting was arbitrary and the Mongols imposed new, more severe taxes upon the native population. For example, the “*tamgha*” was a tax of 10% of the value of each commercial transaction which replaced the Muslim *zakat* of 2.5%³⁰ which was a tax on produce of certain kinds, not on transactions. The *jizya* tax was abolished for non-Muslims early in the Il-Khān period (to be re-established by Ghazan) and was replaced with a general poll tax. In Transoxania, the highest rate for this tax was fifteen dinars and in 1253 when Arghun was in control of that region, he began to levy seventy dinars from every ten men, turning the maximum into an average.³¹ “By extracting taxes greater than the people could pay, and having them reduced to poverty, they began to torment and afflict them. Those who tried to hide were caught and put to death. From those who could not pay they took away their children.”³²

The Iranian economy suffered tremendous losses during the early Il-Khān period. It has been estimated that in their desire for wealth and to finance their campaigns, the Mongols levied taxes twenty to thirty times each year: “the Mongol grandees were the principle culprits; a conquered territory in their opinion existed only to be mulcted, and the terror of their name unlawfully exacted vast sums from the peasants, artisans and merchants.”³³ This resulted in the peasants abandoning their land, and nine tenths of cultivable land went to waste.³⁴ It has been shown that in one region of Fārs, 700,000 ass-loads of grain were yielded annually between 949-983 A.D., and in

²⁹ Rashid al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-tawārikh*, cited by Boyle, p. 506.

³⁰ Petrushevsky, *op. cit.*, p. 506.

³¹ W. Barthold, *Turkestan down to the Mongol invasion*, (London: Luzac, 1928), p. 482.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 482, cited from Kirakos.

³³ J.J. Saunders, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

³⁴ D. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

the aftermath of the Mongol invasion and its consequences, this total was reduced to 300,000 ass loads in 1260.³⁵

To say that Nasafī lived during the best of times and the worst of times may not be too much of an exaggeration. The thirteenth century was a century of extremes; on the one hand it developed a tradition of knowledge whose legacy is still regarded as a treasure by millions not only in the Middle East but all around the world, and on the other hand it suffered the devastation and terror of the Mongol invasions and occupation. Nasafī's life spans the whole course of this era, for he was born in Nasaf around the very beginning of the thirteenth century and died towards its end. This is clear because in *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, Nasafī commented that he was eighty years of age, and this work was compiled some time before 1281.³⁶

Of his youth and early adulthood nothing at all is known, indeed, only fragments of information concerning his life emerge from his works. The first of these is his association with an affiliate of the Kubrāwī order, Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā, who instructed Nasafī in religious disciplines and spiritual effort. This training took place in Bukhārā,³⁷ which indicates that it must have occurred some time during the 1240's and before 1252 when Ḥammuyā died. (Prior to this period, Ḥammuyā was seeking knowledge further west in the Islamic world).³⁸ This still leaves a huge gap of perhaps forty years, from Nasafī's birth until his meeting with Ḥammuyā. A portion of this may have been taken up with Nasafī's study of medicine, which lasted several years,³⁹ and although it is not clear when he commenced this study, one can speculate that it was before he encountered Ḥammuyā, for Nasafī was probably too old in the 1240's to commence such a difficult field of learning. A knowledge of medicine was

³⁵ Petrushevsky, op. cit., p. 490-91.

³⁶ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 255.

³⁷ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, John Rylands Library, Manchester University, C1132, fol. 71b, line 13.

³⁸ Sa'd al-Din Ḥammuyā (1198-1252) served under Najm al-Dīn Kubrā in Khwarazm until 1220. At this point he fled the invading Mongols and journeyed to Egypt, Palestine and Syria where he became acquainted with the school surrounding Ibn 'Arabī. During the 1240's he returned to Iran and Central Asia.

³⁹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. Aḥmad Maḥdawī Dāmghānī, (Tehran: Bungāh-i tarjuma wa nashr-i kitāb, 1965), p. 125.

one that was however fairly typical of the Sufis of the Kubrāwī order for Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār and Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī all spent some time in this occupation.⁴⁰

Following Ḥammuyā's death, Nasafī acquired his own circle of novices who wished to learn from him. His first work appears to be *Kitāb-i tanzīl* which was composed at the request of his followers. The first six chapters were written in Nasaf. By 1261, Nasafī had moved back to Bukhārā,⁴¹ where he continued his work on *Kitāb-i Tanzīl* and commenced *al-Insān al-kāmil*. From this period until 1273 nothing is known, perhaps Nasafī continued to teach his theosophy to his circle of dervishes. However, his life style was to change dramatically following the events of 22 January 1273:

In that year the infidel armies came to Transoxania and they destroyed the province, and at that time this helpless one was in the city of Bukhārā with the community of dervishes. At dawn on Friday, at the beginning of the month of Rajab, we left the city - or should I say, that they forced us to make an exit - and we passed the waters of Khurāsān and arrived at the cities of Khurāsān. From that time onwards, each day we were in one location and each night at another, having no security anywhere.⁴²

The infidel armies belonged to the Il-Khān Aqaba, whose rivalry and dispute with the Chagatai Mongols was a result of the division of Chingiz Khān's empire. Bukhārā was situated on the border between the Il-Khān and Chagatai areas, and friction between the two sides frequently lead to demonstrations of force. The attack of 1273 was brutal and Nasafī was most likely very lucky to escape with his life. The religious schools and books were burned and as many as 50, 000 people were killed. It was said that no living creature appeared in Bukhārā for seven years after the massacre.⁴³

⁴⁰ A.H. Zarrīnkūb, *Justujū dar taṣawwuf-i Irān*, (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1983), p. 160.

⁴¹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 71b, lines 12-13, and *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 80.

⁴² *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 3.

⁴³ Rashid al-Dīn Faḍl-Allah, *Jāmī' al-tawārikh*, cited by Haqq-wardī Nāṣirī in his introduction to Nasafī's *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 7.

It was impossible for Nasafī to return to Bukhārā so he made his way westwards in to northern Iran to visit the tomb of his master, Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā, which was situated in Bahrabād, near Juwain.⁴⁴ Perhaps the Il-Khān control here was strong, because Nasafī moved southwards, and he composed works at Kirmān,⁴⁵ Shirāz,⁴⁶ Isfahān⁴⁷ and Abarqūh.⁴⁸ The date of Nasafī's death is not known, but M. Molé has mentioned one of Nasafī's manuscripts which bears the date of 1291. However, his death could have ^{happened} anytime between 1281 and 1300. It was on the night of 27 August 1281 that Nasafī was in Abarqūh and saw a dream in which the Prophet Muḥammad told him not to reveal the remaining chapters of *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* until seven hundred years had elapsed since the hegira (i.e. 1300 A.D.). Nasafī had already composed the first seven for the dervishes, and in all remaining manuscripts of this work, only the first seven chapters are included. This suggests that Nasafī passed away before the deadline which would have occurred in the year 1300 (A.D.).

Thus, very little is known about Nasafī's personal life, which perhaps is not so surprising since his works were of a didactic nature. In his works, the advice to seek knowledge is predominant, and perhaps Nasafī was speaking of himself when he commented:

The People of Gnosis ... have spent many years in the service of Shaykhs in religious effort and spiritual discipline, and they have actualised knowledge of form and knowledge of meaning, and they supposed that they had reached God and had recognised God. Then after seventy years they understood that they knew nothing, and everything which they had understood was all imagination and fancy; and they saw themselves as ignorant, incapable and helpless.⁴⁹

The People of Gnosis ... have spent periods among the 'Ulamā', periods among the Philosophers, periods among the Transmigrationists, periods among the Sufis and periods among the People of Unity. Among each group that there was, that

⁴⁴ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 82b, line 1, and *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p.80.

⁴⁵ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 80.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 80.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 153.

⁴⁸ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 4-5.

⁴⁹ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 436.

group said that the truth is with us and falsity is with the others. The People of Gnosis thought to themselves that if each one opposes the others then they can not all be the truth because there ^{are} not many truths. So they knew for sure that the truth was not with any of them.⁵⁰

One last factor which appears in Nasafī's works is fear and the danger in expressing the esoteric dimension of Islam. This aspect of Nasafī's life is evident through his dream in which the Prophet warned him not to reveal the remaining chapters of *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*:

Know that in 1281 I was in the province of Fārs in the city of Abarqūh. It was midnight on the 27 August and this helpless one had sat down and placed a lamp nearby and was writing something. Then sleep overcame me and I saw my father enter by the door. I stood up and greeted him, and he returned the greeting and said, "The Prophet Muḥammad is sitting with Shaykh Abu 'Abdullah Khafīf and Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā in the Friday Mosque of Abarqūh and they are waiting for you." I went with my father to the mosque. I saw the Prophet sitting with them and I greeted them all and they replied and each one of them embraced me. I sat down and the Prophet said, "Today Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā has spoken much about you and he is worried and concerned about your circumstances. He said that all the meanings that he assembled in four hundred books 'Azīz has assembled in ten chapters and although he attempted to write them in an obscure and secretive fashion, 'Azīz has attempted to explain clearly and he fears that some bad fortune or harm comes to you."⁵¹

Another indication of the conditions that prevailed when Nasafī was compiling his works is found in *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*:

Now I myself do not give my own opinions so that I can not be accused of infidelity; I report and I say that the People of Unity explain in this way and the Sufis say in that way. O dervish, accept the discourse of this helpless one and recognise yourself so that you can recognise God. And make clear all of these discourses which

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 437.

⁵¹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 4.

have been set out, and know for sure where the Truth lies. I know that you have not fully understood so I shall explain more clearly.⁵²

Nasafī's reluctance to reveal his own views is not surprising given the turbulent times in which he lived. In the generation after Nasafī, the mere possession of Ibn 'Arabī's works was prohibited in Egypt, and such works were confiscated and burnt if found. Moreover, the 'Ulamā' confirmed that any person advocating the ideas of Ibn 'Arabī would be executed.⁵³

1:2 Nasafī's works

There are many features in Nasafī's treatises which enable scholars to identify his works, (although one can not exclude the possibility of someone else using his name and copying his style and content). Nasafī's first distinctive aspect is his simple but lucid, non-verbose Persian style. His predominant aim is that the reader understands his message and in order to achieve this Nasafī presents each topic from several perspectives, adding at the end of each explanation that "I know you have not fully understood so I will explain in another way." This non-condescending style, his direct manner of calling the reader "Dervish" or "Dear Friend," the sections of "advice" at the end of each chapter (in some of his works) in which he offers comfort and encouragement to the Sufi novice and his humility and self rebuking nature endears Nasafī to the reader and one is soon drawn into a warm, intimate relationship with him. The fact that Nasafī used Persian (except for Arabic quotations from the Koran, *ḥadīth* and other sayings), is also of some importance because he can be regarded as among the first of Ibn 'Arabī's commentators who wrote in Persian, thus spreading the message among the non-Arabic speaking populations of Central Asia and Iran.

Secondly, Nasafī's commentaries are both forthright and simple in revealing the non-manifest (*bāṭin*) dimension of Islam. He speaks directly to his readers, advising

⁵² *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 277.

⁵³ Lewisohn, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

them to pass over from the formal dimension of Islam to the esoteric, and indicative of this is Nasafī's dream in which Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā states that he had written over four hundred treatises in an obscure and secretive fashion, whereas Nasafī has revealed all of these non-manifest secrets in just ten chapters.

One of the most striking of all of the features in Nasafī's works is the way in which he presents the arguments of each group, that is, he lets each group speak for itself. His chapters frequently begin by "The People of the Holy Law say that ..." or "The Philosophers say ..." or "The People of Unity say ..." If not employing such labels, Nasafī refers to the People of the Holy Law as the "People of Imitation" (*Ahl-i taqlīd*),⁵⁴ and the Philosophers are called the "People of definite proof and certain demonstration,"⁵⁵ and the People of Unity are the "People of Unveiling."⁵⁶ The reason that Nasafī does not reveal his own opinions are firstly that he may have been afraid and so he hid his own beliefs under the shelter of other groups and secondly, he was attempting to describe the beliefs of all the major interpretations of Islam in an impartial manner. While it is true that Nasafī was not the first to undertake such a project, he was most likely the first to record the various beliefs in a non-partisan, indiscriminate way. In fact his own dervishes had requested that Nasafī compose his treatises conveying the varying Islamic beliefs "without prejudice and without dissimulation and without making them great and without belittling them."⁵⁷ Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) had studied all the different Islamic beliefs in his attempt to realise the Truth and the results of his intellectual and spiritual investigations are set out in his books in a systematic fashion, describing the beliefs of the 'Ulamā', Philosophers and Sufis. However, his preference for the Sufi interpretation of Islam caused him to disparage those beliefs which were at variance with his own, and he describes the Philosophers as "heretics and irreligious men."⁵⁸ Nasafī's own portrayal of the different

⁵⁴ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 247.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 249.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 250.

⁵⁷ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 1.

⁵⁸ W.M. Watt, *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, (al-munqidh ^{min} al-ḍalāl), (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1953), p. 32.

Islamic beliefs did not include such derogatory remarks, and Meier's comment that Nasafī may be considered as a "forerunner of modern comparative religion"⁵⁹ captures the essence of Nasafī's spirit. The reality is that while Nasafī is more sympathetic towards the Sufis, he attempts to discover the reality and truth behind other beliefs. This is neatly expressed by Nasafī in his explanation of similar, but different *ḥadīth*.

In one *ḥadīth* it is stated that "the first thing God created was intelligence," and in another, "the first thing God created was the Pen," and in another, "the first thing God created was the Throne," and there are others like these.⁶⁰

In the Koran and *ḥadīth* there are many references to the First Intelligence.

Know that this first intelligence has been referred to through different attributions and viewpoints.

Oh dervish! If one thing has been named in a hundred ways, in truth there is no multiplicity in that one thing, despite its one hundred names.⁶¹

Yet Nasafī's method of ascribing certain beliefs to particular groups does have the disadvantage in that one is never quite sure when that discourse comes to an end, or whether the beliefs of the same group are carried over into the following discourse (which may not be attributed to any particular group). Moreover, the difficulty in identifying Nasafī's own beliefs has led to several contemporary scholars⁶² seeing Nasafī's own beliefs within those which are attributed to other groups (such as the Transmigrationists). It is more likely that Nasafī believed that the explanations of other groups revealed some aspect of truth depending upon the wayfarer's station.

Another distinctive point in Nasafī's works is the similarity in content, and this reaches the extent that there are passages which appear in different books virtually word for word, or else the imagery is exactly the same. One reason for this is that Nasafī's

⁵⁹ F. Meier, "The Problem of nature in the esoteric monism of Islam," p. 150.

⁶⁰ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 220.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 225.

⁶² See Meier, "The Problem of nature in the esoteric monism of Islam," p. 182, and J. Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters part II: Influences and interpretations," p. 749.

works were all composed during the latter part of his life, and by that time his theosophy had matured to such an extent that he was able to present his teachings in a systematic, coherent manner. There is no development from one work to the next, (with the exception of *Kashf-i širāt*, which presents several problems that will be highlighted later) only the same message of the unity of being and the perfectibility of man through ascetic discipline and religious effort. So if Nasafī had one fundamental message, the question that must be asked is why did he not write one large book which contained the whole package of his theosophy instead of writing several works which involved a lot of repetition. The reason may be due to Nasafī's teaching in several areas and having different groups of followers. Thus, Nasafī may have composed *Kitāb-i Tanzīl* in Nasaf and Bukhārā at the request of the dervishes, and then he composed *al-Insān al-kāmil* on the Iranian plateau for another group of dervishes, adding new expressions which he thought would be understood easily. This is not to say that his books are completely the same, because this is not the case. For example, *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* contains discussions which are not found in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* or *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*.

There has been a considerable amount of research on the manuscripts of Nasafī's works,⁶³ so it is not necessary to repeat it here. However, the following is a list of Nasafī's known treatises, all of which have been used in this study (with the exception of *Mabdā' wa ma'ād*).

⁶³ Several western scholars have paid considerable attention to Nasafī's manuscripts without commenting upon their content. However, their efforts have made the task of contemporary researchers that much easier in terms of access to these manuscripts. In particular, the efforts of M. Molé should be mentioned for he gathered manuscripts from libraries in Iran and Turkey. These are now stored in Paris in the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique: Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, Section Arabe*.

On Nasafī's works see Molé, "Die Schriften des 'Azīz Nasafī," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 52. (1953), and his introduction to Nasafī's *al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 28-57. See also F. Coslovi, "Liste des manuscrits Arabe et Persans microfilms (Fond Molé) de L'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes," *Studia Iranica*, 7, (1978), pp. 117-155, and "Second Liste de Microfilms des Manuscrits Arabes et Persans du Fond Molé," *Studia Iranica* 14/2 (1985), pp. 245-254. See also Jürgen Paul, "A Propos de Quelques Microfilms du 'Fond Molé.'" *Studia Iranica*, 18, (1989), pp. 243-245.

(1). *Kitāb-i tanzīl* (Book of the descent)

This work of twenty chapters was probably one of Nasafī's very first because he mentions that the first six chapters were composed in Nasaf.⁶⁴ The subsequent four chapters were written in Bukhārā,⁶⁵ and this must have been before the devastation of Aqaba's massacre in 1271. The remaining chapters were set out in Bahrabād,⁶⁶ at the tomb of Sa'd al-Dīn Hammuyā.

The contents of *Kitāb-i tanzīl* are in fact representative of all of Nasafī's subsequent works. The first and by far longest chapter, entitled "the gnosis of God," reflects his ontological pre-occupation. This is continued in the next chapters on the gnosis of the world, the angels and man. The fifth chapter is one of the most interesting because it focuses upon the differences between Prophets and Friends of God. In most of his works, Nasafī includes short passages that mention a distinction between the two, but chapters five through eight are more detailed and clear. The second half of the work is much shorter than the first half and concentrates mainly upon issues that are relevant to the practical dimension of Sufism (such as chapter fifteen, entitled "the gnosis of service, seclusion and love").

One last significant point about *Kitāb-i tanzīl* is that there exist two Arabic translations of the work.⁶⁷ The fact that this work was most likely composed in Persian and then translated at a later date into Arabic indicates the extent to which Muslims held Nasafī's treatises in esteem.

(2). *Kashf al-haqā'iq* (Unveiling of realities)

This major work which was probably completed in 1281, is longer than *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, despite the fact that the last three chapters and conclusion that are mentioned in

⁶⁴ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 64a, line 4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, fol. 71b, line 12-13.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, fol. 82b, line 1

⁶⁷ See F. Coslovi, "Liste des manuscrits Arabes et Persans microfilms (Fond Molé) de L'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes."

the introduction are missing. The seven chapters are entitled existence; man; the journey; unity; man's return; this world and the afterlife, the night of destiny and the day of resurrection, and life and death; which are the seven heavens and earths, what the transforming of the land and the folding up of the skies is, which is the land of resurrection and the land of 'Arafāt, and what *Hajj* is an expression for and how many kinds there are. Fortunately, Nasafī gives the titles of the three missing chapters and the conclusion to the book and it is possible to find similar issues discussed in his other works.⁶⁸

(3). *Bayān-i tanzīl* (Explanation of the descent)

In the introduction to this treatise, Nasafī comments that the dervishes requested him to write a book which is longer than *Kitāb-i tanzīl* and shorter than *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, which suggests that it was written after 1281. The dervishes found the former work was a summary in terms of words and they could not understand the meanings behind them. The latter was so long that the dervishes could not memorise all the meanings.⁶⁹ Despite the request to write a work longer than *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, *Bayān-i tanzīl* is in fact shorter than the latter treatise.⁷⁰

Bayān-i tanzīl has ten chapters whereas *Kitāb-i tanzīl* has twenty. The content is similar although not the same. Of particular interest is the first chapter on God and the seventh and eighth chapters on the Book and Word of God.

⁶⁸ Chapter eight was to explain the Book of God and the Word of God. A chapter by the same name appears in *Bayān-i tanzīl* - (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Pers. e 35, fol. 25a-26b). Chapter nine was to be a discussion on the reality of surrender (*ḥaqīqat-i islām*), faith (*īmān*), excellence (*iḥsān*) and contemplation (*'iyān*), which is a fourfold division of the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel that Nasafī associates with four kinds of individuals in other works. The tenth chapter was to explain the Possessor of the Holy Law and the author of the resurrection, and also how many religions and Holy Laws there are and what and why there is the abrogation of the Holy Law, (several of these points appear in chapter five of *Kitāb-i tanzīl*). The conclusion to the book explains the Seal of Prophecy and the Seal of Friendship, which again is discussed in chapter five of *Kitāb-i tanzīl*.

⁶⁹ *Bayān-i tanzīl*, fol. 1a. lines 5-8. *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* is indeed longer than *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, although not considerably. In the Veliyuddin no. 1767 collection of Nasafi's works, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* contains seventy two folios while *Kitāb-i tanzīl* contains fifty.

⁷⁰ In Veliyuddin no. 1767, *Bayān-i tanzīl* contains thirty four folios.

(4). *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* (The most sublime goal)

As mentioned in the introduction, this was one of the first Sufi works translated into Latin and was finally rendered into an English paraphrase by E.H. Palmer in 1867. Palmer's efforts should be recognised in the light of the nineteenth century when scholars did not have the benefit of a wider range of academic Orientalist studies which modern researchers have. However the truth of James Morris's statement that *Oriental Mysticism* is a "truncated, grossly inadequate summary,"⁷¹ cannot be denied.

It is probable that *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* was completed by Nasafī prior to 1281. The reason for this assumption is that in the introduction to *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, Nasafī gives the date of 1281 and he mentions *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* in the very same section.⁷² He comments that his own opinions are not included in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* but they are set out in *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*. Despite this, Nasafī own opinions are not explicitly revealed in *Maqṣad*. Typically, the views of the People of the Holy Law, the Philosophers, the Sufis and the People of Unity are given. He even explains that his own views are not set out so that others can not accuse him of infidelity (*kufr*).⁷³

Maqṣad-i aqṣā is a relatively short work.⁷⁴ Its contents include a lengthy introduction followed by chapters on the knowledge of God's essence; God's attributes, God's acts; God's acts in the words of the Philosophers; the knowledge of Prophecy and Friendship of God; the beliefs of the People of Imitation, the People of Reasoning and the People of Unveiling; the knowledge of man; the Four Seas and a conclusion. The emphasis is ontological, chapters seven and eight (which discuss the levels of existence) being the most detailed of all.

Within *Maqṣad* there are several passages which clearly reveal the "intellectual-spiritual" influences upon Nasafī. He mentions several Sufis including Sa'd al-Dīn

⁷¹ J.W. Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters part II: Influences and Interpretations," p. 746.

⁷² *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 10.

⁷³ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 277.

⁷⁴ This work is found in Rabbānī, op.cit., pp. 210-85.

Ḥammuyā, Ibn ‘Arabī and his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikām*,⁷⁵ Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī and his *‘Awārif al-ma‘ārif* and Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Rūmī. The latter may have been Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī who is thought to be the author of *Tabṣirat al-mubtadī* and Nasafī quotes this work several times in *Maqṣad*.

The number of extant manuscripts of *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* suggest that it was a very popular work among the Islamic populace. Numerous copies have been found in regions of Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, India and China.⁷⁶ The lucid language and the clarity in explaining complex issues in a simple way may have made *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* an ideal book for Sufi novices.

(5). *al-Insān al-kāmil* (The Perfect Man)

This work is a collection of treatises containing an introduction and twenty two chapters. In the edited version by M. Molé, Nasafī comments in his introduction that he wrote twenty chapters, ten for beginners and ten for those more advanced in the Sufi path.⁷⁷ These chapters appear to have been composed by Nasafī over a long period of time. The first chapter was written in Bukhārā in 660 (A.H.) before Aqaba’s destruction of that city. The subsequent chapters were written in other cities, as Nasafī moved south west into Iran. Thus chapter two was put to paper in Bahrabād, chapter three in Kirmān, chapters four through to seven in Shirāz and chapters eight through to ten in Isfahān. The introduction to the work (which was probably written after all the other chapters) was composed in Arbaqūh, a city between Shirāz and Isfahān.⁷⁸ The work may have been

⁷⁵ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 264.

⁷⁶ For the copies found in Turkey and Iran see Coslovi, “Liste des Manuscrits Arabes et Persans Microfilmes (Fonds Molé) de L’Institut de Recherche et D’Histoire des Textes,” for those in Pakistan see *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the National Museum of Pakistan at Karachi*, ed. S. Arif Naushānī, (Islamabad: Iran-Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies, 1983). For manuscripts of *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* in India see *Sufism in the Sub Continent: Papers presented in the second Khudabakhsh South-Asian Regional Seminar on Tasawwuf Manuscripts*, (Patna: Khudabakhsh Oriental Public Library, 1985). A Persian manuscript of *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* has even been found in China, (Gansu province), see Mozafar Bakhtiyar’s article on China in *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts*, Vol IV, ed. G. Roper, (London: al-furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1994), p. 89.

⁷⁷ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁸ *al-Insān al-kāmil*. For chapters 1-4 see p. 80; Chapters 5-7 see p. 118; Chapters 8-10 see p. 153; Introduction see p. 14.

completed well into the 1280s because in chapter six there is a mention of *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* (which is known to have been completed in 1281).⁷⁹

Questions have been raised by both Molé and Morris concerning the title, order and number of the treatises.⁸⁰ It may indeed be true that the original work has been added to, or revised by Nasafī or others, but the style and content of all the chapters is the same as Nasafī's other works (except for *Kashf-i širāṭ* which shall be commented upon later).

The contents, as one might expect, are discussions of the People of the Holy Law, the Philosophers and the People of Unity. They are predominantly of an ontological nature, such as the three chapters explaining the levels of existence (*Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt*). There are also several chapters of a practical nature such as chapter six on the rules of seclusion.

As mentioned in the introduction, *Kitāb al-insān al-kāmil* has been translated in to western languages several times. It was rendered into French by Isabelle de Gastines in 1984. W. M. Thackston also translated it into English although it has not been published and my own translation of this work was published in 1992.

(6). *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (The waystations of the travellers)⁸¹

In Molé's edition of this work there are eleven chapters, the most interesting of which is its opening chapter on the Friendship of God. The remaining chapters focus on ontological issues such as the origin and return and real and imaginary existence. There are also chapters detailing the beliefs of the Transmigrationists, the People of Unity and the People of Gnosis. The first three chapters of this work were written in Isfahān,⁸² probably before 1281 since *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* is mentioned in *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*⁸³ (which was composed before this date).

⁷⁹ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 110.

⁸⁰ See J. Morris, "Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters, Part II," p. 745.

⁸¹ This work is appended to M. Molé's edition of *al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 313-456.

⁸² *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 341.

⁸³ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 263.

(7). Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq (Quintessence of realities)⁸⁴

This is a relatively shorter work, only seventy seven pages in Ḥaqq-wardī Nāsirī's edition. There are two main parts to this book; the first discusses the knowledge of the "big man" or macrocosm (*'ālam-i kabīr*), while the second covers the knowledge of the "small man" or microcosm (*'ālam-i ṣaghīr*). Once again, the discussion is presented in the form of the beliefs of the People of the Holy Law, the Philosophers and the People of Unity.

Zubdāt al-ḥaqā'iq contains the same discussions that appear in all of Nasafī's works. Despite this, he comments that his explanation of man and the levels of man can not be found in any of his other treatises, moreover such explanations can not be found even in the books written by different Sufis.⁸⁵ Perhaps the reason for such comments is that *Zubdāt al-ḥaqā'iq* is didactic, and he may have wanted his Sufi novices to fully comprehend this book before reading others.

In Nasafī's own introduction to *Zubdāt*, he says that he originally wrote a work at the dervishes request which he called *Mabdā' wa ma'ād*. However when they saw *Mabdā' wa ma'ād*, they asked him to shorten it and the result was *Zubdāt al-ḥaqā'iq*.⁸⁶

(8). Mabdā' wa ma'ād (The origin and place of return)

Although I have not seen this work, there are existent copies in the Subcontinent. The "Comprehensive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in Pakistan"⁸⁷ states that *Mabdā' wa ma'ād* contains five chapters. These are the origin; the intelligences and souls of the lower world; the return; the state of souls after separation from the body;

⁸⁴ *Zubdāt al-ḥaqā'iq*, ed. Ḥaqq-wardī Nāsirī, (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Tahūri, 1985).

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 94.

⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 41-42.

⁸⁷ *Comprehensive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in Pakistan*, Vol II, compiled by Aḥmad Monzavī, (Islamabad: Iran-Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies, 1984), p. 980.

advice. In addition, at the end of the fourth chapter, it is mentioned that the treatise was compiled at Shirāz, which suggests a dating of around 1280.

F. Meier's article on Nasafī's manuscripts lists the five chapters as; the discourse of the People of the Holy Law; the discourse of the Philosophers; the discourse of the People of Unity; the levels of man; travelling and journeying.⁸⁸

(9). *Kashf-i sirāt* (Unveiling of the Path)⁸⁹

Kashf-i sirāt is the black sheep among works that are attributed to Nasafī. Before discussing whether or not Nasafī was the author, the contents are set out below. Following a lengthy introduction, there are two sections;

Section A

- i). Explaining the natural soul, animal soul (*nafs-i ḥaywānī*) and human soul and explaining the inner and outer senses.
- ii). Explaining the real human soul (*nafs-i ḥaqīqī-yi ādamī*) in an abridged way.
- iii). Explaining the real human in a detailed way.
- iv). Explaining the levels of names of the real soul in the terminology of the Sufis.

Section B.

- i). Explaining the person who is on the right path (*ṣirāt al-mustaqīm*); the Righteous, the Gnostic, the Friend and the Prophet.
- ii). The kinds of disciples (*murīdān*) and the right path of each one and explaining the school of free thinking and the school of compulsion.
- iii). Explaining love, stations and states.
- iv). The reality of surrender (*islām*), faith (*īmān*) friendship (*walāyat*) and prophecy (*nubuwwat*).

⁸⁸ F. Meier, "Die Schriften des 'Azīz Nasafī," p. 178.

⁸⁹ *Kashf-i sirāt* Veliyuddin no. 1767, folios 204-244. Veliyuddin no. 1685, folios 79-103. The Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique hold microfilm of Veliyuddin no. 1765; the "pochette" number is 25587-25588. I was not able to locate a microfilm of Veliyuddin 1685, although there is a poor quality photocopy of the manuscript.

The lengthy introduction⁹⁰ is concerned largely with the *ḥadīth* “whoever knows himself knows his lord,” and “God created Adam in His form.” In other words, it focuses upon the degree to which man can know God’s essence and reflects the discussion in *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*.⁹¹ This sets the tone for the second section of the work which describes the four types of individual and the limits to their knowledge. Individuals are classified into four groups, based upon the Koran which states: “And whosoever obeys God and the Messenger, shall be with those whom God has blessed; the Prophets (*al-nabīyīn*), the truthful (*al-ṣiddīqīn*), the martyrs (*al-shuhadā’*) and the righteous (*al-ṣāliḥīn*).”⁹²

The author of *Kashf-i ṣirāṭ* classifies the righteous in the station of surrender (*islām*), the martyr (also called the gnostic) in the station of faith (*īmān*), the truthful man (also called the Friend of God) in the station of excellence (*iḥsān*) and the prophet in the station of witnessing (*‘iyān*).⁹³ In *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, Nasafī also makes the same classification in a section entitled discussing the beliefs of “some of the Sufis.”⁹⁴ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq* differs from *Kashf-i ṣirāṭ* however, in that in the former work there are also sections which explain the esoteric meaning (*bāṭin*) of Friendship of God. In other words, Friendship of God is the level where the natures, qualities and realities of things are understood, whereas Prophecy is the level where only the natures and qualities are understood.⁹⁵

The whole tone and emphasis of *Kashf-i ṣirāṭ* is the superiority of Prophecy over Friendship of God. This is one of the reasons that M. Molé has raised doubts concerning Nasafī’s authorship of this work. If Nasafī did not compose this work then it must have been written by someone who was very familiar with his treatises but perhaps desired the adoption of a position that was not so explicit in revealing the non-manifest dimension of Islam, or as Molé suggests, a position less sympathetic to Shī’

⁹⁰ *Kashf-i ṣirāṭ*, Veliyuddin no. 1676, fol. 204a-210a.

⁹¹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, pp. 123-125.

⁹² Koran 4:71.

⁹³ *Kashf-i ṣirāṭ* Veliyuddin, no. 1767, folio 218-219.

⁹⁴ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 77.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 58-59. The discussion is examined in more detail in chapter six.

ism. It is interesting that the author of *Kashf-i şirāt* adopts a conciliatory approach on the issue of Shī'ism by stating that although some Sufis say *walāyat* arose from Abū Bakr and others say that it arose from 'Alī, it is better to say that both Abū Bakr and 'Alī were in the station of *walāyat* and leave it at that.⁹⁶

The second reason that Molé cites in doubting Nasafī's authorship is that the name of this work does not appear in any of his other treatises. The mentioning of one of his books within others was a practice often employed by Nasafī, for example, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* is mentioned in both *al-Insān al-kāmil* and *Bayān-i tanzīl*; *Maqṣad al-aqṣā* in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*; *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* in *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* and *Mabdā' wa ma'ād* in *Zubdāt al-ḥaqā'iq*. This at least suggests that *Kashf-i şirāt* is a book that was composed after all the others, perhaps by someone other than Nasafī.

In *Kashf-i şirāt* two other works are mentioned, the names of which do not appear in any of Nasafī's other books. The author of *Kashf-i şirāt* intended the work for intermediary Sufis (*mutawassitān*), whereas "Courtesies of the Way," (*Ādāb-i tariqat*) was composed for the beginners and "the Unveiling of Secrets" (*Kashf-i rumūz*) was written for the advanced Sufis. Unfortunately there are no known manuscripts of these works.

If it is accepted that *Kashf-i şirāt* was indeed written for the intermediary Sufis, then this may explain why there is no mention of the esoteric dimension of the Friendship of God which is present in Nasafī's books such as *al-Insān al-kāmil*, *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* and *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*.

The final point that Molé makes regarding the authorship of *Kashf-i şirāt* is that the style is very different from all of Nasafī's other works. Having read all of Nasafī's works, one is indeed struck by the relatively long Persian sentences and also the frequent use of Arabic quotations from Sufis such as Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī which are found in *Kashf al-şirāt* but not in other treatises.

Despite this, there are arguments for attributing this work to Nasafī. Firstly, in the introduction to this treatise, the author states that his name is 'Azīz Ibn Muḥammad

⁹⁶ *Kashf-i şirāt*, Veliyuddin no. 1767, fol. 236a.

al-Nasafī al-Şūfī.⁹⁷ In addition, the style of the work includes Nasafī's idiosyncratic phrases such as "I know that you have not fully understood so I will explain more clearly," and "the discourse has become long and I have digressed." Moreover the content (aside from the problems already mentioned) is remarkably similar to the issues that appear in Nasafī's other works.

If *Kashf-i şirāt* was not written by Nasafī it must have been composed by someone who was remarkably familiar with his works, perhaps even one of his followers. Even if it was not written by Nasafī, the fact that someone wrote under his name gives an indication of Nasafī's fame and importance.

⁹⁷ Ibid, fol. 204a.

CHAPTER 2

Ontology

2:1 ‘Azīz Nasafī’s six ontological faces

(Wherever you turn there is the face of God)¹

Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī’s acceptance of Sufism as a genuine expression of Islamic belief and his composition of treatises in the field of speculative Sufism² (*‘irfān-i nazārī*) in the language of the Koran and philosophers may be regarded as something of a watershed in the history of Sufism. After Ghazālī, numerous Sufi texts were composed in a similar style by affiliates of Sufi orders that had established roots in the Muslim world stretching from Andalusia to Central Asia. The movement of explaining Sufism in the lingua franca of the “intelligentsia” of the day perhaps reached a pinnacle in the profound and voluminous theosophy of Ibn ‘Arabī, whose writings required and deserved much study and meditation by learned scholars. For the majority of the Islamic populace, his message was delivered in a more simplified and summarised form by interpreters, such as ‘Azīz Nasafī, and in this way Ibn ‘Arabī’s version of Sufism penetrated into areas such as Iran and Central Asia.

This section is an attempt to summarise Nasafī’s ontological teachings and in so doing, show how he condensed and conveyed Ibn ‘Arabī’s vast corpus of teachings to an audience who were Persian speakers and who were probably beginners on the Sufi path. Nasafī’s treatises provided his dervishes with plenty to contemplate and served as a basis from which they could advance to the texts of the Greatest Shaykh (Ibn ‘Arabī) himself.

¹ Koran, 2: 115.

² For example, *Mishkāt al-anwār*, trans W.H.T. Gairdner, (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1915; repr. Lahore: SH Muḥammad Ashraf, 1952).

In this section, Nasafī's ontology is discussed by focusing upon one chapter from the treatise *Kitāb-i tanzīl* (the Book of the Descent). It is hoped that this method covers all the main points on the one hand, and also that the reader will catch something of the flow, directness and simplicity of the original text (which are distinctive characteristics of Nasafī's works).

2:1:1 Incomparability and similarity

There has been a tendency by scholars to explain Ibn 'Arabī's theosophy in the simple term "unity of existence" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*), and to label the world view of the *wujūdī* school pantheistic or monist.³ A more suitable way to characterise this theosophy is not unity of existence (a term which Ibn 'Arabī did not use),⁴ but He / not He. This axiom neatly encapsulates the Islamic teaching of God's incomparability (*tanzīh*) and similarity (*tashbīh*). 'Azīz Nasafī's works should also be considered in the same light. The idea of incomparability is expressed in the Koran that "Nothing is like Him,"⁵ and in the *ḥadīth* that "none knows God but God,"⁶ and "reflect upon all things but reflect not upon God's essence."⁷ Similarity is also found in the Islamic tradition, perhaps the best example being the famous *ḥadīth* that "God made Adam in His own form."⁸ Adam is of course the archetypal human being, so each person's essence in fact is a mirror of God's essence.

Sufism tended to emphasise the *tashbīh* relationship between God and man, although this should always be considered in the light of *tanzīh*. The first chapter of Nasafī's *Kitāb-i tanzīl* is quite instructive in this respect because the beginning of the

³ A.E. Affifi comments that Ibn 'Arabī is a "...thoroughgoing pantheist who tried his best to reconcile his pantheistic doctrine with Islam." See "Ibn 'Arabī," *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, ed. M.M. Sharif, (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), Vol I, p. 420. See also I.R. Netton's relevant comments in *Allah Transcendent*, (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 272-274. F. Meier's article on Nasafī, "The nature of monism in Islam," refers to his theosophy as monist countless times.

⁴ W. Chittick, "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," p. 72.

⁵ Koran, 42: 11.

⁶ *Ḥadīth* frequently quoted by Sufis.

⁷ *Ḥadīth*, See *al-Suyūṭī, al-Jāmi' al-ṣaghīr (Fayḍ al-qadīr fī sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-ṣaghīr)*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1972), Vol. III, pp. 262-63.

⁸ *Ḥadīth*, ed. B. Furūzānfar, *Aḥādīth mathnawī*, (Tehran: 1955), no. 346.

work stresses the *tanzīh* position while the remaining sections reflect the *tashbīh* dimension of existence.

From a *tanzīh* perspective, Nasafī comments upon a *ḥadīth* frequently discussed by Sufis that says “He who knows himself knows his Lord.”

O dear friend! The pure essence and Holy Face of the Truth is so great that an individual’s intelligence cannot encompass Him; rather, His exalted self is too high for another person to discover Him as He really is. Each one of the Prophets and Friends of God became aware of God Almighty in accordance with their own preparedness and station, and each one of them told the people in accordance with the preparedness and station of the listeners. What they knew compared to what they did not know is a drop in the ocean, and what they said compared to what they understood is also a drop in the ocean. No-one understands *his* self in the way *it* is, and *he* cannot understand. The extremity of man’s knowledge is that point where he knows that he cannot know God as God really is. So according to the knowledge one has of one’s soul, one also has knowledge of God.⁹

Nasafī then proceeds to say that even the most intelligent of philosophers, and even the Prophets and Friends of God, cannot understand God, each believing their own knowledge to be the ultimate vision of God. It is impossible to reach God’s essence, which is infinite and beyond man’s sense perception and intelligence (*‘aql*):

Just as the seekers and the students who are counted among the People of Thought and Reasoning do not like or accept the discourse which their intelligence does not attain to, and just as they judge it correct to deny one another’s discourse, because there are ranks (*darajāt*) of intelligence and because the wisdom (*ḥikmat*) in each thing is infinite, so also the wayfarers and spiritual warriors who are accounted as the People of Unveiling and Contemplation do not like or accept the spiritual station (*maqām*) which their view does not reach. They judge it correct to deny one another’s station, because there are ranks in unveiling and (God’s) self-disclosure (*tajallī*) is infinite. So in whatever station a man is, it is necessary that he makes this prayer his litany: “My Lord! Increase me in knowledge,”¹⁰ because if man could live for a thousand years, and in this thousand years he is (busy) in searching and

⁹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 38a, lines 9 - 13.

¹⁰ Koran, 20: 114.

advancing (*taraqqī*), he would discover and understand something every day which he had not discovered or understood the day before...

O dear friend! If someone fancies that he has understood whatever can be understood and has discovered whatever can be found, this fancy is his idol and this wretched person is an idol worshipper. The reality of an idol is that it keeps a person busy with itself and it becomes an obstacle in his searching and advance.¹¹

Yet it is necessary to make an attempt to understand oneself (and in so doing, God's existence), for "He who knows himself knows his Lord." This is a difficult task to undertake and understand as Nasafī himself comments:

A person may ask, "How can God's essence which is non-delimited and infinite be considered as together with *Jabarūt*, *Malakūt* and *Mulk*?"¹² The Sufis have asked many questions about this and the answer to these questions is extremely difficult and hard. But it is necessary to give an answer. If you want to know that it is difficult, I will give an indication: Understanding the existence of non-delimitation and infinity, and understanding the existence of something else with that such that the non-delimited and infinite possess limits and boundaries, direction, division, separation, breaking apart and coming together is extremely difficult and hard.¹³

The meaning behind such remarks by Nasafī is that man should reach the essence of God as far as it is possible, that is, he should reach the essence of God as seen through *tashbīh*. Thus whenever Nasafī speaks of reaching God's essence, one should read with two eyes (to borrow an analogy from Ibn 'Arabī),¹⁴ that is, with one eye of *tashbīh* and with one eye of *tanzīh*.

Having given a *tanzīh* warning in the opening pages of *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, Nasafī then devotes the rest of the chapter to the *tashbīh* dimension. It is typical that the

¹¹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 39a, lines 5 - 11.

¹² These three terms, *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt* are crucial in Nasafī's theosophy. The first two appear in the Koran, (for *Mulk* see for example 2: 101, 3: 186, 5: 20, 21, 44, 120. For *Malakūt* see 23: 90, 36: 83). *Jabarūt* does not appear in the Koran, but it is derived from the divine name *al-Jabbār*, or All-compeller (59: 23). Scholars have translated *Mulk* as "kingdom" and *Malakūt* as "dominion" and *Jabarūt* as "invincibility," (see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 282). However, I have refrained from translating these terms in this way because such translations do not reflect the meaning that Nasafī generally gives to them. *Mulk* is connected with the world of sense perception and *Malakūt* is connected to the world of spirits, and *Jabarūt* stands higher than these two, for it is their origin.

¹³ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p.231.

¹⁴ See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, chapter 20.

tashbīh section takes up about ninety percent of the whole chapter, for Sufism emphasises the love between God and man, that is, the dimension which can be known. As ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib is reported to have said, “I only worship a Lord I see.”¹⁵ This *tashbīh* position is explained by Nasafī from six different points of view, that is, six ontological perspectives, all of which are the spiritual stations (*maqām*) of the Friends of God (*āwliyā*), who are those closest to God.

2:1:2 Nasafī’s six faces

In the Sufi tradition, a spiritual station (*maqām*), describes a relationship between the wayfarer and God. This station is acquired (*kasbī*), based upon the wayfarer’s own spiritual effort, and the knowledge that he actualises in a particular station remains with him even if he progresses on to another station. Spiritual stations are often discussed in the Sufi manuals along with *ḥāl*, or a spiritual state, which is a bestowal by God upon the wayfarer which takes place in a particular station. Nasafī does not employ the term *ḥāl* in *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, but uses *waqt*, (present moment) a technical word discussed by Sufis prior to Nasafī, including Hujwīrī¹⁶ and al-Ghazālī.¹⁷ The latter two classified the mystical experience into three stages; the first stage is *waqt*, the second is *ḥāl* and the third is stability (*tamkīn*). It is not possible to investigate the differences between these three here, suffice to say that the *waqt* is the lowest stage and stability is the highest stage.

Acquisition of the station by the wayfarer and God’s bestowal of the *waqt* is referred to by Nasafī at the beginning of each of the stations:

O dear friend! There is a station for the wayfarer, and in that station there is a *waqt*. When he reaches that station and enters into it, and when that *waqt* reaches him ...¹⁸

¹⁵ A saying frequently quoted by Sufis, for example see Chittick, *Faith and Practice*, p.14.

¹⁶ *Kashf al-mahjūb*, Hujwīrī, trans. R.A. Nicholson, (London: Luzac, 1911), pp. 367-370.

¹⁷ See Margaret Smith, *al-Ghazālī the mystic*, (London: Luzac, 1944; repr. Lahore: Hijra International Publications, 1983), pp. 130-131.

¹⁸ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol . 39b, lines 3-4.

The *waqt* is based upon the *ḥadīth* which states: “I have a *waqt* with God when no angel brought nigh or prophet sent embraces me.”¹⁹ This *waqt* has been interpreted by some to refer to Muḥammad’s ascent, referred to in the Koran: “Glory be to Him, who carried His servant by night from the Holy Mosque to the Farthest Mosque.”²⁰ According to Islamic tradition, Muḥammad rose from his bed and journeyed with Gabriel from Arabia to Jerusalem, and then upwards through all the heavens until he reached the final boundary of the heavens. At this point, Muḥammad had to proceed alone to witness God, for Gabriel said that if he went further towards God he would be burnt.

The *waqt* is not permanent (unlike the station and the knowledge associated with it); it can last less than one hour and may last for longer than ten days.²¹ In another work, Nasafī mentions moments experienced by various Sufis:

Our master (*Ḥammuyā*) stated, “My spirit spent thirteen days in the heavens and then returned to my body. And during those thirteen days my body was like that of a dead man and had no concern for anything. Others who were present said that my body had been in such a way for thirteen days.” And another dear one stated, “My spirit remained there for twenty days and then came back to the body.” And another good companion said, “My spirit spent forty days and then returned to the body.” He remembered everything that he saw in those forty days.²²

Although the identity of the Friends of God within these six stations is unclear in the majority of cases, by comparing the contents of these stations with the discourses that appear in other works by Nasafī, one can conclude that the beliefs of the ‘*Ulamā*’, Philosophers, Transmigrationists and the People of Unity are all mentioned. This shows Nasafī at his best, prepared to endorse the beliefs of groups other than the Sufis if he sees truth in them. Yet, typically, he does not claim that any one group represents his

¹⁹ *Ḥadīth*, Furūzānfar, no. 100. See S. Murata, op.cit., p. 265.

²⁰ Koran, 17: 1.

²¹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 40a, lines 9-10.

²² *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 109.

own beliefs. The person with real knowledge witnesses the truth (through experience) in all of the stations:

At the end of journeying, each wayfarer is in one of these stations, and one of these stations has become his aim and he remains there. There are few wayfarers who are informed of all six stations, and until the wayfarer discovers the information of all six stations and sees the correctness (*ṣalāḥ*) and corruption of each one (not through imitation (*taqlīd*) and supposition (*gumān*) but through unveiling and contemplation) he will neither reach the end point of the journey nor be informed of the extremity of the journey nor discern the truth from the false nor recognise God.²³

This idea that the wayfarer has to recognise the truth in all expressions of belief is perhaps the fundamental element in Nasafī's theosophy, for it reveals the reality of "no repetition in God's self disclosure" (*lā takrār fī 'l-tajallī*) which is the basis of the all-embracing nature of Sufism. This idea is discussed in detail within one of the six stations, and so it is not necessary to develop it any further at this point.

2:1:3 The first station

The first station is the shortest of all the stations, perhaps an indication that Nasafī did not regard it as a profound ontological explanation of the relationship between God and man. God is explained as the essential existent (*mawjūd li-dhātihi*) and He is also termed the *Jabarūt*. This stands in opposition to the world (*'ālam*) which is an existent through other than itself (*mawjūd li-ghayrihi*) and comprises *Mulk* and *Malakūt*. *Mulk* is the world of sensory existents (*mawjūdāt-i ḥissī*) and *Malakūt* is the world of intelligible existents (*mawjūdāt-i 'aqlī*). God, or *Jabarūt*, is real and eternal existence, whereas the world (*Mulk* and *Malakūt*) have metaphorical and created existence. The world is created by God from non-existence through His attributes, that is, through His knowledge, desire and power. These three attributes of knowledge, desire and power were commonly discussed by the theologians in the process of

²³ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 51a, lines 13-17.

creation; in order to create something, God must have knowledge of it; then He must have the desire to create that thing; thirdly, He must have the desire to bring it in to existence. Nasafī then follows the standard explanation of the theologians that there are seven attributes of essence (*ṣifāt-i dhāt*); the seven are, life, knowledge, desire, power, speaking, hearing and seeing. Of course, God's attributes are infinite, but apart from the foregoing seven, they are all attributes of acts.

In this station, creation is seen as a process whereby God makes something existent from non-existence, in other words, it is an interpretation reflecting the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*. This is the meaning behind making something exist (*hast gardānīd*) from non-existence (*nīstī*) and this position is reflected in a small sentence "God was and nothing else was,"²⁴ which is in fact a *ḥadīth*.²⁵ Creation from nothing is typically taken by Nasafī as the belief of the People of the Holy Law (*Ahl-i sharī'at*), (who are called the '*Ulamā*' in other works):

Know that the wise men have had differences of opinion about the possibility of non-existence becoming existence, and existence becoming non-existence. The '*Ulamā*' and *Fuqahā* believe that it is possible for non-existence to become existence and for existence to become non-existence. This is because the world was non-existent and God Almighty made the world existent and will make it non-existent when He desires.

The Philosophers and People of Unity believe that it is not possible for existence to become non-existence and it is not possible for non-existence to become existence.²⁶

The distinction made between God and the world (that is, between *Jabarūt* on the one hand, and *Mulk* and *Malakūt* on the other) represents a *tanzīh* position. This is counter-balanced by a *tashbīh* explanation that God is with everything, for "it is not possible for a leaf to move on a tree without His knowledge, desire and power."²⁷

²⁴ Ibid, fol. 39b, lines 16-17.

²⁵ This *ḥadīth* is often quoted by Sufis but given various interpretations. For example, see Ibn 'Arabi's usage in Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 88.

²⁶ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 254.

²⁷ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 39b, line 10. (This alludes to the Koran 6: 59, "Not a leaf falls but He knows it.")

God's *tanzīh-tashbīh* relationship with the world is described in the following way:

The God of the world is not inside nor outside of the world, nor contiguous (*muttaṣil*) with or discontinuous (*munfaṣil*) from the world, and not in any direction of the directions of the world or in time or place because these are attributes of bodies, and the God of the world is not a body or bodily.²⁸

Although this is the simplest explanation of all the six stations (in terms of an ontological explanation of existence), Nasafī comments that the wayfarer in this station is able to experience the *waqt* with God:

In this station, when the wayfarer shows perseverance and persistence in the task and does not cease in ascetic discipline and spiritual effort, then *Mulk* and *Malakūt* (which are God's creation) become concealed and forgotten all at once when this *waqt* predominates over him. This is called the station of annihilation (*maqām-i fanā'*). When the existence of the wayfarer also becomes concealed from and forgotten by the wayfarer and he does not see or know anything else except God, this station is called annihilation of annihilation (*fanā'-i fanā'*).²⁹

2:1:4 The second station

The first station takes up only twenty-nine lines, whereas the second station comprises a hundred and thirty-four; in fact, it is longer than any other of the stations. Obviously, in this station there are discussions which must have been important to Nasafī.

Whereas in the first station God's essence and attributes are *Jabarūt* and other than God is *Mulk* and *Malakūt*, in the second station God is other than all three worlds. *Mulk* and *Malakūt* are explained in the same way as the preceding station, but *Jabarūt* is an expression for the first substance (*jawhar-i awwal*), yet God is with all three

²⁸ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 39b, lines 15-16.

²⁹ *Ibid*, fol. 40a, lines 1-4.

worlds through His essence and His attributes. The “withness” (*ma‘iyyat*) of God with the three worlds is described in terms of the human spirit in the human body. The word *ma‘iyyat* is an allusion to the Koranic verse, “God is with you wherever you are.”³⁰ Thus although man is separated from God by the first substance, the *tashbīh* position is maintained through God’s “withness.”

One of the major discussions in this station is the nature of *Jabarūt* (or first substance), and here the relationship between the first and second stations becomes clear. The first station states a position of *creatio ex nihilo*, whereas the second station suggests a kind of eternity for *Jabarūt*:

The first substance came from the world of potentiality (*‘ālam-i quwwat*) to the world of actuality (*‘ālam-i fi‘l*) through one command in the blink of an eye, “And Our command is but one, as the twinkling of an eye³¹.”³²

This eternal potentiality is attributed likewise to *Mulk* and *Malakūt*, for the first substance is like a seed and all the substances of *Mulk* and *Malakūt* are existent in the first substance. To use Nasafī’s words, everything that “was, is and will be, was potentially existent” in the first substance. However, while these substances are existent in the first substance, they are not distinct (*mumtāz*) from one another; and for this reason, the first substance is also called the undifferentiated world (*‘ālam-i ijmāl*). In this state, the potential existents of *Mulk* and *Malakūt* are called non-existent things (*ashyā’-i ma‘dūm*), since they have the possibility of existence in contrast to God’s real existence.

Both the content and language that Nasafī uses in this discussion reflect an intermingling of Koranic terminology with the kind of philosophical concepts that were discussed by the Ikhwān al-Ṣafā (Brethren of Purity) and Ibn Sīnā (known to the west as Avicenna) among others. Indeed, in this discussion on *Jabarūt*, one finds numerous parallels with Ibn ‘Arabī’s theosophy, and in other works Nasafī explicitly refers to the

³⁰ Koran, 57: 4.

³¹ Koran, 54: 50

³² *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 41a, lines 1-2.

similarity of his position with Ibn ‘Arabī’s, the only difference being one of terminology:

All potential existents are things, and they are all the objects of God’s knowledge (*ma‘lūm-i khudā*). Possible non-existence is one thing and impossible non-existence is another. Possible non-existence is a thing, but impossible non-existence is not a thing. And Ibn ‘Arabī calls these things the immutable entities (*a‘yān-i thābita*); Shaykh Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥammuyā calls these things the immutable things (*ashyā’-i thābitā*); and this helpless one (i.e. Nasafī) calls them the immutable realities (*ḥaqā’iq-i thābita*). They are called immutable (*thābit*) because they never change their own state, and they never will.³³

These possible non-existent things plead with God to have existence bestowed upon them, they say to God “in the tongue of [their] state,” (*bā zabān-i ḥāl*) “We have such a preparedness (*isti’dād*) and such a task can be performed through us.”³⁴ The similarity of this passage with chapter sixty-six of Ibn ‘Arabī’s *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya* is unmistakable,³⁵ and the tongue of their own state is a Persian translation of Ibn ‘Arabī’s Arabic expression *lisān al-ḥāl*.³⁶

If God bestows existence upon these non-existent things by the command “Be!” then they are manifested in the differentiated world (*‘ālam-i tafṣīl*) (which is *Mulk* and *Malakūt*) in exactly the way in which they spoke with God. They do whatever they said they would, and this introduces the second major point in the second spiritual station.

God bestows existence upon the non-existent things, but He is not the creator of their actions:

Everything and everyone has whatever he has from himself and has brought it with himself, nobody has placed it there. This is because only the command to become existent is from God Almighty. Everything and everyone became existent in such a way that they were in the world of potentiality. So God Almighty is All-

³³ *Manāzil al-sā’irīn*, p. 364.

³⁴ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 41a, lines 14-15.

³⁵ For an English translation of this chapter, see Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 129-136.

³⁶ See Chittick, *The Sufī Path of Knowledge*, p. 387, n. 14.

Knowing (*'ālim*) and All-Aware (*khabīr*), and his knowledge and awareness follow its object (*'ilm tābi' ma'lūm*).³⁷

This last phrase, again, leads back to Ibn 'Arabī,³⁸ and the significance of God's knowledge following its object is that God does not make the existents act, which "justifies" His rewarding and punishing of creatures. As Nasafī reminds us, "His command, when He desires a thing, is to say Be! and it is,"³⁹ He does not say to the non-existent thing, "Be a wrong doer!" or "Be God-fearing!"

God Almighty commanded the recital of prayers. Recital of prayers is the action of the prayer reciter, and the prayer reciter is the one who brings into existence (*mūjid*) his own actions. If this were not so, why would the performer of good actions deserve reward and praise and the performer of bad actions deserve punishment and blame? Potential existents are the ones who bring into existence their own actions and everything and everyone came to the world of actuality through the command of God and from its own action, just as it was in the world of potentiality, and the good ones brought goodness with them and the wretched ones brought wretchedness with them. "A happy man is he who is happy in his mother's womb and a wretched man is he who was wretched in his mother's womb"⁴⁰.⁴¹

Although God does not create the acts of the things directly, He knows what they will do once they have existence bestowed upon them. For God not to know this would mean there is a deficiency in Him. Therefore, Nasafī explains God's knowledge as the third main component in the second station. He divides it into two kinds since He is All-Knowing and All-Aware.⁴² The All-Knowing refers to God's existentiating command, for He knows the universal condition of each thing:

³⁷ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 41a, lines 16-18.

³⁸ See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 298.

³⁹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 41b, lines 5-6. (Koran, 36: 82).

⁴⁰ A *ḥadīth* reported by Bukharī, Muslim and Ibn Ḥanbal, frequently quoted by Sufis; see Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, *Mirṣad al-'ibād min al-mabdā ilā'l-ma'ād*, trans. H. Algar, *The path of God's bondsmen from origin to return*, (New York: Caravan Books, 1982), p. 162.

⁴¹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 41b, lines 8-13.

⁴² *Ibid*, fol. 42a, line 1. This discussion of God being All-Knowing and All-Aware is based on two of God's Ninety-Nine Names. The All-Knowing occurs in the Koran in verses 32: 1, 35: 2, 27: 1, 37:1, and the All-Aware is found in verses 6: 18 and 34: 1. God's names were the topic of many Sufi works, such as Ghazālī's *Maqṣad al-asnā*, trans. R.C. Stade, "The Ninety-Name Names of God in Islam," (Ibadan, Nigeria: Caystar Press, 1970).

When a farmer wants to plant, he takes the seed of the fruit he wants to pick. When he looks at the seed, he “knows” of the existence of the crop before its existence and he recognises the result of the crop. He knows that the barley seed will in fact produce barley and the wheat seed will in fact produce wheat if the earth is wholesome and the air is compatible and there is water on appropriate occasions and no calamity befalls. This knowledge of the farmer is absolute (*muṭlaq*) but it is not complete. Although the farmer knows this, he does not know how many of the wheat seeds that he sowed will rise from the earth and how many will not rise. He does not know how many will reach their full term (*ajal-i musammā*) and how many will become non-existent before the full term through the term of the divine decree (*ajal-i qaḍā*). He does not know the cause of the non-existence of that which becomes non-existent through the decreed term of life, perhaps because of warmth or cold, too little water or too much water, being eaten by animals or intrusion by people and so on. But when he scatters the seed on the ground, and some rise and others do not, some reach perfection and a calamity befalls others before perfection, then all of this becomes known by the farmer, and this is the farmer’s experiential knowledge (*‘ilm-i dhawq*).⁴³

As Nasafī comments, this is another way of saying that knowledge follows its object. In the first case, the All-Knowing follows the known because the seeds tell the farmer that they have such a preparedness for manifesting what is particular to them. In the second, the All-Aware follows the known, because it is only after the development of the plant that he knows what happens to it. As Nasafī says, this relates to the knowledge of universals and particulars:

So the farmer is “knowing” and “aware.” He is “knowing” of the crop before its existence and he is “aware” of the existence of the crop after its existence. He is “knowing” of the universals (*kulliyyāt*) before the existence of the universals and he is “aware” of the particulars after the existence of the particulars.

In the same way, God Almighty is knowing and aware. He is knowing of the existence of *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt* before their existence and He is aware of the existence of *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt* after their existence. He is knowing of the universals before their existence and He is aware of the particulars after their existence.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 42a, lines 2-12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, fol. 42a, line 17 - fol. 42b, line 1.

Nasafī then returns to the statement made in the beginning of the passage that God's essence and attributes are with everything. This begs the question that if God's attribute of awareness is with everything, then why is He aware of a thing only after it has performed the action? If He is aware of it only after the action, then His awareness appears to be defective, which contradicts the idea that his attributes are perfect. Nasafī recognises this problem and he comments that the example of the farmer is only an approximation⁴⁵ to help us understand the real situation. Although he does not make the point in this work, in *al-Insān al-kāmil* Nasafī says that time is not a consideration for God but only for humans.⁴⁶ There is no dimension of time in God's world, so He is All-Aware of everything all at once, even "before" something takes place.

God's attributes of All-Knowing and All-Awareness are identical to His essence, because there is nothing in true existence except His essence. However, the essence has been called different names by people from various perspectives. Nasafī returns to the seven main attributes which are discussed in the first station:

So God Almighty is All-Knowing in essence, a desirer in essence, powerful in essence, a hearer in essence, a seer in essence, speaker in essence and command in essence.⁴⁷

These attributes of essence are then divided into two groups which are the basis of the second station. There are God's existentiating command and His knowledge:

His desire, power and speaking are expressions for His command; and His hearing, sight and life are expressions for His knowledge. So there are not more than two attributes, and there are not more than three things from God's side and there are also three things from the side of potential existents.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid, fol. 42b, line 2.

⁴⁶ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 242.

⁴⁷ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 42b, lines 18-19.

⁴⁸ Ibid, fol. 43a, line 2-3.

From God's side there is the essence (which is infinite and encompasses everything) and two attributes (command and knowledge); from the side of the potential existents there is "thingness" (*shay'iiyyat*), acceptance (*qabūl*) and action (*fi'l*).⁴⁹ "Thingness" is the essence of the thing, acceptance is the receptivity of the thing of God's command to be, and action is what the thing does when existence is bestowed upon it. Nasafi's portrayal of such a dual triplicity is very reminiscent of that found in Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikām*. Ibn 'Arabī described God's triplicity in terms of Essence, Desire and Speaking (reflecting the main components necessary for creation).⁵⁰ The triplicity of the created thing is its own thingness, its hearing of God's command to be and its obedience to the command, Be!

Having described the theory behind this station, Nasafi then explains how the wayfarer perceives the relationship of man and God. This is done with reference to the *ḥadīth qudsī*, "My servant draws near to Me through nothing I love more than that which I have made obligatory for him. My servant never ceases drawing near to Me through supererogatory works until I love him. Then, when I love him, I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand through which he grasps, and his foot through which he walks."⁵¹ From this *ḥadīth*, Muslims distinguish two kinds of acts of worship; the first is the obligatory acts which include praying, fasting and the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the second is the supererogatory which are acts of worship in excess of obligatory worship.

Nasafi's interpretation resembles that of Ibn 'Arabī;⁵² Ibn 'Arabī says that the servant is the hearing and seeing of God in obligatory acts of worship and Nasafi expresses this in terms of everything at the level of self of self, hearing of hearing and sight of sight as being God's discourse.⁵³ It is God's discourse because He looks at the cosmos through man. If He were to look at the cosmos without an intermediary then the

⁴⁹ Ibid, fol. 41b, line 6.

⁵⁰ Ibn 'Arabī comments "For God says, 'Our only word to a thing, when We desire it is to say to it 'Be!' and it is.'" (16: 40). Here we have an Essence, a desire and a word." cited by S. Murata, op.cit., p. 151. See also R. Austin, *Ibn al-'Arabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1980) chapter 11.

⁵¹ This *ḥadīth* in this form is found in Bukhārī, *Riqāq*, 38.

⁵² See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 325-31.

⁵³ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 43a, line 18.

cosmos would be “burnt away by the glories of His face.” Since the obligatory acts are commanded by God, they are regarded by Ibn ‘Arabī as more eminent than supererogatory acts of worship in which the servant has a choice concerning their performance. (Of course, this does not mean that one should not perform the supererogatory acts. The obligatory acts are sufficient for the majority of believers but the supererogatory acts draw each individual even closer to God.) Concerning the supererogatory acts, Ibn ‘Arabī states that God is the servant’s hearing and seeing and therefore says “I,”⁵⁴ and Nasafī comments that everything at the level of self, hearing and sight is the discourse of God’s messenger (*rasūl-i khudā*).⁵⁵ The distinction between the two sets of acts is very intricate and complex. One way to contemplate the obligatory and supererogatory acts is through the relationship between annihilation (*fanā’*) and subsistence (*baqā’*). Through the obligatory acts, man annihilates his “self,” and therefore it is God performing the acts through man. From this point, the annihilated man subsists in God and so he is able to perform the supererogatory acts. Another way to view the relationship is through *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*. *Tanzīh* stresses God’s mastery over His servants through *tanzīh* names, including the majestic (*jalāl*) and the compeller (*jabbār*), and the obligatory acts establish God’s majesty and compulsion over his servant for the latter has no free will in the performance of such acts. *Tashbīh* emphasises the similarity between man and God through *tashbīh* names, including beauty (*jamāl*) and gentleness (*lutf*). God and the supererogatory acts draw the servant closer to God since he assimilates God’s attributes in the performance of those very acts. Nasafī summarises the obligatory and supererogatory acts of worship in the following way:

When the wayfarer shows perseverance and persistence in the task in this station and does not cease from ascetic discipline and spiritual effort, then the self of the self, the hearing of hearing, the sight of sight sees, listens and speaks in him. In whomever the self of the self, hearing of hearing, and sight of sight sees, listens and speaks, that person has reached God and the day of resurrection has arrived for him. The dead

⁵⁴ Ibn ‘Arabī, translated by Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 329.

⁵⁵ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 43a, line 19.

become living and rise from the graves. Although in form such a person is in the world, in meaning he is in the afterlife. Outwardly he is with the creatures but inwardly he is with God, since the resurrection of the spirit is different from the resurrection of the body.⁵⁶

So until this point, the wayfarer was alive through himself, heard through himself, saw through himself and spoke through himself. Now he is alive through God, he hears through God, sees through God and speaks through God, "I am his hearing, his sight and his speaking." Moreover, he reaches a point where God hears, God sees, God speaks and God does everything he does. "So you did not slay them, but it was Allah Who slew them, and you did not throw when you threw, but it was Allah who threw."⁵⁷ There is much difference between the station where one listens through God, sees through God and speaks through God and the station where God listens, God sees, and God speaks. So everything which the People of Perfection perform is all good. Although some of their actions appear in the form of disobedience (*ma'ṣiyat*), in the actual situation it is not disobedience, rather it is identical to obedience (*ṭā'at*).⁵⁸

2:1:5 The third station

The next station described by Nasafī draws on the Sufi tradition of regarding everything other than God as imagination. The imagination has been the focus of many studies by twentieth-century scholars because it is one of the primary ways in which Ibn 'Arabī explains his theosophy.⁵⁹ In the ninth chapter of his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikām*, Ibn 'Arabī discusses two kinds of imagination.⁶⁰ The first is the cosmos and the second is the individual. It is likely that Nasafī based his third station on Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ* since he follows the same two-fold classification, and not only does he reach the same

⁵⁶ Ibid, fol. 43a, lines 3-7.

⁵⁷ Koran, 8: 17.

⁵⁸ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 43a, lines 14-16.

⁵⁹ For example, see Henri Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) and Chittick *Imaginal Worlds*. Ibn 'Arabī defines three types of imagination. "Non-delimited imagination" is the widest sense of the concept for it includes existents in potentiality and in actuality; "discontiguous imagination" refers to the intermediate world of the macrocosm; "contiguous imagination" is used to describe both the soul and also one of the faculties of the soul called imagination in each individual.

⁶⁰ Austin, op.cit., pp. 120-127.

conclusion that Prophets and Friends of God are required to interpret the meanings behind imagination, but he also quotes the *Fuṣūṣ*.

The first kind of imagination is the world (which comprises *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt*). The world has imaginary existence which stands in contrast to God's real existence:

Real existence (*wujūd-i ḥaqīqī*) which is the existence of God is existence (*ḥastī*) that appears non-existent (*nīst numā*). Imaginary existence (*wujūd-i khayālī*) which is the existence of the world, is non-existence that appears existent.⁶¹

Although the world is imagination and unreal, it can still tell us something about the reality of God because

... there is not one particle of all the particles of the world which God is not with, for imagination cannot exist without reality, and a shadow cannot exist without essence. This discourse will only be clear for you through an example (*mithāl*).

Know that according to the philosophers (*ḥukamā'*), air is existence that appears non-existent while a mirage is non-existence that appears existent. The existence of the mirage is through the air and the manifestation of the air is through the mirage. Air is the reality of the mirage and the mirage is the form of the air. You should understand God's witness with the world in the same way as the witness of the air with the mirage. From this point of view, it has been said, "All the world is imagination in imagination and a dream in a dream."⁶² This is the meaning of "People are asleep and when they die they wake up"⁶³.⁶⁴

In this station, when man looks at anything, he perceives the forms of the world that are the manifest dimension of meanings,⁶⁵ (as Ibn 'Arabī so often states, this situation reflects the Koranic verse "We will show them Our signs upon the horizons

⁶¹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 43b, lines 18-19.

⁶² A quotation from Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikām*. "...whole earthly life was after this fashion, being a dream within a dream," and several paragraphs later, "all existence is an imagination within an imagination." See Austin, op.cit., p. 121, p. 125.

⁶³ *Ḥadīth*, Furūzānfar, no. 222.

⁶⁴ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 44a, lines 1-6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, fol. 44a, line 1.

and in themselves”⁶⁶). These signs within the self introduce the second classification of imagination, which is the faculty of imagination within each person. Although Nasafi does not discuss this faculty in any detail in this chapter, he does refer to it in a later chapter where he explains the imagination and its functions (and his analysis leans heavily upon the teachings of Ibn Sīnā).⁶⁷ One of man’s sources of intelligence is the five senses which gather in the *sensus communis* and these forms are then stored in the imagination.⁶⁸ The store of forms is crucial for man to make sense of God’s self disclosure because the majority of Sufis (including Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī) held that God’s self disclosure takes a form: “the heart is the antechamber of the eye: For certain everything that reaches the heart will enter into the eye and become a form.”⁶⁹ Nasafi himself says that God’s self-disclosure without a form is impossible (although he makes this comment in the fifth station).⁷⁰

Since everything is imagination, or a form, it is necessary to understand the reality behind the form:

Everything people see in a dream is all imagination. Everything people see is imagination, so they are all in a dream. Although they see everything in a dream as imagination, that imagination is a denotation (*dalāla*) of reality and [people] will not reach the reality of that imagination for as long as they have not “crossed over” (*‘ubūr*) from it. An interpreter (*mu‘abbir*) is called an “interpreter” on the basis of this, and because of this his words are called interpretation (*ta‘bīr*). The Friends of God (*awliyā*) and the Prophets are all interpreters and they interpret peoples’ dreams so that the people can pass from supposed and imaginary existents (*mawjūdāt-i mutawahham wa mutakhayāl*) and reach real existents (*mawjūdāt-i ḥaqīqī*).⁷¹

Even the interpreters of dreams and their interpretations may be considered as imagination. The difference between them and other people is that they have woken up from the dream and they know that everything is imagination (or a dream), while those

⁶⁶ Koran 41: 53. For Ibn ‘Arabi’s use of this verse see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. xv.

⁶⁷ See F. Rahman’s *Avicenna’s Psychology*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 30-38.

⁶⁸ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 59b, line 4 - fol. 60 a line 2.

⁶⁹ Rūmī, quoted by Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, p. 279.

⁷⁰ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 48a, lines 16-17.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, fol. 44a, lines 6-10.

who are sleeping think that their dreams are reality since they undergo all kinds of “sensory” and “emotional” experience for as long as they witness dreams.⁷² Those people who are in a dream but think that it is real may not wake up at all. Only at death do they awaken and by then it may be too late. This death is the natural death (*murdan-i tabī‘ī*), whereas those who have woken up and realised that all is imagination die the voluntary death (*murdan-i irādī*):

It is necessary to die the voluntary death before natural death in order to awaken from sleep. This is the meaning of *Die before you die*^{73,74}

2:1:6 The fourth station

The whole tone of the fourth station is very much of a *tashbīh* nature, for God is recognised as the whole world, whether it is imagination or reality:⁷⁵

In this station, the wayfarer knows and sees the “world,” which is an expression for *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt*, all at once as the existence of God and he sees or knows no existence other than *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt* which are the levels of the world.⁷⁶

Existence is one. However, it is described by many attributes, since it is manifested in many forms. Therefore the reality of existence is its unity, even though it has been called by many names. As Nasafī says, it may be called God, the world,⁷⁷ creature or spirit. In fact, it is best to call this existence by the name which is closer to one’s understanding.⁷⁸

⁷² Ibid, fol. 44a, lines 11-14.

⁷³ *Ḥadīth*, Furūzānfar, no. 352.

⁷⁴ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 44a, lines 15-16:

⁷⁵ Ibid, fol. 44b, line 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid, fol. 44b, lines 9-10.

⁷⁷ Ibid, fol. 44b, lines 15-16.

⁷⁸ Ibid, fol. 45a, line 9.

Another way to express existence is through the terms substance (*jawhar*) and accident (*ʿaraḍ*). Substance is common for everything, for it is the fundamental reality, however, the distinction between things is through accident:

... there is not more than one substance but there are many accidents for this one substance; growing and not growing, sensory and non-sensory, rational (*nāṭiq*) and non-rational, Philosopher (*ḥakīm*) and other than Philosopher, Prophet and other than Prophet, Friend of God and other than Friend of God and others like these have all one substance, and the substance of them all is one. The distinction between them all is through accident.⁷⁹

From this perspective, one can say that everything is God (*kull khudā ast*),⁸⁰ an expression that is very reminiscent of the “everything is He” (*hama ūst*), which was employed by Sufis including Farīd al-Dīn ‘Aṭṭār⁸¹ and Anṣārī (d. 1089).⁸² This phrase has also been spoken of in the same breath as the unity of existence (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) which is the doctrine typically attributed to Ibn ‘Arabī.⁸³

In this fourth station, the unity of God’s existence is divided into two forms; the form of essence and attribute (*dhāt wa ṣifāt*) and the form of face and name (*wajh wa ism*). The form of essence and attribute may also be called the undifferentiated world (*‘ālam-i ‘ijmāl*) and the level of readiness (*martaba-yi ṣalāḥiyyat*). This is because in origin the substance of everything is in potentiality, as described in the second station, and it is ready to perform its actions. When existence is bestowed upon a thing, substances and accidents may be spoken of as the face and name, because the things are differentiated (*tafṣīl*) and dispersed (*tafraqa*) from one another and also since they are at the actualised level (*martaba-yi ḥāṣiliyyat*). The two forms which describe this one substance, or God’s existence, are summarised in the three levels. Each form is one

⁷⁹ Ibid, fol. 45a, lines 4-6.

⁸⁰ Ibid, fol. 45a, line 7.

⁸¹ See A. Schimmel, *As through a veil*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 61.

⁸² See W.M. Thackston’s translation of Anṣārī’s *Munājāt, Intimate Conversations*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 215.

⁸³ A. Schimmel, *As through a veil*, p. 61.

level and the two combined forms make the third level. So the first level is God's essence, the second level is His face and the combined forms are His breath (*nafas*).⁸⁴

Level of essence

(Undifferentiated world / Level of readiness / Collected form)

Level of face

(Differentiated World / Actualised level / Dispersed Form)

} Level of breath

M. Molé has read this third level as *nafs*, rather than *nafas*. *Nafs* has a variety of meanings ranging from the self, soul, mode and aspect and Molé preferred the word "heccité,"⁸⁵ whereas *nafas* means breath. *Nafas* is etymologically related to *nafs* since both come from the same Arabic root. Thus both of them appear exactly the same way when written because the vowel signs (which would distinguish between *nafs* and *nafas*) are not usually written in Persian. This distinction between the two words is important because the discussion of *n.f.s.* as *nafas* (breath) concerns the Divine breath, which is a major element in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī.⁸⁶

The reason for reading *n.f.s.* as *nafas* in this particular passage appears in another of Nasafī's works. In *Bayān-i tanzīl*, Nasafī comments:

O dervish! If the essence is called the ink-pot, and if the face is called the book, then the breath (*n.f.s.*) which is the intermediary (*wāsiṭa*) must be called the pen. If the essence is called the undifferentiated world and if the face is called the differentiated world, the breath is the world of love.

...the sigh (*āh*) of the *n.f.s.* comes from the essence and the face comes from the breath (*nafas*). The face is the self disclosure of the breath and the breath is the self-disclosure of the essence.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 45a, line 14.

⁸⁵ See M. Molé's introduction to *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 13. Heccité is the French form of haecceity, an obsolete English word meaning a quality or mode of being in virtue of which a thing is or becomes a definite individual.

⁸⁶ See H. Corbin's *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, and Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, pp. 127-30.

⁸⁷ *Bayān-i tanzīl*, fol. 9, lines 9-13.

Given that Nasafī uses “sigh,” it appears more likely that *n.f.s.* is *nafas* (breath) rather than *nafs* (heccité). The sound of a sigh is heard when one breathes out or exhales air or blows. (This image calls to mind God's blowing of His spirit into Adam.) The visual image of the breath as an intermediary also makes sense because one cannot see the breath in the undifferentiated world, but when God sighs or exhales, then a “cloud” of breath becomes visible.⁸⁸

In this station there are two questions that may be asked about the nature of this unity of existence. The first concerns the reason for the existence of incompatible (*nā-muwāfiq*) forms and the infinite differences among their attributes, such as one who confesses and one who denies, a powerful person and an incapable person, a just person and a wrongdoer. The answer is that existence

... is described by every attribute which has the possibility to be. Each attribute is perfect in its own level, and this perfection is its greatness. And [existence] is manifested in every form which has the possibility to be and each form is perfect in its own level.⁸⁹

This leads to the next problem, for if all the attributes and forms are manifested perfectly, then is wrongdoing a perfect attribute and is the wrongdoer a perfect form?⁹⁰ The reply to this question is linked to God's attributes of power (*qudrat*) and desire (*irādat*) which are perfect attributes. The forms (i.e. the creatures) also have these attributes within them and so they are able to create their own actions, or in other words, they are the cause of their own actions. (This is another way of expressing the point made in the second station that knowledge follows its object (*'ilm tābi' ma'lūm*) and God is not responsible for peoples' actions, He only bestows existence upon them.) So if a form employs power at the right time, it is called just (*'ādil*) and if it uses power on an inappropriate occasion, it is called wrongdoer (*zālim*). Nasafī repeats that if the

⁸⁸ See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge* concerning the Divine Breath and the Cloud, p. 126.

⁸⁹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 45b, lines 8-10.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, fol. 45b, lines 13-14.

situation were not this way, then there would be no point in the call of the Prophets and the instruction of the Friends of God.⁹¹

The divine attributes are always manifested in the world, for although the form may differ due to time and place, the substance of the form is always the same. From this perspective

... it is correct if it is said that it is we that existed, it is we that exist and it is we that will exist. And it is also correct if it is said that it is not we that existed and it is not we that exist and it is not we that will exist. You should understand all things in the same way. If, according to you, Moses was the son of 'Imrān and came from Egypt and spoke Hebrew, then Muḥammad was not Moses because Muḥammad was the son of 'Abdullāh and came from Mecca and spoke Arabic. But if Moses was the Perfect Man according to you, then Muḥammad was Moses because Muḥammad was the Perfect Man.⁹²

Here an important term is introduced, that is, the Perfect Man.⁹³ He is God's deputy on earth because he is able to manifest the divine attributes at their appropriate time and place. Such a concept guides each individual towards their own perfection, but whether or not this perfection is actualised depends to a great extent on one's own effort. Since God's attributes always exist, it necessarily follows that the Perfect Man who manifests perfection is always in the world:

If there was a time when there was Moses and Pharaoh and there was discussion and dispute between them, then there is always Moses and Pharaoh and there is always discussion and dispute between them. The difference is to the extent that one may speak of a time for Adam and Satan, a time for Abraham and Nimrūd, a time for Moses and Pharaoh, a time for Muḥammad and Abu Jahl, a time for Ḥusayn and Yazīd, and a time for Jesus and Dajjāl. If it never was the case that Moses and Pharaoh were, then there would never be Moses and Pharaoh, because nothing comes

⁹¹ Ibid, fol. 46a, line 3.

⁹² Ibid, fol. 46a, lines 14-18.

⁹³ The Perfect Man is a major element in Ibn 'Arabī's theosophy and his commentators discussed this issue at length. Indeed, Nasafī himself composed a book entitled the Perfect Man.

to the world which was not and everything that was, is and will be; and everything that was not, is not and will not be.⁹⁴

2:1:7 The fifth station

There are two interrelated points in the fifth station; God's new creation ("No indeed, but they are in uncertainty as to the new creation"),⁹⁵ and the non-repetition of this new creation. Many Muslims held that this Koranic verse referred to the resurrection, but Ibn 'Arabī and Nasafī take it as an indication of the renewal of creation at every instant.

God's new creation was accepted by Ash'arī theologians and both Ibn 'Arabī and Nasafī quote the Ash'arī axiom that "the accident does not remain for two moments."⁹⁶ However they disagree with the Ash'arī idea that only accidents disappear. Rather, they maintain that both substance and accident are continually destroyed and created again by God. In the quotation below, Nasafī speaks of "accidents" to refer to both substance and accidents. These are both annihilated, while only the real substance, or the One Entity remains:

This wayfarer in this station says that one Entity (*'ayn*) is the Entity of the world and this One Entity (*'ayn-i wāḥid*), that is the Entity of the world, is described with the attribute of unity. In other words, it is one thing that is the reality of the world and this one thing is described with the attribute of unity. All the forms of the world are the forms of the One Entity. This One Entity, which is the Entity of the world, always was and always is and whatever is existent of all the forms and accidents of the world, which are the forms and accidents of the One Entity, becomes non-existent in each moment and a similar (*mithl*) thing becomes existent.⁹⁷

Humans cannot perceive this new creation because of both the extreme speed of the process⁹⁸ and also because the thing made non-existent is similar to that which

⁹⁴ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 46a, line 18 - fol. 46b, line 3.

⁹⁵ Koran, 50: 15, quoted by Nasafī, *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 46b, line 19.

⁹⁶ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 46b, line 6. For Ibn 'Arabī see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 97.

⁹⁷ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 46b, lines 11-16.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, fol. 47a, line 9.

takes its place. One way of explaining how Nasafī perceived this idea is to say that each person is continually changing, whether in his personality, his thoughts, or even his physical appearance. Therefore God's "new creation" is always unique; in other words, His self-disclosure never repeats itself:

It is one light which has disclosed itself in the whole world. In other words, it is God who has been manifested in all these forms. Whatever is existent becomes non-existent in each moment and something similar to that becomes existent. If He wills, that which becomes existent in the east in a fixed time will become existent in the west, not in the east, and if He wills, that which becomes existent in the west in a fixed time will be manifested in the east, not in the west, since it is God that becomes manifested in the east and west. The sea produces waves in the east, west, south and north and the sea is one, and the waves are the forms of the sea, or rather they are the same as the sea. Just as the sea is constantly billowing, the light of God Almighty is continually disclosing itself.⁹⁹

Nasafī offers this self-disclosure which can take place in the east and in the next moment in the west as the explanation for miracles (*mu'jizāt*), charismatic powers (*karāmāt*) and the manifestation of angels such as Gabriel, and the story of the Queen of Sheba's throne being transported in an instant to Solomon's court,¹⁰⁰ the appearance of Khidr and also of the Invisible Shaykh.¹⁰¹ So miracles and charismatic powers should be regarded as the breaking of enduring habits (*kharq-i 'ādat-i mustamirr*) rather than the changing of reality (*qalb-i haqiqat*).¹⁰²

God as substance never changes, but the forms or accidents of the One Entity, that is, its self-disclosure is always changing. In this station, Nasafī again refers to the three levels of God to explain existence, that is, the levels of essence, face and breath:

God's essence, face and breath are not synonymous words (*alfāz-i mutarādif*), for they are distinct words (*alfāz-i mubāyin*). Considering contradictory words is difficult since the light of God can not be partitioned or

⁹⁹ Ibid, fol. 47a, line 6 - fol. 47b, line 3.

¹⁰⁰ See the Koran, 27: 40 and also Austin, op.cit., pp. 188-189.

¹⁰¹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 47a, lines 14-16.

¹⁰² Ibid, fol. 47b, lines 10-11.

divided and can not alter or change. So one's vision (*naẓar*) must be extremely piercing (*tizbīn*) and far-sighted (*dūrbīn*) in order to discover these meanings. Know that the wayfarer says that the People of Unveiling and Contemplation have three visions (*naẓar*) in existents: one is towards the existence of that thing, and one is towards the generality (*'umūm*) and specificity (*khuṣūṣ*) of that thing; and one is towards the whole (*majmū'*) of that thing.¹⁰³

Nasafī offers the example of water: the vision of the existence of water reveals the essence of water; and the existence of water in all plants reveals the generality of water, and the plant is thus the face of God. Water as essence and water as face make up the breath of water. In other words, God's light as essence, and God's light in its forms make up God's breath. So wherever one looks, one sees God; everything is God (*kull khudā ast*); everything is He (*hama ūst*):

The existence of light is an expression for the essence of God because He is independent (*ghani*) of the world, "God is independent of the worlds."¹⁰⁴ The generality of God's light for all things and the witness of God's light with each one of the world's forms is an expression for God's face and the whole is an expression for God's breath. For each form to which you turn, you have turned to God's face, "wherever you turn there is the face of God,"¹⁰⁵ and each one of the forms of the world is perishing except God's face, "everything is perishing except His face."¹⁰⁶

Everything man sees is a face of God, thus all beliefs express God's self-disclosure. For this reason Sufis witness truth in all beliefs; however, they stress that one has to recognise the truth in all faces and not become fixed to only one of the faces or forms:

Whoever reaches God's face (*wajh*) and has not reached the essence has become an associator of others with God (*mushrik*), and whoever has not passed on from God's face and does not reach the essence is an associator of others with God.

¹⁰³ Ibid, fol. 47b, lines 16-19.

¹⁰⁴ Koran, 3: 97. *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 48a, line 4.

¹⁰⁵ Koran, 2: 115. *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 48a, line 7.

¹⁰⁶ Koran, 28: 88. *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 48a, line 8.

Whoever passes on from God's face and reaches the essence is a Unitarian (*muwahhid*). So whoever worships something worships nothing except God, and whoever turns to something turns to nothing except God, "wherever you turn, there is the face of God."¹⁰⁷ Although all the associators of others with God have turned to God's face and worship God, they were limited (*muqayyad*) to one face and turned their back towards the other faces. Consenting to some and denying others is not acceptable, so the Prophets called them from the limited God to the non delimited God and they said, "God is one. Whatever you have turned towards, it is all one God that you have worshipped." The associators of others with God were surprised at this and they denied the words of the Prophets, but they marvelled: "What, has he made the gods One God? This is indeed a marvellous thing!"¹⁰⁸¹⁰⁹

From this point on, Nasafī describes the *waqt* of this station, the explanation of which differs from the other *awqāt* since it contains the ecstatic utterances (*shaḥīyyāt*) of several celebrated mystics:

When he [the wayfarer] becomes completely clean of reproachable descriptions and unpleasant character traits and becomes completely described and characterised with praiseworthy descriptions and pleasant character traits, and when he becomes translucent (*shaffāf*), reflective (*'aks pazīr*) and glass-like (*zujājī*) through extreme subtleness, then the real light, which is the essence of God, becomes like one thing with the existence of this wayfarer, who is reflective and glass-like. It is like a goblet made of glass which is extremely translucent and reflective, and has wine poured into it, a wine which is extremely pure and fine. One cannot distinguish the goblet from the wine or the wine from the goblet,¹¹⁰ because the two things are like one. The prophets said from this viewpoint, "Our spirits are our bodies and our bodies are our spirits."¹¹¹ Each cry (*awāzī*) which comes from the wayfarer like "There is nothing in my cloak except God,"¹¹² and "I am the Truth,"¹¹³ is in this station.¹¹⁴

In truth, this station requires this, because the body of the wayfarer becomes very glass-like and extremely translucent and reflective through ascetic discipline

¹⁰⁷ Koran, 2: 115.

¹⁰⁸ Koran, 38: 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 48a, lines 8-15.

¹¹⁰ Such a description is be found in 'Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār*, trans. Gairdner, p. 108.

¹¹¹ I have not been able to trace the origin of this statement.

¹¹² The *shaḥīhāt* of Abū Sa'id b. Abi'l Khayr.

¹¹³ The *shaḥīhāt* of Hallāj Ibn Mansūr.

¹¹⁴ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 48b, lines 4-10.

and spiritual effort. It is in such a way that the wayfarer sees himself as light, and he cannot distinguish the light from the glass or the glass from the light. Whether he desires or not, this cry comes from him involuntarily like "There is nothing in my cloak except God" and "I am the Truth." That is, at the beginning of this station, the wayfarer is still aware of himself and he sees himself and also sees the light from himself. This cry comes from him, "There is nothing in my cloak except God," and "There is nothing in existence except God." People have called this station the station of incarnation (*maqām-i ḥulūl*). At the end of this station, the wayfarer is not aware of himself and he does not recognise himself because he sees everything as light and this cry comes from him, "I am the Truth," and "Glory to me, how great is my majesty!" People have called this station the station of union (*maqām-i ittihād*).¹¹⁵

2:1:8 The sixth station

Whereas the fifth station describes the creatures as the loci of manifestation of God, the sixth station explains the creatures as the loci of manifestation of God's light (*mazāhir-i nūr-i khudā*). Nasafī is able to use this last station to portray existence in terms of the relationship between God, the macrocosm (big man) (*insān-i kabīr*) and the microcosm (small man) (*insān-i ṣaghīr*).

The world is again portrayed as a mirror, but not in the sense that it has an imaginary existence. God's world is a mirror in which He can witness His beautiful names.¹¹⁶ It is like a soulless body or an unpolished mirror, and when God breathes of His spirit into the world it becomes the locus of manifestation of His light. In other words, God fashions (*taswiya*)¹¹⁷ the world and gives it a preparedness (*isti'dād*) for a task. This discussion is based upon the Koranic verse in which God is speaking to the angels concerning his creation of Adam, "When I have fashioned him and breathed of my spirit into him, prostrate yourselves before him." Nasafī's explanation of this

¹¹⁵ Ibid, fol. 48b, lines 10-17.

¹¹⁶ A reference to the Koran, (7: 180), "To God belong the most beautiful names."

¹¹⁷ In *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 264, Nasafī mentions that Ibn 'Arabī uses the word *taswiya* in this very sense. *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*.

Koranic verse seems to be based upon the first chapter of Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikām*, for in another work he mentions that Ibn 'Arabī uses the word *taswiya* in this very sense:

In Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikām*, in the first bezel, which is the bezel of Adam, he says that fashioning (*taswiya*) is an expression for preparedness and breathing the spirit is an expression for receiving the spirit.¹¹⁸

So He is the spirit of the world and the world is His body. The spirit ascends in levels, and in each level it is perfect. When the spirit reaches man, the ascent is complete for man contains all the levels within himself. At this juncture, one can understand the purpose of "creation" which is referred to in the Prophet David's prayer, "O God! Why did you create the creatures?" He said, "I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known."¹¹⁹

In this station, the first thing that God creates is compared to a seed, and the body and spirit of the world are enclosed in this seed and are not distinguishable (*mumtāz*) from one another. In their own time, they are manifested and become differentiated. This portrayal of creation is an alternative to the Neoplatonic hierarchy of creation which some modern scholars have attributed to Sufism.¹²⁰ In the first place, Nasafī says that two things come from the seed (that is, body and spirit), whereas the Neoplatonists speak of three things emanating from the first substance (an intelligence, a soul and a heaven). Moreover, in this station, only Koranic imagery is employed in portraying the seed as the first substance which manifest *Mulk* and *Malakūt*: "Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and earth were closed up (*ratq*), but We have opened them up (*fatq*)."¹²¹ Nasafī describes this process in another way which again reflects a Koranic rather than Neoplatonic basis:

¹¹⁸ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 264.

¹¹⁹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 49a, line 13. This is a *Ḥadīth qudsī*, Furūzānfar, no. 70.

¹²⁰ See below 2:3.

¹²¹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 50a, line 7. Koran 21: 30.

As long as the spirit and body were mixed in one another and were not distinguishable from one another, they were like an ink-pot. When they split and become distinguishable from one another, they became like pens. This is the meaning of: "*Nun*, and the pen and what they are writing".¹²² "*Nun*" is an oath by the state of closing (*ratq*) and "the pen" is an oath by the state of opening (*fatq*) and "what they are writing" is an oath by the four pens.¹²³

This alternative perspective to Neoplatonism is also apparent in Nasafī's other works¹²⁴, where he claims that the Philosophers say the first thing that God creates is intelligence (*'aql*) and the last thing is the earth (*khāk*). The People of Unity (who are the elect among the Sufis) maintain that the first thing God creates is earth and the last thing is intelligence, which is manifested only in man. In this way, man is accorded the greatest place in creation. The meaning of man here is the small man (i.e. the microcosm) and not the big man (i.e. the macrocosm), as Nasafī explains:

Although each individual thing (*fard*) of the world is God's mirror, it is the Perfect Man (*insān-i kāmīl*) who is the perfect mirror for "I loved to be known," and some have read it as "I loved to know." Both are correct because the microcosm is both knower and known, both observer (*nāzīr*) and observed (*manzūr*), both mirror and the possessor of beauty.¹²⁵

Man is superior to the macrocosm because the macrocosm does what it does through its specific characteristics and properties, so it is impossible for it not to do the task which God commands. However, man does what he does through his specific characteristics and through activity (*fi'l*), which means he also has the choice in some things.¹²⁶ He can choose to manifest God's beautiful names in the appropriate situation, and thereby hope for the reward of Paradise. The macrocosm does not possess free will or desire to the same extent that man has. Thus man is closer to God and he can reach a

¹²² Koran, 68: 1.

¹²³ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 50a, lines 5-8. The four pens are the four primal elements (earth, water, air and fire) of the world. They mix together to form the composite things, which are the three kingdoms of mineral, plant and animal.

¹²⁴ See *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, pp. 57-58.

¹²⁵ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 49b, lines 13-17.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, fol. 51a, line 10.

point where God is the seer, hearer and speaker. For this reason, man is both knower and known, observer and observed, mirror and possessor of beauty. Of course, this refers to the *ḥadīth* that Nasafī discusses in the second station.

In this station, human bodies are compared to windows (*darīcha*) and man's spirit, which is God's light, shines out of all these windows. Sometimes the light shines from many windows, and sometimes it shines from fewer windows. When the windows are fewer in number (if there is a plague, or natural disaster) the light is stronger in the remaining windows, and this helps the spirit of one person reach the extremity in knowledge. Such a person becomes the leader of people; he may be a Prophet, Friend of God, commander or sultan.¹²⁷

Although the light is the same for each person, its manifestation in the world is different and so people are not aware of the knowledge others have had or have. The reason for this difference in manifestation is explained as follows:

Know that the self-disclosures of God's light are not repeated. Each occasion that He discloses Himself, that self disclosure is not identical to the first; it is similar (*mithl*) to the first. If it were in such a way that the second was identical with the first, then you would be aware of the first frame (*qālib*) and would recognise and remember whatever you had seen in that frame. But it is not so. If a water jug is dipped into the sea a thousand times, and a thousand times it is filled from that sea, the water of the first time is not the same as the water of the second time, even though the jug is filled with sea water each time. From this perspective, it is said that His self-disclosures have no end point.

In addition, know that when the water jug is filled with sea water, in fact the water takes on several attributes from the adjacency (*mujāwarat*) of the jug, and the jug takes on several attributes from the adjacency of the water. When the jug is smashed, the water goes to water and the earth goes to earth. Each one goes to its own state and takes on the attributes of the whole (*ṣifāt-i kull*).¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Ibid, fol. 51a, lines 12-16. Compare with Ibn 'Arabī's ideas on this point in Austin, op.cit., p. 251-252.

¹²⁸ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 50b, lines 5-11. The imagery of the jug in this passage resembles Junayd's axiom that the water takes the colour of the cup.

2:1:9 Conclusion

Nasafī closes the first chapter of *Kitāb-i tanzīl* by relating the famous story of the blind men and the elephant. The story goes that there was a city of blind people who had heard of elephants but could not imagine what they were like. When a caravan (in which there was an elephant) passed their city, some blind men went out to the caravan and each of the blind men touched the elephant. One felt its trunk, another its leg, another its ear, and so each one discovered something about the elephant, about which the others had no knowledge. When they told each other about the “reality” of the elephant, each one said something which did not accord with the experiences of the others.¹²⁹ All of them were correct from one perspective but not one of them could grasp the whole picture.

This of course is the reality of the *tashbīh-tanzīh* nature of God. Each one of the six stations reflects an element of truth, and the task of the wayfarer is to realise that his own station is not the only one which reveals God’s similarity. However, as Nasafī remarks, even if one person comprehends this fact, the majority (even philosophers and Sufis) do not accept this truth:

This is the state of the People of Thought and Reasoning concerning the objects of intelligence because intelligence has degrees, and the wisdom of things is immeasurable and innumerable. And this is the state of the People of Unveiling and Contemplation concerning the objects of unveiling, because unveiling has degrees and divine self-disclosure is immeasurable and innumerable. Among a hundred thousand people who set out on this road, one reaches the end and is aware of the ultimate goal of the task. The rest remain in way stations (*manāzil*) and they consider the station is their aim.¹³⁰

Each of the six stations represents a way of considering the relationship between God and man, in other words, the *tashbīh-tanzīh* relationship. In the first station,

¹²⁹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, The story of the elephant extends from fol. 51a, line 17 to fol. 51b, line 17. F. Meier has commented on the origin of this story, suggesting a Buddhist origin before it was picked up by Sufis such as Sanā’ī, Ghazālī, Rūmī and Nasafī. See F. Meier, “The nature of monism in Islam.”

¹³⁰ *Kitāb-tanzīl*, fol. 52a, lines 7-11.

creatio ex nihilo expresses man's contingent nature and is on the whole more representative of *tanzīh*. The second station stands in contrast to the first where man is also eternal in potentiality and the *tashbīh* nature is portrayed through the concept of knowledge following the known and also through the *ḥadīth* of supererogatory acts. The third station acts as a kind of isthmus between the previous two, for although world is imagination and thus *tanzīh*, it does at least reveal something of reality and from this perspective it is *tashbīh*. The fourth station also reflects the *tashbīh-tanzīh* relationship. *Tashbīh* is evident through the idea of "everything is He," and God's existence being a single entity which has three levels; essence, face and breath. *Tanzīh* is clear when Nasafī comments that individuals are responsible for their own acts and thus liable to God's wrath if they are disobedient. In the fifth station, creation at every instant and non-repetition in self-disclosure also manifest the *tanzīh-tashbīh* nature. Although things are annihilated each moment by God (*tanzīh*), his mercy bestows existence upon something similar to the annihilated thing (*tashbīh*). The non-repetition of self disclosure also expresses the *tanzīh-tashbīh* nature, for although everything is a self disclosure of God (*tashbīh*), it is only a "face" and not existence as it really is (*tanzīh*). The non-repetition of God's self-disclosure is a theme continued in the sixth station, but Nasafī also focuses upon the important concept of the Perfect Man. The Perfect Man is crucial for an understanding of prophecy and friendship of God. He is the goal of creation because he acts as a link between God and His creation; he is the mirror by which God sees Himself and he is the form in which the creatures can see God's perfect creation. Thus the Perfect Man fuses *tanzīh* and *tashbīh* together and he realises these two aspects of the God-man relationship in their appropriate places.

All issues considered in the first chapter of *Kitāb-i tanzīl* are the major points which concerned Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters. The discussion of these issues combined with Nasafī's style of fusing Koranic imagery and the language of the *kalām* with the use of the Greek-inspired terminology of Philosophers such as al-Farābī and Ibn Sīnā, is enough to firmly place Nasafī in the tradition of the *wujūdī* school. Yet the significance of Nasafī's work goes far beyond this, for it gives a certain simplicity and

clarity to Ibn 'Arabī's idea of He/not He, which Sufi novices may have found difficult to find in the Greatest Shaykh's voluminous treatises. In addition, Nasafi's explanation of the six stations which describe the various ontological perspectives of his time, reveals his interpretation of Sufism as all-embracing. The beliefs of the '*Ulamā*', the philosophers and the different Sufi schools all represent some aspect of truth and are therefore genuine expressions of Islamic belief.

2:2 Nasafī and Imagination

In the previous section, it was shown that Nasafī described existence through the worlds of *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt*. Of the six spiritual stations, the most sophisticated is the second where God is other than the worlds of *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt*. Similar discussions to this second spiritual station occur in most of Nasafī's other works and therefore it is likely that he preferred such a position to any others. This ontological ordering is neatly encapsulated in *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*:

Know that *Mulk* is the world of testimony and *Malakūt* is the invisible world (*'ālam-i ghayb*) and *Jabarūt* is the invisible, invisible world (*'ālam-i ghayb-i ghayb*) and God Almighty is the invisible, invisible, invisible world (*'ālam-i ghayb-i ghayb-i ghayb*).

O dervish! *Jabarūt*, which is the invisible, invisible world, is the world of potentiality, and the world of potentiality is above *Mulk* and *Malakūt*. This is because existents are actual in *Mulk* and *Malakūt* and they are potential in *Jabarūt* and potential existents are prior to actual existents. First is readiness (*ṣalāhiyyat*) and then is special quality (*khāṣṣiyyat*). In addition, potential existents have no beginning and actual existents have a beginning.¹³¹

Nasafī's interpretation of *Jabarūt* is in fact the same as Ibn 'Arabī's immutable entities. This appellation of *Jabarūt* as the immutable entities is somewhat idiosyncratic, for most Sufis, and not only those of the *wujūdī* school, described *Jabarūt* in an altogether different fashion. To demonstrate the specific nature of Nasafī's *Jabarūt*, it is necessary to see how the term was used by his predecessors and contemporaries.

2:2:1 Imagination and the Divine Presences

Mulk and *Malakūt* are Koranic terms. The term *Jabarūt* does not appear in the Koran although one finds it in a *ḥadīth* which states: "Glory to He of the *Jabarūt* and

¹³¹ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 364.

Malakūt and Majesty (*al-kubriyā*) and Greatness (*al-‘azma*).”¹³² Thus, the use of the term *Jabarūt* enters the Islamic vocabulary at an early stage, but its meaning as a technical term is not entirely clear. Some scholars have not been able to see a difference between *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt* in the works of early Islamic philosophers such as al-Farābī and Ibn Sīnā.¹³³ However, L.E. Goodman has suggested that Ibn Sīnā’s system differentiates between *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt*, the former being the realm of intellectual realities (or disembodied intellects) and the latter being the realm of symbols that affect the imagination, which is the realm in which Ibn Sīnā locates the celestial souls.¹³⁴

A contemporary of Ibn Sīnā was Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 998) who also makes a clear distinction between *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt* in *Qūt al-qulūb*. *Mulk* is witnessed by intellectual light; *Malakūt* which is the next world, is witnessed by the light of faith; the Majesty (*al-‘izza*) which is the (divine) attributes, is witnessed by the light of certainty; and *Jabarūt*, which is the Unity (*al-wāḥidāniyya*) is witnessed by the light of gnosis.¹³⁵ Nasafī’s interpretation of *Jabarūt* as the undifferentiated world which encompasses both *Mulk* and *Malakūt* resembles Makkī’s *Jabarūt* of *al-wāḥidāniyya*.

Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī was familiar with the works of both Ibn Sīnā and Makkī. Within his works there are many references to *Jabarūt* which is portrayed in two main ways. The first is found in his *Durra* in which the lowest world is *Mulk*, then *Malakūt* and the highest world is *Jabarūt*. *Mulk* pertains to “Adam and his posterity,” *Malakūt* pertains to the classes of angels and *jinn*, while *Jabarūt* pertains to the elect among the angels. The elect of the angels are the Cherubs, the bearers of God’s Throne and the chamberlains of the godhead.¹³⁶

¹³² Nasā’i, *Taṭbīq*, bāb 12, 25, 73, 86; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, vi. 24. Cited by A. J. Wensinck, “On the relation between Ghazālī’s cosmology and his mysticism,” (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1933).

¹³³ A. J. Wensinck, *op.cit.*, p. 188-190.

¹³⁴ L.E. Goodman, *Avicenna*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 89-90.

¹³⁵ A. J. Wensinck, *op.cit.*, pp. 191-92.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 193.

This ranking appears in treatises of other Sufis, such as the author of *Tabṣirat al-mubtadi*,¹³⁷ who is thought to be Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī.¹³⁷ Nasafī copied several passages from this work in his *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, several of which are discussions related to the existents of *Malakūt* (*mawjūdāt-i malakūtī*). Nasafī describes several kinds of existents. The first are those who pay no attention to the world of the creatures, and these are the “Enraptured Angels.” Another kind who also are not concerned with the world of bodies and who continually contemplate God are the door-keepers of the Divinity (*hijāb bārgāh-i ulūhiyya*) and they are also known as the Folk of *Jabarūt*. A second kind of spiritual existent are those who order, govern and pertain to this world and they are called “spirituals,” (*rūḥāniyyān*). Among these are the Folk of Higher *Malakūt*, who have free disposal in the heavens, and the Folk of Lower *Malakūt* who are the guardians over minerals, plants and animals. The *jinn* and Satan are included among the Folk of Lower *Malakūt*.¹³⁸ This particular ordering by Nasafī resembles Ghazālī’s hierarchy found in the *Durra*, but this system is not repeated in any of Nasafī’s other works. The first chapter of *Kitāb-i tanzīl* is much more representative of his discussions of *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt*.

Returning to Ghazālī, his second way of portraying *Jabarūt* owes more perhaps to the systems of Ibn Sīnā and Makkī that were described previously. In this second ordering of the three worlds, *Jabarūt* is a unity of *Mulk* and *Malakūt* within man but it is not the origin of *Mulk* and *Malakūt* as in Nasafī’s system. Ghazālī’s *Jabarūt* in fact prefigures the discussions of the imagination that became one of the predominant features in many of the Sufi works of the *wujūdī* school.¹³⁹ For Ghazālī, *Mulk* is the world of sense perception and *Malakūt* is the invisible world. “The realm of the world of *Jabarūt* lies between the two worlds; partly it may become visible in the world of *Mulk*, partly it is related to the eternal Power and belongs to the world of *Malakūt*.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ See Chittick, *Faith and Practice*, p. 263.

¹³⁸ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, pp. 238-240.

¹³⁹ See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 408, n.8.

¹⁴⁰ Translated by Wensinck, op.cit., p. 195.

In other words, *Malakūt* is a realm which can not be witnessed by the physical eye, however, that which pertains to *Malakūt*, such as spirits and angels, takes a form within the imagination. In this way *Malakūt* and *Mulk* combine together and the result is *Jabarūt*. Ghazālī explains: “Now the world of *Jabarūt* ¹⁴¹ between that of *Mulk* and *Malakūt*, resembles a ship which is moving between the beach and the water; it has neither the utter fluxity of the water not the utter stability and fixidness of the beach. Everyone who walks on the earth walks in the world of *Mulk* and of sensual apperception. And when he has sufficient power to sail on a ship, he is as one who walks in the world of *Jabarūt*. And when he has reached such a stage that he can walk on the water without a ship, he walks in the *Malakūt* without sinking.”¹⁴²

This is the imaginal world, which was explained and developed at length by the *wujūdī* school. In many ways Nasafī was influenced by this school as was shown in the previous section, however his works do not discuss the world of exemplars (*‘ālam-i mithāl*) or the imagination in the same manner as Ibn ‘Arabī or Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī. Nasafī’s most detailed ontological hierarchy posits four levels which are God, *Jabarūt*, *Malakūt* and *Mulk*, omitting the world of imagination from his order. This is not the case with the leading members of the *wujūdī* school who include the world of exemplars within their ontological hierarchy which contains five (and sometimes six) levels of existence.¹⁴³ These five levels were formulated by members of the *wujūdī* school into the “Five Divine Presences,” (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyya al-khams*). With a lack of a detailed discussion on the world of exemplars from Nasafī’s theosophy, it is perhaps inevitable that Nasafī’s works are not as sophisticated as those by Sufi’s such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, Sa‘id al-Dīn Farghānī (d.c. 1300), Mu‘ayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d.c. 1300), Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī (d. 1329) and Sharaf al-Dīn Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 1350).

¹⁴¹ Wensinck’s translation reads *Malakūt*, but this must be an error. To make sense of the passage, one should read *Jabarūt*.

¹⁴² A. J. Wensinck, op.cit., p. 194-195. For another account of Ghazālī’s interpretation of *Jabarūt*, see K. Nakamura, “Imam Ghazali’s cosmology reconsidered with special reference to the concept of jabarut,” *Muslim World*, 1994, pp. 29-46.

¹⁴³ For an account of the *wujūdī* schools interpretation of the different levels of existence see Chittick’s article, “The Five Divine Presences,” *Muslim World*, pp.107-28.

In order to elucidate Nasafī's position within the *wujūdī* school, it is useful to compare his "four seas" from his *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* with the interpretation of the Five Divine Presences by Sa'īd al-Dīn Farghānī. The reason for looking at Farghānī's exegesis rather than any other interpreter is because the former's works probably exercised a more widespread influence on the Islamic world.¹⁴⁴ Before focusing upon Farghānī's Divine Presences, Nasafī's "four seas" will be briefly analysed (it is not necessary to examine them in detail because the four levels of existence *have already* been discussed).

In the final two chapters of *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, the topic of discussion is "the four seas," which are "the invisible, invisible, invisible world," *Jabarūt*, *Malakūt* and *Mulk*.¹⁴⁵ The first of these is God's essence which is an infinite, non-delimited light and is a sea without end and without shore.¹⁴⁶ This essence is explained with reference to the *ḥadīth*, "I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known." Since it desired to be known, the first essence made itself a mirror and this is the second sea, (which is the mirror in potentiality).¹⁴⁷ The second sea acts as an intermediary between the *tanzīh* first sea and the third and fourth seas. This second sea is the world of *Jabarūt* and is called by other names including the Attributed Spirit (*rūḥ-i idāfi*)¹⁴⁸ the Muḥammadan Spirit, the Greatest Light and the Muḥammadan Light among others,¹⁴⁹ and it is also an infinite and non-delimited light and a sea without end and without shore.

It encompasses the world, and there is not one particle of all the particles of the world which the Attributed Spirit is not with and which it does not encompass and about which it is not aware. It is the life of the world and ^{of} the creatures of the world, and it is the governor of the world and the creatures, it is the master (*mutaṣarrif*) in its world and it governs the world. Its task is existentiating (*ijād*),

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 119.

¹⁴⁵ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, pp. 275-285.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 279.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 281.

¹⁴⁸ So called because the spirit is attributed to both God and man. The Koran says that God blew of is spirit into Adam.

¹⁴⁹ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 275.

annihilation (*ī'dām*), reviving (*iḥyā*), putting to death (*imātat*), honouring (*zāz*) and holding in contempt (*idhlāl*).¹⁵⁰

The reason that Nasafī gave the name *Jabarūt* to this particular level may be found in the etymology of the word. *Jabarūt* is not found in the Koran although the derived name *al-Jabbār* (the All-Compeller) appears in 59: 23. So the things in *Jabarūt* are those which are fixed and which can not change their nature or quality. In other words, they are determined or compelled (*jabr*) in their state from eternity.

Nasafī describes the Attributed Spirit (or *Jabarūt*) as a seed, which contains *Mulk* and *Malakūt* (the third and fourth seas). A seed has the potential to existentiate a plant and it also has a set limit for a plant's life, for a seed contains everything which has the potential to be manifested, from the stalk, to the leaves and petals. The second sea is also described as a pen:

"The ink-pot (*nūn*), by the pen and what they are writing."¹⁵¹ *Nūn* is an expression for the first sea because "I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known,"¹⁵² and the pen is an expression for the second sea because "the first thing God created was intelligence,"¹⁵³ and "what they are writing," is an expression for the third and fourth seas, and they are continually writing and the three kinds of children¹⁵⁴ were and are created from their writing, and the three kinds of children are words and they are not repeated rather there is no end as the Almighty said "Say: if the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, sooner would the sea be exhausted than would the words of my Lord, even if we added another sea like it for its aid."¹⁵⁵

The words are existent in the pen in an undifferentiated mode, and when the pen splits them into the third and fourth seas, it is able to compose them in a differentiated mode.

Aside from Nasafī's four seas, there is a discussion in *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* of another level of existence which other Sufis of the *wujūdī* school consider a Divine presence. This is the Perfect Man. Nasafī frequently refers to the aforementioned *ḥadīth*

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 280.

¹⁵¹ Koran, 68: 1.

¹⁵² *Ḥadīth*, in Furūzānfar, no.70.

¹⁵³ *Ḥadīth*, in Furūzānfar, no. 342.

¹⁵⁴ The children are the kingdoms of mineral, plant and animal.

¹⁵⁵ Koran, 18: 109. *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 258.

that “I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known.” He explains how *Mulk* and *Malakūt* are combined together in man, for all existents are compounds of light and darkness. Each compound has its nature (its spiritual dimension) and its body (its sensory dimension). These two are mixed together and need to be separated which is started through eating pure food. The process leads from the stomach through the liver and to the brain where the attributes of light can be manifested. According to Nasafī, animals and men are constantly performing this “alchemy,” but the Perfect Man takes this alchemy to the limit. The Perfect Man is God’s perfect mirror:

The answer that the Almighty Truth gave to David (peace be upon him) that “I was a hidden treasure and I loved to be known,” becomes apparent and recognised here. He sees His own glory and He witnesses His own attributes, names, works and wisdom.¹⁵⁶

So within one chapter of *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, Nasafī discusses the ontological hierarchy of the four seas and the Perfect Man who comprehends them all.

Turning now to Sa’īd al-Dīn Farghānī’s Divine Presences, the first thing to note is that he speaks of six levels rather than five levels. His first level is that of God in His *tanzīh* nature, which is called *aḥadiyya* or Exclusive Unity. This is the level beyond man’s conception, and it is Nasafī’s “invisible, invisible, invisible world.” The second level is that of Inclusive Oneness (*wāḥidiyya*) which is another expression for God as Creator, the source of all things, Who has knowledge of all things and can bestow existence upon them. This is the ^{world of the} immutable entities, or in Nasafī’s terminology, it is *Jabarūt*. Once God bestows existence upon His knowledge, there are three modes or levels in which they are the loci of manifestation. The first is the spiritual world, or the level of intelligible things; the second is the sensory world, or level of sense perception; third is the level of imagination where spirits are corporealised and bodies are spiritualised. The last level is that of the all-encompassing Perfect Man, who comprehends all the prior levels.

¹⁵⁶ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 274.

Nasafī does not use the terminology of the divine presences although the predominant theme in his theosophy is the hierarchical nature of existence. His four main levels and the Perfect Man, as has been shown accord with Farghānī's *aḥadiyya*, *wāḥidiyya*, spiritual and sensory worlds and Perfect Man. That Nasafī did not include detailed discussions in his works of the central concept of the world of exemplars, or the imaginal world, is quite surprising given the fact that he explains the other main aspects of *wujūdī* theosophy (albeit in a summarised manner). The significance of this omission becomes clear when Nasafī's explanation of what happens to the soul after death is compared with the descriptions given by Ibn 'Arabī and other Sufis of the *wujūdī* school.

2:2:2 Imagination and the Return to God (*Ma'ād*)

The unity of God, Muḥammad being God's last prophet and the return of each individual to God to be judged are the three fundamental principles of Islam. As one would expect, each one is discussed in all of Nasafī's works. With respect to the return, the Sufis of the *wujūdī* school discussed three worlds: this world (*dunyā*), the grave, and the next world (*ākhirā*). Nasafī discusses this world in detail and his references to the next world are many but he hardly mentions the grave. In the whole of *Kitāb-i tanzīl* there is only one paragraph which refers to the grave:

Know that the Prophets and Friends of God were informed of the states after death, like the questioning in the grave, the tortures of the graves, becoming alive and rising from the grave, reading the letter of one's works, the reckoning (*ḥisāb*) of each person, the scales (*tarāzū*), the straight path (*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*), hell and the various tortures in hell, paradise (*bihisht*) and the numerous comforts in paradise, and all the others are the truth. It is necessary for each person to have faith in each one of them even if he does not know the manner (*kayfiyyat*) of these things. If a person does not have faith in some of them then he is not a believer. There is no damage to faith if a person discusses the manner of these things and makes an explanation

(*sharḥi*) even if he is mistaken on some of them, because he is searching. But it is more correct if he does not say anything and does not become busy in explaining.¹⁵⁷

Yet there can be little doubt that Nasafī was aware of the *wujūdī* discussion of the grave because this topic is included within *Tabṣirat al-mubtadi*,¹⁵⁸ a text with which he was familiar and passages of which he copied in *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*. Nasafī in fact does deal with concepts that are similar to the discussions of the *wujūdī* school but there are fundamental differences. Before reflecting on Nasafī's explanations, it is necessary to summarise the position of the *wujūdī* school on the return to God.

As stated earlier, the *wujūdī* school discuss three worlds: this world, the grave and the next world. The grave is understood as an isthmus (*barzakh*) between this world and the next world and its nature is different for each individual soul. This is because the experiences in the grave are dependent upon the attributes that were predominant in the individual soul while it was in this world. When the soul separates from the material body of this world, God provides another body for the soul in the grave which is an "imaginal" body. These are not veiled from the realities of things in the same way that corporeal bodies are in this world. This is because corporeal bodies are dense whereas imaginal bodies are relatively subtle. Therefore the experiences of the soul in the grave, be they felicitous or wretched are more intense than those in this world. The next world is even more real "because it lies closer to the spiritual side of things and is therefore subtle and more luminous."¹⁵⁹

Since realities in this world are veiled by corporeal bodies, it is difficult to understand the motivations and intentions of people. Their outward dimension or appearance remains relatively fixed while their inward states, moods and thoughts are constantly fluctuating and changing. Most people can only witness the outward appearance and not the inward state. This is not the case in the grave where there are no corporeal bodies to veil realities. Each soul takes an "imaginal" form appropriate to its

¹⁵⁷ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 67b lines 8-14.

¹⁵⁸ *Tabṣirat al-mubtadi*, trans. Chittick, *Faith and Practice*, pp. 99-100.

¹⁵⁹ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 103.

state which is determined by the attributes or character traits that were predominant over it in this world. This is clarified by the author of *Tabṣirat al-mubtadi*,¹⁶⁰ who says, “If for example, love of position dominated, the person will appear in the form of a leopard. If the faculty of appetite dominated over the other attributes, he will appear as a dog.”¹⁶⁰

The inner reality of each individual, that is, in terms of attributes, in the grave is fixed. However the manifestations of these attributes at the outward dimension are constantly changing in the forms of their works during this world. The grave then is this world inside out where the intentions and motivations of the soul are apparent in form. If the intentions and motivations are worthy then the form will be pleasant and if they are blameworthy then the form will be hellish. So the grave gives a foretaste of the next world, which may be paradise or hell.

As stated earlier, Nasafī does not discuss the grave. His explanation of the return to God is connected with the idea of the spirit rising through several levels until it perfects itself. Of his portrayal of the beliefs of the People of the Holy Law, the Philosophers, the Transmigrationists and the People of Unity, it is the discourses of the Transmigrationists that appear similar to those of the *wujūdī* school concerning the grave. However, it will be shown that there are fundamental differences between the two.

I. Imagination and the return according to the Transmigrationists

Nasafī’s discussions of the return to God are similar to those of the *wujūdī* school in his explanations of the People of Transmigration (*ahl-i tanāsukh*). These occur in several of his works which indicates that he held them to be quite significant.¹⁶¹ The identity of this group is somewhat unclear. In *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*,

¹⁶⁰ *Tabṣirat al-mubtadi*, trans. Chittick, *Faith and Practice*, p. 99.

¹⁶¹ See *Manāzil al-sā’irīn*, p. 408-420, also *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 17-19. In *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, the Transmigrationists are not named although the discussions are the same as those attributed to the Transmigrationists in other works, see fol. 68 a, line 2 - fol.71 b line13.

Nasafī states that they may be accounted among the Philosophers (*Ahl-i hikmat*),¹⁶² while in *Mazāzil al-sā'irīn*, he comments that they have existed for several thousand years and four parts out of six (*chahār dāng-i 'ālam*) in the world follow the beliefs of the Transmigrationists¹⁶³ which indicates a pre-Islamic, possibly Indian belief.

According to the People of Transmigration, all souls are existent in the celestial world (*'ālam-i 'ulwī*) and they come to the lower world (*'ālam-i suflī*) to actualise their perfection because this can only be achieved with a body. If this perfection is achieved then the soul returns to the celestial world.¹⁶⁴ The individual soul at first has the form of a plant, then an animal and then a human. Nasafī explains that this ascent is known as “progressive transmigration,” (*naskh*), the lowest plant form is moss (*tuḥlub*) and the highest form of plant are trees such as mandrake (*dirakht-i lūffāh*) and *dhāq dhāq* trees whose fruit are similar to animals. The ascent continues in to the lowest form of animals which is the worm, until the non-rational animals (*ḥaywān-i ghayr-i nāṭiq*) appear such as the elephant, ape and *nasnās*.¹⁶⁵ From here, the human form appears, the lowest of which is the negro and it rises in levels until it reaches the Philosopher where it is called the Rational Soul, then it reaches the degree of the Friends of God where it is named the Holy Soul, and finally it reaches the form of the Prophets where it is called the Soul at rest.¹⁶⁶

Nasafī also gives the Transmigrationists account of the ascent of the spirit from plant to human form within one lifetime. Some trees bear fruits whose outward appearance is like that of humans. If these trees grow in areas where the air is moderate in regions beneath the equator, such as Sri Lanka, their fruit will gradually become rational and speak. From this perspective, one can make sense of the belief that Adam came to earth first in Sri Lanka.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 17.

¹⁶³ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 408

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 410.

¹⁶⁵ For an explanation of the *nasnās*, see Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return*, p. 82, n. 18.

¹⁶⁶ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 68 b line 1 - 68 b line 17.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, fol. 69 a line 13.

Progressive transmigration is when the individual soul appears in a form higher than the one that it had previously and regressive transmigration works in the opposite direction. Once the spirit has reached the human level it has the ability to reach its ultimate perfection. According to the Transmigrationists, the spirit below the level of Philosopher is in hell. The rank of Philosopher reaches heaven, the rank of the Friend of God passes on from the heavens and reaches the universal intelligence and the spirit of the Prophet reaches God.¹⁶⁸ If the spirit reaches its perfection in this world, then at the time of death when the spirit separates from the body (*mufāriqat*), it returns to the world of intelligences and souls. The individual soul connects to the soul of a sphere with which the knowledge and piety that it acquired in this world accords. If it does not reach its perfection in this world then after separation from the body, the soul can not return to the world of intelligences and souls but remains beneath the firmament of the moon (i.e. this world of creation and corruption, which is hell).¹⁶⁹ In this case, the spirit is resurrected (*hashr*) in another body until it reaches its perfection. Some of the Transmigrationists held that it was impossible for the human spirit to be resurrected in anything other than a human body,¹⁷⁰ while others have said that the spirit may regress below the world of animals and become resurrected in the kingdom of plants.¹⁷¹ In regressive transmigration the spirit suffers in proportion with its sins and then it has the chance to rise again through the various forms until it reaches its perfection. If it does not reach its perfection again, then the process is repeated. The spirit is always resurrected in a form which is suitable to it, in other words, it is raised in the form of the attribute that was dominant over it when it was alive in this world.¹⁷²

This is the point where the beliefs of the Transmigrationists appear similar to those of the *wujūdī* school. It was shown that the Sufis of the *wujūdī* tradition held that in the grave, individuals have “imaginal” bodies which accord with the works of the individual while they were in this world. However, the Transmigrationists believed that

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, fol. 68 b line 15 - 68 b line 17.

¹⁶⁹ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 410.

¹⁷⁰ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 188.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 189.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 188.

if the individual soul did not actualise its perfection that it was resurrected in this world in the form appropriate to its acts. This superficial similarity was pointed out by Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnāwī:

In the *barzakh* - or rather, a short time before the Mustering - some people appear in the form of lions, wolves and birds, as the Shari'ah has mentioned, and as unveiling and divine instruction have given witness.

But this does not happen by means of metempsychosis (*maskh*) or transmigration (*tanāsukh*) that is denied, for people who believe in such things hold that it occurs in this world. But what we are speaking about occurs in the *barzakh* after death.¹⁷³

Generally speaking, Sufis view the ascent of man's spirit as passing through several stages before reaching its perfection, but the form always remains the same in this world, only the non-manifest dimension changes. Rūmī captures the essence of this concept in a well known passage from the *Mathnawī*:

I died from the mineral kingdom and became a plant; I died to vegetative nature and attained to animality.

I died to animality and became a man. So why should I fear? When did I ever become less through dying?

Next time I will die to human nature, so that I may spread my wings and lift up my head among the angels.

Once again, I will be sacrificed from angelic nature and become that which enters not the imagination.¹⁷⁴

II. Imagination in the Return according to the People of Unity

One might expect Nasafī to explain the beliefs of the Sufis or People of Unity regarding the forms of individuals in the grave in the same manner as Ibn 'Arabī and Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī. However within the sections of the People of Unity where the discussion is related to the return to God, there is no mention of the imagination in the

¹⁷³ See Chittick, *Faith and Practice*, p. 227 - 228.

¹⁷⁴ Trans. Chittick, *The Sufī Path of Love*, p. 79.

same sense in which the *wujūdī* school employ the term. For example, in two chapters of *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* entitled “Unity” and “the Resurrection of Man,” Nasafī presents the discourses of four different groups among the People of Unity. The first two are called the Followers of Fire (*aḥṣāb-i nār*). The first of these explains that man’s body is the creation of God and his spirit is the God of creation. At death, there is no more existence for the body but the spirit continues to exist because it is eternal. People in this particular station, according to Nasafī, have included Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī and Shaykh ‘Abdallah Ansārī of Herat.¹⁷⁵ The second party among the Followers of Fire hold that both man’s spirit and body are unreal, for they are opposites and there are no contraries in God’s world. This is the station of Shaykh Ibn Sab‘īn.¹⁷⁶

The second two groups are called the Followers of Light (*aṣḥāb-i nūr*). The first of these says that the spirit and body are with each other and can not be separated. They rise together in levels and reach their ultimate perfection in man. Then they return to their origin which is earth. Bodies return to the element of earth and spirits return to the nature of earth, and the process of seeking perfection commences again. There is no distinction in the element of earth for each person or in the spirit of each person: the differences among individuals arise due to the movements of the spheres.¹⁷⁷ The second group say that man’s body and spirit form a temporary union and after perfection is reached they separate. In other words, the body returns to its world and the spirit returns to its world. However there is no distinction or differences in bodies when they return to ^{their} own world and the same applies to spirits.¹⁷⁸

These discussions by Nasafī are short and limited and there is no mention of the grave or the resurrection. Therefore it is difficult to make any comments about them. However, if the beliefs of Followers of Light concerning the return of the spirit and body refer to the resurrection, then there are several issues which need to be raised. This is because there appears to be a lack of individuation after death which runs

¹⁷⁵ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 156.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 158.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 192.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 192.

contrary to the Koranic belief in reward and punishment for each individual based upon his or her works in this world. Moreover, the Koran also states that man will be resurrected in both body and spirit, which the second group of Followers of Light seems to deny.

The beliefs of the Followers of Fire also present some interesting problems, especially the group that is representative of Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī (and which also is similar to the theories of Ibn Sīnā). The difficulty lies in the fact that this group sees man's spirit as eternal and that the body is not necessary in the next world, which as already mentioned, contradicts the Koran. Ibn Sīnā regarded the resurrection of the body as an "imaginal" body (and in this respect he is a fore-runner of the *wujūdī* school). For the disembodied spirits enjoy pleasure and suffer torture by virtue of the application of their imaginations.¹⁷⁹ Ibn Rushd (1126-1198) could not accept this idea of imaginal bodies because the imagination pertains to sense perception. The imagination is a faculty of the soul and the soul can not exist without a body. When the body dies, so too the soul (and therefore the imagination) ceases to function.¹⁸⁰ For Ibn Rushd, the resurrection took place for each individual in his soul and a physical body similar to the one that was united with the soul in this world.¹⁸¹ In this respect Ibn Rushd defends the Koranic doctrine of the resurrection of man's body and spirit and at the same time rejects the idea that man conquers death through the intrinsic nature of his soul. The process is God's second creation.¹⁸²

The *wujūdī* school did not interpret the soul as pertaining to the body in the same way as Ibn Rushd. The soul had a somewhat undetermined position between matter and the spiritual, or between darkness and light. Therefore it shares the qualities of the two. Moreover, it is able to experience things in the grave because God creates *barzakh* bodies for the soul.¹⁸³

¹⁷⁹ O. Leaman, *An introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 94.

¹⁸⁰ Mohammed, O.N. *Averroes doctrine of immortality*, (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), See Chapter III, pp 84-114.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 110.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 112-113.

¹⁸³ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 99.

Nasafī's explanation of the Return to God for the People of Unity leaves many questions unanswered. There is no detailed discussion of the nature of the grave or of the afterlife and there is no mention of the imagination, which as demonstrated in this section, is the key to how many Sufis explained several aspects of the Return to God. Given Nasafī's limited explanation of the imagination in his portrayal of the ontological hierarchy, it is not really surprising that there is no discussion of the grave and "imaginal bodies" in his works. In this respect Nasafī's theosophy is not as sophisticated as that of other *wujūdī* Sufis and this may explain why there is little reference to his works by other major Sufis. This does not mean that Nasafī's works are not worthy of study because there are other aspects in his treatises (such as the relationship between Prophecy and Friendship of God) which compensate for the lack of imagination. Moreover, although Nasafī's works may not have been mentioned by other famous Sufis, there is no doubt that he played a major role in the growth and development of Sufism in Iran, Central Asia, India and China.

2:3 Nasafī and Neoplatonic Ontology

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several eminent scholars of Sufism believed that Neoplatonic thought was one of the major influences upon Sufism. For example, R.A. Nicholson commented that, “we are drawn irresistibly to the conclusion ... that Neoplatonism poured in to Islam a large tincture of the same mystical element in which Christianity was already steeped.”¹⁸⁴ This train of thought was also adopted by A.J. Arberry (Nicholson’s student) who held Neoplatonism and the “transcendental theism of the Koran” as the “twain fountainheads of Sufi theosophy.”¹⁸⁵ In more recent years, the Neoplatonic influence has been identified by P. Morewedge in the works of ‘Azīz Nasafī, who described “... a Neoplatonic system of ‘emanation and return’ as a mystical depiction of the world.”¹⁸⁶ Indeed, one can find many passages in Nasafī’s works which one might classify as being of a Neoplatonic persuasion; the example below is a fairly typical Nasafī passage and it portrays the descent and return in Koranic terms which suggests the same Neoplatonic idea of emanation through the intelligences until the individual things of the earth are created, and then a return to the One through the compounds. (This passage however, as will be shown later, does not provide the complete picture of what Nasafī has to say about the ontological system of creation and return).

Know that in the macrocosm there are three heavens (*samawāt*) and three earths, one heaven and earth is particular for *Jabarūt*, and one heaven and earth is particular for *Malakūt* and one heaven and earth is particular for the *Mulk*. “A revelation from Him who created the earth and the lofty heavens.”¹⁸⁷ This is the first heaven and earth. “The Compassionate is firmly established upon the Throne.”¹⁸⁸ This is the second heavens and earth. “Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and whatever is in-between them belongs to Him.”¹⁸⁹ This is the third

¹⁸⁴ R.A. Nicholson, *The Mystics of Islam*, (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1914), p. 13.

¹⁸⁵ A.J. Arberry, *Fifty Poems of Hāfiz*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1947), p. 31.

¹⁸⁶ P. Morewedge, “Sufism, Neoplatonism, and Zaehner’s Theistic Theory of Mysticism,” in P. Morewedge (ed). *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1981), p. 225.

¹⁸⁷ Koran, 20:4 .

¹⁸⁸ Koran, 20:5 .

¹⁸⁹ Koran, 20:6 .

heavens and earth. "And whatever is underneath the clay,"¹⁹⁰ clay is an expression for composition (*mizāj*), and beneath composition is the world of the compounds. There are also three heavens and earths in compound things, so everything together makes six. "It is He who created the heavens and earth in six days."¹⁹¹ Day is an expression for level (*martaba*), that is, 'We created in six levels.' "Then He is firmly established upon the Throne,"¹⁹² "Then" is above it, in other words, "After six levels He is firmly established upon the Throne." The meaning (*murād*) of this is the Perfect Man, who in descent, passes three levels of heavens and earth, and in ascent passes three levels of heaven and earth, and then he is firmly established upon the Throne; that is, he comes from the first intelligence and reaches the first intelligence, and the circle is completed.¹⁹³

The influence of Neoplatonism upon Sufism has been questioned by other scholars, such as W. Chittick, who believes the world view of mystics such as Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī was in fact founded upon both spiritual unveiling and the contemplation of Koranic images. However, the extent to which Neoplatonism affected Sufism is still open to debate and much research is required to provide a clearer picture. Nasafī's position in this respect is interesting because scholars have emphasised different elements in his world view; while P. Morewedge seems to witness Neoplatonic tendencies in Nasafī's thought, Chittick has indicated that he was primarily in the *wujūdī* tradition of Ibn 'Arabī and Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī.¹⁹⁴ Before concentrating upon the similarities or differences of Nasafī's theosophy with that of the Neoplatonists, a brief description shall be given of the points where Islam and Neoplatonic thought meet.

2:3:1 Similarities between Islam and Classical Neoplatonism

By 840 A.D. the so-called "Theology of Aristotle" had been translated into Arabic and was soon utilised by Islamic philosophers such as al-Farābī¹⁹⁵ in their world views. The "Theology of Aristotle" was in fact, a resume of books IV, V and VI of

¹⁹⁰ Koran, 20: 6.

¹⁹¹ Koran, 57: 4 .

¹⁹² Koran, 57: 4.

¹⁹³ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 190.

¹⁹⁴ Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, p. 179. f. 1.

¹⁹⁵ Concerning the influence of Neoplatonism upon al-Farabi, see I.R. Netton's *Al-Farabi and his school*, (London: Routledge, 1992).

Plotinus's "*Enneads*." The fundamental tenets of Plotinus's visionary theosophy are fivefold; God is one: He is eternal: there is a perpetual emanation from the One: the Universal Intellect then acts as a means between the One and the emanations that result from the Universal Intellect: these emanations finally return to the One.¹⁹⁶ These five fundamentals of Neoplatonism bear strong similarities to certain verses and meanings which can be found in the Koran. This will be illustrated in the next few paragraphs.

(i). The first tenet, which is that of God's unity is described by Plotinus in the following manner: "Think of the One as Mind or God, you think too meanly; use all the resources of understanding to conceive this Unity and, again it is more authentically one than God, even though you reach for God's unity beyond the unity the most perfect you can conceive. This self sufficiency is the essence of its unity. Something there must be supremely adequate, autonomous, all transcending, most utterly without need."¹⁹⁷

Unity is of course the backbone of Islam and it is the basis of the testimony of faith, "There is no God but God." The Koran is littered with references to God's unity, for example: "Invoke no other God with Allah. There is no God but He. All things perish except His ^{face} _λ,"¹⁹⁸ "Why, were there gods in earth and heaven other than God they would surely go to ruin,"¹⁹⁹ "Say: He is God, the One."²⁰⁰

(ii). The eternity of God, the second tenet of Neoplatonism, was defined by Plotinus in the following manner: "This principle, at rest within the One, is Eternity; possessing this stable quality, being itself at once the absolute self identical and none the less the active manifestation of an unchanging Life set towards the Divine and dwelling within It untrue, therefore neither on the side of being nor on the side of Life - this will be eternity."²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ D. Martin, "The return to the One in the philosophy of Najm al-Din Kubra," in P. Morewedge (ed), *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, p. 212.

¹⁹⁷ Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, VI.9.6, (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 542.

¹⁹⁸ Koran, 28:88.

¹⁹⁹ Koran, 21:22.

²⁰⁰ Koran, 112:1

²⁰¹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, III.7.6, p. 219.

The eternity of God is taken for granted in the Islamic tradition for it is the very nature of God that He is eternal. In many verses, the Koran contrasts the eternal God with His temporal, created world. "All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the face of thy Lord, majestic and splendid,"²⁰² "God, there is no God but He, the Living, the Everlasting (*qayyūm*)."²⁰³ In addition one of the ninety-nine names of God is *baqā'* the meaning of which is permanent, or eternal.

(iii). The third principle of Neoplatonic thought is perpetual emanation. Creation was expressed by Plotinus in terms of generation or emanation, for example; "If the First is perfect, utterly perfect above all, it must be the most powerful of all that is, and all other powers must act in partial imitation of it. Now other things coming to perfection are observed to generate ... How then could the most perfect remain self set - the First Good, the Power towards all, how could it grudge or be powerless to give of itself? If things other than itself are to exist, things dependent upon it for their reality, it must produce since there is no other source."²⁰⁴ Plotinus also commented, "... all that is fully achieved engenders: therefore the eternally achieved engenders eternally an eternal being. At the same time, the offspring is always minor: what then are we to think of the All Perfect but that it can produce nothing less than the very greatest that is later than itself? This greatest must be the Divine Mind, and it must be the second of all existence ... (it) is the loftiest being in the universe, all else following upon it - the Soul for example, being an utterance and act of the Intellectual Principle."²⁰⁵

If one replaces the Neoplatonic word of generation or emanation with the Koranic term of "creation," it is possible to find references that can be interpreted in a way which imply eternal creation. For example, "No indeed, but they are in uncertainty as to the new creation,"²⁰⁶ "Each day He is upon some labour,"²⁰⁷ "To God belongs the Command before and after."²⁰⁸

²⁰² Koran, 55:26.

²⁰³ Koran, 2:255.

²⁰⁴ Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.4.1, p. 388.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, V.1.6, p. 354.

²⁰⁶ Koran, 50:15.

²⁰⁷ Koran, 55:29.

²⁰⁸ Koran, 30:4.

(iv). The universal intellect of Plotinus acts as an intermediate between the One and many and this preserves the One in transcendence, beyond the limits of rational human understanding and also guards the One from multiplicity which is incompatible with Unity. The One engenders the Intellectual Principle, and the latter's vision of the One's overflowing and exuberance causes the Intellectual Principle to imitate this. In such a way, the Intellectual Principle generates the Soul. These then are Plotinus's three initial *hypostases*.²⁰⁹ The One generates the Intellectual Principle which in turn generates the Soul which generates the entire universe and the return to the One follows the same linear route (but in the reverse order).

In the Koran, it is difficult to find such a doctrine of God creating one thing from which the whole universe was created. However, such an idea became one of the linchpins of Sufism, and numerous mystics quoted the *ḥadīth* "the first thing God created was the intellect," to demonstrate this. Sufis including Nasafī frequently quoted the above *ḥadīth*²¹⁰ and also one Koranic verse (which attested to the universe appearing from one thing): "Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and earth were closed up but we have opened them."²¹¹ Nasafī interpreted this verse in such a way that the heavens and earth were closed up together as if they were in a seed.

(v). Having descended from the One down to the Intellect, the Soul and the universe, the ascent back to the One commences. Plotinus describes the return to the One in this famous passage: "Many times it has happened: lifted out of the body into myself; becoming external to all other things and self centred; beholding a marvellous beauty; then more than ever, assured of community with the loftiest order; enacting the noblest life, acquiring identity with the divine."²¹² "But what must we do? How lies the Path? How come to vision of the inaccessible Beauty, dwelling as if in consecrated precincts, apart from the common ways where all may see, even the profane? He that

²⁰⁹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, V.2.1, p. 361.

²¹⁰ Nasafī also quoted variations of this *ḥadīth*, for example, "the first thing God created was intelligence," "the first thing God created was spirit," "the first thing God created was the Pen." *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 47.

²¹¹ Koran, 21:30.

²¹² Plotinus, *Enneads*, IV.8.1, p. 334.

has strength, let him arise and withdraw into himself, foregoing all that is known by the eyes, turning away from the material beauty that once made his joy.”²¹³

The return to God is stressed innumerable times in the Koran, for the meeting with God at the end of time is one of the fundamental purposes of life. Those who have led a good life in conformity with the *Shari‘a* are rewarded with eternity in heaven, and those who have not are sent to Hell: “Are they not in doubt touching the encounter with their Lord?”²¹⁴ “He originates creation, then He brings it back again that He may recompense those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, justly. And those who disbelieve - for them awaits a draught of boiling water, and a painful chastisement, for their disbelieving,”²¹⁵ “O soul at peace! return unto thy Lord, well pleased, well pleasing! Enter thou among my servants! Enter thou My Paradise.”²¹⁶

On the basis of the above five tenets, it is possible to find a degree of compatibility between Neoplatonism and Islam. However, several of the five key Neoplatonic pillars are integral to Islam, and it seems highly unlikely that Muḥammad was influenced by Neoplatonic ideas. It is advisable to bear in mind Nicholson’s adage that “the identity of two beliefs does not prove that one is generated by the other.”²¹⁷ In fact, when both sets of thought are scrutinised more carefully, it becomes apparent that Classical Neoplatonism is very different from the “Neoplatonism” of the Islamic Philosophers and also from the world view of the Sufis.

Yet Neoplatonism did seep in to the Islamic world, indeed, once the “Theology of Aristotle” had been translated into Arabic, Islamic philosophers structured their world views around the emanationist framework, using Arabic equivalents for Neoplatonic terminology (such as *fayḍ* for emanation and *‘aql-i kull* for universal intellect). This does not mean that such philosophers embraced everything in the Neoplatonic system, for despite the similarities between the two positions, modern

²¹³ Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.6.8. p. 53.

²¹⁴ Koran, 41:54.

²¹⁵ Koran, 10:4.

²¹⁶ Koran, 89:27.

²¹⁷ R.A. Nicholson, Introduction to *Selected Poems from the Diwan-i Shams Tabrizi*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1898; repr. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1994), p. xxx.

scholars have noted many differences between Classical Neoplatonic thought and that of the Islamic Philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā. Morewedge has commented that it is incorrect to call Ibn Sīnā an advocate of Islamic Neoplatonism, rather, his mystical philosophy “contains development of Neoplatonic themes,” and at the same time it is a “development of themes found in Islamic philosophy.”²¹⁸ He summarises his standpoint by stating that

“... there is no doubt that Islamic intellectual thought grew through the rich nourishment it received from the Neoplatonic spirit in the same sense that Aristotle’s philosophy flourished on a Platonic basis; in both cases, however, the similarity does not warrant a total reductionism.”²¹⁹ And furthermore, in the same way that there are also major distinctions between Classical Neoplatonism and Islamic Neoplatonism, there are also fundamental differences between Islamic Neoplatonism and Sufism.

2:3:2 Differences between Sufism and Classical Neoplatonism

(I). One of the major differences was that Plotinus had described three *hypostases* (the One, the Intellect Principle and the Soul) and then followed the universe. Al-Farābī and Ibn Sīnā developed this to the extent that there were ten intelligences before existents appeared on the earth. Nasafī described the beliefs of the Islamic Philosophers in the following manner:

Know that the Philosophers say that not more than one substance was emanated (*ṣādir shud*) from the essence of God Almighty and the name of this substance was the First Intelligence. The First Intelligence is a simple substance and it cannot be divided or separated. Therefore real oneness was emanated from God Almighty (Who is Real Oneness) and that is the First Intelligence. From the First Intelligence, the remaining mothers and fathers were emanated, because in this First Intelligence there is real oneness and there is multiplicity from different viewpoints and relations, that is, regarding the essence of intelligence and regarding the cause of intelligence and regarding the relationship between the cause and result. So from these relations of the first intelligence, three view points came to be and something

²¹⁸ P. Morewedge, *Introduction to Neoplatonism and Islamic thought*, (Albany, SUNY Press, 1992), p.4.

²¹⁹ P. Morewedge, “Sufism, Neoplatonism, and Zaehner’s theistic theory of mysticism,” p. 231.

was emanated from each relation of the First Intelligence. That is, an intelligence, a soul and a heaven. In such a way, an intelligence, a soul and a heaven emanated from the First Intelligence until nine intelligences, nine souls and nine heavens came to be from the First Intelligence. And then the element and nature of fire were produced under the firmament of the moon. Then the element and nature of air were produced, and then the element and nature of water were produced and then the element and nature of earth were produced and the fathers and mothers were completed and descent was finished. Fourteen levels descended and there will be an ascent in fourteen levels in the opposite way to the descent; therefore there are fourteen levels of ascent so that the circle can be completed.²²⁰

The first point to note is that in Plotinus's system, only one thing emanates from the First Intelligence (i.e. the Soul), whereas for Nasafī's Philosophers, three things emanate from each intelligence. Nasafī describes the views of the People of Unity which differ from both the Classical Neoplatonists and also the Philosophers:

The Prophets posited this First Intelligence as the greatest level and they praised it very much and called it many names and they did not see anything else as wiser than it, and they said nothing was nearer to God. Mankind is cherished and is the noblest of existents and exists through intelligence. Sermons are by means of intelligence and punishments are by means of intelligence. The Philosophers also posited this First Intelligence as the greatest level and praised it very much. The Philosophers said that not more than one substance (*jawhar*) emanated (*ṣādir shud*) from the essence of God Almighty and Holy, and that substance was the First Intelligence. The rest, including creatures and the objects of intelligence and perception (*ma'qūlāt wa maḥsūsāt*) emanated from the First Intelligence.

O dervish! The Friends of God say it better. They say that the objects of intelligence were manifested from the First Intelligence and the objects of perception were manifested from the First Sphere (*falak-i awwal*). The First Intelligence and the First Sphere were manifested from *Jabarūt* and became existent. These two substances arrived at the shore together from the sea of the divine world.

Since you have understood this introduction, now know that some say that a divine command came to this First Intelligence which is the Pen of God: 'Write upon the First Sphere which is the writing tablet (*lawḥ*) of God.' The Pen said: 'O God! What shall I write?' There came a divine command: 'Write whatever was, is and will be until the day of resurrection.' The Pen wrote all of this and became dry, but

²²⁰ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p.71.

according to this helpless one (*i.e. Nasafī*) a divine command came to the First Intelligence which is the Pen of God: 'Write upon yourself and the First Sphere!' It wrote in the blink of an eye, so that the intelligences, souls and natures appeared (*paydā amadand*) from the first intelligence and the spheres, stars and elements appeared from the First Sphere.²²¹

Thus there is a major difference here, for the first intelligence of the Philosophers corresponds to Nasafī's *Jabarūt*, which contains both the first intelligence and the first sphere. These two things which emanate from *Jabarūt*, are explained further in the following manner:

Know that *Jabarūt* is one world, but this world is called different names. The quiddities of perceivable and intelligible things, and individual and composite things, and substances and accidents are all in *Jabarūt* but they are all concealed and undifferentiated. In addition, they are not separate from one another. It is because of this that *Jabarūt* is called the ink-pot.²²²

Since you have understood this introduction, now know that a divine command came to the ink-pot of the universe to 'Split!' In a wink of an eye it split and there were two parts. One part was the First Intelligence which is the Pen of God and the other part was the First Heaven which is the Throne of God.²²³

The fact that two things emanate from *Jabarūt* reflects imagery from the Koran, for Nasafī frequently quotes the verse "Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and earth are closed up."²²⁴ In addition Nasafī uses the image of the Pen for the first intelligence because of the verse, "By the Ink-pot (*Nun*), the Pen and what they are writing."²²⁵

(II). Another difference between Nasafī's vision of creation and that of the Islamic Philosophers is that for Plotinus and the Islamic Philosophers, the first intelligence is a spiritual intelligence which has no contact with matter, and the universe appears as a

²²¹ Ibid, p. 189.

²²² Ibid, p.186.

²²³ Ibid, p. 186-187.

²²⁴ See for example, *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 50a, line.3.

²²⁵ Koran, 68:1.

result of the chain of emanation which starts at the One and continues through the First Intelligence (down through the nine other intelligences in Ibn Sīnā's case). Nasafī portrays the system of one of the groups of the People of Unity which contrasts considerably with the above.

According to the People of Unity, the first substance (*jawhar-i awwal*) is the earth (*khāk*) and then the rest of the things appear by means of the earth until intelligence is reached. And according to the Philosophers, the first substance is intelligence and then other things appear until earth is reached.²²⁶

Thus on the basis of this comment, the People of Unity dispense with the whole chain of Neoplatonic emanation. Again, such a belief reflects the Koran, "His command, when He desires a thing, is to say 'Be!' and it is."²²⁷ Although Sufis including Nasafī did use the terminology of Neoplatonic emanation (e.g. *fayḍ*), it conveyed a totally different meaning to that of the Islamic Neoplatonists. This point has been elaborated upon by T. Izutsu, discussing the *wujūdī* school, which had a very strong influence upon Nasafī's thought; "It is to be remembered that Ibn 'Arabī uses the Plotinian term 'emanation' (*fayḍ*) as a synonym for *tajallī* (self-disclosure). But 'emanation' does not mean as it does in the world view of Plotinus, one thing overflowing from the Absolute One, then another from that first thing, etc., in the form of a chain. 'Emanation' for Ibn 'Arabī, simply means that the Absolute itself appears in different, more or less concrete forms, with a different self determination in each case. It means that one and the same Reality variously articulates and determines itself and appears immediately in the forms of different things."²²⁸

Thus the *wujūdī* interpretation of emanation as described by Izutsu is rather far removed from that of Nicholson who commented, "the idea of emanation, or rather the

²²⁶ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 57. See also, *Kitāb-i tanzil*, fol. 52a, lines 5-16.

²²⁷ Koran, 36:82.

²²⁸ T. Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984) p. 154. Corbin was perhaps the first to remark on the distinctions between the emanationist position compared with that of the *wujūdī* school. He remarked, "This cosmogony is neither an emanation in the Neoplatonic sense of the word nor, still less, a *creatio ex nihilo*. It is rather a succession of manifestations of being, brought about by an increasing light, within the originally undifferentiated God; it is a succession of *tajalliyat* of theophanies." *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, trans. R. Manheim, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 114.

particular form of it exhibited in Sufism proceeded, if we are not mistaken, from the Neoplatonic mint."²²⁹

In the system of the People of Unity, God exists in His unknowable aspect and secondly there is *Jabarūt* (which is God's knowledge, otherwise known as the immutable entities). When God bestows existence upon His knowledge it comes immediately in to the world. Nasafī comments that the first thing is earth; earth is the First Intelligence and the First Sphere closed up together, as the Koran states. In other words, the nature of earth is the spiritual or intelligible aspect (or "*amr*" in Koranic terminology) and the element of earth is the material or perceptible aspect (or "*khalq*.")

By placing earth first and intelligence last, the People of Unity have stood the Philosophers on their heads. So far, this interpretation accords completely with the Koranic portrayal of creation. Moreover, it remains faithful to the Koran by placing intelligence last in the scheme, as will become clear in the following point.

(III). In *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, (which is one of Nasafī's major works), earth (*khāk*) according to the People of Unity (who are the élite of the Sufis), is the first thing created from *Jabarūt*. Nasafī proceeds to explain how everything is manifested in the universe from earth until intelligence is finally reached. This manifestation is also the way in which earth attains its perfection. In fact there are two ways in which this is done, that is, there are two ways in which existence becomes completely manifested.

The first way to perfection leads from earth to the sphere of spheres:

Know that the select (*zubdat*) and quintessence (*khalāṣa*) of body (*jism*) is earth, and it becomes water, and that which is the select and quintessence of water becomes air, and that which is the select and quintessence of air becomes fire, and that which is the select and quintessence of fire becomes the body of the firmament of the moon.²³⁰

²²⁹ R.A. Nicholson, *Selected Poems from the Diwan-i Shams Tabrizi*, p. xxx-xxxi.

²³⁰ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 57.

This order then proceeds in the same manner through Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Jupiter, Saturn, the Fixed Stars and the Great Firmament. Nasafī continues:

And that which is the (select and quintessence) of the Sphere of Spheres returns to the body of earth and the children from the horizon by means of the light of the Fixed Stars and Wandering stars.²³¹

This idea that in ontological terms, the earth was the first substance and not intelligence, is reconfirmed in another chapter of *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*:

Know that according to the People of Unity, heaven (*samā'*) is an expression for a thing which is celestial (*'ulwī*) and the giver of emanation (*mufīd*) to the level which is lower than itself, and the giver of emanation may be from the world of bodies and may be from the world of spirits.

And the earth (*ard*) is an expression for a thing which is relatively lower (*sufli*) and is a seeker of emanation (*mustafīd*) from the level which is above it, and this seeker of emanation may be from the world of bodies or the world of spirits. So the one thing may be earth and may be heaven and for this reason the heaven and earth are called Adam and Eve.

Know that although the heaven is the giver of emanation and the earth is a seeker of emanation, the level of earth is prior to the level of heaven, so Eve is prior to Adam. Although there never was a time when there was no earth and heaven (because there has always been heaven and earth), the level of earth is prior to the level of heaven and for this reason the nun is mentioned first and then the pen (*qalam*), in such a way as it is said, "Nun, by the pen and what they are writing." (68:1).²³²

The second way of perfection from the earth leads to man:

Know that the levels of children are threefold; mineral, plant and animal. Matter is earth which rises in levels and in each level it has a name. It rises from the elements to plant, and from plant to animal, and one of the types of animal is man, and man is the final type. Whatever is existent in all individual things is existent in man. The body of earth attains its perfection when man is reached. It will return to the earth and rise again in levels until it reaches man. When man is reached it will

²³¹ Ibid, p. 57.

²³² Ibid, p. 225.

return again to the earth, once, twice, three times, eternally and this is the meaning of, "Out of the earth We created you; and We shall restore you into it." ²³³ That is, the perfection of the earth is reached when it reaches the body of man and the perfection of nature is when it reaches intelligence. And everything which attains perfection will return to its origin and this is the meaning of "Everything returns to its origin, once, twice, thrice, maybe indefinitely."²³⁴²³⁵

This description in *Kashf-al-ḥaqa'iq* of two ways to the perfection of earth becomes clearer with Nasafī's remarks in *al-Insān al-kāmil*:

Know that Abū Turāb Nasafī,²³⁶ who is one of the People of Unity says that intelligence and *knowledge* are not included in anything other than mankind. The purpose of Abū Turāb in this discourse is to negate the discourses of the 'Ulamā' and Philosophers. The 'Ulamā' and Philosophers say that spheres and stars have intelligence and *knowledge*, desire and power, that is, each sphere has an intelligence, and there are nine spheres and the nine intelligences. They are constantly acquiring *knowledge* and extracting lights and their movements are voluntary. The 'Ulamā' say that the angels have *knowledge*, but their *knowledge* is not increased. That which each one knows is its inherent knowledge. Abū Turāb does not accept either of these discourses and he says that the spheres and stars and angels do not have intelligence and *knowledge*, for intelligence and *knowledge* are particular to mankind. The spheres, stars and angels are continually occupied, each one has an action and they can not refrain from it or perform another one; so that action came in to existence from themselves without their *knowledge* or desire, and the spheres and stars and angels are compelled in their actions. The spheres, stars and angels are the loci of manifestation for action and mankind is the locus of manifestation for *knowledge*.²³⁷

Thus the first route to perfection through to the Sphere of Spheres is inferior to that which leads to intelligence in man. Initially, earth is the first thing to be created and intelligence comes last. Once created however, the heavens and stars have an important role to play upon the states and circumstances and the make up of each thing. For this

²³³ Koran, 20:57.

²³⁴ *Hadīth*, (source not given).

²³⁵ *Kashf al-ḥaqa'iq*, p. 58.

²³⁶ Abū Turāb Nasafī was a Sufi from Transoxania who emphasised trust in God (*tawakkul*). He met an unfortunate end in 859 A.D for he was eaten by lions in the desert.

²³⁷ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 263.

reason, it sometimes occurs in Nasafi's works that the heavens are placed in a position which is prior to the earth. However, the heavens and stars can only exercise their influences upon that which has already been created, (that is, upon something which is prior to them).²³⁸ This creation is constantly occurring because God creates the world anew every moment, thus the whole process of earth being created first commences again and again).

The reason that the philosophers are stood on their heads by placing earth first and intelligence last is because intelligence is found only in man. Man is the centre of the universe. This point was of course stressed by other Sufis prior to Nasafi, for example, Rūmī expressed the superiority of man over the universe by saying; "We have honoured the children of Adam (17:70), God did not say, 'We have honoured the heavens and earth.' So man is able to perform that task which neither the heavens nor the earth nor the mountains can perform. When he performs that task, he will no longer be sinful, very foolish."²³⁹ The honour that Rūmī refers to is the gift of knowledge, the knowledge by which man is able to acquire more knowledge. Not even the angels (who are merely messengers) possess this kind of knowledge. Indeed, in the Koran, the angels are required to bow down before man, a verse which Nasafi quoted: When I have breathed of my spirit into him, you (the angels) should bow down before him all

²³⁸ In this system, emanation still has an important role to play, because the emanations from the spheres determine the fortune of each child's life, and there are four times when these emanations take place:

... there are two kinds of preparedness (*isti'dād*); one is actualized at the origin without the free will and acquisition of the child, and this is the preparedness of the effects of the qualities of time and place; and the other is actualized after the origin through free will and acquisition and this preparedness is through effort and endeavour.

O dear friend! There are strong effects and complete qualities on the preparedness and states (*aḥwāl*) of the child for when the sperm falls in to the womb, the time when the form of the child appears, the time when the spirit appears in the form and the time when the child leaves the mother's womb. (*Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 60b lines 11-17).

The states of each person are different because the emanations each day (and thus the four times of each person) are different:

The spheres and stars are the managers of the lower world and they have no free will and their function is to continually spread torment and comfort in this world and spread felicity and wretchedness in a universal way, not in a particular way. (*al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 197).

²³⁹ Quoted from Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, p. 63.

together.²⁴⁰ Rūmī also quotes the *ḥadīth*, “But for thee I would not have created the heavenly spheres,” which also emphasises man’s superior position to any other created thing. Such an idea, that the universe was created for man’s benefit and to serve him, is common-place in Nasafī’s works:

O dervish! It is man and whatever he needs that is existent. Nothing else is existent other than this. If man could exist without the spheres, stars, elements, natures, plants and animals, then he would live without them. But he can not exist without them and he can not live without them, so the aim of all of them is man, and the existence of all other things is for man’s sake.²⁴¹

This relationship is described in another way by Nasafī as man being the fruit of a tree, with all other existents being part of the tree, serving the fruit:

Know that according to the People of Unity all of the existents are one tree; the first sphere (which is the sphere of spheres and is simple and not illuminated) is the ground (*zamīn*) of this tree. And the ground of the second sphere (which is the fixed sphere) is the root of this tree. The seven heavens (*haft āsmān*), is the trunk of this tree, Saturn in the first heaven and the moon in the seventh heaven. Saturn, which is further from us is in the first heaven; and you should understand the rest in the same way. Each one which is nearer to us is higher up. And the fourfold elements and natures are the branches of this tree; minerals, plants and animals are the leaves, flowers and fruit of the tree. Since you have understood the levels of the tree, now know that the fruit is the end of the tree; it is the select and quintessence of the tree and is more noble and subtle than the tree. Whatever is nearer to the fruit in the tree is higher and more subtle and noble.²⁴²

O dervish! The People of Unity say that the levels of this tree were always complete and are always complete. But some of the levels of this tree are in such a way that they can not release the form which they have and they cannot take another form. This is the lower world (*‘ālam-i suflī*) which is the spheres and stars which are the roots and trunk of this tree. It must be in this way because the roots and trunk of the tree have a form which they do not release and they do not take another form. But some [of the levels of the tree] are in such a way that they release the form which they have and take another form, and this is the higher world (*‘ālam-i ‘ulwī*), which

²⁴⁰ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 85, Koran 15:29.

²⁴¹ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 266

²⁴² *Manāzil al-sā’irīn*, p. 430-1.

is the minerals, plants and animals and they are the leaves, flowers and fruit of this tree. And it must be in this way because the leaves, flowers and fruit are not always in one state, sometimes the flowers drop off, and the fruit of some falls when it is not ripe and some falls when it is ripe. Moreover, the leaves, flowers and fruit appear; they themselves grow, they themselves are born, they themselves exist and they themselves die. However, this tree rises up in levels and becomes more subtle and more delicate (*nāzuktar*), and for this reason it may suffer a calamity and move from place to place contrary to the roots, trunk and branches.²⁴³

Know that the People of Unity say that there is no sense perception, voluntary movement or desire in all the levels of existents except for animals. Sense perception, voluntary movement and desire is particular to animals. And there is no intelligence (*'aql*) or knowledge (*'ilm*) in existents except in man; intelligence and knowledge is particular for man. The spheres, stars, angels, elements and natures do not have sense perception, voluntary movement, intelligence or knowledge. They are continually working and each one has a task; each one is engaged in performing that task and it can not perform a task other than that [which it is performing]. So that task without knowledge, and without thought and without their desire, comes in to existence through them. That is, sense perception, voluntary movement, desire, intelligence and knowledge is particular for the fruit of this tree, but there is no sense perception, voluntary movement, desire, intelligence and knowledge in the other levels of this tree.²⁴⁴

In Rūmī's words, "The outward form of the branch is the origin of the fruit; but inwardly, the branch came into existence for the fruit's sake."

The significance of the microcosm being regarded as superior to the macrocosm can also be seen in the light of the *wujūdi* interpretation of the divine names *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm*, which Nasafī appears to make. He comments:

O dear friend! The spirit of the tenth sphere is the select and quintessence of the spirits of the macrocosm because it is the last of spirits and extremity of natures and it comes at the tenth level. The body of the tenth sphere is the select and quintessence of the bodies of the macrocosm because it is the last of bodies and the extremity of the elements and it comes at the tenth level. The natures and elements (which reach their own perfection and extremity) reach it in two ways. They reach it either through the macrocosm or through the microcosm. So in the microcosm, the

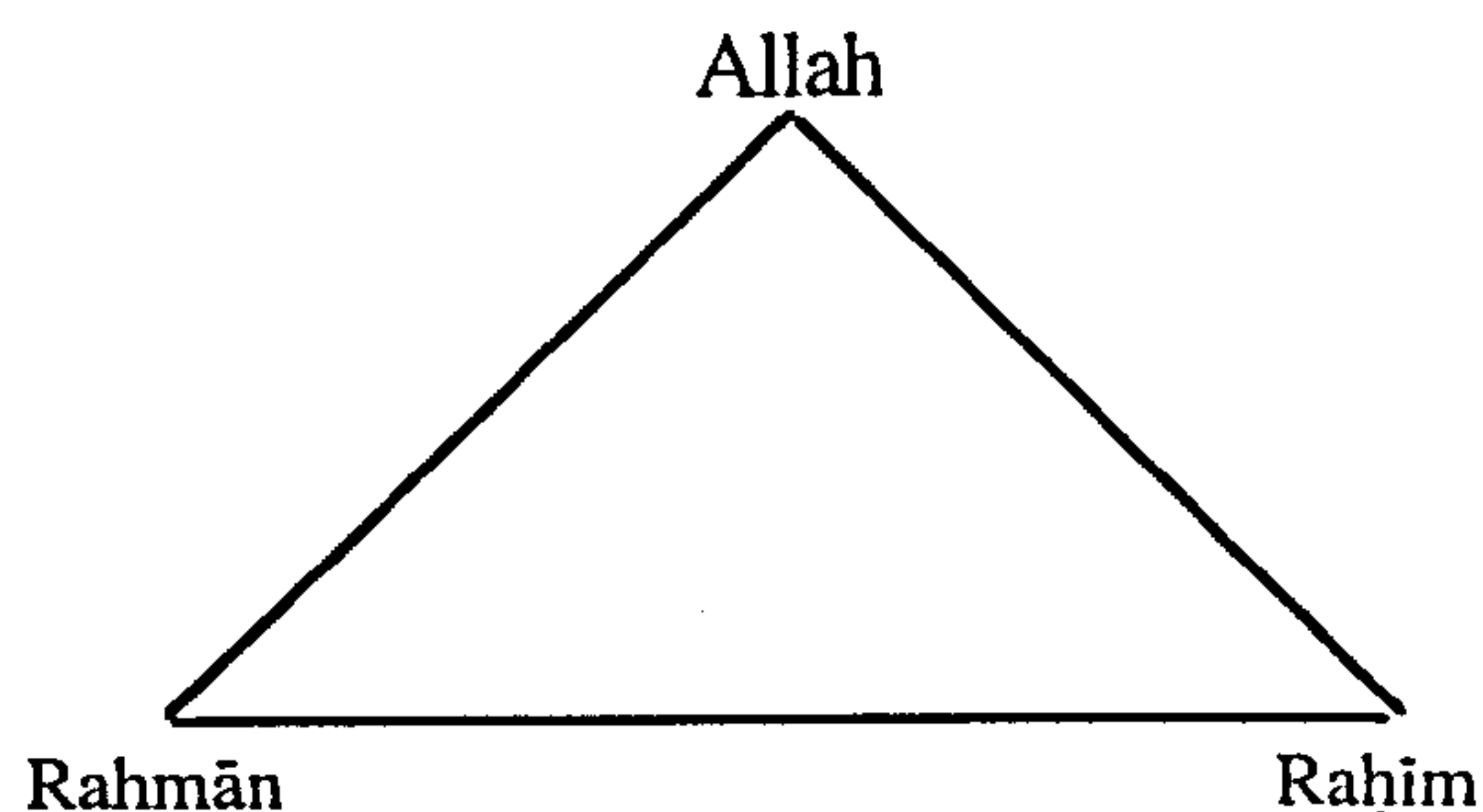
²⁴³ Ibid, p. 431-432.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 433.

spirit of the Perfected Man is the select and quintessence of spirits because he is the last of spirits and the extremity of natures and he comes at the tenth level and the body of the Perfected Man is the select and quintessence of bodies because he is the last of bodies and the extremity of elements and he comes at the tenth level.

Since you have understood this introduction, now know that one name of the names of the spirit of the sphere of spheres is the Compassionate (*al-Raḥman*) and the body of the sphere of spheres is the Throne, and the Compassionate is ^{established} firmly upon the Throne: "The Compassionate is ^{firmly established} upon the Throne," ²⁴⁵ and one name of the names of the spirit of the Perfected Man is the Merciful: "He is gentle to believers, merciful," ²⁴⁶ and the body of the Perfected Man is the Throne and the Merciful is ^{firmly established} upon the Throne. The Compassionate and Merciful (who are the select and quintessence of the macrocosm and microcosm and the last of existents and extremity of levels) are God's Throne and God is ^{firmly established} upon the Throne. ²⁴⁷

Nasafī's interpretation of *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* was discussed by Fritz Meier, who visualized the relationship in the diagram below.



Meier has seen in this a kind of Islamic trinity in which "Nasafī's conception is ... that man, by mystical growth into the knowledge of the All (i.e. the macrocosm - or Raḥman) ultimately arrives at a kind of coincidence with the All, and with God. All and Man the Perfecter are two all-embracing loci: the All in that it is nature, man in that he reflects this nature. And God is exalted above these two only to the extent that he is symbol and concept of their unity, wherein all antagonisms are resolved."²⁴⁸ Meier's explanation is illuminating, but we can advance one step further by recognising the

²⁴⁵ Koran, 20: 5.

²⁴⁶ Koran, 9: 129.

²⁴⁷ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 66a, lines 5-15.

²⁴⁸ F. Meier, "The Problem of Nature in the Monism of Islam," p. 187.

fundamental distinctions between *Raḥman* and *Raḥīm* of the *wujūdī* school which emphasizes a uniqueness enjoyed by *Raḥīm*.

Ibn 'Arabī regards *Raḥman* as an inclusive mercy which is bestowed upon the macrocosm and the microcosm. *Raḥman* is the existence which is blown upon the immutable entities which then immediately appear in this. *Raḥīm*, however, is particular to man, for it is an obligatory mercy in the sense that God rewards those who are worthy of it, and He is wrathful upon those who are not. So man in fact receives *Raḥman* (i.e. existence) and has the potential to receive *Raḥīm* (God's reward) and this makes him unique. Although Nasafī does not describe these views in his own works, by naming the macrocosm "*Raḥman*" and the microcosm "*Raḥīm*"^{he} suggests that he is aware of this distinction that Ibn 'Arabi makes. Moreover, Nasafī is well acquainted with Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikām* in which such a portrayal is made.²⁴⁹

(IV). Aside from this major difference between Nasafī's theosophy and that of the Islamic Philosophers and Classical Neoplatonism, there are several other factors which make Classical Neoplatonism distinct from the beliefs of Nasafī and the Islamic Philosophers.²⁵⁰ The first of these concerns the concept of being. For Plotinus, the One is completely transcendent, to the extent that in some passages of the "*Enneads*," it appears that the One is not even conscious of itself.²⁵¹ Moreover, in some passages, the One is beyond being: "What is this which does not exist? But the existence of That, in the sense which we say it exists, is known from the things that come after it."²⁵² It appears that there were some Islamic Philosophers who followed this line, for in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, Nasafī comments:

... and the Philosophers have different opinions regarding the existence of God Almighty and Holy. Some have said that God has quiddity and also existence, since existence is impossible without quiddity. Some have said that God has quiddity

²⁴⁹ See Austin, op.cit., p. 188-191. See also Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 130.

²⁵⁰ See P. Morewedge, "Sufism, Neoplatonism, and Zaehner's theistic theory of mysticism," p. 228-229.

²⁵¹ Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI.9.9.

²⁵² Ibid.

but not existence, in order that "manyness" (*kathrat*) and plurality (*ijzā'*) is not necessary [for God]. Some have said that God's quiddity is the same (*'ayn*) as God's existence and is not prior to God's existence in order that "manyness" and plurality is not necessary [for God].²⁵³

For Nasafī, God's quiddity is His existence; one of Nasafī's favourite phrases, which occurs numerable times in all of his works, is "existence is not more than one and that is the existence of God Almighty and Holy."²⁵⁴

(V). There is quite a distinction between Nasafī and Neoplatonic thought in the stance taken towards matter. Plotinus regards matter as intrinsically evil, while later Neoplatonists such as Proclus modify this idea and come to regard it in a more positive light.²⁵⁵ For Nasafī, it is unthinkable that matter can be evil because it is one of the modes in which God manifests Himself. It has already been seen that Nasafī views the world as divided into two parts, that is, the sensual and spiritual. Matter belongs to the sensual world but it co-exists with the spiritual world and is not separate from it. Nasafī repeatedly uses the Koranic concepts of non-manifest (*bāṭin*) and manifest (*ẓāhir*) to describe how these two should be regarded as one:

Existence is not more than one and that is the existence of God, and other than God nothing else has existence. But there is a '*ẓāhir*' and a '*bāṭin*' for this one existence. Its '*ẓāhir*' is creation (*khalq*) which is an expression for the world of bodies, and its '*bāṭin*' is called 'command' (*'amr*) which is an expression for the world of spirits.²⁵⁶

Know that the call of the Prophets and the instruction of the Friends of God are for the sake that the people adhere with good words, good actions and character traits so that their '*ẓāhir*' becomes correct. If the '*ẓāhir*' is not correct then the '*bāṭin*' is not correct, because the '*bāṭin*' is like a thing which is poured into the body. So if the body is erect, the thing that is poured into the body will also be erect, but if it is bent, that thing poured into the body will also be bent.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 39.

²⁵⁴ It is interesting that Ibn 'Arabi also uses the expression "There is no existent but God," and "there is no existent other than He." See Chittick, "Rumi and waḥdat al-wujūd." p. 108, n. 52.

²⁵⁵ See I.R. Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p. 34.

²⁵⁶ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 190.

²⁵⁷ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 88.

(VI). The last difference involves the practical manner of Sufism and Neoplatonism, in particular, the role of an intermediary between the individual and the One/God. Modern commentators have seen different mediator figures in the “*Enneads*” ranging from an “ascetic sage” to love, and it has also been speculated that there is no intermediary at all.²⁵⁸ This stands in contrast to Sufism and Nasafī’s theosophy where the role of the intermediary figure plays a crucial role. The identity of this figure is not the same in all cases. One possibility is the Sufi Shaykh or wise man (*dānā*):

Without the association of a wise man it is not possible that someone can reach his target. The fruit of the desert which grows by itself is never equal with the fruit of the orchard which the gardener has nurtured. In the same way, each wayfarer who has not found association with a wise man will never be equal to a wayfarer who has found association with a wise man.²⁵⁹

Another possible intermediary is the so-called “invisible shaykh” (*shaykh al-ghayb*) who appeared to the wayfarer following the ascetic disciplines and spiritual exercises under the supervision of the Sufi shaykh. The invisible shaykh is an important element in the theosophy of Najm al-Din Kubrā (the founder of the Kubrāwiyya order) for the former is no other than the realisation of the perfected self, or the “theophanical ego.”²⁶⁰

The last possible mediator described by Nasafī is God’s love. Nasafī described God’s love in a discourse on *dhikr* in such a way that it was regarded as a gift from God:

The glory of the Beloved empties the heart of the lover of everything but Himself, everything is taken out of the heart ... at that time the lover does not see himself and he sees everything as the Beloved.²⁶¹

The possibility that God draws one of his servants towards him on the basis of His love was a common belief in Sufi circles. Indeed, Nasafī describes how Shaykh

²⁵⁸ For this discussion see P. Morewedge, *Neoplatonism and Islamic thought*, p. 70.

²⁵⁹ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 109.

²⁶⁰ T. Izutsu, “The Theophanical Ego in Sufism,” *Sophia Perennis*, the Bulletin of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, Vol.IV, No 1, (Tehran, 1978).

²⁶¹ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 139.

Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī portrayed four types of Sufis, one of which he called “*majdhūb*” (or divinely attracted), who are involuntarily drawn by God’s divine attraction (*jadhb*) and they arrive at the level of love in the love of God.²⁶²

2:3:3 Conclusion

Several eminent scholars, in particular P. Morewedge, have highlighted the distinctions between Neoplatonic thought and that of the Islamic Philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā. This has provided a basis to re-investigate the relationship between Sufism and Neoplatonism (and Islamic Neoplatonism/Philosophy). Nasafī’s world view is confusing because one is not always sure about which group he is referring to. In some passages creation is seen as descending through the heavens and spheres and until the individual elements and natures are created. From here the ascent commences for the elements and natures combine to create the threefold kingdoms, and the ascent is completed once man reaches intelligence. This perspective resembles the position of the Islamic Philosophers. However, the alternative system portrayed in *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq* posits earth as the first thing created by God, and everything else, including the heavens and man reach perfection from earth. This is the belief of one of the groups of the People of Unity, and therefore it would seem likely that Nasafī had more sympathy with this group than with the ideas of the Philosophers. One can speculate that Nasafī’s portrayal of the “Philosophers” was based upon his familiarity of works such as the “Theology of Aristotle” and the eclectic mixes of al-Farābī and Ibn Sīnā whereas the explanation of the People of Unity way well have been a result of spiritual unveiling and contemplation of the Koran. Labelling Nasafī’s works as “a Neoplatonic system of ‘emanation and return’ as a mystical depiction of the world,”²⁶³ does not do justice to the many levels of interpretation that are contained within them. It is equally as valid to remark that his works depict the Koranic belief of creation and return.

²⁶² *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 226.

²⁶³ P. Morewedge, “Sufism, Neoplatonism and Zaehner’s theistic theory of mysticism,” *op.cit.*, p225.

CHAPTER 3

Epistemology

3:1:1. Attaining Knowledge

Section 2:1:5 included a discussion of God's "witness" (*ma'iyyat*) with all existent things and this "witness" is the basis of the unity between God and His creation. The Koran states that God is with man wherever he is,¹ but the problem that man faces is that he is negligent and he forgets this "witness." Nasafī explains this situation in terms of knowledge:

O Dervish! God is very close, just as the Almighty said: "We are nearer to him than the jugular vein,"² and there are many examples like this in the Koran and *ḥadīth*, but what is the use if the people have fallen far, far behind and remain without any share or portion in the gnosis of God and God's proximity. Every day they boast and say that we are searching for God, but they do not know that God is present and there is no need to search. O dervish! God is neither far from some nor close to others. He is with everyone. All the existents are equal in proximity with Him. The highest of the high and the lowest of the low are the same in proximity with Him. We have spoken of proximity in terms of knowledge (*'ilm*) and ignorance, that is, whoever is more knowledgeable is nearer. If it were not so, there would not be one particle in all existent ^{things} which God's essence would not be with, or encompass or be aware of.³

The knowledge of the various groups that Nasafī describes agree upon the general principles of Islam, such as the unity of God and how He can be described. For example:

Know that the Sufis say that all the Prophets and Friends of God have said that there is a creator for the world. After the Prophets and Friends of God, all the

¹ Koran, "He is with you wherever you are." 57: 4.

² Koran, 50:16.

³ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 235.

'*Ulamā*' and Philosophers have also said that there is a creator for the world and in order to prove this they have given many reasons and they have written and continue to write books, so it is not necessary for me to give any reason for the creator of the world.

Since you have understood that there is a creator for the world, now know that the Sufis say that there is one creator and He is eternal, and has no beginning or end, no like or partner, and He can not change or alter, and He can not be non-existent or annihilated, and He has no place (*makān*), time or direction. He is endowed with the appropriate attributes and He is free from inappropriate attributes. The '*Ulamā*' and Philosophers agree on this point with the Sufis.

The Sufis say in addition to this that the essence of God is unlimited and infinite. O dervish! The '*Ulamā*' and Philosophers also say that the essence of God Almighty is infinite, and they say that this infinity of God has no beginning or end, above or under, before or after, that is, it has no direction. It is a light, unlimited and infinite. It is an ocean without shore or end. The totality of the universe is a drop in the ocean considered in relation to the greatness of God's essence, perhaps less than a drop. There is not one particle in all existent particles which God is not with, or which God does not encompass and of which He is not aware.⁴

Thus the beliefs of both the '*Ulamā*' and Philosophers are regarded as Islamic and worthy in their own right, however, their knowledge of things does not match that of the Sufis or People of Unity. In fact, Nasafī makes a distinction between the groups which reflects the well-known *ḥadīth* of Gabriel, in which Muḥammad divides Islam into three stages. The first stage is submission (*islām*), the second is faith (*īmān*), and the third is excellence (*iḥsān*). According to this *ḥadīth*, submission is bearing witness that there is no god but God and Muḥammad is His messenger, and performing the five pillars of Islam: the ritual prayer (*ṣalāt*), paying the alms tax, fasting during Ramadan and making the pilgrimage to Mecca; faith is having faith in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last Day and the measuring out (*qadar*); excellence means worshipping God as if you see Him, for even if you do not see Him, He sees you.⁵ Submission pertains merely to practice, and is the lowest in the hierarchy because people may practice Islam even if they do not want to. There are many reasons for performing actions,

⁴ Ibid, p. 229.

⁵ For a discussion of the implications of this *ḥadīth*, see Murata and Chittick, *The Vision of Islam*, (New York: Paragon House, 1994).

ranging from the economic to social, so even a hypocrite (*munāfiq*) can submit to God and the five pillars of Islam. Faith is a stage above practice, for the person who undertakes submission does so through sincerity. The relationship between practice and faith can be described in Koranic terms as the manifest (*zāhir*) and the non-manifest (*bāṭin*). Above faith is excellence, and this is the highest degree in the *ḥadīth* of Gabriel because excellence involves a degree of insight or gnosis which faith does not encompass. For Nasafī, the 'Ulamā' have submission,⁶ the Philosophers have faith,⁷ and the People of Unity have excellence (*iḥsān*).⁸

The differences between submission, faith and excellence may also be clarified through another *ḥadīth* which Nasafī quotes on numerous occasions: "The Holy Law (*shari'at*) is my words, the Path (*ṭarīqat*) is my works and the Reality (*ḥaqīqat*) is my states."⁹ Nasafī reworks this *ḥadīth* and states that the Perfect Man has four things; good words, good works, noble character traits (*akhlāq*) and gnosis (*ma'rifat*).¹⁰ Good words and works pertain to the Holy Law, the character traits pertain to the Path, and gnosis pertains to the Reality. Gnosis is the ability to see things as they are, to see the essences (as far as it is possible) of oneself and God, whereas having the appropriate character traits or being sincere does not necessarily mean that one can see things as they are.

3:1:2. The knowledge of the 'Ulamā'

Tradition plays a very important role in the Islamic community and this tradition is based upon memorising the Koran and *ḥadīth* and also by following the *Sunna* of Muḥammad. The importance of this tradition is demonstrated by the fact that Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (the founder of the Sufi order to which Nasafī was probably affiliated) had spent long periods in the study of *ḥadīth* and he also commenced a commentary on the Koran (which was eventually completed by 'Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī, another Kubrāwī affiliate).

⁶ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 248.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 249.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 212.

⁹ For example, *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 213.

¹⁰ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 217.

This kind of knowledge is fundamental for all Muslims, and Nasafī recognises that the ‘*Ulamā*’ provide a crucial role in society for acting as guardians of this knowledge. They act as propagators of the exoteric message of the Koran, *ḥadīth* and *Sunna*, and education (reading and writing) is entrusted to them. Nasafī expresses the importance of the ‘*Ulamā*’ in society:

O dervish! Whoever has made himself a director of creatures makes himself known as a Shaykh or an ascetic. Know for sure that he has found no trace of God’s fragrance. It was necessary for the Prophets to be the directors of creatures whether they wanted to be or not. It is also necessary for the ‘*Ulamā*’.¹¹

O dervish! Whoever has one skill of knowledge has a narrow field of thought and his enemy is the ‘*Ulamā*’ who have the skills of knowledge. Whoever has the skills of knowledge, his field of thought is wide and he is a friend of the ‘*Ulamā*’ who have the skills of knowledge.¹²

However, the knowledge of tradition is founded upon memory and represents only the first step towards the realisation of things. It is not sufficient to be able to recite the Koran and *ḥadīth* and act in the way of Muḥammad, for one also has to understand the message of the Koran and *ḥadīth* and realise why Muḥammad acted in a certain way:

“God Almighty sent down the Koran in ten meanings.”¹³ The grammarians, philologists, jurists, commentators of the *ḥadīth* and expounders (*mufassirūn*) are all at the first stage and are not aware of the second stage.¹⁴

Nasafī calls the ‘*Ulamā*’ the “People of Imitation” (*Ahl-ī Taqlid*) and their belief is based upon the sense of hearing:

They have heard and accepted, that is, their acceptance is not by reason and demonstration, and not by unveiling and spiritual contemplation. This belief is worthy although it is through the sense of hearing, and this group is included among the People of Submission (*Ahl-ī Islām*). At this level, effort and endeavour are

¹¹ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 291.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 81.

¹³ *Ḥadīth*, I have not been able to trace this.

¹⁴ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 175.

dominant over the wayfarer and satisfaction and submission are subdued. There is much difficult asceticism and spiritual discipline and much obedience and worship in this level. They perform very much of everything which pertains to the manifest dimension, and they perform little of anything that pertains to the non-manifest dimension. This is because this group (in this level) believe in existence and oneness, and although they believe that God is Knowing, Desiring and Powerful, they have not seen that His knowledge, desire and power is through the light of reason and demonstration and through the light of spiritual unveiling and contemplation for all secondary causes (*asbāb*) and caused things (*musababāt*). They have not witnessed that all the secondary causes are incapable and over-powered, like all the caused things. So effort and endeavour is valid according to them and everything is increased by secondary causes, effort and endeavour. They see through secondary causes, effort and endeavour, since this group is still in the level of sense perception and they can not proceed from it.¹⁵

This belief is merely a preliminary stage, but it provides the foundation upon which to build other forms of knowledge. Nasafī contrasts the results obtained through the religious institution of the 'Ulamā' (the *madrasa*) with those of the house of Sufis (*khānaqāh*):

There is one way which leads to perfection of the path. At the beginning is education and repetition and at the end it is religious effort and remembrance of God (*dhikr*). One must first go to the *madrasa* and then one must go to the *khānaqāh* from the *madrasa*.

Whoever does not go to the *madrasa* but goes to the *khānaqāh* may profit and have some reward and may reach God through the journey to God, but will not profit or have any reward through the journey in God.¹⁶

Nasafī is referring to the Sufi concept of annihilation (*fanā'*), a state when all human attributes which form a veil between man and God are removed. According to Nasafī, it is possible to reach this stage even if one does not learn the knowledge offered through the *madrasa*, that is, belief through sense perception. However, the higher stage

¹⁵ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 247-8.

¹⁶ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 54-55.

of *baqā'*, or subsistence in God, can only be reached by first attending the *madrasa* and then going onto the *khānaqāh*.

3:1:3. The knowledge of the Philosophers

The knowledge of the Philosophers is a stage above that of the '*Ulamā'*

This group are among the People of Faith; and satisfaction and submission are in this level and effort and endeavour are subdued. This is because this group has recognised God through definite proofs and certain demonstration, and they have seen His knowledge, desire and power encompassing all existents. They have witnessed secondary causes as incapable and overpowered in the same way as caused things. That is, in the same way that until now they saw a thing as incapable and overpowered, they also see secondary causes as incapable and overpowered. In other words, they reached the Causer of secondary causes and saw the Causer of secondary causes as encompassing everything and powerful over everything and they became satisfied and submitted. They do not place their faith upon anything, neither effort nor endeavour, and neither material wealth nor reputation, neither obedience nor worship.¹⁷

The Philosophers' tool is intelligence or reason ('*aql*). Nasafi's usage of the word '*aql* is quite problematic because it has many synonyms:

Know that '*aql* is a substance. But this substance has been remembered in various names through attribution and example taking. When they saw that this substance was intelligent and a giver of intelligence, they called it '*aql* because '*aql* is both a perceiver and perceived.

When they saw that this substance was alive and a life giver, they called it spirit (*rūh*) because the spirit is alive and a life giver.¹⁸

This problem is accentuated by the fact there are also different levels of '*aql* which do have a difference in reality. There is a discussion of such levels of '*aql* in *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*

¹⁷ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 249.

¹⁸ *Zubdāt al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 65.

which includes an *'aql* for things of this world and an *'aql* called the First Intelligence (*'aql-i awwal*) which (as mentioned above) is another name for the spirit:

... man is a partner with other animals, that is, in having three spirits: the plant spirit, the animal spirit and the soul spirit. This is because all men and all animals have three spirits and man also has other things which animals do not have.

The first is speech, and man becomes superior to other animals. At first he becomes superior through this spirit of speech, and this spirit is also called intelligence (*'aql*). It is this intelligence which has no share or part in the gnosis of God. It is this intelligence which is the king on earth, and which makes the waters flow on the earth and which prepares the fields and creates gardens and which makes boats move on the water and which carries merchandise (*rakht*) from east to west and carries merchandise from west to east, and there are many examples like this. I have discussed this intelligence for livelihood (*'aql-i mu'āsh*) in the seventh station of *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, and one can study it there.

That intelligence about which the Prophet Muḥammad said: "Intelligence is a light distinguishing between the truth and the false,"¹⁹ is different. This light rules the heart and soul whereas the intelligence for livelihood rules water and clay. For as long as man has not reached the human spirit (*rūḥ-i insānī*), he has not reached the intelligence about which the Prophet spoke, and the human spirit is called the Attributed Spirit (*rūḥ-i idāfī*) because God Almighty attributed the human spirit to Himself and said: "And when I have fashioned him and breathed of My spirit into him."²⁰ Several times it has been said that the Attributed Spirit has many names; the First Intelligence, the Greatest Pen, the Supreme Spirit, the Muḥammadan Spirit and others like these.²¹

Moreover, Nasafī not only explains *'aql* in the discourses of the Philosophers but also in those of the People of Unity in describing the covenant between God and man. Before God bestowed existence upon man He assembled them and asked, "Am I not your Lord?" and they answered "Yes." This is based on the covenant which appears in the Koran.²² Nasafī describes the result of this event:

¹⁹ *Ḥadīth*. This is a *ḥadīth* which was quoted by Sufis prior to Nasafī. For example see al-Sarrāj (d. 989) *Kitāb al-luma' fi'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R. A. Nicholson, (Leiden and London, E.J. Brill, 1914), 548.

²⁰ Koran, 15: 29.

²¹ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 263.

²² Koran, 7: 172.

That trust (*amānat*) which was presented to all existents, and was denied and not accepted by any of them, was accepted by man, and he reached his perfection through it. That trust was *'aql*.²³

Two chapters later, continuing the discourses of the People of Unity, Nasafī explains the same covenant and instead replaces *'aql* with love (*'ishq*).²⁴

Despite this confusion, it is clear that Nasafī distinguishes between the methods of attaining to the “First Intelligence.” Only the Sufis can see things as they really are because ascetic discipline and spiritual effort perfects man’s spirit (or *'aql*). The way of the Philosophers, by means of definite proofs (*dalā'il qaṭ'i*) and certain demonstration does not have the same result.²⁵ The *'aql* of the Philosophers is ultimately limited since it can not reconcile *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*. Therefore, *'aql* pushes the Philosophers towards a *tanzīh* position, the *via negativa*, for it demonstrates something in the manner of a mathematical problem. Knowing something rationally is different from knowing something through experience. As Nasafī says, one will only know the reality of sugar when it is tasted.²⁶ The inadequacy of *'aql* compared to the methods used by Sufis is also described with reference to the story made famous by Nizāmī and Rūmī about the Greek and Chinese painters:

O dervish! Some wayfarers say that we learn the skills of painting so that we can illustrate the tablet of our hearts with all knowledge by the pencil of education and the pen of repetition, so all knowledge will be written in our hearts, and everything which is written in our hearts will become the well preserved tablet (*lawḥ-i maḥfūz*). Other wayfarers say that we learn the skills of polishing so that we make the mirror of our heart clean and pure by the tool of polishing which is asceticism and by the oil of *dhikr*, in order that our heart becomes capable of transparency and reflecting, so that the reflection of every knowledge which exists in the invisible world can be manifested in our hearts. Reflection is more reliable and

²³ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 203.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 299.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 41.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 269-270.

correct than a book because mistakes and error are possible in writing, but not in reflection. The story of the Chinese painters and the Emperor is famous.²⁷ In addition, there is much knowledge for individuals and there are many types of knowledge. But life is short and it is not possible to fulfil life by making the heart the well preserved tablet by education and repetition, but it is possible to fulfil life by making the heart the cosmos reflecting mirror by the path of asceticism and *dhikr*.²⁸

The rational demonstration and intellectual reasoning of the Philosophers is regarded by Nasafī as inferior to the Sufi method of renouncing and abandoning worldly affairs and undertaking a spiritual journey founded upon love. Despite this, Nasafī recognises that '*aql*' (or rather the '*aql*' for livelihood) enables man to intellectually comprehend God, and it is more reliable than sense perception, the tool of the '*Ulamā*'. In Nasafī's works, there are many passages which demonstrate '*aql*'s capacity to discover some of the esoteric realities of Koranic images. The following example of the esoteric exegesis of the Koran by the Philosophers (in Nasafī's words) is taken from the fifth treatise of *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* concerning the resurrection of man:

So the heaven which is promised after death for the pious ones is commanded by God Almighty so that it might be made clear for you from this example, "This is the similitude of Paradise which the god-fearing have been promised; therein are rivers of water unstalling, rivers of milk unchanging in flavour and rivers of wine - a delight to the drinkers, rivers, too, of honey purified; and therein for them is every fruit, and forgiveness from their Lord - Are they as he who dwells forever in the Fire, such as are given to drink boiling water, that tears their bowels asunder?"²⁹ Know that water is the cause of life and its benefit is common for everything in all times, and the reality of these rivers of water in heaven is that they are the waters of life which are for all the People of Heaven who enjoy all of them.

Milk is the cause which nurtures children, and milk is more particular than water, since its benefit is common for all but only at a certain time. The reality of these rivers of milk in heaven is that they are rivers of common sense which is the

²⁷ See Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, I, 3467. Also Nizāmī, *Sikandar-nāma*, Vol II, pp. 197-200, (Dehli, 1316). For a translation of this story in Nizāmī, see *Painting in Islam*, Sir Thomas W. Arnold, (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), pp. 67-68.

²⁸ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 93.

²⁹ Koran, 47:15.

basis and exoteric aspect of wisdom, and the common pleasure in heaven is from these rivers.

Honey is the cause of healing sickness and suffering and honey is more particular than milk since its benefit is particular for some people. The reality of these rivers of honey in heaven is that they are the rivers of wisdom for the special ones and the pleasure of the special ones in heaven comes from these rivers.

Wine is the cause which removes grief and sadness, and wine is more particular than honey since it is unlawful for all the People of the World but it is lawful for the unclean and the People of Heaven. And the purification and reality of these rivers of wine in heaven is that they are the wisdom and pleasure of the special ones among the special ones in heaven and their pleasure is from these rivers.

In addition, know that in hell there are four rivers for the inhabitants of hell, which correspond to the rivers in Heaven: these are hot water, stagnant water, stagnant water mixed with matter flowing from the bodies of the damned, tar and pus: "And these similitudes - We strike them for the people, but none understands them save those who know."^{30,31}

3:1:4 The Knowledge of the People of Unity

Nasafī explains that the knowledge of the People of Unity (also referred to as the People of Unveiling) is superior to that of the 'Ulamā' and the Philosophers:

O dear friend! What is heard (*masmū'*), the object of knowledge (*ma'lūm*) and spiritual station (*maqām*) are all different from each other. It is a long way from what is heard to what is known and there are uncountable difficult passes from what is known to the spiritual station. So whoever has read or heard these chapters (which have been written) should not suppose that he has understood (*ma'lūm kard*) the intention and purpose of the author in these chapters. Whoever has understood the intent and purpose of the author does not suppose that this has become his spiritual station. This is because whoever hears that there is a thing in the world called sugar is never equal with the person who knows there is a plant called sugar cane which is extremely sweet, and that when that plant is cut and beaten and the water is taken from it and made thick, sugar and cane is made. Whoever knows how sugar is made is never equal to the person who sees how it is made and places sugar in his mouth. First is the level of hearing (*sam'*) concerning the ^{experiential knowledge (*ma'rifat*)} of sugar, second is the level

³⁰ Koran, 29:43.

³¹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 179-80.

of knowledge (*'ilm*) and third is the station of tasting (*dhawq*). When knowledge is completed, it becomes complete through tasting and reaches its perfection through tasting. First in the gnosis of sugar is general knowledge (*'ilm-i ijmāli*), and second is the differentiated knowledge (*'ilm-i tafṣilī*) and third is experiential knowledge (*'ilm-i dhawqī*). First, sugar is heard of, second it is known and third it is seen and tasted. You should understand all things in this way.³²

This experiential knowledge transcends sense perception and *'aql* because it is based upon unveiling bestowed upon wayfarers by God. Although the wayfarer can not guarantee that God will ever rip away the veils that conceal Him, the wayfarers among the People of Unity believe that unveiling is more likely if they love God intensely and engage in ascetic discipline and spiritual effort.

Know that the People of Spiritual Unveiling confirm with their tongue and testify with their hearts the existence and unity of God and this confirmation and testimony of theirs is by way of spiritual unveiling and contemplation. O dervish, these are groups that see and know everything as God since they have passed all the veils and have become close to God's face and have seen and known the knowledge of certainty (*'ilm al-yaqīn*) and the eye of certainty (*'ayn al-yaqīn*) and they have understood that existence is for God alone, and for this reason they are called the People of Unity, for they do not see or understand anything other than God.

Know that at this level, nothing is predominant for the Unitarian, neither effort nor endeavour, neither satisfaction nor submission, because the Unitarian says that everything in the beginning is good, and everything that exists must be as it should, and if it were not so then it would not be itself. But everything must be in such a way that it is in its right place and in its own degree, since everything is called bad which is not in its right place or else is in its right place but not in its own degree. So effort and endeavour are good in the right place and degree, and satisfaction and submission are good in the right place and in the right degree, and the words of the doctors are good in the right place and the right degree, and everything which exists is good in its right degree.³³

It was mentioned in the first chapter that Nasafī was requested to compose his treatises without prejudice and without belittlement, and in to a remarkable extent, he is

³² *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 68b, l.15 - fol. 69a, l.6.

³³ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 250.

consistent in maintaining this, however, there can be no doubt that he preferred his path of ascetic discipline and religious effort to 'aql and sense perception. He slips in a slight criticism of the other groups:

The People of Unveiling (*Ahl-i Kashf*) attained to the truth of things and they saw and understood things as they are. The rest are in a sleep and are dreaming and they tell stories to one another in their dreams.³⁴

3:2:1 The convergence of Hellenistic and Islamic epistemological thought

The integration of Greek knowledge into the Islamic world resulted in Muslim philosophers discussing ontological and epistemological issues. As some Muslim philosophers were also attracted to Sufi explanations of existence and knowledge, the mystical and the rational philosophical traditions converged, to which some of Ibn Sinā's works testify. By Nasafī's era and in the tradition of which he was a part, many Sufi works included discussions that on the one hand preserved the basic Koranic doctrines and also employed Islamic terminology and on the other hand borrowed certain rational philosophical structures and occasionally used the language that would have been familiar to students of Classical Greek thought.

This confluence of the Islamic and Hellenistic is apparent in many sections of Nasafī's works. For example, the ontological levels of the soul (*nafs*) reflect the Greek classification of the three kingdoms (mineral, plant and animal) and also the Koranic terminology of the soul commanding to evil (*al-nafs al-ammāra bi'l sū'*), the blaming soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*) and the soul at peace (*al-nafs al-muṭma'inna*). In a discussion of the Transmigrationists in *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, there is a description of the ascent of the soul which reflects the Greek-Islamic heritage. At the lowest level, the soul is called nature (*ṭabī'at*) and then it rises to the plant-soul (*nafs-i nabātī*) and then the animal-soul (*nafs-i ḥaywānī*) and then the human soul (*nafs-i insānī*) which is also

³⁴ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 270.

called the rational soul (*nafs-i nāṭiqā*) and the commanding soul. The ascent continues and the soul of the Philosopher is called the blaming soul, the soul of the Friend of God is the holy soul (*nafs-i qudsī*) and the soul of the Prophet is the soul at peace.³⁵ In other works Nasafī also says there is one spirit which is described by praiseworthy and blameworthy attributes, such as the predatory spirit, satanic spirit, the commanding soul, the blaming soul and the soul at peace.³⁶ He then compares the levels of the spirit to the Light verse of the Koran:³⁷

The body (*qālib*) is like a niche, the plant spirit is like a glass lamp, the animal spirit is like a wick, the soul spirit is like oil, the human spirit is like light, the prophetic spirit is like the light of light and the holy spirit is like light of light of light.³⁸

A similar ontological hierarchy is utilised in other works in Nasafī's discussions of the other Islamic beliefs to portray how man can know God. The basic epistemological structures are grounded in both the frameworks provided by Ibn Sinā, who adopted them from Galen³⁹ and also in the doctrines found in the Koran. Yet there is a crucial distinction between Nasafī's beliefs and those of philosophers such as al-Farābī concerning the knowledge that man can actualise. In order to show this difference it is necessary to portray Nasafī's epistemological order.

3:2:2 The outer and inner faculties of perception

The faculties of perception (*idrāk*) are of two kinds, outer and inner; and there are five outer senses and five inner senses. The outer senses are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. The inner senses are the *sensus communis* (*ḥiss-i mushtarak*),

³⁵ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 412.

³⁶ *Kitāb-i tanzil*, fol. 58b, lines 9-11.

³⁷ Koran 24:35, "God is the light of the heavens and earth. The parable of His light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp enclosed in a glass, the glass as it were a shining star, kindled from a blessed tree, an olive tree neither of the east nor the west. Its oil would almost shine even if no fire touched it. Light upon light. God guides to His light whom He will."

³⁸ *Kitāb-i tanzil*, fol. 58b lines 16-18.

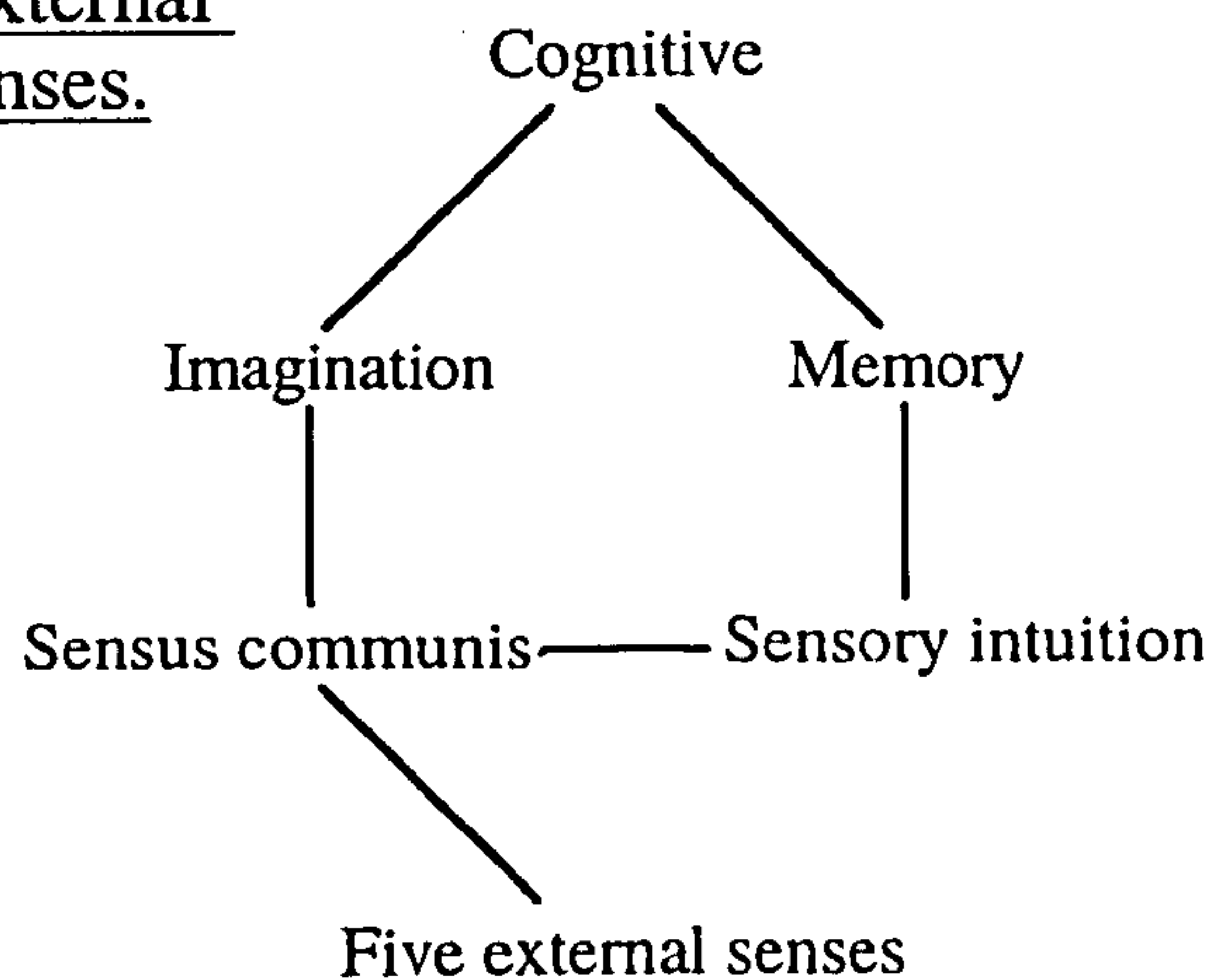
³⁹ See S.H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, (New York: Caravan Books, 1964), p. 39.

imagination (*khayāl*), sensory intuition (*wahm*), the memory and the cognitive faculty (*mutaṣarrafa*).

The *sensus communis* is the perceiver of the objects of sense perception (*maḥsūsāt*) and these are stored as forms in the imagination. Thus the *sensus communis* discovers those things which pertain to the world of testimony such as the colour, flavour, scent, sound and coldness of water. Sensory intuition is the perceiver of the meaning (*ma'ānī*) of the objects of sense perception and these are stored in the memory. So sensory intuition pertains to the invisible, such as the meaning of friendship in friend.⁴⁰

These faculties are governed by the cognitive faculty for it orders (*taṣarruf*) the perceptions which are stored in the imagination through composition (*tarkīb*) and distinguishing (*tafṣīl*), for example it composes a man with no head. It is also implied in Nasafi's works that the cognitive faculty also needs to order and control sensory intuition. These relationships between the five inner senses and the five external senses are shown in the diagram below.

Nasafi's five external
and internal senses.



Nasafi observes that the physicians say that there are no more than three inner senses; the imaginative (*takhayyul*), sensory intuition (*tawahhum*) and recollection

⁴⁰ As S. Murata has commented, there is no scholarly consensus on how to translate the word *wahm*. See *The Tao of Islam*, p. 351, n. 77.

(*tadhakkur*) because the *sensus communis* and imagination are one and are located at the front of the brain, sensory intuition and the cognitive are one and are located at the middle of the brain and memory and recollection are one and are located at the back of the brain.⁴¹ Such discussions are also found in Ibn Sīnā's works⁴² and also those of Ibn Rushd.⁴³

Thus it would seem that all knowledge that man can obtain is sensory. However, the cognitive, may also be considered as man's *'aql*, or man's soul. It is difficult to analyse the nature of soul in Nasafī works because he states the beliefs of several groups within the People of Unity. However, there is a consensus that the soul is from the World of Command which is regarded as being closer to God. Therefore the work of the soul is considered superior to the works of the faculties which pertain to sense perception. The latter are fallible and therefore the soul has to take command of them otherwise man's knowledge is likely to be imperfect.

Nasafī outlines several problems related to the operations of the faculties of imagination and sensory intuition which pertain to sense perception. These include the manifestation of images when they are not sought which may occur during sleep or during wakefulness (in the latter case Nasafī comments that one says such a thing or such a person just came in to the mind)⁴⁴: the slowness in presenting images that are sought which is commonly called forgetfulness.⁴⁵ Imagination and sensory intuition can have such a strong effect upon individuals that they can present images that effect the state of that individual. Nasafī describes imagination's power in an example of a person asleep who witnesses a cup of water. He drinks the water and something of the pleasure in satisfying that thirst remains when that person wakes up. Likewise, sensory intuition has similar power, and people may even become sick and die through its effects. For this reason, *'aql* has to become the master over imagination and sensory intuition.⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 88-89.

⁴² S.H. Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages*, p. 39.

⁴³ See O.N. Mohammed, *Averroes Doctrine of Immortality*. (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984), p. 102.

⁴⁴ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 244.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 243.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 240-241.

The superiority of '*aql*' to the other faculties is portrayed by Nasafī with reference to man as the microcosm:

Know that just as Adam, Eve and Iblis are in the macrocosm, so too are they in the microcosm, and just as predatory animals, beasts, satans and angels are in the macrocosm, so too are they in the microcosm.

O dervish! Man is the microcosm and Adam is the '*aql*', and Eve is the body, sensory intuition is the Iblis, appetite is the peacock, anger is the snake of this world and good character traits is heaven and bad character traits is hell, and the faculties of '*aql*' and the faculties of spirit and body are angels.⁴⁷

Nasafī proceeds to describe how it is the task of man (otherwise known as Adam, Solomon or Jesus) to make his satan (who has the attribute of disobedience) his Iblis (who has the attributes of pride, self satisfaction, envy and disobedience) and his angel (who has the attributes of obedience and heeding commands) subservient to him:

The task of God's deputy is to make all these attributes subjected and subservient to himself and put each one of them in its correct place. Without his command, not one of them ^{can} do anything and God's deputy is Solomon and all of them work for Solomon.

O dervish! The angel and Iblis are a single faculty and for as long as this faculty is not obedient to Solomon, it is called Iblis and Solomon puts it in chains. When it obeys Solomon it is called an angel and then he puts it to work. Some build, some dive.

So Solomon's task is to change attributes, not to make them non-existent, since this is impossible. He makes the disobedient obedient. He teaches courtesy (*adab*) to the discourteous and he makes the blind see and he makes the deaf hear and he brings the dead to life. So '*aql*', which is God's deputy is Adam, Solomon and Jesus.⁴⁸

Nasafī uses '*aql*' in this sense as a synonym for man's spirit which Sufis locate in the heart. When the spirit becomes the master of the body it has the capacity to witness God and those things which pertain to the world of spirits. Such visions are then

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 149.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 150.

somehow corporealised within the inner senses. In other words, the world of spirits is a disembodied world, but man's inner sense of imagination provides him with the facility to imaginalise such disembodied realities. Nasafī also comments that God's self-disclosure is impossible without a form⁴⁹ taken from the imagination and processed by the cognitive faculty. Since each person's sensory experiences are unique, it follows that the imagination is particular to each person. This means that God's self-disclosure is different for each person.

The manner in which the spirit and the inner senses operate in embodying disembodied objects is a mystery that is not explained by the Sufis. Such a secret could be not be discovered even by Ibn 'Arabī:

... the gnostic knows who is disclosing Himself and Why He is disclosing Himself. But only the Real knows how (*kayf*) He discloses Himself. No one in the cosmos, no one other than God, knows that, neither angel nor prophet. For that is one of the specific characteristics of the Real, since the Essence is unknown at root. Hence the knowledge of how He discloses Himself in the loci of manifestation can not be acquired or perceived by any of God's creatures.⁵⁰

Despite the impossibility of knowing how God discloses Himself, it is clear that for Nasafī, the path of refining one's sensory faculties and '*aql* (in terms of intellectual reasoning) is inadequate for coming close to God. At this point, the Greek heritage is incompetent and Nasafī adopts Koranic imagery in his portrayal of man's vision of the spiritual world.

As mentioned earlier, the Sufi tradition, based on the Koran and *ḥadīth* literature holds man's heart as the locus of the spirit. It is the heart which has the closest proximity to God: "My heavens and earth embrace me not, but the heart of My believing servant does embrace Me;"⁵¹ "The hearts of the children of Adam are like a single heart between

⁴⁹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 48a, lines 16-17.

⁵⁰ Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyya*, (II 597.4, 35) trans Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 342.

⁵¹ *Ḥadīth*, Muslim, *Qadar*, 17.

the two fingers of the All-merciful.”⁵² Nasafī also provides many similar examples, such as, “Knowledge is a light in the heart distinguishing between truth and falsity.”⁵³ The actual process of how the heart can “perceive” God remains a mystery as Ibn ‘Arabī comments, however, the Koran hints that the heart can be considered in the same way as a mirror: “No indeed, but what they were earning has rusted upon their hearts.”⁵⁴ Mirrors were made of polished metal in Arabia during the seventh century and they rusted if they were not cleaned. In addition, the verse: “We lay coverings upon their hearts”⁵⁵ occurs several times in the Koran and one cannot see a reflection in a veiled mirror. Moreover the *ḥadīth* the Nasafī cites that “Knowledge is a light in the heart,” suggests a mirror imagery because there can be no reflection in a mirror without light.

The polished heart (also called the non-manifest) has to master the body (the manifest) because if the body predominates over the heart then knowledge from the world of spirits can not be actualised:

That side which is the invisible world is always clean and pure and there is no vexation (*zaḥmat*) or darkness (*zulmat*) or turbidity (*kadūrat*) for the non-manifest dimension. As for that side which is the body, it is a slave to greed and anger and it is gloomy and dark and the non-manifest becomes gloomy and dark for as long as it is tied to its appetites. It is for this reason that the non-manifest of the invisible world - which is the world of angels and pure spirits - is not able to acquire knowledge and lights. When the body becomes clean and pure, the non-manifest is made clean between two worlds. Whatever is in the invisible world - which is the world of angels and pure spirits - is also manifested in the non-manifest dimension of the wayfarer just as two clean mirrors when they are placed opposite one another; whatever is found in one mirror will also be found in the other mirror and vice versa.⁵⁶

⁵² According to Chittick, this *ḥadīth* is frequently quoted in Sufi texts as well as by Ghazālī in *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, but it is not acknowledged as authentic by most of the exoteric scholars. See *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 396, n.20.

⁵³ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 263. This is a *ḥadīth* which was quoted by Sufis prior to Nasafī. For example see al-Sarrāj (d. 989) *Kitāb al-luma’ fi’l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R. A. Nicholson, (Leiden and London, E.J. Brill, 1914), 548.

⁵⁴ Koran, 83:14.

⁵⁵ Koran, 6: 25, 17: 46, 18: 57.

⁵⁶ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 89.

When man's heart is polished and dominates his senses, he can become informed of past present and future events⁵⁷ because there is no dimension of time in the spiritual world. This knowledge passes in to a form in most cases while man is asleep (when his sensory faculties are dulled and thus do not present any images which would obstruct the creation of forms for the knowledge from the disembodied world). This is known as veridical dreaming (*khwāb-i rāst*). However, some people are also able to actualise this knowledge even while they are awake. Such cases are rare and Nasafī says that the isolation, ascetic discipline and spiritual effort of the wayfarer is so that his body has the same state in wakefulness that it has while he is asleep.

Yet isolation, ascetic discipline and spiritual effort are not the only ways that contribute to actualising a polished heart. Some people have a constitution (*mizāj*) which is innately perfect and such individuals include Prophets, Friends of God and the élite among the '*Ulamā*'. They have praiseworthy attributes, pleasant character traits and good qualities and they can acquire lights and knowledge from the spiritual world without much ascetic discipline or spiritual effort.⁵⁸ Other people do not have such a constitution and they have nothing but blameworthy attributes and bad character traits which can not be improved through ascetic discipline and spiritual effort. Between these two are those people whose attributes and character traits are not determined in essence but can be improved through the Sufi practices or may deteriorate if the body dominates over the spirit. Each person's fate is decided by the "four times," in other words, by the movements of the stars and planets during the period of the child's conception and its birth into this world.⁵⁹ According to Nasafī, these three kinds of humans are referred to in the Koran: "People of the right hand, o how fortunate shall be the people of the right hand! And the people of the left hand, o how unfortunate shall be the people of the left hand! And the foremost shall still be the foremost,"⁶⁰ and: "Now someone among them

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 242.

⁵⁸ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 117-18.

⁵⁹ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 90.

⁶⁰ Koran, 61: 7-12.

is being unjust to his own self, and someone is following a middle course and someone is excelling in good deeds by God's leave." ⁶¹

Since the actualisation of a polished heart is in some cases determined by the four times, it is not surprising that Nasafī states that such a quality does not pertain solely to Islam. Acquiring knowledge from the spiritual world upon the heart may be found in non-believers. This significance of this point will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The important point to note concerning Nasafī's portrayal of how man actualises knowledge is that it is not intellectual or rational. The Sufi makes an effort to polish his heart, but having done this, it is God that places a certain knowledge in the heart. For the Philosophers, knowledge is acquired through finding the "middle term" rationally which does not involve God. God's action of bestowing knowledge upon the wayfarer is described by Nasafī as love:

O dervish! Love is a fire which falls into the wayfarer's heart. It annihilates the external secondary causes and inner thoughts of the wayfarer - which are all idols of the soul and veils in the path of the wayfarer - in order that he becomes "qibla-less" and "idol-less" and he becomes clean, pure and disengaged (*mujarrad*).

O dervish! Love is the staff of Moses and this world is the magician which plays tricks every day. In other words, everyday it makes illusions (*khayālbāzī*) and the people are deceived by these worldly illusions. Love opens its mouth and swallows this world and everything in this world in one go and it makes the wayfarer clean, pure and disengaged in one go. Now the wayfarer is called "ṣāfī," (pure) for up to this point he was not a Sufi because he was not pure. He becomes a Sufi when he becomes pure. ⁶²

O dervish! 'Aql is the staff of the wayfarer for as long as he has not reached the level of love and it prepares his worldly structures and tasks because it is engaged with the edifice of this world which has no soul (*jān*): "He replied, 'It is my staff: Upon it I lean and with it I beat down the leaves for my flock. It has other uses

⁶¹ Koran, 35: 31.

⁶² *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 297.

besides.”⁶³ The soul of *'aql* is love. *'Aql* without love is “soul-less” and dead. That dear one said from this point of view:

If there is no heart, where does love build its home?

And if there is no love what would the heart do?

O dervish! A command came to the wayfarer, “Cast aside *'aql* for *'aql* has turned towards this world and there is a danger that it will lead you to destruction (*halāk*). Turn it around so that it faces Me.” The wayfarer can not cast aside *'aql* at first because it is love that casts it aside. When the wayfarer reaches the level of love, he casts aside *'aql* and regards it as a serpent. He is afraid that it may kill him.⁶⁴

The knowledge of the Philosophers such as al-Farabī and Ibn Rushd is purely scientific, however gradually philosophers of the Greek tradition combined Islamic doctrines of revelation or unveiling. For example, Ibn Sīnā “recognises the possibility of man’s attaining instantaneous scientific knowledge without following scientific procedures.”⁶⁵ Nasafī’s epistemology bears many resemblances to that of Ibn Sīnā, including the explanation of man’s inner senses and also the possibility of actualising intelligible thoughts and foreknowledge of the future from the world of spirits in dreams and in wakefulness.⁶⁶ Moreover, Nasafī and Ibn Sīnā appear to be saying similar things concerning the knowledge actualised by the Prophets:

...there might be a man whose soul has such an intense purity and is so firmly linked to rational principles that he blazes with intuition, i.e. with the receptivity of inspiration coming from the Active Intelligence concerning everything. So the forms of all things contained in the Active Intelligence are imprinted on his soul either all at once or nearly so, not that he accepts them merely on authority but on account of their logical order which encompasses all the middle terms ... This is a kind of prophetic inspiration, indeed its highest form and the one most fitted to be called a Divine Power; and it is the highest human faculty.⁶⁷

⁶³ Koran, 20:19.

⁶⁴ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 297-298.

⁶⁵ H. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on intellect*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 123.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 119.

⁶⁷ Avicenna, *Avicenna's Psychology*, trans. F. Rahman, p. 37.

Yet Ibn Sīnā's hierarchy of ten intellects between God and man with the Active Intellect acting as the link between man and the higher intellects seems to emphasise God's *tanzīh* nature. The Sufis and Nasafī pass beyond these ten intellects and reach God as far as He can be known and thus settle the balance between *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*.

3:3:1 Mystical Knowledge

Although reason and logical argument are insufficient to grasp the true reality of Ultimate Existence, Nasafī portrays a systematic hierarchy of mystical perception which leads the wayfarer from the very start of the path where multiplicity is witnessed in all things to the termination of the journey where the unity of existence, or unity in multiplicity is apprehended. There are four levels in this hierarchy; the first is "remembrance" (*dhikr*), the second is "reflection" (*fikr*), the third is "inspiration" (*ilhām*) and the fourth is contemplation (*'iyān*). Nasafī himself comments that no one can comprehend the wayfarer's experiences of the fourth level unless they have also reached this station⁶⁸ and this is just as valid for the other three levels too. Nevertheless, Nasafī's didactic works provided a guide of these levels for the wayfarers, perhaps as a foretaste of what one could expect should the path be followed. Even if one did not have the preparedness to reach any one of the four levels of mystical knowledge at least one would be able to comprehend the theoretical explanation that Nasafī provides.

3:3:2 *Dhikr* (Remembrance)⁶⁹

It has been stated that one of the distinguishing features of Sufism around Nasafī's era was the practice of *dhikr*.⁷⁰ The verbal form of this term appears in the Koran several times where Muslims are commanded to remember God: "O you who

⁶⁸ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 207.

⁶⁹ For an alternative discussion on *dhikr*, see J.J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of 'Alā' ad-dawla as-Simnani*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), p. 119-146.

⁷⁰ M. Hodgson, *The venture of Islam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1974-77), p. 211.

believe! Remember God with much remembrance,”⁷¹ “And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and with awe and under your breath by morning and evening.”⁷²

One of the most common forms of *dhikr* was the repetition of the Islamic testament, “There is no god but God.” By uttering this simple phrase in “mantra-style,” whether verbally or silently, the Muslim was able to focus his concentration upon God alone and the distractions of this world ceased to be a veil between him and God. Nasafī describes the *dhikr* as the first step towards reaching God:

Know that for the wayfarer, the *dhikr* is just like milk for a child...⁷³ Just as it is impossible for the body to grow strong and reach its perfection without milk, so too is it impossible for the heart to be nurtured and reach its perfection without the *dhikr*.⁷⁴

Nasafī describes four levels of *dhikr*. The first of these is that of the novice whose *dhikr* is verbal but whose heart is negligent. This *dhikr* reciter says the *dhikr* but only in form for his thoughts are elsewhere, perhaps buying and selling goods in the bazaar. The effects of this *dhikr* are weak but still beneficial, for at least the journey has commenced. The second level of *dhikr* is when the reciter performs the *dhikr* with his tongue and heart, and although the heart is present (*ḥādir*) in a formal manner (*bi-takalluf*) the pure ones are aware of their own disobedience to God. The third level of *dhikr* is when it is performed in such a way that it is both verbal and at the heart. Here the *dhikr* is dominant over the heart which becomes calm and stable. Even though the *dhikr* prevails over the heart, the reciter is able to perform other tasks which pertain to this world in a formal manner. The inner sign of this third level is that one is always aware of one’s own obedience (*ṭā’at*) to God. The final level of *dhikr* is where the “object of remembrance” (*madhkūr*), or God, becomes dominant over the heart. In fact this final

⁷¹ Koran, 33:41.

⁷² Koran, 7: 205. See also 76: 25, 73: 8, 3: 41, 4: 103, 18: 24.

⁷³ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 135.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 164.

level of *dhikr* is also referred to by Nasafī as the beginning of *fikr* or reflection. At this point the novice reaches the start of the Sufi path.⁷⁵

3:3:3 *Fikr* (Reflection).

Several major Sufis of Nasafī's era, including Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Ibn 'Arabī,⁷⁶ considered reflection as pertaining to the human intellectual and rational faculties. For this reason they held reflection as an inferior method of obtaining knowledge when compared with *dhikr* (which was a means of obtaining knowledge of a higher dimension). However, there was no real consensus among the Sufis because Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī believed *fikr* to be superior to *dhikr*. Ghazālī defined five stages in obtaining non-rational knowledge:

What we have said thus far will show you how excellent a thing is meditation (*tafakkur*) and how it surpasses invocation (*dhikr*) and remembrance (*tadhakkur*) ... First: remembrance or invocation (*tadhakkur*), which consists in bringing to mind two cognitions. Second: meditation or reflection (*tafakkur*), which is the search for the cognition which one seeks to obtain from the two concepts already in the mind. Third: obtaining the desired cognition, and the heart's illumination by it. Fourth: a change in the heart from its former state, by virtue of the illumination attained. Fifth: service performed for the heart by the bodily members in conformity with the new state prevailing within it.⁷⁷

Like Ghazālī, Nasafī posits *fikr* as more eminent than *dhikr*:

Just as you have understood the effects and qualities of the *dhikr* for the illumination of the wayfarer's heart, know that the effects and qualities of *fikr* are a hundred times greater, maybe more.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ For these four levels of *dhikr*, see *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, pp. 165-166. Nasafī's discussion of the different levels of the *dhikr* are very similar to those of earlier Sufis such as Maybudī (d. 1126 C.E.). See M.I. Waley, "Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism," in *Classical Persian Sufism: from its Origins to Rumi*, ed. L. Lewisohn, (London: Khaniqahi Nimatullahi Publications, 1993), p. 531-32.

⁷⁶ For Ibn 'Arabī on *fikr*, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 159. For Rūmī on *fikr*, see Lewisohn, *Beyond faith and infidelity*, p. 222-225.

⁷⁷ Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā', Bāb al-tafakkur*, (vol 4, pp. 412), trans. by M.I. Waley, cited in Lewisohn, *Beyond faith and infidelity*, p. 219.

⁷⁸ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 164.

The journey is searching and searching is an attribute of the heart. There is a time when this searching becomes strong and dominates over the heart in such a way that it is transmitted to the outside which then becomes engaged in the same task as the inside. The inner and outer searching turn to the object of desire and they are engaged in that task. The inner task is the resolution of purity and great effort: the outer task is bodily asceticism and constraint of the soul. The inner task is *fikr* and the outer task is *dhikr*.⁷⁹

Nasafī's understanding of *fikr* becomes clearer when he explains how it has been known under different names by various individuals:

Every person gives *fikr* a name; some call it "reflection" (*fikr*), some call it "state" (*ḥāl*), some call it "I have a time with God," and some call it "absence" (*ghaybat*).⁸⁰

Thus in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, Nasafī's explanation of *fikr* is a non-rational and non-intellectual process.⁸¹ It is that particular mystical moment when the bonds of time and space are shattered and the wayfarer apprehends God according to his preparedness.

The meaning of all of them [that is, *fikr*, *ḥāl*, etc.] is that there is a time for a person when his inside (*andarūn*) becomes so absorbed and engaged in something that his external senses cease from their activity and in that state his inside pays complete attention to that thing. Such a state lasts for one hour for some people, and for one day for other people, or two or three days for still others, and it is possible for it to last for up to ten days.⁸²

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 165.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 149.

⁸¹ In *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, Nasafī explains *fikr* in a way which may be interpreted as a rational and intellectual process. He explains the appearance of light within the wayfarer, which at the beginning may have

the strength of a star in [the wayfarer's inside]. According to the times of the day, [the light] has the strength of the moon, and with the passing of time that moon becomes just like the sun through ascetic discipline and *dhikr*, until a point when reflection (*fikr*) and thought (*andīsha*) are no longer required for [the wayfarer]. Everything becomes the object of contemplation (*mu'āyana*) for him. (*Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 74b, lines 12-14).

⁸² *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 139.

Nasafī gives examples of how *fikr* or *ḥāl* can befall a person when he or she is in the middle of any task:

It is related that one day, a dear one was climbing up a ladder [to reach a place where] he could perform his ritual ablutions. A servant had taken a water jug and was following him when that dear one experienced this [mystical] state while still on the ladder. That state remained with him for forty days while he was on the ladder and the servant stood in assistance, still holding the water jug. When the Shaykh came out of the state and climbed to the top of the ladder, the servant followed him to the top and the Shaykh took the water jug and made his ablutions. The servant said that it had been forty days since they had prayed. The Shaykh replied that it is necessary for you to go and pray the equivalent of forty days prayers since you have been aware of this for forty days.⁸³

Other examples of *fikr* befalling people while engaged in day to day activities are given, such as during prayer or even while eating food, and this mystical state may last for one or two days.⁸⁴

3:3:4 Inspiration (*ilhām*)

The third level of mystical perception which is called inspiration, is different in nature from *fikr*. The former is when the wayfarer is in a particular spiritual station and pays complete attention to God and a state is bestowed upon him by God which reflects the knowledge of that station. Thus the states in various spiritual stations differ from one another.⁸⁵

The scope of inspiration differs because it is a time when the heart is illuminated with knowledge concerning a past or future event without prior meditation or hearing it from some other person. Again Nasafī comments that inspiration has been known by

⁸³ Ibid, p. 166.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 139-140.

⁸⁵ "The states that come over [the wayfarer] will vary according to the station in which he is presently living; thus the *qabḍ*, 'contraction,' of someone in the station of poverty is different from the *qabḍ* of someone in the station of longing." See A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 99.

different names including “heralding” (*adhina*) and “a passing thought” (*khāṭir*). Inspiration is very similar to the concept of revelation (*waḥī*), however revelation is limited to prophets which came to an end with the sealing of Prophecy.

Nasafī also describes how the experiences of *fikr-ḥāl* and inspiration may be manifested externally in the wayfarer. He does this by listing the various degrees of insight. The first is called “finding” (*wajd*) of a thing in the heart which has come from the invisible world. When the “finding” becomes more manifest, it is called “unveiling” (*kashf*), and when this becomes more manifest it is called “gnostic knowledge” (*ma‘rifat*) which is then called “witnessing” (*mushāhada*) when it becomes more manifest. When all the veils have been cast aside, the wayfarer reaches the station of contemplation (*mu‘āyana*). Having given this introduction, Nasafī compares the heart to a hearth and gnostic knowledge is like a coal in the hearth, affection (*maḥabbat*) is like fire in the coal, and love (*‘ishq*) is like the flames of the fire. The states and mystical occurrences (*wārid*) and inspiration and mystical audition (*samā‘*) are like a breeze which blows on the fire.

Thus the wayfarer must first have the preparedness, affection and love for God and then God may release a breeze of *fikr-ḥāl* or inspiration upon him. There is nothing rational or intellectual in this process.

When the fire of affection, which is in the heart, flares up in flames because of the breeze of mystical audition, then the wayfarer cries in tears if it expresses itself through the eyes. He shouts out loud if it expresses itself through the mouth. He moves about if it expresses itself through the hands and he rises up and dances if it expresses itself through the legs. States like these are called “finding” because if the fire of affection was in the heart but could not be manifested, it resembles a thing that has been lost. When the breeze of mystical audition or mystical occurrences cause this fire to burst forth in flames, it resembles a lost thing which has been found. So these states are called “finding.”⁸⁶

⁸⁶ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 136-137.

3:3:5 Contemplation (*'iyān*)

In the previous section it was shown that Nasafī lists a hierarchy of spiritual experience. This starts with “finding” and progresses through “unveiling,” “gnostic knowledge,” “witnessing” and finally “contemplation.” Unfortunately, in Nasafī’s works there is no precise definition of these technical terms so it is difficult to understand how he distinguishes between them (in addition, these terms were defined by various Sufis in different ways)⁸⁷. Despite this, there is no doubt that “contemplation” is the greatest level of mystical perception. One clue to Nasafī’s understanding of “contemplation” is contained in the following portrayal of God as light:

The Shaykh of this helpless one said, “I reached and saw this light. It was an infinite and limitless light, it was an ocean, endless and shore-less that had no above, under, left, right, before or after. I remained bewildered in that light. Concerns for sleep, eating and problems of livelihood departed from me and I could not do any of them. I said to a dear friend that my condition (*ḥāl*) was in this way and he said that I should go and take a handful of straw from someone’s harvest store without God’s permission. I went and I took [the handful of straw] and I no longer saw the light.”

This helpless one said to the Shaykh, “O Shaykh, according to me, one can not see this light with the eyes of the head, but one can see it with the eyes of the inner heart (*sirr*) because this light is not the object of sense perception (*maḥsūs*).”

The Shaykh said, “O ‘Aziz, according to me one can see this light with both the eyes of the head and also with the eyes of the inner heart.”

I said, “O Shaykh, the indication of whoever has reached this sea of light is that he drowns in it and he will never see himself afterwards. He sees everything as this sea of light.”

The Shaykh said, “One should not witness (*mushāhada*) continually.”

I said, “O Shaykh, witnessing is one thing and contemplating (*mu‘āyana*) is another.”

⁸⁷ For example, see Hujwiri: “Therefore the life of contemplatives is the time during which they enjoy *mushāhadat*: the time spent in seeing occurularly (*mu‘āyanat*) they do not reckon as life, for that to them is really death.” *Kashf al-mahjūb*, op.cit., p. 331. Nasafī spiritualises the meaning of *mu‘āyanat*, as is shown in this section.

He said, "One should not witness continually but one should contemplate continually."⁸⁸

The above is an account of Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā's experience of "witnessing" which occurs within the heart. This "inner witnessing" of God has been described by one of the foremost scholars of Sufism as "the realisation of one's own nothingness,"⁸⁹ through witnessing God in the heart, which encapsulates Ḥammuyā's loss of self in the sea of light. "Witnessing" is contrasted with the experience of "contemplation" which is when the mystic sees God with the eyes of the head. This would seem to be heretical, but the Sufis meant the seeing^{of} God through His signs in this world. One realises that although everything, including oneself, has no real existence, the things of this world reveal some aspect of God's existence.

For Nasafī, "contemplation" is a superior level of mystical experience compared to "witnessing" because the mystic has already passed through the stage of "witnessing" and has returned to this world and can now contemplate God in a sober manner and see and understand the things as they are. Moreover, from this elevated stand-point, one can do anything one pleases, such as engage in the *dhikr*, *fikr* or inspiration.

For as long as the wayfarer is engaged in *dhikr* and it is dominant over him, he is in the world of body and physical sensation. When he ceases the *dhikr* and *fikr* presents itself and it becomes dominant over him, he passes from the world of body and reaches the world of spirit. When he ceases *fikr* and inspiration presents itself and it becomes dominant over him, he passes from the world of intelligence and reaches the world of love. When he ceases from inspiration, contemplation presents itself and he passes from the world of love and reaches the station of stability (*tamkīn*), and in (*the station of*) stability he may choose whatever attribute he desires and he will be attributed with it.

So at first the *dhikr* is dominant for the wayfarer, then *fikr* is dominant, then inspiration and then contemplation. And then he reaches the station of stability and he becomes free from any variegation. That is at first the attributes of the wayfarer are dominant over his existence. Each day, perhaps each hour, an attribute is dominant over the wayfarer. But when he passes the station of variegation (*talwīn*)

⁸⁸ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 286-287.

⁸⁹ C.W. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), p. 35.

and reaches the station of stability, his existence becomes dominant over his attributes. The indication of the station of stability is that the wayfarer can obtain whatever station or attribute he desires, in other words, he can choose and all the attributes are his property. If he desires he can recite the *dhikr*, and if he wants he can engage in *fikr*, and if he does not desire then he will not recite the *dhikr* or engage in *fikr*. He has made himself prepared for inspiration so that he can become informed of past and future events. In other words, the mirror of his heart has been cleaned from the tarnishing of both worlds, so that the reflection of whatever occurs or will occur in the world will become apparent upon his heart. If he desires, he can abandon the past and future and enjoy his present time.⁹⁰

3:3:6 The two varieties of mystical wayfarer⁹¹

The superiority that Nasafī sees between *dhikr* and *fikr* is highlighted in his comparison of the terrestrial and celestial wayfarers. The terrestrial wayfarer journeys on land and his means of transport is a mount (*markab*) which is in fact, the *dhikr*. The celestial wayfarer journeys through the heavens and his mount which is called Burāq (the name of the horse of the Prophet Muḥammad, by which, according to Sufi tradition, he rode on his night ascent through the heavens) is in reality, *fikr*.

There are four conditions (*shart*) for the terrestrial wayfarer without which the spiritual journey is impossible. These four are association with a wise man, complying with the orders of this wise man, continual *dhikr* and lastly God fearingness (*taqwā*) and abstinence (*parhizgar*).

There are also four "wings" (*par*) for the Burāq of the celestial wayfarer, without which it can not fly in to the heavens of mystical experience. These four wings are firstly correct hearing, or hearing and understanding the reality and meaning behind things; second is correct seeing which is the ability to see things as they are. These two wings

⁹⁰ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 141-2.

⁹¹ See Lewisohn's discussion on Nasafī and the celestial wayfarer, *Beyond faith and infidelity*, p.220-222.

are called manifest revelation (*waḥy-i jahr*). The third wing is *fikr* and the fourth is inspiration, and these two wings are called revelation of the spiritual heart (*waḥy-i sirr*).

According to L. Lewisohn, this classification of terrestrial and celestial wayfarers is unique and found in no other author preceding or following Nasafī.⁹² With the practice of *dhikr*, the terrestrial wayfarer can also become a celestial wayfarer:

Know that it is necessary for the terrestrial wayfarer to travel on the mount of religious effort and to be engaged in continual *dhikr* until he acquires the Burāq of contemplation. And when he acquires the Burāq of contemplation, he ceases from the *dhikr*, the sign is that the wayfarer has passed from the earth and heavens and the earth and heavens are one.⁹³

3:3:7 Conclusion

For those who have not had any kind of mystical experience, it may be difficult to comprehend Nasafī's epistemological discussion of mystical experience because it transcends the logical and rational processes of acquiring knowledge which are based on sense perception and the intellect. It is perhaps obvious to state that "a full understanding of mystical phenomena requires more than a study of mystical literature."⁹⁴ In other words, one has to have had a mystical experience oneself in order to appreciate what is really happening when mystics such as Nasafī are discussing the inner senses and losing oneself in the sea of light.

This ineffability of the mystical experience and the transcendence of logic and reason is the essence of what distinguishes the epistemology of the Sufis from that of the Philosophers. The Sufis of Nasafī's era held that mystical experience occurred through the "inner senses" and by this term they were not referring to the intellectual faculties. Nasafī does not elaborate on these "inner senses" but his contemporaries, such as 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnānī constructed a hierarchical framework of inner senses which he called

⁹² Ibid, p. 220.

⁹³ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 141.

⁹⁴ N. Pike, *Mystic Union*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. xii.

“Subtle Substances” (*latā'īf*). These are the essential reality of the human being. Of course reason and intelligence have a role to play in how man acquires knowledge for it is through the imagination that knowledge from *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt* takes a form. It is also vital to note that the pinnacle of Nasafī's epistemology, namely “contemplation” is when one “returns” to this world and is able to understand and see everything as it is and in its right place. Thus Nasafī's Sufism should not be regarded as “otherworldly,” or as a form of mystical escapism. Rather, Nasafī provides a path to perfection which leads one away from oneself to God. Thereafter, one remains with God but enjoys a felicitous life in this world. Just how one can achieve this life is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

The Sufi Journey

Surely God's friends - no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow. Those who believe and are god fearing - for them is good tidings in the present life and in the world to come.¹

4:1:1 Introduction: Felicity, the goal of Sufism.

The origin of the word “Sufism” has been studied in depth by both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars but as yet, there is no consensus concerning its etymology.² However, the reality of Sufism is clear, for its paramount aim is felicity (*sa'āda*) which is determined by the knowledge or proximity one has to God. The theoretical dimension of the knowledge that man can actualise about God has been dealt with in the preceding two chapters. However this knowledge has no value unless it is used to bring man close to God. In other words, the practice of Sufism is just as important as theoretical knowledge of it. Having explained the Sufi ideas of ontology and epistemology as seen by Nasafī, it is now necessary to focus upon his practical teachings.

Nasafī's version of felicity is attractive because it reveals the simple and complex nature of the “*shahāda*” or testimony of Islam. The public and voluntary utterance of the *shahāda*, “There is no god but God,”³ is the foundation of Islam and by this statement, consenting adults become Muslims. At the manifest level, the *shahāda* is an affirmation of the unity of God and negates any multiplicity of deities. The non-manifest dimension of the *shahāda* is more intricate and Nasafī's explanation of this is the means by which the wayfarer can enjoy the felicitous life in Sufism. To understand the non-manifest dimension of the *shahāda*, it is necessary to know the Sufi meaning of felicity.

¹ Koran, 10: 65.

² See L. Massignon, art . “*Taşawwuf*,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill).

³ The full *shahāda* is “There is no god but God and Muḥammad is the messenger of God.”

4:1:2. Felicity and heaven

Finding real existence, which is the existence of God, is the cause of felicity. This search is the Sufi path in which there are many stages and the closer one comes to real existence, the more one's felicity increases. Nasafī portrays three basic degrees of felicity by revealing the esoteric meaning of the word "ajr," or reward. In Persian, this word is spelt with three letters; *alif*, *jim* and *ra*:

Alif is an expression for return to God (*i'ādat*), and *jim* is an expression for paradise (*jānna*) and *ra* is an expression for vision of God (*rū'yat*). In other words, those who have faith and have performed good works will return to God and their return is to God's essence. There is no doubt that they reach God's essence when they ascend, and they are in paradise and encounter God.⁴

The distinction in felicity between Paradise and witnessing God is a typical Sufi theme and dates back to the time of Rābi'a (d. 801),⁵ a female mystic from Basra who stressed the importance of avoiding any ulterior motive in worshipping God. Aṭṭār (d. 1221) cites one of Rābi'a's prayers:

O my Lord, if I worship Thee from fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship Thee from hope of Paradise, exclude me thence, but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake then withhold not from me Thine Eternal Beauty.⁶

The vision of God as the ultimate degree of felicity is not confined to the afterlife. Through following the Sufi path of ascetic discipline and spiritual effort under the guidance of a guide or master, many mystics claimed that it is possible to witness God through his signs in this world. Nasafī gives an indication of such Sufis and the subsequent felicity that they experience:

⁴ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 266

⁵ See Margaret Smith, *Rābi'a the Mystic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928).

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 30.

Know that some of the élite of the élite among the People of the Holy Law say that it is possible that the body of the wayfarer can reach a point through ascetic discipline and spiritual effort in attributes and subtlety that it becomes extremely translucent (*shaffāf*) and reflective (*'aks padhīr*), and illuminous (*nūrānī*). The light and the place of manifestation become like one thing just like a glass goblet which is extremely translucent and reflective in which there is an extremely pure and fine (*latīf*) wine. One can not distinguish the goblet from the wine or the wine from the goblet since the two are like one thing.⁷ The Prophets said from this perspective that, "Our spirits are our bodies and our bodies are our spirits." Each cry that comes from the wayfarers like, "Glory be to me, how great is my majesty,"⁸ and "I am the Truth,"⁹ is in this station. In fact this station requires this because when the wayfarer's body becomes glass like (*zujājī*), extremely translucent and reflective through ascetic discipline and spiritual effort, he sees things that others can not see, he hears things that others do not hear, he knows things that others do not know and he does things that others do not do. When it occurs in this way, the wayfarer sees the whole of his self as light and he can not distinguish the light from the glass or the glass from the light. Even if he does not wish, a cry such as "Glory be to me how great is my majesty," comes from him involuntarily.

O dervish! At the beginning of this station a cry comes from the wayfarers like "There is nothing in my cloak except God,"¹⁰ and "There is nothing in the two worlds except me."¹¹ In the middle of this station, in fact the cry "I am the Truth," and "Glory be to Me how great is my majesty," comes from the wayfarers. At the end of this station, such a silence and quietness prevails over the wayfarer that he does not speak with anyone at any time unless it is necessary, and such an incapacity (*'ajz*) and ignorance (*nā-dānā'i*) prevails over the wayfarer that he knows for sure that nobody knows or will know God's essence and attributes just as God's essence and attributes are, and such a tranquillity (*farāghat*) and peace of mind (*jam'iyat*) prevails over the wayfarer that he abandons everything all at once, and such an entrustment (*tafwīz*) and surrender (*taslīm*) prevails over the wayfarer that nothing remains as a sorrow for him and he recognises God as knowing and powerful over the servants.¹²

Although the ultimate goal is the contemplation of God, in Nasafī's works there are frequent references to the wayfarer being in either heaven (*bihisht*) or hell (*dūzakh*).

⁷ This description may be found in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār*, trans. Gairdner, pp. 60-61.

⁸ The ecstatic utterance of Bāyazīd Bāstāmī (d.ca. 845).

⁹ The ecstatic utterance [*shaṭḥ*] of Husayn Ibn Manṣūr al Ḥallāj, (d. 922).

¹⁰ In *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 277, Nasafī attributes this ecstatic utterance to Abū Bakr al-Shibli, (d. 945).

¹¹ In *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 277, Nasafī attributes this ecstatic utterance to Abū'l Ḥabbās Qaṣṣāb.

¹² *Bayān-i tanzīl*, fol. 7a line 3 - 7b line 6.

In Sufi terms, being in hell is a state of remoteness from God where it is not possible to witness Him. However, heaven is a place where the wayfarer is able to contemplate Him.¹³ As Nasafī indicates, some Sufis claim that it is possible to behold God in this world, therefore there is a heaven and hell in this world as well as a heaven and hell in the next world. In this world,

love of material wealth and reputation, greed and avarice, associating others with God (*shirk*) and not recognising God is hell. The hatred of material wealth and reputation, abandonment of seeking them, contentment, satisfaction, unity and recognition of God is heaven.¹⁴

This worldly heaven and hell appears in Nasafī's discourses of both the Sufis and the Philosophers. For example, according to the Philosophers

the real Heaven is harmony and the real Hell is antagonism, and the truth of felicity is obtaining [one's] desire and the truth of non-felicity is not obtaining [one's] desire ... Since you have understood the truth of Heaven and Hell, now know that Heaven and Hell have many gates. All pleasant words and actions and praiseworthy character traits are the gates of heaven. All unpleasant words and actions and reproachable character traits are the gates of hell. This is because each torment and unhappiness that befalls man is through unpleasant words and actions and reproachable character traits. Each comfort and felicity that befalls man is through pleasant words and actions and praiseworthy character traits.

Know that some people say that Hell has seven gates and Heaven has eight gates. This is correct because man has eight senses, that is, man has eight perceptions; five external senses, imagination (*khayāl*), sensory intuition (*wahm*) and intelligence (*'aql*). Everything that man perceives and discovers is through these eight gates. Each time that intelligence does not accompany the other seven, or when they operate without the order of intelligence but operate through the order of nature, these seven are the gates of Hell. And when intelligence is manifested and becomes the master of these seven and when they operate on the command of intelligence, the eight become the gates of heaven. Therefore all of mankind will pass through Hell and then arrive at Heaven. Some remain in Hell and can not proceed from there, and

¹³ See Chittick, *Faith and Practice*, p. 13-14.

¹⁴ *Kashf al-ḥaqqā'iq*, p. 202.

others pass Hell and arrive at Heaven.¹⁵

Nasafi's statement that everyone passes the gates of Hell is based upon a verse in the Koran which states "Not one of you there is, but he shall go down to it [Hell]."¹⁶

In fact, the whole of Nasafi's works reflect a deep knowledge of the Koran and in outlining his thought and that of others, he draws many allusions from it. The following example (which again comes from a discourse of the Philosophers) stresses the immediacy of Heaven and Hell in the present world and portrays the tree in Heaven and the tree in Hell.¹⁷

Know that the *Tubba'* tree is a tree which has a branch in each pavilion and in all the levels of heaven. Each comfort and repose for each individual of the People of Heaven comes from a branch of the *Tubba'* tree, since it is in their pavilion. That tree is wisdom, since there is wisdom in every branch. Each person thinks about the end cause of each action he performs and he does not regret any action.

And the *Zaqqūm* tree is a tree which has a branch in each house and in each of the hells of hell. Every torment and vexation that afflicts the People of Hell comes from the *Zaqqūm* tree. That tree is nature since there is nature in each branch of this tree. Each person does not think about the end cause of each action that he performs, and this lack of reflection and thought is created by him and he regrets his own action. The sign of the ignorant is that they regret [their] words and actions.

Know that reward and punishment are the fruits of the *Tubba'* and the *Zaqqūm* trees. The fruit of their branches will be produced for you since there is a branch of both in your house.

Since you have understood that reward and punishment are the fruits of your tree, now know that the nurturing of these trees is through your own planting and rearing. This is because each action which you perform is through the management and thought of intelligence and the prevention of the soul's caprice is in that action.¹⁸

¹⁵ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 290-291.

¹⁶ Koran, 19: 71.

¹⁷ The *Tubba'* tree occurs in sura 44: 37.

The *Zaqqūm* tree is described in sura 37: 62-66. "We have appointed it as a trial for the evildoers. It is a tree that comes forth in the root of Hell; its spathes are as the heads of Satans, and they eat of it and of it fill their bellies, then on top of it they have a brew of boiling water, then their return is unto Hell."

¹⁸ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 180-181. The imagery of the tree is also found in the Koran: "A good word is as a good tree - its roots are firm, and its branches are in heaven. It gives its produce every season by the leaves of its Lord. So God strikes similitudes for men, haply they will remember. And the likeness of a

Although the two previous quotations are from the discourses of the Philosophers, they also reflect the esoteric dimension of Nasafī's brand of Sufism. The only difference that Nasafī has with the Philosophers is that there is another stage beyond intelligence which enables the wayfarer to contemplate God from heaven. This stage is the love for God where one actualises gnosis (*ma'rifa*).

O dervish! Ignorance is a hell before [attaining] gnosis. Ignorance after gnosis is heaven. Before attaining gnosis, ignorance is the cause of greed and avarice, and after gnosis it is the cause of satisfaction and surrender. ¹⁹

4:1:3. The path of felicity

Sufism is more than a theoretical interpretation of the esoteric dimension of Islam for there is no benefit to the wayfarer in comprehending the theory of felicity without performing those tasks which draw him towards the felicitous life:

Whoever hears there is a thing in this world called sugar is never equal with the person who knows there is a plant called sugar cane which is extremely sweet and when that plant is cut and beaten and the water is taken from it and made thick, sugar and cane ^{are made.} ~~by-products~~ Whoever knows how sugar is made is never equal to the person who sees how it is made and places sugar in his mouth. First is the level of hearing (*sam'*) concerning the ^{experiential knowledge} ~~(ma'nīyat)~~ of sugar, second is the level of knowledge (*'ilm*) and third is the level of tasting (*dhawq*). ²⁰

In other words, the first level pertains to those members of the '*Ulamā* or religious scholars who stress the exoteric dimension of Islam, and the second level is that of the Philosophers who emphasise the use of rational knowledge in explaining the world. The third level belongs to the Sufis whose practices enable them to understand the reality of things as they really are. In *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, Nasafī classifies these

corrupt word is a corrupt tree - uprooted from the earth, having no establishment. God confirms those who believe with the firm word, in the present life and in the world to come." (Koran, 14: 30)

¹⁹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 105.

²⁰ Nasafī, *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 71b line 18 - fol. 72a line 6.

practices in to two sections, which if perfected together, can lead to the felicitous life. The first factor is abandonment (*tark*) and the second is gnosis of God.

4:1:3 - I. Abandonment

Nasafī lived through the two Mongol invasions of Central Asia and Iran between 1220 and 1258. The subsequent occupation of that area by the Mongols clarified to the local inhabitants the insecurity and impermanence of their lives and circumstances. The horrors perpetrated by the Mongols are infamous and need not be repeated here.²¹ It may well be a result of his experiences under Mongol domination that Nasafī was so adamant that “there is no happiness (*khūshī*) in this world (*dunyā*).”²² The instability of this world and its circumstances (*aḥwāl*) are compared by Nasafī to a wave of the sea:

O dervish! You must not put your trust in this world or this world's comforts, and you should not put your trust in the life or veracity of material wealth and reputation. Everything which is under the sphere of the moon and the stars does not keep its original state. It will certainly change from its original state. In other words, the state of this world does not stay in one state, but is always changing. Each moment it takes a new form and each hour a plan is created, but the first form has still not been completed or found stability when another form comes and annuls the first form. It resembles a wave of the sea, and the wise man never builds his house upon a wave of the sea and he never intends to live there.²³

As a result of this impermanence, people are always seeking more.

Nobody is satisfied with his own station. If there is an ignorant person, he seeks something and if there is a wise person, he also seeks something, perhaps more; and if there is a poor person, he seeks something and if there is a wealthy person, he seeks something, perhaps more; and if there is a subject and if there is a king, they are both desirers. This conflict and discord are due to desire and seeking;

²¹ For an account of the Mongol invasion and the atrocities they committed see ‘Alā al-Dīn ‘Ata al Malik Juwainī, trans. A.J. Boyle, op.cit.

²² *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 193.

²³ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 228.

so there are conflict and discord wherever one desires and seeks. There is no difference between the wise and the ignorant person, the wealthy and the poor person, the subject and the king. But the wise person, the wealthy person and the king have more suffering because their desires and seeking are greater.²⁴

The only cure for conflict and discord is the abandonment of whatever one is seeking.

Know that abandonment is the severing of connections; the severing of connections in its non-manifest dimension is when love of this world is expelled from one's heart, and in its manifest dimension it is when a worldly person abandons everything he has and gives it to the poor people.²⁵

Desire is not limited to worldly matters, for according to Nasafī, attachment to religion and the afterlife is undesirable in certain respects. This is particularly the case if the exoteric dimension of a religion predominates in the believer.

O dervish, everything which becomes a veil in the path of the wayfarer obstructs his path. He must abandon it, whether it belongs to this world or to the afterlife. That is, just as property and reputation obstruct the path of the wayfarer, there is also a time when too much prayer and fasting obstruct the path. One is a murky veil and the other is a luminous veil.²⁶

Nasafī relates an enlightening story which highlights the extent of abandonment when attachment to religion (even Sufism) can become a veil. The story involves two famous Sufis, Ibrāhīm Adham (d. 790) and Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 809).

It is said that Shaqīq came to Ibrāhīm and Ibrāhīm asked Shaqīq -

“O Shaqīq! How do the dervishes of your city behave?”

“In the best spiritual state,” Shaqīq replied.

“How is that spiritual state?” Ibrāhīm asked.

“If they find something they give thanks, and if they do not find anything,

²⁴ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 104-105.

²⁵ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 222.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

they wait,” Shaqīq replied.

“The dogs of our city act in the same way; if they find something they eat it, and if they don’t find anything, they wait,” Ibrāhīm said

“So how should the dervishes live?” asked Shaqīq.

“If they don’t find anything, they give thanks, and if they find something, they give it up (*īthār kunand*),” he replied. ²⁷

The “murky” and “luminous veils” are also called idols (*but*) which come in all forms:

Old clothes may be an idol for one person and new clothes may be an idol of another. The free person is he who sees both in the same way. The purpose of clothing is the repelling of cold and obtaining warmth, and one should desire whichever serves this purpose. If neither do, then one should desire whichever serves the purpose in an easier way. O dervish, the person who says “I want new clothes and I do not want old clothes,” is in chains. And the person who says “I want old clothes and I do not want new clothes,” is also in chains. As long as they are in chains, there is no difference between them. Whether gold or iron, both are chains. The free person is one who has no chains of any type in any way, because chains are idols. ²⁸

Generally, Nasafī describes the root of all idols in the following way:

O dervish, there is one big idol and the rest of the idols are small. These small idols come from the big idol. For some people the big idol is material wealth (*māl*) and for others it is reputation (*jāh*) while for still others it is being accepted by other people. Being accepted by other people is the biggest of all idols, and reputation is bigger than material wealth. ²⁹

Nasafī does not advocate the complete abandonment of everything; rather the abandonment of idols means becoming non-attached to everything to such an extent that makes life possible. One has to be practical in abandonment:

Abandonment is the abandonment of trifling matters, not the abandonment

²⁷ *Manāzil al-sā’irīn*, p. 331.

²⁸ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 138.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

of what is required. This is because too much material wealth is unpleasant and obstructs the path. The abandonment of what is necessary is also unpleasant and also obstructs the path because man needs nourishment, clothing and a place to live to a degree that is necessary. If man abandons everything, he needs others and he becomes hungry and hunger is the mother of meanness. In the same way that too much material wealth causes much corruption, so too does the abandonment of whatever is necessary. Whatever is necessary is a great blessing and whatever is not necessary is a great affliction. The amount of whatever is necessary is a blessing, but it becomes an affliction when that amount is exceeded.³⁰

Abandonment is not an easy task, since one has to determine what is the necessary amount. This is one reason why Nasafī holds it advisable to practice abandonment with the help of someone who is spiritually more mature and advanced, that is, the Sufi Master.

... abandonment must have the permission of the Master. You must abandon whatever he says, whether it pertains to this world or the afterlife, for nobody recognises his own idol and nobody sees himself as an idol worshipper. Everyone believes himself to be released and free and recognises himself as a Unitarian and idol smasher.³¹

Abandonment and idol-smashing have results in two ways: that one may enter heaven after the Day of Judgement and that one may enjoy a felicitous life in this world in close proximity to God.

4:1:3 - II. Gnosis of God

Abandonment is a concept that is common in the esoteric dimension of all major religions, but the gnosis of God is perhaps a more particularised aspect in each belief. For Sufis, gnosis of God means seeing God in everything, for His creation reveals something about Him - if one has the ability to see correctly. His creation is all good,

³⁰ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 223.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 223.

for it is impossible that God creates something evil. Nasafī explains:

No attribute is bad, but some of these are used on an improper occasion, and it is said that the attribute is bad. There is nothing bad in the world. Everything in its right place is good, but the name of some things becomes bad when they are not in the right place. Therefore God Almighty does not create anything bad, He has created everything good. ³²

Thus all attributes and character traits are good, but they can be bad if manifested at an improper time. For example, one person may be characterised by the attribute of generosity which is good on some occasions (such as giving food to one's neighbour when one has plenty to eat) but bad on others (giving to those who have food when one's own family is starving). Even character traits involving violence may be good on particular occasions (such as not turning the other cheek). The individual who manifests the right character trait at the right time has the gnosis of God, but the problem of course, is how one knows which character trait to reveal at any given moment.

(a). The simplest way to obtain gnosis of God is to realise that Heaven and Hell exist within the self and to act appropriately, for God is witnessed in Heaven.

Know that someone asked a wise man, "Each person has a way and that way is called the way of deliverance, and each person denies the way of the others. I am confused and I do not know where my deliverance lies or what way will make me sorrowful." The wise man said, "Go and be a man of good conduct, since no evil befalls a man of good conduct in this world or the afterlife and the man of good conduct never regrets his actions." He asked the wise man, "What is good conduct?" The wise man said, "Don't do anything evil against anyone and do good with everyone, and do not wish evil against anyone but wish well for everyone, since the quality of wishing well and a good soul is that at first one's own state and affairs prosper and the quality of a bad souled and evil wisher is that at first one's own state and affairs deteriorate. So whoever does evil and wishes evil upon people, in truth does it against his own soul."

³² *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 48.

O dervish! The bad souled, evil wishing person has a state right now in Hell and burns in Hell and his heart is tormented. His fire and torture become more severe on the basis of other peoples' states and to the extent that other peoples' states improve.³³

Thus the person who steals for no good reason, steals from himself, and the person who torments other people or even animals without purpose, in fact torments himself: "whatever evil visits you is from yourself."³⁴ The manifestation of such character traits at the improper time leads straight to Hell: "For them is chastisement in the present life; and the chastisement of the world to come is yet more grievous."³⁵

(b). The second way is by following the laws that God has sent down to His community. The laws of Islam (the *Sharī'a*) are quite specific, ranging from issues on inheritance to those on marriage. However, Nasafī is aware that in some cases, the *Sharī'a* needs to be understood in an esoteric manner:

The Unitarian says that recognising good and bad, and obedience (*ṭā'at*) and disobedience (*ma'ṣiyat*) is a great task and nobody understands them except the wise man and perfect ones.

O dervish! All the religions and Islamic schools have agreed that telling lies is a great disobedience, and they have seen and spoken the truth, but there is a time when speaking the truth is a great disobedience and there is a time when lying is a great act of worship, so it is clear that understanding good and bad is a difficult task.

O dervish! Actions according to intent may be good and they may be bad, so recognising the intent is a great task.³⁶

So it is incumbent upon each individual to make an attempt to recognise the intent behind each person's action, but this does not mean that everyone can ignore the laws of the *Sharī'a* on the basis of their own esoteric interpretations of the Koran, (however much the intent may be in the spirit of the *Sharī'a*). Indeed, having composed treatises on the esoteric nature of Islam, Nasafī concludes both *Maqṣad-i*

³³ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 203-204.

³⁴ Koran, 4: 79.

³⁵ Koran, 13: 35.

³⁶ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 251.

aqṣā and *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* with warnings that the ultimate recourse of the Muslim must be to the *Sharī'a* :

O dervish! In whatever station you are in, do not trust in your own intelligence and knowledge, and do not see or name yourself "Verifier of the Truth." Neither make a special way (*ṭarīqī*) for yourself nor establish a religious school (*madhhab*) through your own thought. In other words, you must be an imitator of your prophet (*payghambar*) in the knowledge and gnosis of any station that you are in, and do not neglect his *Sharī'a* : ...³⁷

Don't let your caution slip, in other words, don't neglect the *Sharī'a* because anyone who neglects it will certainly be sorrowful since "abandonment of caution and discretion is poor opinion."³⁸

Know that the wise men have said that man's expediency is to respect the claims of the Verifier of the Truth and not to step outside the bounds of imitation (*ḥadd-i taqlīd*) and admit one's own incapacity and ignorance and know for sure that one cannot know in reality God, as God really is, and one cannot recognise in reality things as they really are. When this was understood, the *Sharī'a* was, and is held in veneration. The *Sharī'a* includes conforming to commands, abstaining from prohibited things, being abstinent, not neglecting one point in observing the *Sharī'a* , speaking truthfully and behaving correctly.

Once the *Sharī'a* is venerated, the wayfarer knows that the perfection of man is that he reaches the human level and becomes completely clean of blameworthy qualities and unpleasant character traits and he becomes adorned with laudable qualities and pleasant character traits.³⁹

Esoteric interpretations of the *Sharī'a* are limited to those who have a great degree of spiritual understanding, such as the Sufi master, which introduces the third step for attaining gnosis of God.

(c). The way of the scholars of Islam (through the study of the Koran and the *ḥadīth*) and the way of the Philosophers (through reason and intelligence) are regarded as a preliminary stage by the Sufis. They hold that there is a superior way to know God, which is surrendering to Him and building faith through performing acts of worship and

³⁷ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 455.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 455-6.

³⁹ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 285-86.

devotion such as prayer, abandonment and other Sufi practices including the *dhikr*, *chilla* (a period of forty day isolation for spiritual contemplation) and the recital of litanies. All of these activities must be performed under the guidance of the Sufi master, if they are not, then they have no value because only the Sufi master can recognise the significance of the effects and spiritual visions that may result from such practices.

The aim of these activities is to recognise the self, for man is the purpose of God's creation, since all of God's attributes and character traits can be witnessed through the man. If man perfects himself and manifests the appropriate attribute at the right time, he is like a mirror for God. This is why many Sufis quoted the *ḥadīth*, "I (God) was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known," and "God created Adam in His own form." Adam, is of course, the archetype of all humans and therefore each person is made in God's image, having the potential to manifest all the character traits in the correct manner. From this perspective, one can understand why Nasafī states:

O dervish, there is a sign for understanding the magnificence and greatness of man, and if you find that sign in yourself it is clear that you have understood what a man is. That sign is that hereafter you must search in yourself for whatever you are searching. If you are searching for God's essence and attributes, then search in yourself. If you are searching for the First Intelligence and the First Spirit (which is the Attributed Spirit) then search in yourself. If you are searching for Satan and the Devil, then search in yourself. If you are searching for the Resurrection and the Reckoning and the Straight Path then search in yourself. And if you are searching for the water of life then search in yourself - pass the darkness of nature until you arrive at the water of life. O dervish! I say all of this and I know for sure that you do not understand what I am saying.

I travelled in search of ^{Jamsnīd's} world reflecting chalice

I did not rest during the day and I did not sleep at night.

I listened to the description of ^{Jamsnīd's} chalice from a wise man.

I was the world reflecting chalice! 40

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 282. The poem is attributed to Shaykh Rūzbihān Baqli, (1128-1209), see M. Hillman's afterword in M. Boylan's *Hafez: Dance of Life*, (Washington: Mage Publications, 1987), p.102.

4:1:4 Conclusion

The path to felicity, which is composed of abandonment and gnosis of God, is encapsulated by Nasafī to reflect a simple formula known to millions of Muslims: “There is no God, but God.”

O dervish! Abandonment and gnosis of God is the testimony of Islam. The testimony of Islam is negation and affirmation. Negation is the abandonment of idols and affirmation is the gnosis of God. Material wealth and reputation are two great idols and they have lead astray and they lead astray many people. They are the deities of creatures and many creatures worship material wealth and reputation. There must be no doubt for you in this discourse that it is in this way. Whoever has abandoned material wealth and reputation and has cast aside love of the world from his heart has completed the negation and whoever has obtained the gnosis of God has completed the affirmation. This is the reality of “There is no god but God.”⁴¹

The testimony of Islam has been the source of inspiration for Sufis throughout history. For Ibn ‘Arabī, the testament of Islam could be formulated in the idea of “He/not He,” which reflects the negation (there is no god) and affirmation (but God). In other words, everything in the world possesses existence, but this existence is limited in comparison to that of God. For example, man is limited in terms of the duration of his life and also in the talent he possesses, whereas God is eternal and knowing and powerful over everything: “What is with you comes to an end, but what is with God abides.”⁴² Thus, in some respects, man resembles God in that he can manifest the appropriate character traits but in other respects he cannot be compared with God, Whose essence is unknowable, that is He/ not He, or “there is no god, but God.”

The public utterance of the testimony of Islam makes an adult a Muslim, but for Nasafī however, being a real Muslim is not so easy:

Whoever has not carried out abandonment and does not have gnosis of God

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 224.

⁴² Koran, 16: 96.

has never said the testimony of Islam. ⁴³

Nasafī own views are reflected in the discourses of the People of Unity:

O dervish! The People of Unity say this in a better, more pleasant way. They say that the meaning of the testimony of Islam is negation and affirmation but the negation is not seeing the self and the affirmation is seeing God. ⁴⁴

In fact, this is a similar way of expressing Ibn ‘Arabī’s “He/not He.” The incomparability (*tanzīh*) of the self with God is contrasted with the similarity (*tashbih*) of the self with God. Real Muslims are able to witness the unity in these opposites and the reward of undertaking abandonment and having gnosis of God is the felicitous life, which is a life here and now and also in the afterlife.

The testimony of Islam, prayer, fasting have a form and a reality, and you have been uninformed of these realities and you have been content in the form. It is a great shame if you do not reach these realities. Abandonment and gnosis of God are like a tree, for the gnosis of God is the root of this tree and abandonment is the trunk. All the good attributes and pleasant character traits are the fruit of this tree. The root of this tree is the heart and the trunk is manifested from the heart. However much the root becomes stronger, the trunk also becomes stronger, until abandonment reaches a point where the world and the afterlife and the existence of the wayfarer are lifted away and God alone remains. O dervish! God alone always existed and God alone always exists, but the wayfarer was blind but he sees at the hour when he reaches the reality of the testimony of Islam. ⁴⁵

4:2 The Sufi path

4:2:1 The order (*tarīqa*)

By the thirteenth century, Sufism developed within a range of different orders (*tarīqa*) which were brotherhoods of Sufis having a common spiritual “family tree.”

⁴³ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 224.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 224-225.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, p. 225.

This spiritual ancestry (*silsila*) was traced back through various shaykhs to the Prophet Muḥammad. According to Sufi tradition, at Muḥammad's death, the spiritual virtue (*baraka*) was passed on to his successors (many orders cite 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib as the second link in the *silsila*). With the growth in the number of shaykhs possessing *baraka*, the *silsilas* often became complex and in addition, the growth in the numbers of *Shaykhs* who initiated disciples in to Sufism resulted in a differentiation among the orders in ascetic disciplines and spiritual practices by which one could come close to God (such as the silent *dhikr* and the vocal *dhikr*).

The extent to which Nasafī was affiliated to a Sufi order is unclear. Although he claims in his works that his Shaykh was Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā, there is no letter of *ijāza*⁴⁶ which would indicate that Ḥammuyā was indeed Nasafī's shaykh. Indeed, Nasafī's "formal" connections to a Sufi order has been questioned to the extent that he has been called a "free-thinker."⁴⁷ Although it is clear that Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā was initiated in to Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's circle of Sufis which came to be known as the Kubrāwiyya order, in his later life it seems that Ḥammuyā was "poorly received" by other Kubrāwī Sufis, which may have been a result of his "heterodox" Sufism and his close association with Ibn 'Arabī and his Damascene circle.⁴⁸ If Ḥammuyā was not completely integrated into the Kubrāwiyya circle then it is indeed possible that Nasafī may also have been on the fringe of this order. If this is indeed the case, then the passages in Nasafī's texts which are severely critical of Sufism make more sense.⁴⁹ So the real situation concerning Nasafī's affiliation with the Kubrāwiyya is not clear, but

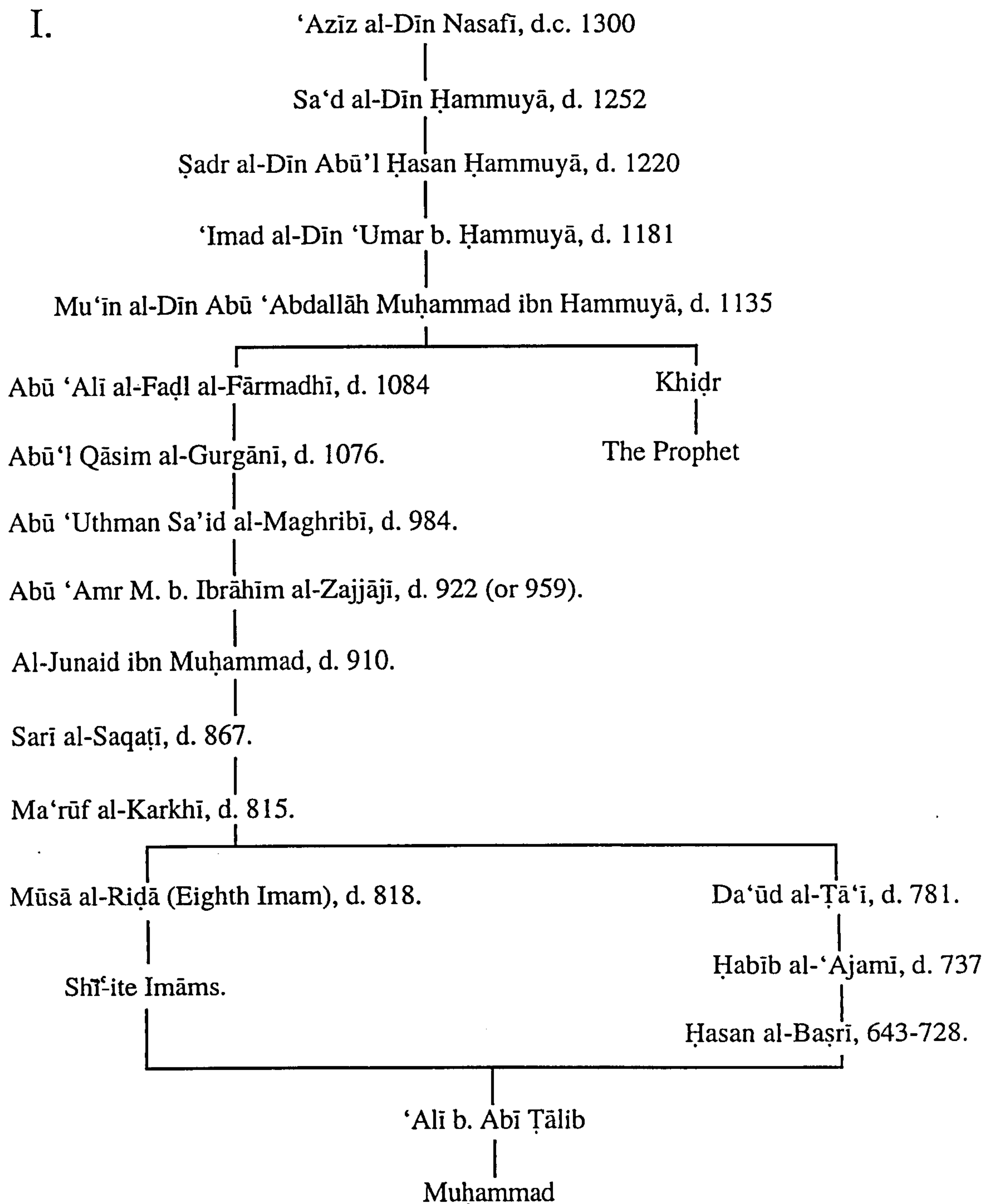
⁴⁶ "*Ijāza-nāma*" (literally, letter of permission) was given by a Sufi master to a disciple which in effect was the disciple's certificate to teach the gnostic wisdom that he had learnt under the guidance of the Shaykh. The "*ijāza-nāma*" given to Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā exists to this day in the Suleymaniye Library in Istanbul. See J.J. Elias, "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabad: Sa'd al-Dīn and Ṣadr al-Dīn Ḥamuwayi," *Iranian Studies*, volume 27, numbers 1-4, 1994, p. 55-56.

⁴⁷ Professor H. Landolt delivered a lecture in September 1995 at the third European Conference of Iranian Studies at Cambridge University entitled "A free-thinker among the Sufis: the case of 'Azīz-i Nasafī." When questioned about Nasafī's apparent leanings to formal Sufism as shown in his comments that it is necessary for the wayfarer to first attend the *madrassa* and then proceed to the *khānaqāh* to acquire gnostic knowledge, Professor Landolt replied that this may be little more than "lip-service."

⁴⁸ See J.J. Elias, "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabad," p. 73.

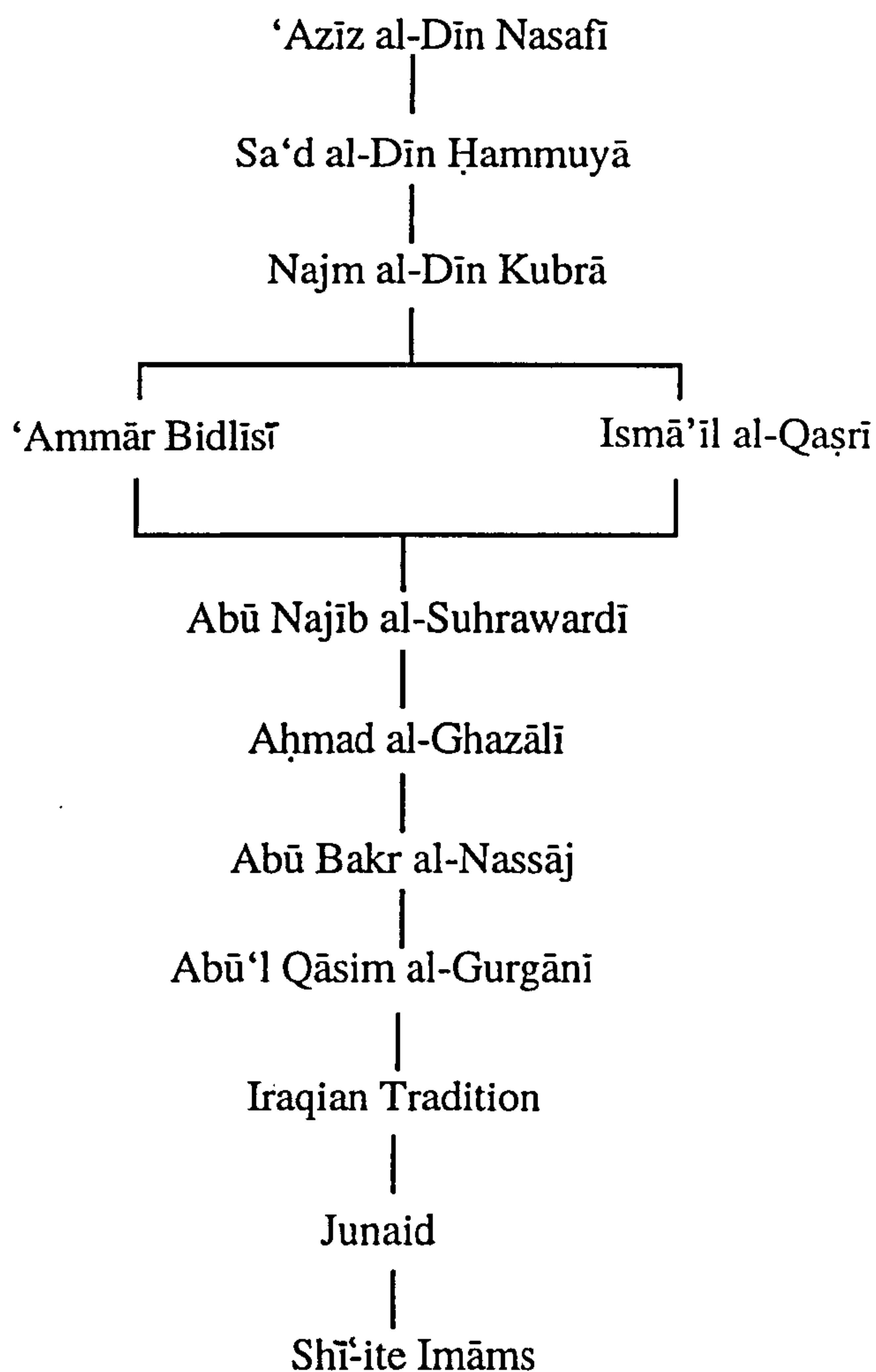
⁴⁹ For example, there are explicit criticisms of some of the so-called Sufi Shaykhs in the introduction to *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, in a discussion concerning the wise man. It is said that one will not find him in the *khānaqāh*, prostrating himself with the People of Imagination and self-worshippers. (*Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 28).

below are two possible *silsilas*⁵⁰ which link Nasafī with Muḥammad:



⁵⁰ These *silsilas* are based on those in J.S. Trimmingham's *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). See pages 262 and 31. See also H. Landolt's comments on Ḥammuyā's silsila, "Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammū'ī," *Encyclopedia of Islam* (second edition, 1995), vol. VIII, p. 703.

II.



One reason which supports the belief that Nasafī was affiliated with the Kubrāwiyya order is the fact there are many similarities in the basic beliefs held by both Nasafī and also the order as a whole. This order was greatly inspired by the teachings of Junayd of Baghdad (d. 910) and there are several references within Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's *Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa fawātiḥ al-jalāl* to Junayd.⁵¹ Junayd listed eight principles which he considered essential in the Sufi path. These were purity, silence of the tongue, seclusion and avoidance of people, fasting, continual *dhikr*, negation of thoughts, inclination for the association of pure people (such as the shaykh), surrender and finally contentment with God's command. Najm al-Dīn Kubrā offered the same eight principles adding two of his own: the abandonment of sleep and observing the

⁵¹ Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, ed. F. Meier, *Fawā'ih al-Jamāl wa fawātiḥ al-Jalāl*, ed. F. Meier, (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1957), 6, 80, 93, 109, 127, 148.

Sufis rules concerning consumption of food and drink.⁵² Nasafī also lists ten actions of the “People of the Path,” which reflect the influence of Junayd and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā. The ten are: the search for God, the search for a wise man (shaykh), desire for the shaykh, obeying the commands of the shaykh, abandonment, God-fearingness, speaking little, sleeping little, eating little and seclusion.⁵³

Distinctions have been made by Sufis themselves and also western scholars between the “sober” and “drunken” forms of Sufism. This is particularly the case with reference to Junayd’s form of Sufism,⁵⁴ since he is known to have been critical of Bāyazīd Bastāmī’s descriptions of mystical experience. Nasafī also regarded the “sober” form of Sufism as a higher stage than the drunken form. The latter, which is characterised by the ecstatic comments such as “I am the Truth,” or “Glory be to me how great is my majesty,” is necessary although it does not represent the ultimate degree of spirituality:

When they return from the ascent, some wayfarers are sober and some are drunk because they have tasted from cups full to the brim of pure wine and their wine has been their God. For this reason, those who are weaker do not look after their exterior side and they behave drunkenly and they neglect the externalities of the Holy Law.⁵⁵

And whoever has become a lover and manifests his love remains dirty and does not become clean because that fire which entered by means of his eyes has left by means of his tongue, and the heart remains only half burnt. Thereafter, the heart can do nothing, neither a task of this world nor a task of the next world nor a task of the Lord.⁵⁶

In *Bayān-i tanzīl*, Nasafī remarks that drunkenness is at the beginning and middle of the station of unity with God, and the wayfarer cannot but make such ecstatic

⁵² Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *al-Sā’ir al-Hā’ir*, (Tehran: Naqsh-i Jahān, 1361).

⁵³ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 215.

⁵⁴ See J. Baldick’s comments in *Mystical Islam*, (London: I.B. Taurus, 1989), p. 45-46.

⁵⁵ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 109.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 118.

utterances. However, sobriety is at the very end of the station and is the more mature relation between man and God.⁵⁷ When Nasafī makes critical remarks about Sufism, he is not complaining about those Sufis who are drunk, for they cannot help their state, rather he is condemning those who use Sufism and make claims to advance themselves.

Aside from being a “sober” order, the Kubrāwiyya also became known for its psycho-analysis of light colour in mystical visions. The details of such phenomena were described by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and also by ‘Alā’ al-Dawla Simnānī.⁵⁸ In Nasafī’s works, there are no such exegesis of colours, indeed, when one is struck by the dryness of Nasafī’s treatises when compared with the poetic and imaginal nature of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā’s *Fawā’ih*. (Of course, one has to bear in mind that the objectives of the two were different: Nasafī was concerned with explaining the beliefs of the ‘*Ulamā*’, Philosophers, Transmigrationists and Sufis, while Kubrā was detailing his own visionary experiences).

Nasafī’s links with “institutionalised” Sufism certainly go as far as believing in the necessity of the shaykh and performing the Sufi devotional practices under his guidance. Spiritual wayfaring is impossible without these two, and therefore the remainder of this chapter will investigate in more detail Nasafī’s explanation of the shaykh and devotional practices.

4:2:2 The Sufi Shaykh

The importance of the Sufi shaykh in actualising gnosis of God is paramount in Nasafī’s theosophy. The difference between the shaykh and the wayfarer is that the former has already completed the spiritual wayfaring and thus possesses the spiritual blessing (*baraka*)⁵⁹ from his own shaykh. *Baraka* is the blessing bestowed by God upon the individual, and since Muḥammad is thought to have received God’s blessing,

⁵⁷ *Bayān-i tanzīl*, fol. 7a line 3 - 7b line 6.

⁵⁸ See Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Fawā’ih al-Jamāl wa fawā’ih al-Jalāl*, and J.J. Elias’s “A Kubrāwi treatise on mystical visions: the *Risāla-yi Nūriyya* of ‘Alā ad-Dawleh as-Simnānī,” *The Muslim World*, 83 no.1, January 1993.

⁵⁹ See G.S. Colin, art. “Baraka,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*².

so too others believed that Muḥammad passed on this *baraka* to those around him who were worthy of it. The initiation into Sufism and the transmission of *baraka* was not bestowed upon everyone because the gnosis of Sufism could not be understood by all members of the community, and the beliefs and ecstatic utterances (*shaṭḥiyyāt*) could easily be mis-interpreted by the common people and also the 'Ulamā'. Therefore, the novices were bound to the commands of the shaykh by an oath of loyalty (*bay'a*), and they were not supposed to divulge these secrets to the uninitiated or unsympathetic.

The tradition of the beloved ones has been in such a way that the community which had association with them saw their protection in whoever had talent and acceptance of secrets and the safety of dignity. And they surrendered to him for protection and they said to him in their wills that they would not betray this protection and they kept this secret from those who were not of the community.⁶⁰

In addition, if the Sufi shaykh was accused of deviating from Islam, he was able to defend the "orthodoxy" of his beliefs and practices by referring to his *baraka* and the *silsila* as the ultimate authority (since it had been passed down to him from Muḥammad via his own shaykh). To repeat, it is through *baraka* that one comes close to God. In some cases, the *baraka* was received not from the living shaykh of a particular order, but from the spirit of an Islamic mystic who had died many years previously. This was the case of a Khwājagānī Shaykh, 'Abd al-Khāliq Ghujdawānī (d. 1220) who was initiated into Sufism by the spirit of Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf Hamadānī (d. 1140).

The shaykh possessing *baraka* was one of the most important components in Nasafī's theosophy. In a typical comment, Nasafī explains:

Know that association has strong effects and great qualities, in evil and good. The reason that any wayfarer arrives at the destination and achieves his aim is because he has association with a wise man. The reason that the wayfarer does not arrive at the destination and does not achieve his aim is because he has not had association with a wise man. The task requires association with a wise man. All the ascetic discipline and spiritual effort and the rules of courtesy and conditions which

⁶⁰ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 9.

have been set in the Sufi path are so that the wayfarer becomes worthy of the association with a wise man. When the wayfarer becomes worthy of association with a wise man his task is complete.⁶¹

O dervish, if a wayfarer has association with a wise man for one day, even one hour, and he is prepared (*musta'ad*) and worthy of association with a wise man, this is better than being engaged in a hundred years or a thousand years of ascetic discipline and spiritual effort.⁶²

Finding a suitable Sufi shaykh was not an easy task because by the thirteenth century, Sufism had become so popular in the Islamic world that there were many "shaykhs," and some of them had reached this spiritual position in society without truly deserving it. Nasafī refers to this several times:

People must have great caution at the beginning and not become the disciple of any person even if they are good and sound, since shaykh-hood and leadership and the taking of disciples is a different task. I myself do not speak the discourses of those people who are the People of Idle Talk. O dervish, I have seen many who have claimed such things for themselves and they make claims of shaykh-hood and they have made shaykh-hood a trap of property and fame. God preserve everyone from the association of such people.⁶³

O dervish, my intention of this wise man or searcher of the Truth is not these inactive religious scholars (*'Ulamā'*) and not these impure shaykhs. These religious scholars and shaykhs are a thousand times more imitating, lost and further from God Almighty than you are. Despite this remoteness from God, they regard themselves as near to Him, and as a result of extreme ignorance and darkness, they regard themselves as wise men, and they see themselves as existing with light. Each time they read the verse: "It is like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow, topped by dark clouds, depths of darkness, one above the other,"⁶⁴ they apply these words to China and India but never to themselves.⁶⁵

Nasafī describes the difficulty of finding a suitable shaykh:

⁶¹ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 220-221.

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 221.

⁶³ *Ibid*, p. 226-7.

⁶⁴ Koran, 24:40.

⁶⁵ *Kashf al-ḥaqqā'iq*, p. 28.

O dervish, you will not find this wise man or this Verifier of the Truth in mosques, preaching from the *minbar* or reciting *dhikr*. You will not find him in the religious schools giving lessons, and you will not find him among the people of high office among the bookish people or among the idol worshippers. You will not find him in the Sufi *Khānaqāh* prostrating himself with the People of Imagination and self worshippers. Out of these three places for worshipping God, there may be one person out of a thousand working for the sake of God. O dervish, the wise man and Verifier of the Truth and the men of God are hidden and this hiddenness is their guardian, their club, their fortress, their weapon. It is the reason for their cleanliness and purity. He that is not hidden is a plot and a trick of Satan. O dervish, their exterior is like the exterior of the common people and their interior is like the interior of the elite. They do not give access to any leader or chief and they have no claim to be leader or leaders. Each one is busy with something or someone according to his need and they earn their own living through their own business and they flee from the wealth of kings and tyrants. They do not seek anything in excess and if something falls to them without effort or exertion which they do not need, they give it away. They spend most of their time in retreat and seclusion, and they do not enjoy interaction with the world and they are opposed to company with the lords of high position. If it is useful, they spend their time in association with the dear ones and the dervishes and by observing and guarding each other's states and words they turn the night into day and the day into night. They are awaiting death so that they obtain liberation from this city of uproar and this raging sea and this world full of calamities whose name is the frame of mankind.⁶⁶

The kind of wise man that Nasafī would have approved of can be ascertained by the references that he makes to other mystics in his works. These include Ibn 'Arabī, Ṣadr al Dīn Qūnawī, Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn 'Umār Suhrawardī⁶⁷ and other Sufis including Abū Ḥāmid Ghazālī and 'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadhānī. Presumably the shaykhs of the Kubrāwiyya order were also held in high esteem, such as Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī and Nasafī's own spiritual master, Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā.

Nasafī describes the ideal shaykh with reference to the views of Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī:

... know that when one man is overtaken by the Truth's divine attraction (*jadhḥ*) and

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 28-29.

⁶⁷ Suhrawardī's *'Awārif al-ma'ārif* is also mentioned by name in *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 226.

that person arrives at the level of love in the love of God, it is more likely that he will not return from that level and he will live and die in that very level. Such a person is called the object of divine attraction (*majdhūb*). There are some people who return and they are aware of themselves and they are called the divinely attracted wayfarers (*majdhūb sālik*) if they engage in wayfaring and complete the wayfaring. If a person performs the spiritual wayfaring first of all and completes it and then the divine attraction of the Truth overcomes him, such a person is called a wayfarer of divine attraction. If a person performs the spiritual wayfaring and completes it, but the divine attraction does not overtake him, then such a person is called a wayfarer (*sālik*). So there are four kinds; the divinely attracted one, the divinely attracted wayfarer, the wayfarer of divine attraction and the wayfarer.

Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī said in his *'Awārif al-ma'ārif* that there should be one group of shaykhs and leaders among these four and they are the divinely attracted wayfarers, and the others should not be shaykhs or leaders.⁶⁸

The reason that the *majdhūb* is not considered as a suitable shaykh is because he cannot be held responsible for his words or actions in the state of being overtaken by divine attraction. Such ecstatic utterances not only aroused the opposition of the '*Ulamā*' but also could not be understood by novices who wished to follow the Sufi path. Thus it is necessary that the shaykh be someone who has both traversed the path and can recognise the different stations and states and understand all the pitfalls and dangers, and has also received the divine grace.

It has already been mentioned that it was not easy for novices to identify "legitimate" Sufi shaykhs and therefore Nasafī describes four qualities that are found in a genuine shaykh.

The first is that they [the Shaykhs] are pious and forbear and they keep the customs and traditions and ways, and they are very careful in nourishment, clothes and place of living. They keep their distance from dubious property, bequests and taxes, the property of kings, the property of the followers of titles and tyrants ... Accepting what is legal and having caution in nourishment and clothing and places to live has many good qualities which people do not know except for the Perfect Ones. And accepting what is illegal and not having caution in nourishment and clothing and places to live

⁶⁸ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p, 226.

has many bad qualities which people do not know except for the Perfect Ones.

The second is that they flee from property and fame, in such a way that they do not like these two in their hearts since they are the causes of all sin. The indication of the person who has abandoned property is that he has no property, and he does not accept it even if it is given to him. He is not arrogant with anyone, but is humble and he does not associate or sit with the People of Titles and the People of the World.

The third is that they never speak of their own souls ^{purification} or make claims of themselves. That is, they do not speak about their own obedience to God and their own purity. They do not describe their own sacrifices and munificence. But they talk about their own faults and deficiencies, and the perfection and states of others. They speak of injustices that they themselves have caused and of the justices caused by others.

The fourth is that they do not speak too much, and they do not speak of that matter which is not asked of them. They give brief answers to questions. If in truth they do not know that matter then they say "I do not know," and they do not answer in a dubious and inexact way.

So every person who trains people has these four internal indications in him and many people may benefit from association with him. Whoever does not have these four indications it is unlawful to train people for many people may be caused harm through association with him, and he may cause innumerable faults in people.⁶⁹

Once the appropriate shaykh has been found, it is incumbent upon the novice to persuade the shaykh of his genuine desire to follow the Sufi path.

When you have found one [a shaykh], pay attention and serve him and regard him dearly, and see association with him as the cause of all your blessings and surrender to him. You should empty your existence of your ego and your opinion, and you should fill your interior with him and his will and his love, even if he distances you from himself and drives you away. He can not endure social interaction and association with everyone. Be inseparable from him and try to be in such a way that he can not refuse you. When you have been accepted, you have found the correct path and you have become one of the Saved People (*Ahl-i nojāt*).⁷⁰

Having been accepted by the shaykh, the Sufi novice commences a commitment

⁶⁹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 129.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 27-28.

to wayfaring (*sulūk*). There are six essential conditions for wayfaring,⁷¹ all of which are connected with the relationship between the novice and the shaykh. The first condition is finding the shaykh, and the second condition stipulated that having found the shaykh, the novice should not love anyone else in the same way during the whole of his life. This condition enables the novice to practice the third essential condition which is obeying all the shaykh's commands. This means that the novice has to abandon his own independent opinion and thought which is the fourth condition. The fifth condition is the abandonment of complaint and denial, that is, complaint and denial of the shaykh, because the novice cannot recognise what is good or bad or what is obedience or disobedience. Therefore the simplest policy is to carry out all the shaykh's commands without complaint or denial. This is the case even if it means doing certain things which appear to contradict the *Sharī'a* :

... one [should do] nothing according to one's own opinion and idea, even if it is the obligatory prayer (*namāz-ī farz*), without the command of the guide (*hādī*), since whatever the wayfarer does on the basis of his own opinion is the cause of his remoteness, and whatever he does according to the command of the guide is the cause of his nearness.⁷²

Not all Sufis would have agreed on this point, that is, that the shaykh may cause the wayfarer to temporarily refrain from following the *Sharī'a* (as in not performing the obligatory prayers). However, the genuine shaykh always has a valid reason for doing this, and he himself continually follows the manifest (and non-manifest) dimensions of the *Sharī'a* for the first quality of the genuine shaykh is that he "keeps the customs and traditions and ways." And finally, the last condition for spiritual wayfaring is constancy on the path.

This commitment and surrender by the wayfarer to the shaykh has two conditions:

⁷¹ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 95.

⁷² *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 73b, lines 17-19.

The first condition is that the disciple, in the association of his shaykh, is just like the community in the association of its prophet⁷³; and the second condition is that the shaykh speaks with the disciple in accordance with his station.⁷⁴

The ideal period to commence this commitment to the shaykh is at the age of twenty. Nasafī comments that the first twenty years of man's life is the period when his body becomes mature, and in the next twenty years his spirit becomes mature.⁷⁵ This ascetic discipline and spiritual effort under the shaykh continues for twenty years:

It is necessary that in these twenty years, one must never be relaxed and without religious effort for an instant ... O dervish, whoever engages himself in these twenty years which are the times of wayfaring (*sulūk*) and does not waste his life, if he is one of the People of the Holy Law and is in the service of a perfect teacher, then there will be no knowledge remaining from the exoteric knowledge, rather, he will know everything about it. And if he is one of the People of the Way and in the association of a perfect shaykh, then there will be no knowledge remaining of the real knowledge, rather, he will know everything about it. So whoever is one of the People of the Holy Law and who - during these twenty years which is the time of wayfaring - is engaged in the position of judgement or in the position of teaching, that person is unfortunate and a dweller of hell. But whoever is in the service of a perfect shaykh and does not waste his life and remains in this state for twenty years, and is then engaged in the position of judgement or in the position of teaching, that person is in the correct manner. And if he becomes engaged in shaykh-hood or being a preacher, he is also in the correct manner. If he abandons all of this after forty years despite these titles, he is perfect.⁷⁶

Although the period of religious effort and spiritual discipline is limited to twenty years, the association with a wise^{man} lasts for a life time:

The dervishes must never be without religious effort and ascetic discipline until they are forty years of age, and when the fortieth year has passed they must not perform religious effort and ascetic discipline in an excessive way, but they must not

⁷³ This reflects the *ḥadīth*, frequently quoted by Sufis, that "The Shaykh in his group is like a Prophet in his people." See Furūzānfar, no. 224.

⁷⁴ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 77b, lines 1-3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, fol. 75a, lines 3-5.

⁷⁶ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 130.

be without it until they become sixty years old. When the sixtieth year passes, they must not perform much religious effort and ascetic discipline. After the sixtieth year they must continue with association, the People of the Heart can not live without association.⁷⁷

4:2:3 Devotional practices

From this point, Nasafī proceeded to describe the customs (*adab*) of wayfaring, the striking feature of which was the predominance of prayer in the everyday life of the wayfarer:

Know that the first custom of wayfaring is continually being ceremonially pure, and each time that ablutions are made, two *rak'a* (bending of the body in prayer) of thanks are performed. After the first *rak'a*, after the opening chapter of the Koran, one must read, "If one does a sinful thing or wrongs himself in any way and afterwards implores Allah's forgiveness, he will find God Forgiving and Compassionate."⁷⁸ At the second *rak'a*, one must read: "O believers, who if ever they commit a sin remember Allah instantly and ask forgiveness from Him for their shortcomings - for who but Allah can forgive sins? - who do not knowingly persist in the wrongs they did."⁷⁹

The second custom is to divide the time of day and night. That is, one should make a time for litanies (*wird*) a prayer for worship, a litany for food, and a litany for sleep in order that one's life is not wasted.

The third custom is the prayer repeated during the night (*namāz-i tahajjud*). That is, in the second half of the night, one must perform twelve *rak'a* of the "*witr*" prayers (voluntary prayers). Some, after reading the opening verse of the Koran at the end of the *namāz-i tahajjud* recite this verse: "Besides this, offer the Tahajjud prayer at night: this is an additional prayer for you. That time is not far when your Lord may exalt you to a laudable position."⁸⁰ Some, at the end of the *namāz-i tahajjud* after the opening verse of the Koran, recite the *Sūra: Innā anzalnā*^{80A}, and some read from *wasamā'iwa al-ṭāriq*,^{80B} to the end of the Koran in the *namāz-i tahajjud*.

The fourth custom is the mid morning prayer (*namāz-i chāsht*). That is, each day at sun rise, one must perform two *rak'a* for the sunrise prayers (*namāz-i ishrāq*)

⁷⁷ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 129.

⁷⁸ Koran, 4:110.

⁷⁹ Koran, 3:135.

⁸⁰ Koran, 17:79.

^{80A} Koran, 97:1: We have sent down

^{80B} Koran, 86:1: By the sky and the Night-Visitor.

and at mid morning one must perform twelve *rak'a* for the *namāz-i chāshtgāh*.

The fifth custom is the prayer of the penitents (*namāz-i awwābīn*). That is, one must perform twelve *rak'a* between the evening prayer and the prayers before sleeping.

The sixth custom is continual *dhikr*.

The seventh custom is recognising thoughts (*khāṭir*). That is, there are four kinds of thought; merciful (*raḥmānī*), angelic (*malakī*), egoistic (*nafsānī*), and satanic (*shayṭānī*) and there is an indication for each one.

The eighth custom is reading something from the discourses of the shaykh.

The ninth custom is accepting service in the *khānaqāh*.

The tenth custom is sitting everyday for a period in the association of dervishes and listening to their discourses.

The eleventh custom is the declaration of incidents (*mājarā*). That is, if a dervish tells a discourse or does something that vexes another dervish, the vexed dervish must not keep it in his heart but explain the incident in a kind way before all the dervishes and the dervish who has caused the incident.

The twelfth custom is religious effort and ascetic discipline.⁸¹

Thus the Sufi's wayfaring was based upon devotion to God and not a moment passed when the Sufi was engaged in a task which did not involve him thinking about God. Half of the above customs (if one considers *dhikr* as a form of prayer) were established upon prayer and the frequency of prayer alone must have conditioned the wayfarer's life towards complete devotion. Indeed, prayer is portrayed as consisting of half of wayfaring (*sulūk*) in another work:

O dear friend! the reality of wayfaring is two steps; proceeding from veils and reaching stations. A veil is whatever one has to remove from oneself and a station is whatever one has to actualise for oneself. So whoever has been completely cleansed of blameworthy attributes and unpleasant character traits has passed all the veils; and whoever becomes completely described by praiseworthy attributes and pleasant character traits has reached all the stations. Whoever has passed the veils has produced purity and whoever has reached all the levels has performed prayers, since the reality of purity is distinction (*faṣl*) and the reality of prayers is connection (*waṣl*).⁸²

⁸¹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p 132-133.

⁸² *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 74a, lines 9-14.

This description of prayer in terms of connection (*waṣl*), that is, connection with God, is important to note because it reflects the Sufi belief that it is through prayer that the wayfarer witnesses God. What the *miṣrāj* was for the Prophet Muḥammad, so too, the prayer is for the wayfarer.

With regards to prayer, the Islamic mystics believed that there were particular times when its effects (such as the possibility of experiencing a mystical vision or witnessing God) were very strong. Nasafi himself comments:

When the sun rises, the prayers of dawn are recited twice and when the prayers of dawn have been performed there is a place kept for the complete recital of the morning prayers until the time when the sun rises high. And then once it has risen, one performs the mid morning prayer twelve times. When this is completed one may become occupied with whatever one wishes, and from the start of the morning until this point, not one word concerning the world has been spoken and one has not left the place of prayer. And the Sufis hold this time very dear because many divine graces have been found during this period.⁸³

Such careful attention to the details and times of prayer, as has already been shown, has a basis in the Koran. Muḥammad had directed his community concerning the time of prayer in the following way, “Establish regular prayers - at the sun’s decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer and reading: for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony.”⁸⁴ In another verse, prayer during the night was advocated: “Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul) and most suitable for (framing) the Word (of praise).”⁸⁵ The Sufi orders complied in these commands, and some zealous orders went to extremes in performing them. For example, the Sufis of the *Shadhiliyya* order used to drink coffee to keep themselves awake during their litanies and vigils.⁸⁶

By the thirteenth century, the Sufis believed that they had discovered the reason

⁸³ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 121.

⁸⁴ Koran, 17:78.

⁸⁵ Koran, 73:6.

⁸⁶ A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 254.

why the night and early morning were set aside by Muḥammad for prayer. It was considered that during these times, man's five external senses were dulled and did not work so efficiently. The Sufis held that it was while man's senses were dulled that the "internal senses" had a better chance to perceive what the external senses blocked. This included the possibility of witnessing God.

From this perspective, Nasafī's exhortation that after service to a wise man, there was nothing better than eating little, speaking little and sleeping little⁸⁷ becomes clear for this was considered as one of the ways to dullen the external senses.

Other practices which are associated with prayer include the *dhikr* (which was discussed in the previous chapter). Nasafī's descriptions of the different forms of performing the *dhikr* have been noted by M.I. Waley, so it is not necessary to repeat them here.⁸⁸

4:2:4 Contemplative discipline, the mastering of one's soul and other Sufi practices

There are other Sufi practices which cannot be classified as devotional because they are concerned with the individual's examination of his own thoughts and actions. For example, "contemplative vigilance" (*murāqaba*) is the attention paid by the Sufi to all his thoughts and actions, including the *dhikr*, to ensure that he is concerned only with God.⁸⁹ Vigilance over thoughts (*khawāṭir*) was a major element in contemplative practices and Nasafī describes four kinds of thought of which the Sufi must be able to distinguish; divine (*rahmānī*), angelic (*malakī*), egotistical (*nafsānī*) and satanic (*shaytānī*).⁹⁰ (It is of interest that Najm al-Dīn Kubrā lists the very same four kinds of *khāṭir*⁹¹). Special caution is paid to the *khāṭir* when the wayfarer undergoes a period of seclusion (*khilwat*). A typical practice of the Sufis was the "forty day period of

⁸⁷ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p.129.

⁸⁸ M. I. Waley, "Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and the Central Asian School of Sufism," *Islamic Spirituality II*, ed. S.H. Nasr, (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

⁸⁹ See M.I. Waley, "Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism," in *Classical Persian Sufism*, ed.

⁹⁰ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p.133, see also *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 105.

⁹¹ Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa fawātih al-jalāl*, [25].

L. Lewisohn, (London: Kharrigahi
Nimatullahi Publications, 1993) p.535-38.

seclusion” (*chilla*⁹²) during which time the wayfarer engaged in prayer, *dhikr*, *fikr* and was constantly heedful of his *khawāṭir*. Recognition of the *khawāṭir* is necessary because they are an indication of the position the wayfarer has made on the path, and frequently they can give an indication of his spiritual station and also if any obstacles remain in the way. Nasafī mentions that during the *chilla*, it is necessary to negate the *khawāṭir*, even those of a divine nature. If a *khāṭir* does arise and it cannot be put aside, then it is necessary for the wayfarer to present it to the shaykh, who can explain it in order that it does not obstruct the wayfarer’s path.⁹³

The *chilla* was also used in the process of mastering one’s soul or spirit. For Nasafī, the spirit reached perfection by advancing through a series of levels, starting with animal spirit and advancing to the soul spirit and human spirit (also known as the Attributed Spirit):

Man’s body is like a lamp, and the animal spirit is in the heart which is just like a wick. The soul spirit is in the brain and is like oil. The human spirit is like fire ... [and] when the human spirit, which is the Attributed spirit, is connected to the soul spirit, there is “light upon light.”⁹⁴

During the *chilla*, the task of the wayfarer was to master the spirit so that it could reach the human level. The *chilla*, in effect, not only meant that the wayfarer was engaged in devotional practices, but also that his whole existence was transformed by the strict adherence to his shaykh’s rules, which were designed to master the animal and soul spirits, thus enabling the human spirit to emerge from the inner self of the wayfarer. Nasafī describes several ways in which this mastery could be managed. For example, special attention was paid to one’s diet:

O dear friend! It is necessary that the wayfarer eats once every day, any time which is better and more suitable for him. It is [also] necessary that on that one occasion, he eats “pure” food (*ṭa’ām-i laṭīf*). The amount of food is different for each

⁹² For Nasafī on *chilla*, see *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 134-35.

⁹³ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 135.

⁹⁴ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 274-75.

person; it is necessary to eat to the extent that one does not become full because being too full is not pleasant, but one must also not become a slave to eating an extremely small amount which may cause one's strength to fail, for this is not pleasant.⁹⁵

The regulations during the *chilla* were more specific:

One shaykh may give an amount of food each night of less than fifty *dirham*, and another may give more. Our shaykh [i.e. Ḥammuyā] ordered a loaf of bread worth forty *dirham*, a piece of meat worth forty *dirham* and a bowl of stew (*āb-i gūsh*). I suffered if I did not eat, and now it is clear that he was right ... some ate forty mouthfuls during the first night [of the *chilla*] and they ate one mouthful less each night so that they ate only one mouthful by the last night. Others ate one *man* [about three kilograms] during the whole *chilla* and [some] ate the equivalent of seven *dirham* each night. Others did not eat meat at all during the whole period of the *chilla*. Our shaykh said that all of this was unimportant because performing [the *chilla*] is [more] important. The meaning of decreasing food and how much each person eats pertains to the shaykh.⁹⁶

Thus Nasafī advocates the middle way between excessive fasting and excessive eating in order to control the *nafs*. Some Sufis prior to Nasafī are said to have starved to death whereas others are known to have enjoyed lavish spreads.⁹⁷ In addition to offering advice to dervishes concerning the quantity of food to be eaten, Nasafī also gives instructions on Sufi table manners:

The dervishes must be present and sit politely at meals and they must not eat anything greedily. They must respect the elders and not sit above them, nor should they start eating before them. Moreover, they must not look at anyone else's plate, for they should look at their own plate. They should eat in small morsels, chewing well, and they may take another morsel after swallowing the first. If it happens that the dervishes eat from one dish, then each dervish must eat from the part facing him and not stretch across the other dervishes. If something falls from his hand, he must pick it up with his left hand and not put it in his mouth, but place it to

⁹⁵ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 74b, lines 14-17.

⁹⁶ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, pp. 134-35.

⁹⁷ See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 115-17.

one side. The dervish must not refuse food in front of the other dervishes. If they do not want food then they must keep themselves busy. At the beginning of eating one must wash one's hands and at the end one must wash one's hands and mouth.⁹⁸

The foregoing passage is significant because it reveals the importance of the communal nature of Nasafī's Sufism (not to mention the concern for selfless behaviour and purity). This attention to communal Sufism is highlighted in Nasafī's discussion of disputes among the dervishes:

If a dervish makes a remark or does something which causes the others to suffer, the [dervish] who has been made to suffer must not keep the problem in his heart. He must disclose tactfully whatever has taken place to the dervish who has caused the suffering, before the other dervishes. If he has a clear answer, in such a way that it is accepted by the other dervishes, then he explains until the problem is solved for the [accusing] dervish. If he has no clear answer, then he should not draw out the explanation but he should quickly apologise and beg forgiveness. He should rise up and go to wherever the shoes are stored and stand there with his hands placed together with his head hung low until the accusing dervish rises and the other dervishes arise in unison with him. Then the two dervishes embrace and become happy. Then all the others in accord with the two dervishes embrace one another and they sit down again.⁹⁹

It seems clear from such comments that Nasafī was intimately involved in life within the *khānaqāh*. In other words, he was not merely a speculative Sufi, but he was also actively involved in the practice of Sufism in the company of other Sufis. Of course, this does not prove his affiliation to the Kubrāwiyya order, but it does appear to be the case that Nasafī was not paying "lip service" when he says that one should first go^{to} the *madrasa* and then go to the *khānaqāh*.

One of the activities that took place within the confines of the *khānaqāh* and which became a major point of controversy within the Islamic community, was the *samā'*. The *samā'* is "sacred music and dance" in which the individual opens himself

⁹⁸ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 128.

⁹⁹ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 125.

“to an influence, to a vibration of suprahuman origin ‘made sound’ in order to awaken in us the echoes of a primordial state and to arouse in the heart a longing for union with its own Essence.”¹⁰⁰ Both the philosophers within the Islamic world and Sufis had noticed the effects that music had upon the mood of the human soul. Nasafī underlines this idea in the following passages:

All humans share in gaining (*istikhrāj*) from singing voices (*aṣwāt*) and melodies (*alḥān*) but some not only gain [but] pleasant singing voices and melodies are the cause of unveiling in some and the cause of sadness in others. Because of this, one person [has] asked, “What are the effects of *samā’*?” It is said that it depends upon the listener because pleasant singing voices and melodies are like raindrops and the listeners are like plants, or we say that singing voices and melodies are like sunlight and the listeners are like minerals, and although in truth, the sunlight is one thing, it reveals something in each mine.¹⁰¹

If a dervish weakens in religious effort or ascetic discipline, or if there is an illness in his mind, he must quickly become busy in curing it, arranging for suitable oils, pure food and temperate air. One of the cures that can help him is a pleasant voice. One of the dervishes who has a pleasant and sad (*hazīn*) voice should occasionally sing for him. And if there is no problem for anyone, and the dervishes are worried, the removal of that worry is through one of the dervishes singing something at an expedient time and at an agreed place where there are no common people present. It is permissible if he sings along with a tambourine. There are some wayfarers for whom states are produced during the *samā’* and innumerable benefits and openings come to them from those states. It is expedient for such people to engage in *samā’* if the time, place and brothers are all appropriate.¹⁰²

Some jurists, such as Ibn Abi’l Dunyā (d. 894) condemned singing and music since they held that it stimulated the “soul inciting to evil.” The Sufis themselves had mixed feelings towards the *samā’* because it acted upon both the sensual and spiritual. The Naqshbandiyya order forbade participation in the *samā’* since they saw its dangers

¹⁰⁰ J.L. Michon, “Sacred Music and Dance in Islam,” *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. S.H. Nasr, pp. 474-475.

¹⁰¹ *Bayān-i tanzīl*, fol. 16a lines 9-13.

¹⁰² *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 126.

were stronger than its benefits.¹⁰³ Other Sufis, including Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā deemed it permissible¹⁰⁴ and Abū Ḥafṣ Suhrawardī recognised that the matter depended upon the individual.

Music does not give rise, in the heart, to anything which is not already there: so he whose inner self is attached to anything else than God is stirred by music to sensual desire, but the one who is inwardly attached to the love of God is moved, by hearing music, to do his will.¹⁰⁵

For this reason, participation in the *samā'* required the permission of the shaykh who understood the true nature of each of the dervishes. The shaykh would be able to determine which individuals would be suitable to participate and which would not be able to appreciate the spiritual nature of the *samā'*. By Nasafī's era, it appears that the *samā'* had degenerated somewhat, or at least, the ecstatic states of the Sufis (during which clothes were rent and dancing breast to breast was known to occur)¹⁰⁶ had been misinterpreted by the common people. Nasafī is cautious about the Sufis engaging in *samā'* when the common people are present and he gives this warning:

O dervish! It is the custom of these times that the élite and common people sit together and perform the *samā'*, but this is neither the dervish way, nor the tradition of the shaykhs. It is one of the customs and habits of the common people. The shaykhs have said that the dervishes must not go to this *samā'*. According to this wretched one, the People of Discernment should not be present in this *samā'* because learned people do not do childish things. Playing is the pastime of children.

O dervish! The dervish must certainly keep the *samā'* for the appropriate time, place and brothers so that it is in line with the tradition of the shaykhs.¹⁰⁷

Nasafī also gives guidelines for how one should behave during the performance

¹⁰³ A. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 180.

¹⁰⁴ Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā composed the following:

*When music is heard, the soul scents the perfume of the beloved;
Melody, like a mystic barque, transports it to the shores of the Friend.*

Cited by C. Rice, *The Persian Sufis*. (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1964).

¹⁰⁵ M. Smith, *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, London: 1950.

¹⁰⁶ See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 181.

¹⁰⁷ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 126-27.

of the *samā'*, such as whether or not one should stand up and whether it is permissible to remove one's turban. These instructions are the very same as those offered by Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī,¹⁰⁸

The speculative and practical form of Sufism that Nasafī advocates places the wayfarer in the middle ground, for he does not encourage excessive ascetic disciplines and religious effort, nor does he permit free licence to the self:

Don't be a slave to [either] too much prayer and fasting or to excessive pilgrimage (*ḥajj*), but perform God's ordinances (*fariḍa*) accordingly. Don't be a slave to either remembering too many words or story telling. And don't be a slave to understanding much wisdom but be satisfied with the required amount.¹⁰⁹

By following this path, the wayfarer will find that gradually the self (that he once knew) is transformed. The "dropping off" of concerns pertaining to the body and mind is an unveiling which reveals the real self beyond the ego. God may even reward the wayfarer by bestowing a *ḥāl* upon him, and it may be the case that he realises the unity between himself and his Lord. This, the ultimate mystical experience is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁰⁸ See. C. Field, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, p. 76.

¹⁰⁹ *Zubdāt al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 116-117.

CHAPTER 5

Visionary Experience and Unity with God

5:1 Types of Visions and Mystical Experience

The aim of Sufism is felicity and there is no greater felicity than witnessing God. The Sufi wayfarer engages in practices such as *dhikr*, *fikr*, *chilla* and *samā'* along with other devotional acts because through them, he polishes his heart¹ so that it can reflect the knowledge of the spiritual world and he can come close to God. This proximity is frequently accompanied by signs within the wayfarer by which one can judge the progress that the Sufi has made along the path. These signs take the form of visions or the witnessing of spirits or “imaginal” beings.

In the first part of this chapter, the visions and mystical experiences that Nasafī describes are portrayed. The second section focuses upon what it actually means for Sufis such as Nasafī to witness God and this inevitably means retracing the concepts of God's essence and His faces. Following on from this, it is possible to see whether Nasafī's vision and mystical experience conforms with the definition of such experiences that were given by R.C. Zaehner, a twentieth century scholar of the mystical tradition.

5:1:1 The Journey to God represented through symbols

The wayfarer's proximity to God, or the degree of the wayfarer's felicity was ascertained by the Kubrāwiyya order through the psychological analysis of visions which indicated the soul's ascent to the Absolute. The works of thirteenth century masters such as Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī and 'Azīz Nasafī depict this ascent through the images of the stars, moon and sun. It is not surprising that the mystic

¹ See 3:3:1

witness such images because these are symbols which occur in the Koran, and the Sufis spent many hours in contemplation of the esoteric meanings of verses in which these symbols appear. For example, Nasafī refers to the sixth Sura of the Koran which concerns the Prophet Abraham:

...there are three angels in *Malakūt* which are the leaders of angels and they are called the Great Angels. Of these three, one is in such a way that the frame of existents comes from him, and this Great Angel has four rows of angels, each row having several thousand angels which are busy in obedience and submission to God. These are the terrestrial angels, so each particle in all particles of earth have an angel together with it, and Abraham's first glance was upon this Great Angel and this is the meaning of: "When the night covered him over, he saw a star, he said 'This is my Lord,' but when it set he said, 'I love not those that set.'" ² Of these three angels, one is bigger than the first angel, and the life of the existents comes from it. And this angel has nine rows of angels, and in each row there are several thousand angels and they are occupied in obedience and submission to God and all these angels are equal and Abraham's second glance fell upon this Great Angel: "When he saw the moon rising in splendour he said, 'This is my Lord,' but when he saw the moon set he said, 'Unless the Lord guide me, I shall be among those who go astray.'" ³ And there is another Great Angel which is bigger than these two, and this Great Angel has ten rows of angels and in each row there are several thousand angels each yearning for God Almighty and Holy and they are absorbed in the Lord of creatures, and this Great Angel is not informed about the land or sky, and Abraham's third glance fell upon him, and this is the meaning of: "When he saw the sun rising in splendour he said, 'This is my Lord, this is the greatest of all.' But when the sun set he said, 'O my people! I am indeed free from your guilt of giving partners to God.'" ⁴ This angel guided Abraham to the Lord of creatures so that he was liberated from association of others with God, and when he attained the world of unity he said, "For me, I have set my face firmly and truly towards Him who created the heavens and earth, and I shall never give partners to God." ⁵ The reason that Abraham's glance fell upon *Malakūt* is set out in the verse, "So also did we show Abraham the power and the laws of the heaven and earth that he might have certitude." ⁶ And it is written: "When

² Koran, 6:76.

³ Koran, 6:77.

⁴ Koran, 6:78.

⁵ Koran, 6:79.

⁶ Koran, 6:75.

the night covered him he saw a star,"⁷ informs us with glory about the state of Abraham and then it describes the details.⁸

Nasafī's account reveals the Koranic and hierarchical foundation for the exegesis of visions of the stars, moon and sun. Half a century prior to Nasafī, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī had portrayed a similar account of Abraham's mystical encounters and he relates these visions to the mystic's ascent and the condition of his heart:

As for those lights that are seen in the form of heavenly bodies, - stars, moons and suns - they derive from the lights of spirituality that appear in the sky of the heart, in accordance with its degree of purity. When the mirror of the heart becomes as pure as a star, the light of the spirit becomes apparent to the amount of a star ... it sometimes happens that the soul attains such purity that it appears to be like the sky, and the heart is seen in it like the moon. If the full moon is seen, the heart has become completely pure; if it is less than full, a degree of impurity remains in the heart. When the mirror of the heart attains perfect purity and begins receiving light of the spirit, that light will be witnessed in the likeness of the sun. The brightness of the sun is in proportion to the degree of the heart's purity, until a point is reached at which the heart is a thousand times brighter than the external sun. If the moon and the sun are witnessed together, then the moon is the heart, illuminated with the reflection of the light of the spirit, and the sun is the spirit.⁹

So, it is clear that the Kubrāwī order developed a technique for interpreting the stages of mystical visions. For Nasafī, the stars represent *Mulk*, the moon indicates *Malakūt* while the sun stands for *Jabarūt*. Above this is the unknowable aspect of God, that is, the Divine Presence which is incomprehensible to man's rational faculties and impossible to describe (except by negating any attributes to Him).

⁷ Koran, 6:76.

⁸ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 61-62.

⁹ Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, trans. H. Algar, op.cit., p. 296.

5:1:2 Visions of the Next World

On ascent to God, not all mystics reach the ultimate stage of contemplating the Absolute. However, Nasafī describes another type of vision which enables the mystic to witness the state of the spirit after natural death:

Observing the states after death is a great task for the wayfarer. People are ignorant about this reality, if they were not surely they would make an effort and endeavour in order for these states after death to be revealed to them, so that they could witness the station which they will return to after separation from the body.¹⁰

Know that the ascent for the Sufis means that the spirit of the wayfarer leaves the body in a healthy and wakeful state. And the state that will be revealed to him after separation from the body is now revealed to him before death. He surveys heaven and hell and he arrives at the level of the eye of certainty from the level of knowledge of certainty, and he sees whatever he has understood.¹¹

Our Shaykh (*Hammuyā*) stated, 'My spirit spent thirteen days in the heavens and then returned to my body. And during those thirteen days my body was like that of a dead man and had no concern for anything. Others who were present said that my body had been in such a way for thirteen days.' And another dear one stated 'My spirit remained there for twenty days and then came back to the body.' And another dear one said, 'My spirit spent forty days and then returned to the body.' He remembered everything that he saw in those forty days.¹²

5:1:3 Encounters with spirits, future events and dreams

Once the heart has become mirror-like, it is able to reflect knowledge that has come from the spiritual world. This includes communication with the spirits of dead people, such as the Friends of God. Nasafī describes the process of pilgrimage to tombs:

If one pays a pilgrimage after the death of the Friend of God, and he asks for help, it will be obtained. The manner of paying pilgrimage and praying is in this way;

¹⁰ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 108.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid*, p. 109.

one must walk around the tomb and be attentive, and at that time, one must be free from everything and make the mirror of the heart clean and pure so that the spirit of the pilgrim can encounter the deceased through the grave. Then, if the pilgrim desires knowledge or wisdom, the solution to the problem will be manifested on his heart in that very hour. If he has the receptivity for discovering it and if the request of the pilgrim is help and assistance, the approval of the prayer will be manifested in other affairs after the pilgrimage and his important affairs will be resolved adequately. This is because the spirit of the deceased has favour with God and the spirit asks that the important affairs of the pilgrim are made adequate. If the deceased spirit has not found favour near God but has favour near God's esteemed ones, he asks of them that God makes the important affairs adequate.¹³

In addition to this, the mirror of the heart can reflect images about the states of living people and the states of future events:

There are some people who can tell the names of whoever they see or whoever they do not see, and they can tell the names of that person's parents and kinsmen and tribe, and they are informed of those peoples' past and present circumstances ... and there are some men who see in their sleep the occurrence of a thing before it has taken place in the real world.¹⁴

And there are some men who see it while awake, and there are several types of this kind of vision; either a form becomes illustrated outside of the mind and describes a past or future circumstance, or a picture appears upon their heart.¹⁵

The witnessing of visions, as mentioned earlier depends upon dulling the five external senses, and this occurs naturally for most people during sleep. Thus, during sleep the opportunities for witnessing visions are greater than when awake:

...the invisible world has levels and from level to level there are many differences and the interior of the wayfarer also has levels and from level to level there are many differences. The first level of the exterior world can extract from the first level of the interior world and the last level of the exterior world can extract from the last level of the interior world. The knowledge and insight of the wayfarer are also

¹³ Ibid, pp. 236-7.

¹⁴ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 107.

¹⁵ Ibid.

obtained in this way, and veridical dreaming (*kuṣb-i rāst*) is one example of this, and ecstasy and experiencing divine inspiration is another example. Each person who makes his heart clear will find these effects. This meaning is found in the dreams of many people, but occurs less in wakefulness because the senses are subdued in dreams. And the displeasures, which are produced by means of the senses and by means of anger and appetites, become less for the interior. At such a time, the interior is able to acquire knowledge from the world for this reason. So isolation and seclusion, the wayfarer's ascetic discipline and spiritual effort are for the sake that during wakefulness, their bodies can be like those of people who are asleep, perhaps cleaner and purer.¹⁶

When the senses are removed by means of sleep, at that time the heart finds suitability with the heavenly angels in the same way as two clear mirrors which are opposite one another. The reflection of that thing which is known by the angels will appear on the heart of the sleeper ... This dreaming is creditworthy and this dream can be explained. And this is the meaning of veridical dream, and this dream is one part of the forty six parts of prophecy.¹⁷

It is interesting that Nasafī appears to have believed that making the heart mirror-like is not confined to Muslims, thus the opportunity of witnessing visions and having mystical experiences such as communicating with the spirits of the living and the dead is open to non-Muslims:

O dervish, this manifestation of reflections does not depend on unbelief (*kufr*) or belief (*Islām*), it depends upon a heart which is plain and without colouring. This manifestation of reflections appears in the complete and the incomplete and in the pious and in the lewd person.¹⁸

Moreover, this form of knowledge is not confined to humans:

And apart from wayfarers there also exists a people whose hearts have been made plain and are not tarnished, and it is also manifested upon their hearts. And some say it is even manifested for animals. Some of the animals inform people before

¹⁶ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 89-90.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 246.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 243.

the arrival of each calamity or fortuity which comes to this world. Some people understand and some do not understand.¹⁹

Najm al-Dīn Rāzī also indicates that non-Muslims can witness mystical visions, yet he stipulates that they cannot reach the same degree of gnosis that Muslims enjoy. Indeed he classifies visions into two varieties; the first is the mystical vision of the spirit, and the second is the mystical vision when God Almighty reveals himself to the mystic in the form in which the mystic can comprehend Him as the Real God.²⁰

5:1:4 The different levels of mystical experience as manifested through visions

The distinction that Najm al-Dīn Rāzī draws between two forms of mysticism enables him to discount non-Muslims, for they can not see the “lights of the attribute of unity” and therefore can not transcend the human state. The reason that Rāzī gives for the inability of followers ^{of other religions} (Hindus, Christians and Philosophers) to reach the ultimate stage is because their practices are deficient. For example, the “extreme mortification of the soul” can only lead to a certain degree of unveiling, and they can not know whether or not they have been lead astray in their journey by their own ego since they do not see the necessity of having a shaykh.²¹

Nasafī also divides mystical experience into two different kinds:

O dervish, life, knowledge, desire, power, hearing, seeing and speech are the attributes of the First Intelligence, and creation, giving life and instruction are the actions of the First Intelligence. No one except for God knows the greatness and splendour of the First Intelligence. Many great men among the eminent shaykhs have arrived at this First Intelligence and have been obstructed by it because they have seen its attributes and actions, and have not seen anything greater than its judgement or found anything above its affairs: “When He decrees a thing He need only say ‘Be,’ and it is.”²² They believed that perhaps it was God, and they worshipped it for a

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 174.

²⁰ Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, trans. H. Algar, op.cit., p. 289.

²¹ Ibid, p. 239.

²² Koran, 36:82.

while until the favour of the Almighty Truth came to them and they saw a judgement greater than that of the First Intelligence and affairs greater than those of the First Intelligence. At that time it became clear for them that it was God's caliph, it was not God, but it was the locus of manifestation of God's attributes and actions.²³

In Nasafī's above quote, the first realisation of the shaykhs is the unity of existence seen in the First Intelligence (that is, *Jabarūt*). The superior realisation is the unity of existence which stretches from man to the level of God beyond the First Intelligence which is ^{the} level of *Aḥadiyya*. In the Sufi tradition, this level transcends man's experiences and therefore it can only be considered theoretically.

With this perspective in mind, we can now return to the question of whether non-Muslims can enjoy the same range of mystical experience as Muslims. Najm al-Dīn Rāzī denies this possibility, and although Nasafī does not say so explicitly, it seems that he does not share the same opinion. This is revealed by his discussion of the discourse of the Indians (*Ahl-i Hind*) which describes human perfection in exactly the same way as the discourses of the Muslims, which draws inspiration from the Light verse of the Koran (24:35).

... understanding this discourse is very important, for the ascetic disciplines and spiritual effort of the Indians are included as the foundation of this discourse. In other words, this discourse is extremely good and many problems are resolved by understanding it.²⁴

The world is made of two things, light and darkness, in other words, a sea of light and a sea of darkness. These two seas are mixed together and it is necessary to separate the light from the darkness in order for the attributes of light to be made clear. Indeed, this light can be separated from the darkness within a given creature, because there are workers in the creature's body ... The alchemy that man performs is that he takes the "soul" of whatever he eats; in other words, he takes the select and quintessence of food. In this way, light is separated from darkness in such a way that light knows and sees itself as it is. Only the Perfect Man can do this.²⁵

²³ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 225.

²⁴ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 24.

²⁵ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 24.

O dervish! It is not possible to completely separate this light from darkness because light cannot exist without darkness ... Light must be with darkness just as a lamp in a niche, so that its attributes may be witnessed. When the light ascends in levels and each one of the workers completes its task, so that the light reaches the brain, it is like a lamp in a niche. The reality of man is the lamp.²⁶

When this lamp becomes strong and pure, the knowledge and wisdom which is hidden in its essence becomes more apparent.

O dervish! From beginning to end, this discourse has been an explanation of the journey of the Indians.²⁷

So it appears that non-Muslims can also witness God by following their own divine laws and engaging in spiritual exercises. This conclusion reflects the beliefs expressed by Nasafī that man's perfection depends upon the "four times," each carrying the qualities of the heavens and stars appearing at a given moment, and that it is possible for the "four times" to bring the same qualities to one person in each climate, whereby individuals outside of the *Dār al-Islām* (the Islamic world) can attain perfection.

Such a view accords with verses in the Koran which express tolerance towards other religions: "To each among you We have prescribed a Law and an open way. If God had so willed He would have made you a single people but His plan is to test you in what He hath given you; so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is God. It is He Who will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute."²⁸

5:1:5 Conclusion

The Kubrāwī exegesis of visions played an important part in the development of *'irfān* during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Iran and Central Asia. There are two reasons which may explain the formulation of the particular techniques and

²⁶ Ibid, p. 25.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

²⁸ Koran, 5: 51.

methodologies in the Sufi orders. Firstly, it was a reaction to the popularity that Sufism enjoyed during this period, and secondly it was a way to recognise the correct spiritual station of Sufis, some of whom mistakenly thought that they had reached the ultimate station and whose “Ḥallājīan” *shatḥiyyāt* incurred the wrath of the ‘*Ulamā*’. The popularity of Sufism was indeed a problem because it resulted in lay people desiring a “popular” form of Islamic mysticism which in reality obscured the essence of Sufism. Indeed, Nasafī himself was opposed to such a “popularisation” of Sufism as his comments concerning the Sufis and the common people sitting together for *samā*’ (see previous chapter) indicate.

Nasafī’s concern about the popularisation of Sufism is mirrored in Trimingham’s observation that “the practical goal of Sufism for the majority came to be the attainment of ecstasy (*wajd* = *faqd al-iḥsās*), ‘loss of consciousness.’ This is not the *wajd* (encounter with God) of the Sufis; it was in fact a degeneration which the early masters of Sufism had perceived and warned against when dealing with the question of *samā*’.” For the masses, “...loss of consciousness is regarded as ‘union,’ an emotional identification of seeker and sought. To some this experience became a drug for which soul and body craved. For the ordinary lay member, participation in the ritual of *dhikr*, which for him occasionally leads to the trance-ecstasy, provides at lowest a release from the hardships of everyday existence, and, at a higher level, some measure of freedom from the limitations of human life and a glimpse at transcendental experience.”²⁹

Nasafī hinted at this problem outlined by Trimingham:

And “inviting ecstasy” (*tawājud*) is an expression for a person who is not an ecstatic but [for a person] who makes himself resemble an ecstatic (*wājidat*), since inviting ecstasy is the same as feigning illness.³⁰

²⁹ J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders Of Islam*, p. 200.

³⁰ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p.174.

5:2 The Vision of God

In the previous section, it was shown that a correct interpretation of the wayfarer's visions revealed his proximity to God. Thus the stars, moon and sun represented *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt*. It is *Jabarūt* which is of interest in this section because this appears to be the ultimate level which man can experience. This is where God first manifests Himself as He is, as far as it possible for man to comprehend Him. Knowledge of this level is the ultimate aim of the wayfarer because from this point he realises that there is another level beyond him, which is the level of *Aḥadiyya*.

In chapter two, it was shown that any discussion of a wayfarer reaching God's essence is purely metaphorical, for man can witness nothing except for God's face. In this section, the reasons behind this are re-investigated by concentrating upon Nasafi's views concerning the ultimate spiritual station, and in addition, his beliefs are also compared with those of Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and Ibn 'Arabī to show the "orthodoxy" of his position within the Sufi world.

Most Sufis held that it was impossible for any individual to reach and know God's essence, yet the author of *Kashf al-ṣirāṭ* (who may have been Nasafi)³¹ describes the views of two groups of Sufis who differ on this issue. According to the author of *Kashf al-ṣirāṭ*, one group of Sufis believe it is not possible to know God's essence:

Know that each person has an interpretation (*ta'wīl*) for the *ḥadīth*: "Whoever knows himself knows his Lord," and also for the *ḥadīth*: "God created Adam upon His own form." Some, including Ḥujjat al-Islām Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, 'Ayn al-Quḍāt and Shaykh Yūsuf Hamadānī hold that it is not possible for men, Prophets and Friends of God to know in truth God Almighty just as God Almighty is. They say that the interpretation of the *ḥadīth*: "Whosoever knows himself knows his Lord," is that it is not possible for anyone to know the self as the self really is because one can not recognise the Almighty Truth as the Almighty Truth is. So the knowledge of the Truth is actualised from the knowledge of the self according to this mode. Likewise you should also understand the interpretation of the *ḥadīth*: "God created Adam upon His own form." It is not possible to recognise both in reality. In addition, it has been said

³¹ The passage in *Kashf al-ṣirāṭ* is similar to a discussion found in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 159-160.

that the world of man is the conceptualisation of the form of a thing and it conforms to the known (*ma'lūm*) in the mind (*dhihn*). So it is necessary that the known is seen (*mubṣar*) or heard (*musma'*) by this person, or its conceptualisation is possible. If such a thing is not the object of sensory perception (*maḥsūs*) it is necessary that there is no genus (*jins*) or similarity (*mānand*) for it. So how is it possible to conceptualise a thing for which there is no like (*mithl*), genus or species (*naw'*) and is not the object of sense perception? It is not possible to conceptualise the Real One (*aḥd-i ḥaqīqī*). So knowledge of the reality of His essence is not possible. There is no path for intelligence to the reality of His essence but there is a path for intelligence to His existence and attributes through signs and indications. His excellency the Messenger said: "Think about God and not the essence of God," and he also said, "The person who speaks of God's essence is foolish."³²

The other group of Sufis claim that it is possible to go beyond this stage and reach God's essence:

Others, including Shaykh of Shaykhs Sa'd al-Dīn Hammuyā, Ibn 'Arabī, Ibn Sab'īn and Imām Aḥmad Ghazālī - may God sanctify their spirits - hold that it is possible for man to know in reality the Almighty Truth just as the Almighty Truth is, by the servant's becoming wise (*dānā*) of the Truth. They say that Muḥammad's knowledge of the Truth was just as the Almighty Truth's knowledge of the Almighty Truth. They also say that no one recognises himself just as the self is except Muḥammad. So the meaning of this *ḥadīth* [He who knows himself knows his Lord] is obvious (*zāhir*) according to them, for the person who recognises himself just as the self is, recognises the Almighty Truth just as the Truth is.

So you have understood the meaning of the [foregoing] *ḥadīth* and you have understood the meaning of the *ḥadīth* that "God created Adam upon His own form," in other words, upon the form of instruction (*ṣurat-i ta'līm*) or the form of free disposal in the world (*ṣurat-i taṣarruf fī 'ālam*) or in a form transcendent of direction or from tool. Some have said that the meaning of this *ḥadīth* is obviously clear and people have fallen into error as a result of this extreme obviousness. The meaning of this *ḥadīth* is that whoever recognises himself recognises his Lord because there is no more than one existence. The Unitarian (*muwaḥḥid*) is the person who understands and sees one thing and if he sees or knows two things he is an associator of others with God (*mushrik*). So on the basis of this thinking that existence is one, whoever recognises himself also recognises his Lord.

³² *Kashf al-ṣirāt*, Veliyuddin 1767, fol. 208, line 13 onwards.

The beliefs of the second group of Sufis do not follow the “orthodox” interpretation of Sufism where man witnesses God’s face in everything but cannot reach His essence. In works aside from *Kashf al-ṣirāṭ*, Nasafī explains the highest spiritual station as the level where man sees God’s essence as it is manifested through His infinite faces. This station is the subject of the following section.

5:2:1 Variegation (*talwīn*), stability (*tamkīn*) and creative power (*takwīn*)

Nasafī’s standpoint regarding the highest spiritual station in relation to attributes is representative of Sufism in the thirteenth century, although the terminology that individual Sufis employed to describe this underlying reality differed. As stated above, Nasafī uses the word stability (*tamkīn*) to denote the pinnacle of spiritual achievement:

When he ceases reflection and inspiration presents itself, and inspiration becomes dominant over him, he passes from the world of intelligence and reaches the world of love. When he ceases from inspiration and witnessing presents itself, he passes from the world of love and reaches the station of stability (*maqām-i tamkīn*) and in [the station of] stability, he becomes attributed with whatever attribute he desires.

So at first, the *dhikr* is dominant over the wayfarer, then reflection is dominant, then inspiration and then witnessing, and finally he reaches the station of stability, and he becomes pure from any variegation (*talwīn*). In other words, at first the attributes of the wayfarer become dominant over his existence and each day, perhaps each hour, an attribute becomes dominant over him. But when the wayfarer passes from the station of variegation (*talwīn*) and reaches the station of stability, his existence becomes dominant over his attributes, and the indication of the station of stability is that he can actualise whatever station or attribute that he desires, that is, he can choose, and all attributes are his property. If he desires he engages in the *dhikr*, and if he wants he can be busy in reflection, if he doesn’t want he does not engage himself in the *dhikr* or reflection, he has made himself ready for inspiration so that he can be informed of past and future events. In other words, the mirror of his heart has been polished from the illuminations of both worlds, so that the reflection of whatever occurs or will occur in this world will become apparent upon his heart. If he wishes he can abandon the past and future and enjoy his moment.

For as long as the wayfarer is in the station of variegation, sometimes grace (*fayḍ*) is dominant over him, and sometimes expansion (*bast*) and sometimes the word (*kalām*) is dominant over him; sometimes silence and sometimes familiar talk (*ikhtilāṭ*) is dominant over him; sometimes seclusion (*'uzlat*) and sometimes anger (*qahr*) and sometimes kindness (*lutf*) is dominant over him and all of these come regardless of the wayfarer's desire. But when the wayfarer reaches the station of stability, all of these come at his desire; with regard to the states of people he is a doctor and cure for them, both through words and actions, and in regard to his own state, he is a king and he can be in any way that he desires.

O dervish! Until the wayfarer reaches the station of stability he is not freed from slavery and has not reached freedom. The People of Heaven are kings because while they were in the station of variegation, they were slaves to their appetites and their attributes were anger and incapacity, but when they arrived at stability, they became kings over their appetites and the God of wrath and the master of all their attributes.³³

For Nasafī, the wayfarer in the station of stability is similar to God; just as God can create anything that He desires and manifest whatever He desires, so too can the perfect wayfarer be a master of himself and “create” or display whatever attribute he desires. To use another expression, the spirit of such a wayfarer is like pure light and his body is like a prism which separates all the colours from this pure light. In other words, he has become attributed with all the Godly character traits and he knows the appropriate occasion for their manifestation.

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, expresses the same reality that Nasafī describes although the terminology is a little different. The views of the former are stated clearly in his discussion of *walāyat*, or Friendship of God. He lists a series of triads, each triad expressing the same reality. The last member in each triad supersedes the previous two members:

Three levels are possible for the wayfarer in the station of Friendship, and all of his Friendship is condensed in those three levels. The first level is variegation and the second level is stability and the third level is “bringing to be”; to use another expression, the first level is knowledge, the second level is state, and then it is annihilation from that state in the changer of states; or we say that the first level is

³³ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 141-142.

disengagement then it is solitariness and then unity; or we can say that the first level is fear and hope and then contraction and expansion and then it is familiarity and awe; or we say the first level is the knowledge of certainty, and after that is the truth of certainty and after that is the eye of certainty; moreover this knowledge is certainly acquired, the truth of certainty is a state and the source of certainty is annihilation in God; or we say the first level is worship and after that is *servanthood* (*'ubūdiyāt*) and after that is servitude (*'ubūda*)³⁴; or we say that the first level is the servant's search and after that is the Truth's acceptance of the servant, that is, the servant has accepted the Almighty Truth as the True, after that is annihilation in the Truth; or we say in the same way as Ḥusayn Ibn Maṣṣūr,³⁵ that the first level is the severing of desires, and the second is the description of truths and third is annihilation from truths in the Truth of Truths; or we say that the first level is the cultivating of devotion (*ta'abbud*), after that it is servant hood (*'ubūdiyāt*) and after that is freedom (*ḥurriyāt*); or we say that the first level is recollection, after that is remembrance and in the end is absorption in the remembered; or we say the first level is the annihilation of the servants attributes, after that is the annihilation of the attributes of the Truth, after that is annihilation of the essence of the Truth; or we say the first level is expression then it is indication, then it is absence of the servant except from the Truth; or we say first is presence and then is absence and in the end is the command of summoning; or we say first is withdrawal, then self-disclosure and finally being protected and "He takes into His protection the righteous"³⁶.³⁷

Thus, the first of these definitions of levels of Friendship of God, (*talwīn*, *tamkīn* and *takwīn*) with *takwīn* at occupying the top rung, is another way to describe Nasafī's view of *tamkīn*. In Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's triad of *talwīn*, *tamkīn* and *takwīn*; *takwīn* comes from the root *kun*, or "Be," which is the divine command. The perfect wayfarer is attributed with this power to manifest whatever attribute he desires and (just as in Nasafī's depiction of the situation) this desire does not come into conflict with God's desire because

³⁴ The difference between servanthood and servitude is that free will is included in the former but not in the latter. See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 312.

³⁵ This refers to Ḥallāj.

³⁶ Koran, 7: 196.

³⁷ Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, ed. F. Meier, [174]. There is also a Persian translation of this work by Najm al-Dīn al-Kubrā, trans. Muhammad Bāqir Sa'ādī Khurāsānī see *Fawā'ih al-Jamāl wa Fawātih al-Jalāl*, (Tehran: Intishārāt-i marwī, 1368). This passage appears on pages 242-243.

when the Friend of God enjoys a form of this reality and when he is clothed in these garments and he does not have any desire himself, and he has annihilated his desire and established it in His desire, then each time he established his annihilated desire in the desire of the Almighty Truth, his desire is the desire of the Truth, he makes it ascend to the point that God Almighty does not desire a thing unless the servant desires that very thing, and the servant also does not attach his desire to anything unless the Almighty Truth desires that very thing, just as the Beneficent Truth says: "but desire, you shall not, unless God desires, the Lord of the two worlds"³⁸.³⁹

At the same time that Najm al-Dīn Kubrā was conveying this message to his followers in Central Asia, Ibn 'Arabī was also expressing the very same thing to his circle of dervishes in Syria. As we have seen, the ultimate station for Najm al-Dīn Kubrā is *takwīn* where the wayfarer has the power to manifest any attribute he desires; Nasafī's system fully accords with this although he names it *tamkīn*. Although Ibn 'Arabī uses a similar term - *al-tamkīn fīl-talwīn* (stability in variegation) - he is explaining the same situation from a slightly different perspective. *Al-tamkīn fīl-talwīn* portrays the ultimate vision of God, the moment when the wayfarer realises that he can never witness the essence of God but always contemplates a face of God. He is stable in witnessing everything as God, but the variegation is due to the fact that God's faces are infinite in number.

In existence, the "reality" is variegation. He who is stable in variegation is the Owner of Stability. The heart longs to witness this reality. God made the heart the locus of this longing to bring the actualisation (*taḥsīl*) of this reality near to man, since there is fluctuation in the heart. God did not place this longing in the rational faculty, since reason possesses delimitation. If this longing were in the rational faculty, the person might see that he is fixed in a single state. But since it lies in the heart, fluctuation comes upon him quickly. For the heart is between the fingers of the all-merciful, so it does not remain in a single state in the reality of the situation. Hence it

³⁸ Koran, 81: 29.

³⁹ Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Arabic, [175], (Persian translation p. 244).

is fixed in its fluctuation within its state in accordance with its witnessing of the way the fingers cause it to fluctuate.⁴⁰

One of Ibn 'Arabī's favourite sayings is that God's self-disclosure never repeats itself,⁴¹ thus, whatever the wayfarer sees, it is a brand new face of God which is unique to that wayfarer and to that moment. In this way neither the wayfarer, nor God becomes bored: "God does not become bored that you should become bored."⁴² In the same way that not one attribute is dominant over the wayfarer, so too the wayfarer does not become tied or limited to one face of God. This is Ibn 'Arabī's "station of no station," for no one particular station is dominant over the wayfarer.⁴³ Nasafī describes a similar idea after presenting the six different stations of the Friends of God in the first chapter of *Kitāb-ī tanzīl*:

O dear friend! The stations of the Friends of God are no more than these six stations, and a person should not think that these six stations are in order and that the wayfarer completes the first station and then goes to the second station until the sixth station, because it is not in this way. At the end of journeying, each wayfarer is in one of these stations and one station of these stations has become his aim and he remains there. There are few wayfarers who are informed of all six stations, and until the wayfarer discovers the information of these six stations and sees the correctness and corruption of each one - not through imitation (*taqlīd*) and supposition (*gumān*) but through unveiling and contemplation - he will neither reach the end point of the journey nor be informed of the extremity of the journey nor recognise the truth from the false nor understand God.⁴⁴

From another perspective, the "station of no station" is the "station of bewilderment." This is because the wayfarer has one eye of *tashbīh* and one eye of *tanzīh*, that is, one eye focused upon God's incomparability and the other eye on God's

⁴⁰ Ibn 'Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiya*, (II 532.30) trans. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 108.

⁴¹ Ibn 'Arabī, *Futūḥāt* (I 266.9), trans. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 103.

⁴² A *ḥadīth* quoted several times by Ibn 'Arabī in the *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiya*, see for example the discussion in (III 254.23, 255.8), trans. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 101.

⁴³ See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 376-379.

⁴⁴ *Kitāb-ī tanzīl*, fol. 51a, lines 11-16.

similarity, the result can only be confusion, becoming cross-eyed, perplexity and bewilderment. The station of bewilderment is also described by Nasafī.

O dear friend! The final task of the wise man is bewilderment in the gnosis of God and the gnosis of the world. And the greater [his] bewilderment, the greater his gazing (*nizāra kardan*) because wisdom is the cause of bewilderment, and bewilderment is the cause of gazing. So for the person whose wisdom is greater, his bewilderment will be greater. And for the person whose bewilderment is greater, his gazing will be greater. Gazing without complaint is a sublime station and a magnificent task.⁴⁵

The wayfarer keeps on gazing because he witnesses God's face in everything. It is not the same as beholding God's essence, for no-one has the preparedness to do this. Nasafī explains this reality through the Koranic story of Moses requesting to see God.

Moses was at this station when he desired to see God. The Almighty Truth said "You can not see me,"⁴⁶ He did not state "I will not show myself to you."⁴⁷

The wayfarer sees God's essence in as much as it is revealed through the signs of the world, but he can never truly reach God's essence.

Likewise, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā posited bewilderment as the final spiritual station, and his description of the mystic's vision graphically reveals the oscillation between *tanzīh* and *tashbīh*:

When the wayfarer reaches bewilderment after fulfilling his purpose by means of the manifest and non-manifest signs and the self-disclosure of the attributes and essence, his longing for it increases and the sky and earth are like a prison, a battlement or a fortress for him in which he is imprisoned.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid, fol. 38b, lines 1-4.

⁴⁶ Koran, 7: 143.

⁴⁷ *al-Insān al-kāmil.*, p. 116.

⁴⁸ Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Arabic, [185], Persian p.254.

Thus *tanzīh* is witnessed here, but at this point things begin to change until *tashbīh* becomes apparent:

Each time he decides to take the path of escape and freedom for himself the veils of the signs and indications from the sky and earth, face him, and all the things on the earth (from fire, light, animals, plants, rocks, clay, and everything which is existent from them) bring themselves level with him, and now the divine signs concord with him in bewilderment, and sometimes they are with him in anxiety and discomfort until the point when their crying voice is heard. Sometimes they call him to themselves and sometimes he hears their individual voices, [which say] "Come to me and look at the wonders that have been concealed in me." Yes, all of them are wonders, even the weed of the earth or the particles of the sky. Sometimes the changing spiritual state and its spiritual aspiration completely reaches the extent that he witnesses God's signs in himself or he witnesses himself inside of them, or he feels that the stars are falling into him, or the sky is descending upon him, or he feels the taste of the sky in his inside, or he witnesses himself upon the top of the sky and at the same time he is looking at the earth.⁴⁹

The signs of God are a veil, but whether they hinder or help the wayfarer depends upon how he looks at them. Veils can hide something, and in this respect, they represent a *tanzīh* position, and since it is impossible for the wayfarer to reach the essence of God, he will always be faced by veils. However, if the wayfarer realises that the veils reveal something about God, then he will pass from one veil to another, enjoying the knowledge that he can obtain from each one. Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's portrayal of *tashbīh* continues:

Sometimes the earth rises in companionship with him and is like a friend and associate and it speaks with him and declares, "Behold me and the wonders in me and see how God Almighty is generous in relation to you, since you can go upon me and I am your mother and greater than you and look upon what a foundation I am based upon!"⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

It is interesting that Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's visionary experiences included such discussions with the earth. His visions were inspired by the Koran which states: "We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and in themselves."⁵¹ For many Sufis, the earth (or horizon), is considered from one perspective, as the most distinguished element that God created.⁵² Nasafī himself says that the first substance that God created was earth and the last thing is intelligence,⁵³ all things are created through the earth, even Adam, who is made of earth and of God's spirit.⁵⁴ In Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's visionary portrayal, the earth is the mother and that which God breathed in to man (i.e. the spirit), is the father. Thus in the state of bewilderment, the wayfarer recognises that he is composed of two seemingly conflicting substances: earth and spirit, density and subtlety, darkness and light. This is another reflection of the *tanzīh - tashbīh* relationship, which appears contradictory until the wayfarer reaches station of bewilderment where all opposites are fused together. Like Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Nasafī also describes the earth and spirit, or elements and natures, in terms of mothers and fathers:

This sea of light is called father and this sea of darkness is called mother, and the fathers and mothers place their hands around each others neck and embrace one another, and the kingdoms are born from them.⁵⁵

Earth is considered a distinguished thing because it has the preparedness to receive the spirit. Having received the spirit, the earth reaches its perfection in two ways: through the macrocosm and through the microcosm. Thus God has two mirrors in which he can witness himself. Earth, the primal element is a non-composite and can

⁵¹ Koran, 41: 53.

⁵² For example, Ibn 'Arabī comments, "The earth ... gives all benefits from its own essence and is the locus of every good. Hence it is the mightiest of corporeal bodies. In its movement it vies with no moving thing, since none of them leave the earth's location. Each pillar manifests its authority within the earth while it is patient, the receptive, the fixed, the stable." Quoted by S. Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, p. 140.

⁵³ *Kashf al-ḥaq'iq*, p. 57.

⁵⁴ Koran, 32:7-9.

⁵⁵ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 164.

neither be corrupted nor decay, thus it is relatively eternal. The respect for earth, due to its non-composite, non-corruptible nature is shown by Nasafī when he commented that

when many of the Great Ones had seen the calamities and catastrophes in this universe, and had witnessed much torment and various vexations in this world and the next world, they said 'I wish I had never been born from my mother, I wish I was earth,' since there is no level lower than earth and they desired that level.⁵⁶

Najm al-Dīn's visionary descriptions of bewilderment continue, revealing that the wayfarer flashes from *tashbīh* to *tanzīh* and from *tanzīh* to *tashbīh* like a coin spinning in the air. In the previous section, the earth is witnessed in a *tashbīh* manner, but then suddenly it flips to a *tanzīh* nature:

Sometimes the earth under his feet resembles a billowing ocean with waves crashing around him, and he is set upon that stormy ocean but he does not drown. This ocean becomes corporealised in a form for him when he does not listen to the discourse of the earth, or if he listens, he will be in a state where he enters the station of bewilderment and he constantly looks at that until a group of spiritual ones who live in the earth attack him, but since he has fortified himself in the garrison of truthfulness and freedom they can not defeat him. In the end everything on the earth is vanquished in his circle of power.⁵⁷

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā concludes his section on bewilderment and its effects in the following way:

The main aim of discussing this reality is that each time the changing spiritual state of the wayfarer reaches the extremity of strength, and his spiritual aspiration (*himmat*) ascends to the highest rung, he can enjoy the effect of that very spiritual state through the faces of the signs and indications, and knowledge or free choice do not have access in the nature of his information.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 231.

⁵⁷ Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Arabic, [185], Persian, p. 255.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

The vivid unveilings experienced by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā graphically portray the Islamic concepts of *tanzīh* and *tashbīh* which were explained in 2:1:1. This dual nature of God is confirmed in much of the Sufi literature of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. (Another example includes the extraordinary visions described in what amounts to a spiritual autobiography by Rūzbihān Baqlī.⁵⁹) Unfortunately, Nasafī does not reveal the character of his visions, however, as has been shown earlier, he does provide wayfarers with an answer to the seemingly contradictory nature of Islamic visionary experience, which is the *tanzīh-tashbīh* relationship.

5:3 Spiritual Perfection and creation

Related to this discussion of the ultimate spiritual station of bewilderment, and already alluded to in 5:2:1, is the capacity of wayfarers to use the attributes given to them to “create,” that is, creation not in the sense of manifesting the appropriate attributes or character traits, such as generosity or wrath, etc., but creating objects on a corporeal plane and causing effects in the world of sense perception. The word for this creative power or *himma*, is found in the Koran⁶⁰ and has been translated as “purpose” and “design.”⁶⁰ By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, *himma* had become a technical term of the Sufis. For example, the great Persian poet Nizāmī (b. 1140) refers to *himma* in his *Makhzan al-asrār* (1166) when he describes how Mahmūd of Ghazna (969-1030) fell sick while besieging an Indian city. Nizāmī explains that the cause of the sickness was the efforts of three Hindu ascetics who had combined their *himma* in an attempt to make Mahmūd leave India.⁶¹ The Sufi “theoreticians” of the same period, including Ibn ‘Arabī, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and Nasafī, all discussed the significance of *himma* in their works.

⁵⁹ See C. Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī*. The second chapter of this work entitled “The Inner Structure of Sainthood,” pp. 17-110, neatly portrays this *tashbīh-tanzīh* dynamic.

⁶⁰ This appears several times in Arberry’s translation of the Koran, for example 9: 74, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955).

⁶¹ Nizāmī, *Makhzan al-asrār*, Matba’a Armaghān, Tehran, 1313, 1099-1101. For an English translation see Gholām Hosein Dārāb’s *The Treasury of Mysteries*, (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1945), p. 90.

Himma is manifested at the stage of human perfection where the Perfect Man assumes the noble character traits:

People may apply the word “state” and mean by it the servant’s becoming manifest in the attribute of God by engendering (*takwīn*) things and producing effects through his Resolve (*himma*). This is the becoming similar (*tashabbuh*) to God which is called assuming the character traits of the names (*al-takhalluq bi’l asmā’*).⁶²

The ability to “create” an effect in this world through *himma* depends upon the strength of the individual’s concentration:

Every man creates by his fancy in the Imaginative faculty that which has existence nowhere else, this being a common faculty. The gnostic however, by his Concentration (*himma*) creates that which has existence beyond the origin of Concentration, indeed, the Concentration continues to maintain its existence, which depletes it in no way at all. Should the attention of the gnostic be deflected from the maintenance of what he has created, it will cease to exist, unless the gnostic commands all planes (of existence), in which case such deflection does not arise, since (at all times) he is present on some plane or another.⁶³

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā also employs the word *himma* in several of his works⁶⁴ but his most interesting explanations appear in his *Fawā’ih al jamāl wa fawātiḥ al jalāl*. In this work, *himma* is posited as the highest level where the wayfarer and God are united:

The end of affection (*maḥabba*) is the beginning of love (*‘ishq*), and affection belongs to the heart and love belongs to the spirit and the mystery (*sirr*) unites the dearest ones, and *himma* is the effect of the uniting.⁶⁵

This unity is between the wayfarer and God, for Kubrā says that each time the wayfarer’s desire becomes strong and he has preparedness and constancy in searching for the Truth, then a connection is created between the possessor of *himma* and his

⁶² Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiya*, II 385.12, trans, Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 265.

⁶³ Austin, *Ibn al-‘Arabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 102.

⁶⁴ For example, see Najm al-Dīn Kubrā’s *Ilā al-hā’im al-Khā’if min lawa lā ‘im*, (Tehran: Sāzmān i intishārāt-i kayhān, 1364), p.57.

⁶⁵ Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Fawā’ih al jamāl wa fawātiḥ al jalāl*, (84).

desired object. This connection is like a chain which is drawn between two things, or it is like a spear between a combatant's hand and the breast of his enemy, or it is like an arrow, or it is like a light than shines from the sun to the earth.⁶⁶ As a result of this connection, the wayfarer's *himma* is now able to create. The progress of the wayfarer's *himma* from beginning to end is summarised by Kubrā:

The traveller is a horseman and *himma* is the horse. There is a beginning and end for *himma*; the beginning is desire, then searching, then union (*rabṭ*), then free disposal (*taṣarruf*), then being (*al-kawn*). *Himma* is power, and the mystery (*sirr*) unites with the *himma* and the power of the Truth.⁶⁷

This creation through the "hand of *himma*" is found when the wayfarer has a pure heart and when he does not stretch out his hands towards this or that. Then another hand appears which engages in his affairs that ordinary hands cannot do. This is the hand of the heart and it takes from the invisible world (*ghayb*) and gives to the invisible world.⁶⁸ Kubrā gives the example of his being able to feel his own Shaykh's shadow and *himma* within him. He thought that his Shaykh had left the city but he realised that he had returned because the shadow and *himma* felt like a heavy mountain upon him so that he was not able to move in any direction. Kubrā told those around him to go out and greet the Shaykh. Those who were present were amazed to see Kubrā's Shaykh riding towards the city in the distance.⁶⁹

This ability to cause things to occur or appear in the visible world from the invisible world is not realised for the common people. That which common people see in dreams can be actualised by those who have a pure heart and have a connection with God. Thus, they are able to fly, walk on water, pass through fire without injury, in fact they have the power of free disposal (*taṣarruf*) through their *himma*.

One of the distinctive features of Kubrā's theosophy is its attention to the lights and colours that the wayfarer sees throughout the spiritual journey. Therefore, it is of

⁶⁶ Ibid, (106).

⁶⁷ Ibid, [106]

⁶⁸ Ibid, (182)

⁶⁹ Ibid, (155).

little surprise that Kubrā describes a particular “vision” which is related to *himma*. These lights, colours and visions are induced by the continual practice of *dhikr*. Unlimited space and broad expanses of land around oneself may be seen as well as colours ranging from green, red, yellow and blue. The colours are representative of a spiritual state: green indicates the life of the heart, while the colour of fire in a pure form free from turbidity is a sign of the life of *himma*. The reality of that *himma* is power (*qudrat*). If there is turbidity in the fire then this is the fire of strength which causes the wayfarer discomfort because its reality is the witnessing of the soul and Satan. A blue colour is an indication of the life of the soul and a yellow colour is an indication of the wayfarer’s weakness and inability.⁷⁰

Since Nasafī is associated by some to the Kubrāwī order, one might expect to find similar descriptions of lights and visions within his works. Although he does discuss visions, there is not a single reference to such coloured lights or fire. Despite this, Nasafī follows in the tradition of Ibn ‘Arabī and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā by portraying a spiritual station which reflects the effects of *himma*.

In *Kitāb-ī Tanzīl*, Nasafī discusses one station for the Friends of God which presents the idea of creation at every moment in time when God replaces something which was existent in the west and replaces it with something similar in the east. This is one way of explaining the miracles of Prophets and charismatic powers of the Friends of God.

... forms are annihilated every moment and something similar to that becomes existent and the senses do not perceive that because of the extreme speed, now know that if a fixed (*mu‘ayan*) form in a fixed time in the east becomes non-existent, in that very fixed time something similar to that becomes existent in the west. Is it not a marvel (*‘ajab*), for how is it possible that whatever is existent in the east at a fixed time becomes non-existent and something similar to that becomes existent in the west? Why is it not possible for whatever is existent in the east to become existent in the west and become non-existent in the east? It is God that becomes manifested with these forms and the east, west, south, north, over and under are the same for God because God’s light is expanded, unlimited and infinite. This is

⁷⁰ Ibid, (13).

the meaning of the manifestation of angels and Gabriel, the Throne of the Queen of Sheba (*takht-i bilqīs*), Khidr, the Invisible Shaykh, miracles and charismatic powers.⁷¹

The possession of *himma* is one of the distinguishing features of the hierarchy of the three hundred and fifty six Friends of God who oversee the world (to be discussed in the next chapter). Nasafī describes the abilities of these individuals in a way similar to Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's explanation:

Their charismatic powers and worth are in such a way that earth, water, air, fire, desert and mountains do not obstruct their vision, and they can see and hear the words of the People of the West when they themselves are in the east. If they want they can go to the west from the east in an hour. Land, sea, mountain or plain are the same to them, and water and fire are equal. There are many of these charismatic powers and powers which belong to them. Although each one of the three hundred and fifty six are wise (*dānā*), esteemed (*muqarrab*), the possessor of *himmat*, the possessor of power (*ṣāhib-i qudrat*) and one whose prayers are answered (*mustajāb al-da'wat*), the Pole (*quṭb*) is wiser and more esteemed than them all and his power and *himmat* is greater. Whoever is nearer to the Pole, that person is wiser and more esteemed.⁷²

In *al-Insān al-kāmil*, however, Nasafī is more reticent about confirming his belief in this station. This seems somewhat strange in light of the fact that in other places he has discussed the miracles of the Prophets and the charismatic powers of the Friends of God.

O dervish, this is the eighth heaven and according to the helpless one, it is the last heaven and there is no other than these eight. But some say that there is another heaven other than these eight, and there is a tree in this heaven and it is called the tree of power. When the wayfarer reaches the eye of certainty (*'ayn al-yaqīn*), - that is, until this point he has known the knowledge of certainty (*'ilm al-yaqīn*) - he sees the eye of certainty which is the existence of God. There is not one particle of the particles of the world in which God's light does not exist and which God does not

⁷¹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 47a, lines 8-16.

⁷² *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 318-319.

embrace and of which God is not aware. The wayfarer casts aside his own existence and leaves behind pride and imagination.

O dervish! Until the wayfarer passes several veils of darkness and light, he does not and can not be released from imagination and fancy. When he is released from imagination and fancy and knows and sees for sure that all of this is appearance and all of this is the lamp, he reaches God's essence. When he reaches God's essence and sacrifices his own existence, God Almighty makes the wayfarer existent in His own existence and adorns him with His attributes so that whatever the wayfarer says, God has said, and whatever the wayfarer does, God has done, and the wayfarer becomes wise, able and becomes the possessor of capability and effort: "You did not slay them, but God slew them, it was not thyself that threw, but God threw, and that He might confer on the believers a fair benefit."⁷³ But the understanding of this weak one does not reach this ninth heaven of which this group have related and I have not seen anything among them nor among their peers but I have only heard very much.

Know that some say that there is a group and God gives them whatever they desire, and everything that is necessary appears for them; and in whatever they fix their *himmat*, [that thing] accords with their *himmat*: "Many a dusty and dishevelled one clad in rags, to whom men pay no head, will have his oath fulfilled when he swears to God."⁷⁴ In other words, they have the wisdom to perfection and power to perfection and *himmat* to perfection. All of their desires are actualised and everything comes about in the way that they desire because they have died the voluntary death before the natural death and they have passed on from this world and they are in the next world. For example, if these people want rain to come, in the moment that it passes through their minds, clouds appear and rain begins to fall. If they do not want rain to fall, in the instant that it passes through their minds the clouds disperse and disappear. If they want someone to fall sick, they become sick instantly; and if they want a sick person to become healthy, in an instant they become healthy. In all things it is in this way. In addition, it is said that this group can go from the east to the west in one hour and can come from the west to the east in one hour. They can go upon water if they want and they can go upon the air if they want, and they can go upon fire if they want. People can see them if they want and people can not see them if they want, and everyday their food is ready and cooked for them without the effort or endeavour of any person.⁷⁵

⁷³ Koran, 8: 17.

⁷⁴ *Ḥadīth*. Also quoted by Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, trans. H. Algar, op.cit., p. 242. According to Algar, this *ḥadīth* is recorded by al-Ḥakīm, and also by al-Ghazālī in *Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, III, 270.

⁷⁵ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 205-207.

O Dervish! Today as I am writing this, I do not have this [power] and my acquaintances do not have this, and despite this it can not be denied. It may be that God Almighty will give and grant this to me since He is capable in everything and that which he has placed before us is man's desire, and if it is provided then one can enjoin the good and forbid the evil.⁷⁶

There are several possible explanations of Nasafī's hesitance regarding the ninth heaven and the Tree of Power. Firstly, one has to consider that there was always danger to Sufis from the secular rulers or those members of the '*Ulamā*' who favoured a more exoteric interpretation of Islam. Reference was made in chapter one to the dangers faced by followers of Ibn 'Arabī in Egypt during the generation after Nasafī. It has also been suggested that the Shaykh al-Ishrāq, Suhrawardī was executed as a result of the political implications of his esoteric beliefs.⁷⁷

Another reason lies in the reluctance of those who possess charismatic powers and *himmat* to demonstrate their power to the common people. In *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, Nasafī himself comments that it is necessary for Prophets to manifest prophecy and miracles but it is not necessary for the Friends of God to show their Friendship and charismatic powers. In fact the Friend of God sees charismatic powers as a trial and a test and they are anguished and afraid at their manifestation. This is because some of the "Friends of God" desired that the common people look at them and the charismatic power, and thus recognise them. Such a person is not a Friend of God, rather, he is "a demon, a deviator of others, in other words, he puts on the clothes of the good and pious and attracts people to himself and in this way actualises fame and wealth."⁷⁸

In *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*, Nasafī also is cautious about *himmat*:

The thought and plans of humans have effects but the *himmat* and wishing of humans have no effect ... if human *himmat* and wishing had effects then no one would be incapable and poor, they would all be capable and rich. If action (*'amal*) is united

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 208.

⁷⁷ See Hossein Ziai, "The source and nature of authority: a study of al-Suhrawardi's Illuminationist Political Doctrine," in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. C.E. Butterworth, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp 304-344.

⁷⁸ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 64, lines 12 64b line 2.

(*jam'*) with *himmat* and wishing then tasks are completed through that *himmat* and action.

If one recognises sickness and killing as an effect of one's *himmat* and says that this is my action (*fi'l*) then in fact this claim is a lie and this claimer is a liar. But it is possible if God Almighty frees one of His Friends of God from sickness through prayer and *himmat* and intercession (*shifā'at*) or makes one of His enemies sick or kills him. Indeed there have been many such cases. But the reality (*ma'ānī*) is that it is the Truth's action. But when this action of the Truth is manifested through the prayer and intermediary of one of the Friends of God, that is called "charismatic power," and "intercession." In other words, God Almighty bestows upon the Friend the acceptance of prayer, intercession and charismatic powers.⁷⁹

The meaning behind this passage is that *himmat* ultimately comes from God and the Friend who has reached the highest spiritual station does not desire to do anything that God does not desire. At this point, the *himmat* of the Friend and God's desire are the same, leaving the question of who is actually exercising *himmat* somewhat unresolved.

5:4 Describing the mystical experience

The problem of verifying the authenticity or falsity of mystical experience has occupied scholars of religion right up to the present day. One of the most noted of such contemporary academics was R.C. Zaehner, the Spalding Professor at Oxford. Zaehner focused not so much on topics such as encounters with spirits or special abilities to foretell the future (which were discussed in this chapter) but with claims of experiences of unity with God. In other words, Zaehner's interest lay in uncovering the reality of the ultimate spiritual station.

Zaehner defined mystical experience as "a sense of union or even identity with something other than oneself."⁸⁰ In his work entitled *Mysticism, sacred and profane*,⁸¹ he discussed three kinds of mystical experience.

⁷⁹ *Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 69.

⁸⁰ R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism, sacred and profane*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 32.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

(i). The first kind is when the individual identifies himself with the object that he witnesses, “when I am inseparably this and that and this and that are I; when I experience the other person as myself and the other, as myself.”⁸² This was termed by Zaehner “panenhenism,” or all-in-one-ism, or nature mysticism. It is devoid of the subject-object dichotomy and whatever one becomes aware of takes place through the five “external” senses. This has also been called the “extrovertive mystical experience.” According to Zaehner, this kind of experience which is described in Huxley’s book “*The Doors of Perception*,”⁸³ is limited because there is no mention of God whatsoever in the experience of unity between the individual and say, a chair.

(ii). Secondly, Zaehner portrays the experiences of the Hindus of the Vedanta tradition, which takes the individual beyond the bounds of time and space: “it is the sole truly existing and eternal reality, beyond time and space and causation and utterly unaffected by these which, from its own standpoint, have no existence whatsoever.”⁸⁴ It is also important to add that the experience occurs through the “inner” senses. This mystical experience is termed “monist” and is not the ultimate kind of mystical awareness according to Zaehner, because the individual at this point has reached the equivalent of the universal intelligence, or in Plotinian terms, the one which is emanated from the One. Moreover, Zaehner notes that in the Vedantan tradition there is not much emphasis placed on love, whether it is God’s love for man or man’s love for God; rather it is a cold, ascetic spiritual discipline.

(iii). The ultimate mystical moment is that experienced by those in the tradition of the great “monotheistic” religions in which “the soul feels itself to be united with God by love.”⁸⁵ This experience, like the “monist” occurs through the “inner” senses. Although the soul feels itself to be united with God by love, this experience is not monistic because “love implies duality, and what is ‘One without a second’ can neither love nor be loved.”⁸⁶ This third kind of experience is termed “theistic.”

⁸² Ibid, p. 28.

⁸³ A. Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1954).

⁸⁴ R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism, sacred and profane*, p. 29.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 188.

One of the problems discussed by Zaehner is that some mystics of the monotheistic traditions have expressed their experiences in monistic terms, such as “I am God,” (*anā al-ḥaqq*). This being the case, is it legitimate to make a distinction between the mystics of the theistic and monistic traditions? The answer that Zaehner supplies is that the mystics of the theistic traditions may *feel* the same kind of experience as the monist, where one may claim “I am God,” but if the mystic is “orthodox” he then interprets the experience in a theistic manner.⁸⁷

When Zaehner’s three-fold classification is applied to Nasafī’s various descriptions of the mystical experience, several conclusions may be drawn.

Firstly, the explanations provided by Nasafī can not be said to be of the “nature mysticism” or “panenhenism” variety. As stated earlier, a feature of nature monism is that it has sensible content whereas those of the monist and theist do not. Nasafī explicitly comments that mystical experiences are those which take place through the senses which do not pertain to the body:

O dervish! That [spiritual] seeing is not by the eyes of the head but by the eyes of the spiritual heart (*sirr*). When the wayfarer reaches the level of love, the mirror of his heart becomes so clean, pure, simple and without tarnish that it is like the world reflecting chalice and the cosmos reflecting mirror. The reflection of everything which starts in the sea of *Jabarūt* is manifested in the heart of the wayfarer before it reaches the shore of existence.⁸⁸

Secondly, within Nasafī’s texts it is possible to find “monistic” passages and “theistic” passages. Taking monism first, the concepts of “undifferentiated unity” and

⁸⁷ There are several possible reasons that explain why the mystic interprets the experience in a certain way, such as the threat of being held as a heretic. Another is that the mystics may “measure their mystical experiences against a culturally acquired though personally deep seated world picture having theistic structure and that also includes items mirroring most of the details of *orthodox doctrine*.” See N. Pike, *Mystic Union*, p. 212.

For Zaehner, (according to N. Pike’s interpretation) the difference between an “orthodox” mystic of the monotheist religion and the Hindu or Buddhist tradition are doctrinal and not phenomenological. That is, the mystical experience is felt to be of a monist nature, even though this may not reflect the ontological reality of the relationship between the mystic’s soul and God. S. Katz has taken another stance and argued that mystical experiences of different religious traditions are not necessarily the same phenomenologically. (See S. Katz’s article in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. S. Katz, London: Sheldon Press, 1978).

⁸⁸ *al-Insan al-kamil*, p. 173.

“absolute identity” seem to apply with the following by Nasafī which he describes as the highest spiritual station:

The sign that the wayfarer is liberated from the darkness of covering over (*zulmat-i kufr*) and the multiplicity of association of gods with God (*kathrat-i shirk*) and is adorned with the light of unity (*tawḥid*) and oneness (*waḥdat*) and reaches the station of stability (*maqām-i tamkīn*) is that he sees one existence. In that one existence, east, west, south, north, over and under are the same. In other words, the east is west and the west is east, over is under and under is over, first is last and last is first, the manifest is the non-manifest and the non-manifest is the manifest. That existence has no over, under, first last, manifest or non-manifest because its over is also its under and its manifest is also its non-manifest because everything is it and there is nothing else except it. It is existence, unlimited and borderless. O dervish! Certainly you may call it unlimited and borderless existence and certainly you may call it unlimited and borderless light because existence is light and the light of the wayfarer's existence makes his own existence disappear (*gum kunad*) in the unlimited and borderless light just as if it will never again re-appear.⁸⁹

So this “monist” mystical experience transcends the limits of time and space and there is also present the idea of undifferentiated unity. Such descriptions have a Koranic basis, as Nasafī following remarks demonstrate:

When the glory of this proximity throws a shadow over the mystic, in his opinion the proximity of the Prophets, Friends of God, the heedless, the heretics, the ant and mosquito is the same with God, just as the Almighty said: “Thou seest not in the creation of the All-merciful any difference: To God belongs the East and West; withersoever you turn, there is the face of God.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ *Kashf al-haqā'iq*, p. 143-144. Another interesting example of the monist “interpretation” from *Kashf al-haqā'iq* where Nasafī depicts the unity between the fabled couple of lovers, Majnun and Layla:

It is related that when blood became dominant in Majnun his father called a doctor to bleed him so that the pain would not last. Majnūn's father brought a copper to bleed him. When he [the copper] took Majnūn's arm and pricked him, Majnūn said, “Be still, so that you don't tire Layla.” This is because Majnūn saw and understood everything as Layla and he did not see or know himself. (*Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 167).

⁹⁰ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 230-1.

“Theistic” passages which discuss love between subject and object also appear in Nasafī’s works in such a way that it is extremely difficult to decide if they are “theistic” or “monist.” The following quotation is taken from *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq* and it just precedes the description of existence having no east or west above or under etc. To repeat, Nasafī comments that this is the highest spiritual station:

Know that the light of intelligence (*‘aql*) is piercing, but the fire of love is more piercing and far sighted. There is a time when the light of intelligence dominates in such a way that if the wayfarer desires, he makes the whole house bright, so that everything in the house is seen in its right place even though it is not joined with love: “Its oil well-nigh would shine, even if no fire touched it.” But the light of intelligence can not make the whole house bright without the fire of love. When the fire of love joins with the light of intelligence and becomes “light upon light,” at that time the whole house becomes bright. The first light is the light of intelligence and the second light is that of love and the third light “God guides to His light whom He wills,” is stability (*tamkīn*). Some have said that the first light is the light of intelligence and the second light is the light of inspiration and the third light is that of love. But according to me, the third light is the light of stability since it is in the station of contemplation. Stability is different from certainty (*itminān*) and peace (*sukūn*).

O dervish! The fire of love makes the wayfarer leave the discord of variegation (*talwīn*) and makes him reach the tranquillity of stability and he is free from multiplicity and associating others with God, and he becomes adorned with unity and oneness, since light is a giver of existence and fire is the burner of existence. There are two existences for as long as you have existence; your existence and God’s existence. In God’s existence there is no dualism and there is no partner. When your existence is burned by the fire of love and nothing remains of it, at that time one existence remains and that is the existence of God Almighty.

O dervish! The meaning of love is not in the same way that the People of Forms and People of Imagination have said, for they have called it temptation (*wiswās*) and when that temptation befalls the wayfarer he is overcome and his reason becomes confused. Our meaning of love is a fire which does not accept intelligence except in oil and it burns all the wayfarer’s *qiblas* and colours when it befalls him. He takes one colour and one *qibla*, and this is the pinnacle of the station of oneness.⁹¹

⁹¹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 142-143.

From the foregoing, love certainly is the cause of the wayfarer reaching one existence. Zaehner sees love as dualistic and therefore theistic, however one has to ask the question of whether the Islamic mystics regarded love in the same way. Did they not see the lover, love and beloved as ultimately one?

As a result of the sayings and records of “theistic” mystics who describe “monist” experiences, modern scholars have created^a a framework to accommodate both systems. An example of this is an interpretation offered by Nelson Pike:

... This experience begins with a dualistic stage and progresses to a peak in which the distinction between subject and object is finally lost ... the dualistic stage is an interval of awareness that is phenomenologically and specifically of the particular individual God, the omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good creator of the universe ... The climax stage of the paradigm union experience can be described as an experience in which the mystic loses track of the distinction between self and a very specific Other-God ... it is an awareness of having become “oned” with God ... Of course this analysis requires that the mystical peak be a state in which the subject-object distinction is *lost* after having been established in a preceding interval. The analysis thus makes essential use of the fact that the paradigm union experience has a progressive structure in which the mystical peak has dualistic experiential ancestors.⁹²

Yet are the Islamic mystics who describe “monistic” experiences actually stating that they are identical with God? The problem of identity between the mystic and God may best be explained with reference to the mirror imagery which so often occurs in Sufi texts. The pinnacle of the mystical experience is interpreted by J.J. Elias:

It is no longer possible to differentiate God as He witnesses Himself in the mirror from the mirror as it bears witness to God. They are like two bright lights reflecting back at each other. The beauty of God is reflected and witnessed by the mirror, which then reflects this beauty back to God Who witnesses the perfect reflection of His own beauty as identical to His beauty. In other words, God witnesses the same image of Himself in the mirror as the mirror witnesses in God.⁹³

⁹² N. Pike, *Mystic Union*, p. 189-190.

⁹³ J.J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God*, p. 96.

Is the mirror identical to God? Who exercises the power of *himmat* - man or God? This ambiguity is beautifully expressed by Maḥmūd Shabistārī (d. ca 1339) in his *Gulshān-i rāz*. Shabistārī discusses God's essence in the form of the beauty spot on the beloved's face which is reflected in the heart of the lover.

*Her beauty spot encompasses her face
as the point is the base of the circle it surrounds.*

*From this mole sprang a streak, a line, sweeping through micro and macrocosmos:
the source and substance of the psyche and heart.*

*From her beauty spot stems all the grief and blood that brims within our hearts.
No way out, no exit from this degree exists.*

*I know not if her beauty spot is our heart's double, its projected image,
or the heart the image and facsimile of her face's fascinating beauty spot.*

*Has the heart, as a reflection or facsimile of that face come forth
or was her image therein projected so palpably?*

*Is the heart within her face or her face within the heart?
An intricate enigma, ineffable, invisible to me as well!⁹⁴*

The answer to the problem of identity between God and the spiritual wayfarer must be affirmative and negative. It is affirmative in respect of the fact that it is God's image that is reflected in the heart of the wayfarer, but it is also negative because the reflection is only one form, that is, it is only a self-disclosure of God in the form that the heart is capable of reflecting. At this point it is necessary to recall Nasafī's warning in his introduction to *Kitāb-i tanzīl* that the pure essence and Holy Face of the Truth is so great that an individual's intelligence cannot encompass Him and the extremity of man's knowledge is that point where he knows that he can not know God as God really is.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Trans. Lewisoohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity*, p. 198.

⁹⁵ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 38a, lines 9-13.

In chapter three it was described how “contemplation” is the ultimate epistemological level that the wayfarer can reach.⁹⁶ In a state of contemplation, the wayfarer has returned to the world after witnessing a state of absolute unity of existence. In this world He realises that everything is a sign of God and he sees the unity in multiplicity. At this point, he knows that God is both transcendent from His creation and at the same time He is also immanent. One should speak neither of an “Allah transcendent” nor an “Allah immanent.” This position, which is generally representative of Ibn ‘Arabi’s so-called school of the Unity of being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) was severely criticised by subsequent Sufis, in particular Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (1564-1624). According to one modern commentator of Sirhindī, Ibn ‘Arabi was censured by Sirhindī because the former “expounded the doctrine (*of waḥdat al-wujūd*) in the light of his experience of oneness and identity. Though he did not stay at the stage of ‘pure union’ and moved ahead, he did not move sufficiently enough and affirm the complete transcendence of God and His absolute difference.”⁹⁷ Sufis such as Ibn ‘Arabi and Nasafi indeed did move on from ‘pure union’ since they returned to this world and through contemplation witnessed God’s incomparability and similarity. They could not “affirm the complete transcendence of God and His absolute difference”

⁹⁶ The levels of “contemplation” and “witnessing” bear some similarity to the distinctions between two kinds of mystical experience described by Richard H. Jones in his *Mysticism Examined* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993). According to Jones, a “depth mystical experience” is where there is a one pointedness which “produces a stillness of mind where all sensory-conceptual apparatuses are in total abeyance. But this state of imagelessness is not unconsciousness in the sense of a total lack of awareness. Instead this emptiness permits the pouring in of a positive experience.” The second kind of mystical experience is termed “nature mystical” which “involves subject-object differentiation present in ordinary sense experience or thought. They need not be sensory; an experiential sense of the presence of, or union with, God involves a differentiation, as do experiences of love or joy.” (Ibid, p. 20). Moreover, the depth mystical experience is temporary as it involves no sensory or mental content. However, “the nature mystical experience may be temporary but it is possible for an inner transformation of the total person to occur which affects cognitive and dispositional structures and which thus implements nature-mystical experiences into one’s life constantly.” (Ibid, p. 21). There are striking similarities between depth mystical experience and Nasafi’s “witnessing” where spatial and temporal concepts no longer apply and the wayfarer (according to Hammuyā) can do nothing at all. In addition nature-mystical experience resembles the discussion of “contemplation” between Nasafi and Hammuyā when it is stated that one should not always be in a state of “witnessing” but one should continually be in a state of “contemplation.” Jones’s definition of mysticism seems to be more useful than that of Zaehner’s and perhaps deserves more careful analysis. This is not to say that Zaehner’s distinctions are not without value, for the criticism that they have provoked and still provoke, demonstrates that scholars still consider them as worthy of consideration.

⁹⁷ Muhammad Abdul Haq Ansari, *Sufism and Shari’ah*, (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1986), p. 94.

because this would have been a distortion of what they perceived to be the real ontological and epistemological relationship between man and God.

Sirhindī believed the ultimate situation was one of servanthood (*'abdiyyat*), which affirmed God's incomparability, whereas he held the *wujūdīs* saw unity (*tawḥīd*) as the pinnacle of spiritual realisation.⁹⁸ Indeed, Nasafī does view unity as the final spiritual level, equating unity (*tawḥīd*) with contemplation (*'iyān*):

...when the wayfarer reaches the station of unity (*maqām-i tawḥīd*), which is the ultimate station of the wayfarers, he reaches his perfection and becomes mature (*bāligh*)...⁹⁹

Know that there are four kinds of maturity:

One (kind) is the maturity of surrender (*bāligh-i islām*) which is the station of imitation (*taqlīd*) and submission (*inqiyd*). In this station, the wayfarer says with his tongue that God is one.

Another [kind] is the maturity of faith (*īmān*) which is the station of reasoning (*istidlāl*) and knowledge (*'ilm*) and in this station the wayfarer knows in his heart that God is one.

Another (kind) is the maturity of certitude (*īqān*) which is the station of assurance (*itminān*) and tranquillity (*ārām*) and it is in this station that the wayfarer sees that God seems to be one (*khudā'i-rā gu'ya yikī mī-binād*).

Another [kind] is the maturity of contemplating (*'iyān*) which is the station of unveiling (*kashf-i ghīṭā*) and rending the veil (*shaqq-i shaqāq*) and it is in this station that the wayfarer sees that God Almighty is one ... and this maturity of contemplation is the perfection of man and the ultimate station.¹⁰⁰

So although Nasafī posits unity (*tawḥīd*) as the ultimate spiritual level in the foregoing, it has been shown in other places that his explanation of unity in terms of contemplation indicates that it is a situation where the wayfarer has returned to the world after experiencing "absolute unity" and sees both God's incomparability and also His similarity through His places of manifestation in the world. Likewise, Ibn 'Arabī did not claim that unity was the highest spiritual level as Sirhindī appears to be saying.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 15.

⁹⁹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 123.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 125.

Rather, perfection is described as servanthood (*'ubūdiyya*) and manliness (*rajūliyya*) or in other words, incomparability and similarity.¹⁰¹

The mystical experiences that Nasafī describes are both theistic and monistic. It seems that Zaehner's classifications of mystical experience are not suitable and Pike's suggestion also seems somewhat unsatisfactory. These frameworks fail to satisfy the *tanzīh/tashbīh* model of mystical experience and this may lead one to conclude that S. Katz is correct when he argues that the mysticism of each religious tradition is unique and that there is no such thing as the perennial philosophy.¹⁰² This still leaves the problem of how to classify the Islamic mystical experience. The language that is available to us has been determined culturally by a tradition which is theistic. While it includes terms for the monist, as yet there is still no word for the *tanzīh/tashbīh* position. Perhaps Corbin did the best thing by creating his own terminology, such as "theo-monist."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 366.

¹⁰² S. Katz, article in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, op.cit.

¹⁰³ For this term see H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. L. Sherrard, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993), pp. 294-95.

CHAPTER 6

The Perfection of Man: the concepts of *walāyat* and *nubuwwat*

6:1:1 Introduction: The Spiritual Ascent

Achieving human perfection is viewed by Sufis as a journey or a spiritual ascent which reaches a pinnacle with the Prophet Muḥammad, the last messenger of God and Seal of the Prophets. This perfection comprises three elements according to a Sufi axiom attributed to the Prophet: “The Law is my words, the Way is my works and the Truth is my vision.”¹ This is the simplest guide for the wayfarer, as Nasafī says,

At first the wayfarer must study and learn whatever is necessary from the Holy Law. Then he must perform and comply with whatever is necessary from the Way until the reality becomes manifest from the lights in accordance with the wayfarer’s effort...²

Although Muḥammad is the example of perfection for all Sufis, from one perspective the Sealing of Prophecy means that there can be no other legislating messenger and this (according to Ibn ‘Arabī) is “a terrible blow” for the Sufis or Friends of God, because it implies the impossibility of experiencing total and perfect servitude.³ In other words, the Sufis can not attain Muḥammad’s level of spiritual perfection, yet as it will be shown in this chapter, the Sufis interpret the relationship between Prophecy (*nubuwwat*) and Friendship of God (*walāyat*) in such a way that it is indeed possible for the Friends of God to reach the Prophet’s spiritual level.

¹ A popular ḥadīth among Sufis. See Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, p. 99.

² *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 3.

³ R. Austin (trans), *Ibn al-‘Arabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 168.

The importance of the relationship between Prophecy and Friendship of God is highlighted in the following quotation from Nasafī:

At one time in the district of Nasaf, in fact in the area of Transoxania, this topic [i.e. *nubuwwat* and *walāyat*] was widespread, whether the attribute of Friendship of God is stronger than the attribute of Prophecy. And some people thought that there was only this discussion concerning the Friends of God and the Prophets. When I came under the service of Shaykh of Shaykhs Sa'd al-Din Ḥammuyā, we also discussed the Friends of God and the Prophet. And now after his death, his followers are also discussing this.⁴

Nasafī sets out a spiritual hierarchy (which is accepted by the '*Ulamā*' and Philosophers) and which clearly distinguishes the station of Prophecy from that of Friendship. For example, the station of the Seal of the Prophets is four stations higher than that of the Friend. Nasafī presents this hierarchy in the following manner:⁵

<u>Spirit</u>	<u>Reason for ascent</u>	<u>Station</u>
9. Seal of the Prophets	Receives final set of Divine Laws and annuls the previous Holy Law.	The Throne
8. Men of Resolution	Receive a new Holy Book and the previous Holy Law is annulled.	The Stool.
7. Messengers	God gives a Holy Book.	7 Heaven (Saturn).
6. Prophets	God gives revelation to be sent to the people and miracles.	6 Heaven (Jupiter).
5. Friends of God	As a result of insight, God gives love and inspiration.	5 Heaven (Mars).
4. Gnostics	Knows and sees things as they are.	4 Heaven (Sun).
3. Ascetics	Turns away from the world and abandons worldly pleasures.	3 Heaven (Venus).
2. Worshippers	Worships very much on the basis of confirming the prophets.	2 Heaven (Mercury).
1. Believers	Confirms the Prophets.	1 Heaven (The moon)

⁴ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p.316.

⁵ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 52-67.

With Muḥammad, the cycle of Prophecy came to a close and on the basis of the above chart, this means that individuals can progress no higher than the fifth spiritual station. This “orthodox” representation of the Islamic spiritual hierarchy in which the Friend of God occupies a lower position than the Prophet is clearly established by the author of *Kashf al-ṣirāṭ*. In this work, humans are classified into four categories, reflecting the Koranic verse 4:71: “And whosoever obeys God and the Messenger shall be with those whom God has blessed; the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous.” The righteous are those people in the station of surrender (*islām*), the martyrs (also called the gnostics) are those who are in the station of faith (*īmān*), the truthful (also named the Friends of God) are those in the station of excellence (*iḥsān*) and the Prophets are in the highest station of witnessing (*‘iyān*).⁶ Yet, Sufis such as Tirmidhī and Ibn ‘Arabī hint of a secret, that spiritual progress is possible for the Friend of God to the extent that one can reach the same level as the prophets. The forcible disclosure of such a secret, according to Ibn ‘Arabī, would shake the Throne.⁷

On discussing the spiritual hierarchy outlined above, Nasafī suggests that the relationship is not as simple as it appears at first sight. To begin with, he gives the views of the ‘*Ulamā*’, who endorse these nine levels and claim that the spirits are created before the bodies thus having a fixed station and therefore the spirit of each person can not progress beyond that fixed station. The Philosophers also agree that there are nine levels but hold that the spirits are created with the bodies and therefore the spirits can ascend depending upon the degree of wisdom and purity attained during life on earth. Nasafī does not say whether the People of Unity accept this nine fold division, however he remarks that there is no limit to the progress of the human spirit because

... if man has the ability for a life of a thousand years, and during this time
he is busy with education, review, ascetic discipline, religious effort and *dhikr*, each

⁶ *Kashf al-ṣirāṭ*, Velīyuddin, no 1767, fol. 218-219.

⁷ See Masataka Takeshita, *Ibn ‘Arabī’s theory of the Perfect Man and its place in the history of Islamic thought*, (Tokyo: Institute for the study of languages and cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, 1987), p. 159.

day he understands something and discovers something which he had not known or discovered the day before, by means of wisdom, for God's wisdom and knowledge has no limit ... and according to the People of Unity, perfection in a human does not exist because whatever perfection a man reaches, he is still incomplete in relation to his preparedness and in relation to the knowledge and wisdom of God. Therefore a man who is said to be perfect is relatively perfect. According to the People of the Holy Law and the Philosophers, perfection exists.⁸

These remarks of the People of Unity that man's spirit has no limit and therefore, that it is possible to ascend towards the pinnacle of the spiritual hierarchy, is endorsed in another section of *al-Insān al-kāmil*:

And a group from among the Sufis also say that the Seals can make an ascent as far as the Throne, that is, the Seal of the Prophets and the Seal of the Friends of God. And this group sees *walāyat* as the superior level, but how can the level of *walāyat* be higher than the level of *nubuwwat*? We have explained this discussion in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*. Anyone who wishes can refer to it there. And this group says that *walāyat* is the heart of *nubuwwat*, and deity is the heart of *walāyat*. *Nubuwwat* is the moon when it splits, and *walāyat* is the sun when it becomes manifest.⁹

The possibility for man to reach the spiritual perfection of the Prophet had also been alluded to (or discussed prior to) Nasafī by mystics such as Sahl Tustarī, Hallāj, Tirmidhī, Rūzbihān Baqlī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Ibn 'Arabī.¹⁰ To demonstrate both why Friendship of God is the heart of Prophecy and why a Friend of God can reach the spiritual station of a prophet it is necessary to analyse the nature of perfection and the perfect man.

⁸ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 30.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 110.

¹⁰ See Masataka Takeshita, *op.cit.*

6:1:2 Qualities of the Perfect Man

In his works, Nasafī describes three qualities which each Perfect Man possesses. Through an investigation of these qualities and then by applying them to both the Prophet and Friend of God, it is possible to show the differences between the two, and thus explain the meaning behind the statement that Friendship of God is the heart of Prophecy.

The first of these is that the Perfect Man is always existent, both in cosmological terms and also in “reality” within the world. This idea reflects the distinction between the Muḥammadan reality and the Perfect Man. The Muḥammadan Reality is a term for the first thing that God created, which is both perfect and eternal and is empowered by God to create. A frequently quoted *ḥadīth* states that “the first thing created by God was my [i.e. Muḥammad] spirit then He created all the creatures from my spirit.”¹¹ This *ḥadīth* became part of the Sufi tradition, for Sahl al-Tustarī (d.896) related how Khidr had told him that “God created the Light of Muḥammad out of his own light and He gave it form and kept it for a hundred years and each day (which is a thousand years in this world) He looked at this light seven thousand times. And seven thousand lights were created from each glance at this light. So all the existents were created from this light.”¹²

The Muḥammadan Reality is then a cosmological reality which is manifested within the world as the Perfect Man. From this perspective, one can understand the meaning of the *ḥadīth* “I was a prophet while Adam was between the water and clay,”¹³ and Nasafī explains this in the following way:

So the origin of human spirits comes from the spirit and the origin of the bodies comes from the body of Adam. Therefore there is no other father of spirits than Muḥammad and there is no other father of bodies than Adam. ¹⁴

¹¹ Quoted by Nasafī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 103. See B. Furūzānfar, op.cit., pp. 113-14.

¹² Quoted by Nasafī, *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 276. See also Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 65-66.

¹³ Quoted by Nasafī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 104.

¹⁴ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 104.

Such an interpretation closely resembles that of the Arab poet Ibn Farīd (d. 1233) who had the Prophet say, "There is no living thing that does not derive its life from me, and all desiring souls are subject to my will. Even though I am a son of Adam in form, in him I have an essence of my own which testifies that I am his father."¹⁵

Although Muḥammad was the first of things to be created, he is the last of a chain of Prophets, and he manifested God's light completely and so he was the epitome of the Perfect Man. Yet it would be wrong to view the Perfect Man and the Muḥammadan Reality as interchangeable as Chodkiewicz has indicated, "the terms *ḥaqīqa Muḥammadiyya* and *insān kāmil* (perfect man) are not purely synonymous, but express differing views of man, the first seeing him in terms of his primordality and the second in terms of his finality."¹⁶ It is possible to see the Muḥammadan Reality and the Perfect Man as a circle, that is, of descent and ascent, which was a familiar motif in all of Nasafī's works.

... the Perfect Man, who in both his descent and ascent, will have passed three heavens and three earths¹⁷ and then is ^{firmly established} upon the Throne, that is, he will have come from and returned to the First Intelligence. Thus the circle is completed, the First Intelligence is ^{established} firmly upon the throne and the Perfect Man is also ^{firmly established} upon the throne.¹⁸

As mentioned above, the Perfect Man is a manifestation of the Muḥammadan Reality, and therefore this quality is not unique to the historical Muḥammad alone. According to Nasafī, the prophets such as Solomon, Khidr and Jesus¹⁹ are also considered as Perfect Men. Indeed, Nasafī remarks that the Perfect Man has been known by different names such as Shaykh, Leader, Guide, *Mahdī*, the Wise Man, the Mature, the Perfect, the Perfector, the World Reflecting Chalice, the Cosmos Reflecting Mirror, the Mighty Opium and the Great Elixir.²⁰ Yet even with the sealing of

¹⁵ Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 67.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 71.

¹⁷ That is, *Mulk*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt*.

¹⁸ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 190.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 5. See also *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 217.

²⁰ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 5.

Prophecy, the Muḥammadan Reality, with its manifestation in the Perfect Man still continues as an actuality in this world. Nasafī explains the reason for this in the following way:

This Perfect Man is always in the world and he is not more than one person because all creatures are like one person and the Perfect Man is the heart of that person and creatures can not exist without a heart; therefore the Perfect Man is always in the world. There is not more than one heart therefore there is not more than one Perfect Man in the world. There are many wise men in the world, but the heart of the world is only one. Other people are in the process of perfection, each one has its own perfection. When that unique wise man passes away from this world, another person reaches his level and becomes his successor so that the world is not without a heart.²¹

Nasafī's image of the Perfect Man being the heart of existence introduces the second quality, which is the Perfect Man being the centre of the universe. To use another expression, the Perfect Man is considered the fruit of the tree of creation, and all existents have existence bestowed upon them so that in the end the Perfect Man is manifested.

This idea of the Perfect Man being the centre of the universe can be described with reference to the ancient idea of man being a microcosm of the universe which is also called the macrocosm. The early Islamic Philosophers such as al-Kindī had read such descriptions of the microcosm in Greek philosophy,²² but it was the Ikhwan al-Safā that developed this concept, in particular, the relation between man's body with the universe. The similarities between man's soul and the universe were described by Sufis such as Ghazālī, Ibn 'Arabī and Nasafī who quoted the *ḥadīths* "God created man in His own form," and "He who knows himself knows his Lord," as the foundations of

²¹ Ibid, p. 5. It is interesting that Ibn 'Arabī also described the Perfect Man as being the heart of the universe. "Through the Perfect Man appeared the perfection of the image. He is the heart to the body of the universe. The universe is the expression for everything other than God. It [the heart] is the Well-Visited House of God, since it contains Him. He says in a ḥadīth, 'Neither my earth nor my heaven contains me, but the heart of my pious slave contains me.'" See Takeshita, p. 114.

²² It was Pythagoras who first developed the idea of the microcosm and the macrocosm.

such discussions. The idea of man, as the microcosm being superior to the macrocosm has already been discussed.²³

Nasafī describes the relation of the microcosm with the macrocosm which integrates both man's spirit and body. The intelligent man becomes God's caliph in the macrocosm because everything that exists in the macrocosm is created to serve him. In addition, everything in the macrocosm also exists within the microcosm and so it is the task of man to become master of these, making his attributes obedient and subservient to himself. Nasafī describes this in another way, that is, when the Perfect Man separates light from darkness so that all of God's attributes are manifested in the appropriate manner.

The alchemy that mankind performs is that he takes the soul of whatever he eats, he takes the select and quintessence of those things, that is, light is separated from darkness in such a way that light knows and sees itself as it is. This is not possible except in the Perfect Man.

O dervish! The Perfect Man completes this alchemy and completely separates light from darkness because light does not know or see itself in any other place and it sees and knows itself in the Perfect Man.²⁴

The third quality concerning the Perfect Man as described by Nasafī is that only one exists at any one time. God requires only one Perfect Man in which to display the entirety of His attributes.²⁵ That there is only one Perfect Man (or Pole) at any one time is the logical consequence of there being only one God. Nasafī explains this point:

O dervish! If in all the world one person reaches perfection, this light can see its own beauty and witness its own attributes, names and actions. There is no need for all of mankind to reach perfection. If all of mankind reached perfection, the attributes, names and actions of this light would not be completely manifested, and the order of the world would not exist, it is necessary for each one of mankind to have a level and for each one to be the locus of manifestation of an attribute, and

²³ See pages 95-102. For Nasafī's summarised treatment of this discussion, see *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 142-143.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 25.

²⁵ This view is very similar to Ibn 'Arabi's concept of the Absolute Pole, see Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, p. 371. See also Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp. 53, 94-95.

each one has the preparedness for a task in order that the attributes and names and actions of this light become completely manifested and the order of the world exists.²⁶

Nasafī explains another reason for there being only one Perfect Man in the World, which resembles Ibn 'Arabī's interpretation of the Koran (28:4-5).

The wisdom of the slaughter of the male children because of Moses was that the life of each boy killed because of him might revert to him as strength, since each one killed as being (potentially) Moses. There was no ignorance in the matter, since the life of each boy killed because of him had to revert to Moses, each life being pure and innocent, unsullied by selfish aims and in the state of "Yea indeed."²⁷ Moses was thus a fusion of each life taken in his stead, and everything prepared for each child according to its spirituality (then) resided in Moses. For Moses, this was a special divine favour not bestowed on anyone before him.²⁸

Nasafī works on a similar theme when he comments:

O dear friend! it is a light in the world which is diffused, non-limited and infinite, and the world is full of this light. This light is God Almighty and Holy. Each individual of all individuals in the world are like windows, and God's light shines through them, and His attributes - which are concealed in His essence - are manifested by means of them.²⁹ There are several windows for each one of His attributes, like the People of Knowledge who are all windows of the attribute of knowledge, and like the People of Power who are all windows for the attribute of power, and like the People of Wrath who are all windows of the attribute of wrath, and like the People of Subtlety who are all windows for the attribute of subtlety. And you should understand all attributes in the same way. So if there are many windows for an attribute then the manifestation of that attribute will not be as powerful as when the window of that attribute are few. So if there are many People of Knowledge in the world, the manifestation of knowledge will not be as powerful as when there are few People of Knowledge. And if there are many People of Power (*ḥukm*), then the manifestation of power will not be as strong as when the

²⁶ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 250.

²⁷ Koran, 7:172.

²⁸ Austin (trans), *Ibn al-'Arabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 251-252.

²⁹ This analogy of Nasafī's is similar to that used by Ibn 'Arabī. See Chittick, "Death and the World of Imagination in Ibn 'Arabī's eschatology." *Muslim World*, 78, (1988) p. 60.

People of *Power* are few, and you should understand the other attributes in the same way. So at one time, each of God's attributes are diffused in the world and at one time they are collected in one person. When they are collected in one person, that person is extremely wise and he is a Prophet or Friend of God and he is none other than the Wise Man, and this is the meaning of Prophet and Friend of God.³⁰

From these three qualities of the Perfect Man, (that is, his eternal existence, his existing as the heart of existence and the existence of just one Perfect Man at any one time), it is now possible to make a distinction between the Prophet and the Friend of God. This is especially the case regarding the eternal existence of the Perfect Man. Eternal existence is not a necessary condition for the Perfect Man as a Prophet. This is because Prophecy came to an end with Muḥammad. However the existence of the Perfect Man in the world continues. There is no such obstacle when the concept of the eternal existence of the Perfect Man is applied to Friendship of God for Friendship is eternal. The word *walī* is one of God's names mentioned in the Koran: "Allah is the Friend (*walī*) of those who believe,"³¹ and this name of God is shared by some of His creatures, again this has a Koranic basis: "Now surely the Friends of God (*awliyā' Allah*) - they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve."³² T. Izutsu has made the relevant point that if God's names are eternal, and if man shares a name with God then it follows that both the *walāyat* of God and man are eternal. Moreover, God does not call himself prophet or apostle which means that their functions are not eternal, but historically limited.³³

This relationship between *walāyat* and *nubuwwat* becomes clearer with Nasafī's own definition of the terms:

O dear friend! The meaning of Prophet in Arabic is informer, and the meaning of Friend of God is proximity. So in Arabic, whoever is an informer is a Prophet, and whoever is in proximity is a Friend of God.

³⁰ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 61b, line 16 - fol. 62a, line 7.

³¹ Koran, 2:257. Nasafī quotes this verse in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 186.

³² Koran, 10:62.

³³ T. Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 264.

O dear friend! At first the wayfarer says that the Friend of God is the one that God Almighty chooses for Friendship from his servants and makes him the esteemed one (*muqarrab*) of His Excellency, and makes him special for His inspiration so that he can be sure of God's existence and the oneness of God. And this is the meaning of the Perfect Man. A Prophet is the one that God Almighty chooses from among His Friends and makes him special for His revelation, and He sends him to the creatures so that they are made aware of God, and he shows them the path that leads to God. And this is the meaning of the Perfecting Man (*insān-i mukammil*).³⁴ So a Prophet has two faces, one face is in the direction of God and the other face is in the direction of the creatures. He accepts from the Truth and passes on to the creatures. That is, he accepts with the face that is turned towards God and he passes on God's orders to the creatures with the face that is towards the creatures. The name of the face which is towards God is *walāyat* and the name of the face which is towards the creatures is *nubuwwat*.³⁵

So the Prophet is also a Friend of God, and it is through his Friendship that he is a Perfect Man. From this perspective, one can understand Nasafī's statement that Friendship is the heart of Prophecy. With respect to the Friendship of the Prophet, it is true that the Prophet can be the Perfect Man, satisfying all three conditions mentioned above. With the termination of Prophecy, Friendship continues through the Friends of God.

6:2 The Superiority of Friendship over Prophecy

(*You are only a warner and the people has its guide*).³⁶

In the previous section it was shown through an analysis of the Perfect Man and Muḥammadan Reality that Nasafī believes the Friends of God reach the spiritual station of the prophets. Moreover, he comments that Friendship is the heart of Prophecy so

³⁴ The Persian here is ambiguous because this can be read either *insān-i mukammal* (which means the Perfected Man, i.e. Perfected by God) or *insān-i mukammil* (which means the Perfecting Man, i.e. perfecting the creatures). Unfortunately it still is not clear from the context which one is correct. See also F. Meier's comments in "The Problem of Nature in the Esoteric Monism of Islam," p. 186.

³⁵ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 61b line 6 - 15.

³⁶ Koran, 8:7. (Quoted by Nasafī, *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 102).

now it is necessary to describe in what ways the superiority of Friendship over Prophecy is manifested.

6:2:1 Knowledge and Friendship

The first point is that the Friendship is a rank which has a closer standing to God and this is reflected in the knowledge of the Friend compared to that of the Prophet in his capacity as Prophet. Nasafī comments that:

Know that freedom has three degrees:

The first type is dying from the veils of darkness and fame, property and appetites, and forgetting the veils of darkness and becoming free from the bonds of the veils of darkness.

The second type is dying from the veils of light which are intelligence, virtue and obedience and becoming free from their bonds, and *nubuwwat* is dying through seeing and becoming free from the bonds of self conceit, and this is the freedom of the Prophets and our messenger, the master of prophets said, "poverty is my pride."

The third type is when one dies from oneself and becomes free from the bonds of oneself and this is the freedom of the Friends of God and the greater Friend of God and master of the wise men said "die before you die."

O dervish! It is at this point that the wayfarer is freed from hell and arrives at heaven, and that dear one stated;

If you want to live, die before death, o friend!

*Because Idris (Enoch) became heavenly from such a death.*³⁷

In the above discussion, Nasafī ranks the Philosopher, Prophet and Friend of God in order, that is, the Philosopher having the least degree of knowledge and the Friend of God having the greatest degree of knowledge. In fact, this view is described several times in Nasafī's works, the following is a typical example:

O dear friend! The knowledge which is designated for a philosopher is the knowledge of the natures of things, and the knowledge which is designated for a Prophet is the knowledge of the qualities of things, and the knowledge which is

³⁷ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 104.

designated for the Friend of God is the knowledge of the realities of things. Whoever knows for sure these three knowledges is both Philosopher, Prophet and Friend of God. So perhaps a philosopher is perfect in wisdom (*ḥikmat*) and has understood God, and perhaps a Prophet is perfect in *nubuwwat* and has understood God, but it is not possible for a Friend of God to be perfect in *walāyat* and have understood God.³⁸

The knowledge of the Philosopher is of the natures of things, in other words, of things as manifested in the cosmos, while that of the Prophets is the knowledge of revelation which is specific to a historical setting. The knowledge of the Friends of God, which is the realities of things, is the knowledge of the immutable entities and since these are infinite and also because perfection in man does not exist, then the Friend of God can not attain perfection in Friendship and understood God perfectly. Yet it is the most complete of all knowledge in that it comes closest to God. Concerning the impossibility to reach perfection, Nasafī writes:

But the knowledge which is particular for the Prophet is one thing and the knowledge which is particular for the Friend of God is another. This is because despite the fact that knowledge is one attribute of God, and power is one attribute of God, knowledge and power have many levels and types in relation to the object of knowledge and the object of power. It is not possible for one person to obtain all the types of power because the life of a man is short and there are many types of knowledge. It is extremely difficult if one person wants to reach perfection in one type of knowledge and in this world there are few people who are perfect in one type of knowledge. For example, if a person lives for a hundred years it is difficult if he desires to reach perfection in knowledge and know through verification in such a way that nothing remains concealed from him, [it is difficult] to reach perfection and know through verification the knowledge of astrology and the insight of the microcosm and macrocosm and all types of knowledge. In the world there are Philosophers, Prophets and Friends of God so it is not necessary for a person to know all types of knowledge since there is a Philosopher or Prophet or Friend of God and there is a particular knowledge for each one.³⁹

This knowledge at the level of Friendship is also described in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*:

³⁸ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 62a, lines 15 - 19.

³⁹ *Ibid*, fol. 62a, lines 7 - 15.

Know that *Malakūt* has three levels; nature (*ṭabī'at*), spirit (*rūḥ*) and intelligence (*'aql*). All of them are one thing but this one thing has different levels and each level has a name. Its name changes whenever its preparedness (*isti'dād*) and attributes increase. *Mulk* is in the same way, where there is the mineral body, plant body and animal body; all of them are one thing, but this one thing has levels and in each level it takes a name. Since you have made understood and made clear the levels of *Malakūt* and that its extremity is intelligence, now know that it is intelligence which is the mother of the Koran (*umm al-qur'ān*) and the mother of judgement⁴⁰ (*umm al-furqān*) since the Koran is the recital of God's book and the recital of God's word is judgement. These two recitals are through intelligence, so intelligence is the mother of the Koran and the mother of Furqān. And intelligence is the knowledgeable man (*'ālam*) and the knowing man (*'alīm*) and the man of great knowledge (*'allām*) because intelligence's recital of God's book and God's word is an expression meaning knowledge (*'ilm*) of God's book and God's word. The knowledgeable man of intelligence is a believer and the knowing man of intelligence is a Prophet and the man of great knowledge of intelligence is a Friend of God. Moses was a Prophet and a knowing man (*'alīm*) because he had the knowledge of a book. Khidr was a Friend of God and a man of great knowledge (*'allām*) and he had witnessed the knowledge of the book's word and a word is invisible and therefore Khidr was a man of great knowledge about the invisible world (*ghuyūb*).⁴¹

O dervish, according to the People of Unity, the wise men (*dānāyān*) are of three kinds; Philosophers, Prophets and Friends of God. A Philosopher is he who knows the natures of things; a Prophet is he who knows the natures and qualities of things; the Friend of God is he who knows the natures, qualities and realities of things. So no-one in the world is equal to a Friend of God in knowledge (*'ilm*) and power (*qudrat*). This is because God has two self-disclosures (*tajallī*); a common self-disclosure (*tajallī-yi 'āmm*) and a special self-disclosure (*tajallī-yi khāṣṣ*). The common self-disclosure is an expression for the individual existents and the special self-disclosure is an expression meaning the Friends of God and this is the meaning of: "And it is God, He is the Friend, He gives life to the dead: It is He who has power over all things"⁴² and this is the meaning of: "God is omnipotent, He knows everything⁴³."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Mother of judgement (*umm al-furqān*) is another name for the Koran because "*furqān*" means the divider or discriminator or judge because through *furqān*, man can divide between right and wrong.

⁴¹ The relevance of the distinction between Moses and Khidr will be explained in greater depth further on in this chapter.

⁴² Koran, 42:9.

⁴³ Koran, 28:12.

⁴⁴ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 58-59.

The lower degree of the Prophet's knowledge is useful in a practical sense, as Nasafī describes in the following quote, however it is not sufficient for those who have the capacity to receive more knowledge:

O dear friend! The Prophet is a warner and the Friend of God is a guide. This is because the Prophet wants to ward off corruption from the creatures and manifest wholesomeness among the creatures, and the warding off of corruption and the manifestation of wholesomeness is impossible without warning. The Friend of God wants to remove association of others with God (*shirk*) and manifest unity among the creatures, and the removal of association of others with God and manifestation of unity can not be guaranteed without guidance. So the Philosophers have made commands and prohibitions and promises and threats based upon the natures of things. And the Prophets have made commands and prohibitions and promises and threats based upon the qualities of things. There is a quality in whatever is existent, from spirits and bodies and the words and actions of each one, for example, in words and actions like lying and telling the truth, honesty and treachery, the bringing together of two souls through passion and not bringing together two souls through passion. It is impossible that there is an existent thing which does not have a quality. So the Prophets can not say to everyone what the quality is in speaking the truth and lying, in eating lawful food or forbidden food, in honesty and treachery, because not everyone can understand. In addition, warning becomes prolonged in this manner, and so they have given warnings in a different way which is shorter, and they said hell is the place for whoever lies or is treacherous, etc., and there are many torments and scorpions. In the same way they said that heaven is the place for whoever tells the truth and remains honest, etc., and there is much comfort and happiness in heaven ... And the Friends of God say that the removal of corruption from the people and the manifestation of wholesomeness among the creatures is extremely good. But because of this summarising (*ikhtisār kardan*), the good souled pious person and the chaste seeker are always placed in veils and do not arrive at God and this is not good.⁴⁵

In the above quote, Nasafī distinguishes three levels of knowledge; one for the individual as Friend of God and two for the individual as Prophet. The Prophet has to qualify his statements about the qualities of things because people do not understand (never mind explaining the reality of things!). The difference in the knowledge of the

⁴⁵ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 62b, line 3 - fol. 63a, line 2.

Prophet and the Friend of God is also highlighted by Nasafī⁴⁶ with reference to the verses in the Koran which deal with Moses's encounter with an un-named person (but identified in Sufi tradition as Khidr). According to the Koran,⁴⁷ Khidr recognises that Moses is not able to understand his knowledge and therefore he says to him "Surely you can not have patience with me; and how can you have patience in that of which you have not got a comprehensive knowledge?"⁴⁸ However, Khidr allows Moses to follow him on the condition that the latter does not question him on anything that occurs and if Moses asks such questions, then they would go their own separate ways. Khidr and Moses set off together, and on their way Khidr makes a hole in the bottom of a boat, kills a young boy and finally fixes a wall of a city where some of the people had refused to feed them. For Moses, each of these acts is inexplicable and seems contrary to the actions of a person who follows a divine law, and therefore he questions Khidr each time. The latter explains that he made a hole in the boat because there was a king who wished to seize it from the poor men who were its owners; he killed the boy because his parents were believers and feared that he would become disobedient and ungrateful; and he fixed the wall (rather than seeking vengeance on the people of the city who refused him food) because the wall belonged to two orphans and beneath the wall was a buried treasure which belonged to them, and their father was a righteous man. Thus the knowledge of Khidr (the Friend of God) is of a different nature to that of Moses (the Prophet),⁴⁹ or in the words that Nasafī might have used, Khidr's knowledge is at the *bāṭin*, whereas that of Moses is at the *ẓāhir*. In addition to this story Nasafī describes another incident between Khidr and Moses which indicates the different levels between them:

It is related that Moses met with Khidr and they were together for a while and one day they became hungry in the desert. There passed by a gazelle and it stood

⁴⁶ *Kitāab-i tanzīl*, fol. 63a lines 10 -16 . See also Austin (trans), *Ibn al-'Arabi: The Bezels of Wisdom*, p.103.

⁴⁷ Koran, 18:65-82.

⁴⁸ Koran, 18, 67-68.

⁴⁹ For a more comprehensive analysis of this story see Austin (trans), *Ibn al-'Arabi: The Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 260-261.

in between them. The side of the gazelle which faced Khidr was cooked and the side which faced Moses was raw. Khidr began to eat but Moses could not eat. Khidr said, "O Moses! Bring some fire wood and cook the meat in a pan and eat it!" Moses asked Khidr, "How is it that your side is cooked and my side is raw?" Khidr answered, "O Moses! I am in the afterlife and you are in the world. The sustenance of the world is acquired and the sustenance of the afterlife is ready and cooked. This world is the abode of toil and the other world is the abode of reward. Our provisions are ready and available, but your provisions depend upon striving and effort."

"Whenever Zacharias went into the chamber to her, he found provisions with her, and he said, 'O Mary! Where is this food from?' She answered, 'This is from God, for God gives without stint to whom he will'⁵⁰." ⁵¹

Khidr is in the next world and Moses is in this world, in other words, Moses is a follower of Khidr.

6:3 The Superiority of Prophecy over Friendship

It has been shown that the Prophet is also a Friend of God, but his Friendship is superior to his Prophecy:

So Friendship is more powerful than Prophecy concerning the reality of Prophecy.⁵²

Yet in another respect, there are cases when Prophecy is superior to Friendship. For example, the author of *Tabṣirat al-mubtadi'* (Clarification for Beginners)⁵³ which was written in the middle of the thirteenth century, perhaps by Ṣadr al-Din Qūnawī, says:

⁵⁰ Koran, 3:37.

⁵¹ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, pp. 307-8.

⁵² *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 61b line 15.

⁵³ See Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*.

... the furthest limit of the stage of Friendship is the beginning of the stage of Prophecy. Hence all the sciences of unveiling bestowed upon the friend are known by the prophet but not vice versa.⁵⁴

The important point here is that the Prophet has all the sciences of unveiling bestowed upon him which the Friend has and also other sciences which the Friend does not share. This superiority of Prophecy over Friendship may be demonstrated through the story of Moses and Khidr. In the first story of Khidr and Moses, after the killing of the boy and Khidr's reprimand of "Did I not say that you (*Moses*) will not be able to have patience with me,"⁵⁵ Moses replied "If I ask you anything after this, keep me not in your company."⁵⁶ Moses of course asked Khidr about the reconstruction of the wall, and Khidr realised that he had to depart from Moses, since the Prophet had previously commanded this. Thus Khidr pays respect to Moses, that is, he is a follower of Moses because of Moses's prophetic capacity.⁵⁷

This story however presents a problem because of the belief that the Prophet possesses both Prophecy and Friendship. This being the case, why was Moses in his capacity as Friend of God, unable to understand the esoteric actions of Khidr?

The answer to such a question lies in the fact that no-one can be perfect in the Friendship of God (as Nasafi states several times) so no Friend or Prophet can know everything. Another explanation (although not apparent in Nasafi's works) lies in Ibn 'Arabi's concept of the solitary ones (*afrād*) who comprise the individuals of various spiritual ranking (from the *qutb*, to the *awtād* and *abdāl*, etc.). The singular of *afrād* is *fard* which is one of the Divine names, meaning the Unique. This fact, according to Chodkiewicz "...explains the fact that their spiritual level is unknown and why they experience misunderstanding and reproach, for 'they have received a knowledge from

⁵⁴ *Tabsirat al-mubtadi*, trans, Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, p. 88.

⁵⁵ Koran, 18:75.

⁵⁶ Koran, 18:76.

⁵⁷ See also Austin (trans), *Ibn al-'Arabi: The Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 260.

God which is known to them alone.' This is illustrated by a reference to the story of Moses and Khidr."⁵⁸

From reading Nasafi's works, the reason behind Moses not understanding Khidr's actions is not completely clear. However, the important fact in the relationship between Moses and Khidr is that Friendship is recognised as the higher rank from one perspective, and Prophecy is superior to Friendship from another.

The tension involved in the relationship between Friendship and Prophecy, that is, each one being a follower of the other, is described by Nasafi:

... knowledge about the realities of things is from the lamp of Friendship for the Prophet, and knowledge about the qualities of things is from the lamp of Prophecy for the Friend of God.⁵⁹

O dear friend! The Prophet is a warner and the Friend of God is a guide, and the Possessor of the Divine Law is an Establisher and the Possessor of Realities is an Unveiler. Each Prophet is not the Possessor of a Divine Law, but each Possessor of a Divine Law is a Prophet. Each Friend of God is not the Possessor of Realities, but each Possessor of Realities is a Friend of God. And an Unveiler is the follower of an Establisher in the established, and an Establisher is the follower of an Unveiler in unveiling, and the story of Moses and Khidr was about this.⁶⁰

This relationship is fundamental to Nasafi's ideas of the perfection of man after the cycle of Prophecy: a Friend of God being a follower of a Prophet means that the *Sharī'a* is preserved from innovation thus providing the basis for a stable Islamic community; a Prophet being a follower of the Friend of God permitted individuals to claim some of the attributes of Prophecy, which means the possibility of achieving the same degree of spiritual unveiling as the Prophets. Ibn 'Arabī expresses this point by indicating that in fact Friendship is a form of Prophecy:

Know that Saintsship (*walāyat*) is an all-inclusive and universal function that never comes to an end, dedicated as it is to the universal communication (of

⁵⁸ Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 107.

⁵⁹ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 62b lines 1 - 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, fol. 63a line 10 - 12.

divine truth). As for the legislative function of prophecy and Apostle ship, it came to an end in Muḥammad. After him there will no longer be any law bringing prophet or community to receive such, nor any apostle bringing divine law.

God however is kind to His servants and has left for them universal Prophecy, which brings no law with it. He has also left to them the power of legislation through the exercise of individual judgement (*ijtihād*) concerning rules and regulations. In addition he has bequeathed to them the heritage of legislation in the tradition “The Learned are the heirs of the Prophets.” This inheritance involves the use of individual judgement in certain rulings, which is a form of legislation.”⁶¹

Shaykh Sa’d al-Din Ḥammuyā also believed that Friends of God could be considered as Prophets. Nasafi explains this point:

Know that Shaykh Sa’d al-Din Ḥammuyā said that before Muḥammad, there were no Friends of God among the old religions and the name Friend of God did not exist. The esteemed ones were called prophets, although in each religion there was one person who was the Possessor of a Holy Law. There was not more than one although the others called the people to his religion, and they were all called prophets. So there were many prophets (*payghambar*) in the religion of Adam who called the people to Adam’s religion, and it was in the same way in the religions of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. When Muḥammad came he commanded that after me there will be people who will be my followers and they will be the esteemed ones of His Holy Presence. Their names will be “Friends of God,” and these Friends of God will call people to my religion.⁶²

Ibn ‘Arabī also makes the important point (which has already been mentioned) that Friendship of God can only be considered higher than Prophecy on the condition that the two are discussed in the context of Friendship of God and Prophecy being within the same person:

When the Prophet speaks on matters that lie outside the scope of law, he is then speaking as a saint and a gnostic, so that his station as a knower (of truth) is more complete and perfect than that as an apostle and law giver. If you hear any of the Folk saying or transmitting sayings from him to the effect that Saint ship is

⁶¹ Austin (trans), *Ibn al-‘Arabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 168.

⁶² *Manāzil al-sā’irīn*, p. 320.

higher than Prophecy, he means only what we have just said. Likewise, if he says that the saint is superior to the prophet and the apostle, he means only that is so within one person. This is because in his Saints^{hip} he is more perfect than he is as a prophet or apostle. It does not mean that any saint coming after him is higher than he, since one who follows cannot attain to the one who is followed, as regards that which he follows him in. Were he indeed to affect such a position, he would no longer be a follower; so understand. The Apostles^{hip} and Prophecy stem from Saints^{hip} and learning.⁶³

The sealing of Prophecy means that God's message to the creatures has been perfected. This does not imply that God abandons His creation, since the Perfect Man (who is always in the world) and the Friends of God (who have the spiritual stations of the prophets as their inheritors) provide advise and comfort for men and women. It has already be shown that according to Nasafī, the Friends of God are those individuals who follow the Prophets in the Holy Law, but who also know the esoteric meaning of the Holy Law since their faces are turned to God. For this reason they are considered heirs of the Prophets. In their function as Prophets, the Prophets understand the special qualities of revelations and in their capacity as Friends of God, they comprehend the realities or esoteric dimension of such revelations. From this perspective, the sealing of Prophecy and the end of legislative prophecy is not "a great blow," because non-legislative prophecy or *walāyat*, deals with the secrets of religion. In other words, legislative prophets are limited in explaining the special qualities of revelation whereas the Friends of God are not restricted in this way and may explain the hidden realities. This is what Nasafī appears to be saying in the following:

Since you have understood that Friendship of God and Prophecy are the attributes of his excellency Muḥammad, know that until now the attribute of Prophecy of his excellency Muḥammad was manifested, and he stipulated the establishment of the form and the form was made clear. All the messengers that have come have all stipulated the establishment of form. Prophecy was completed when the establishment of the form was completed, and now it is the turn of Friendship to become clear and manifested and for the spiritual realities to become

⁶³ Austin (trans), *Ibn al-'Arabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 168-169.

clear. The aforementioned Owner of Time is the Friend of God, and when he appears, Friendship is manifested and the spiritual realities become clear and the form is concealed. Until now there was discussion in the religious schools about the exoteric knowledge, and spiritual realities were concealed since it was the time of Prophecy, for Prophecy stipulates the establishment of the form. When the establishment of the form was completed, Prophecy was also completed. Now it is the time for the manifestation of Friendship. When Friendship is manifested, the spiritual realities are made clear and the form is concealed. Until now there was discussion of form in the religious schools and now there is discussion of spiritual realities.⁶⁴

Know that the Philosophers are free in expressing knowledge, if they want they train others and they do not train others if they do not want to. And the Prophets are compelled in the expression of Prophecy for this is the special quality of this station for whoever is in this station prevents the people from doing anything which has bad qualities and he calls the people to do the things which have good qualities and this is not possible without superfluity and vexation, and they endure all of this although much trouble comes to them because of it. The Friends of God are free in expressing the Friendship of God. If they want they can tell people of the realities of things in order that God becomes manifest, and they do not tell these things if they do not want to, and this is not possible without unity and guidance.⁶⁵

6:4 Conclusion

(1). The relationship between Prophecy and Friendship of God is a complex one and this is nowhere more apparent than in the portrayal given by Sa'd al-Din Hammuyā:

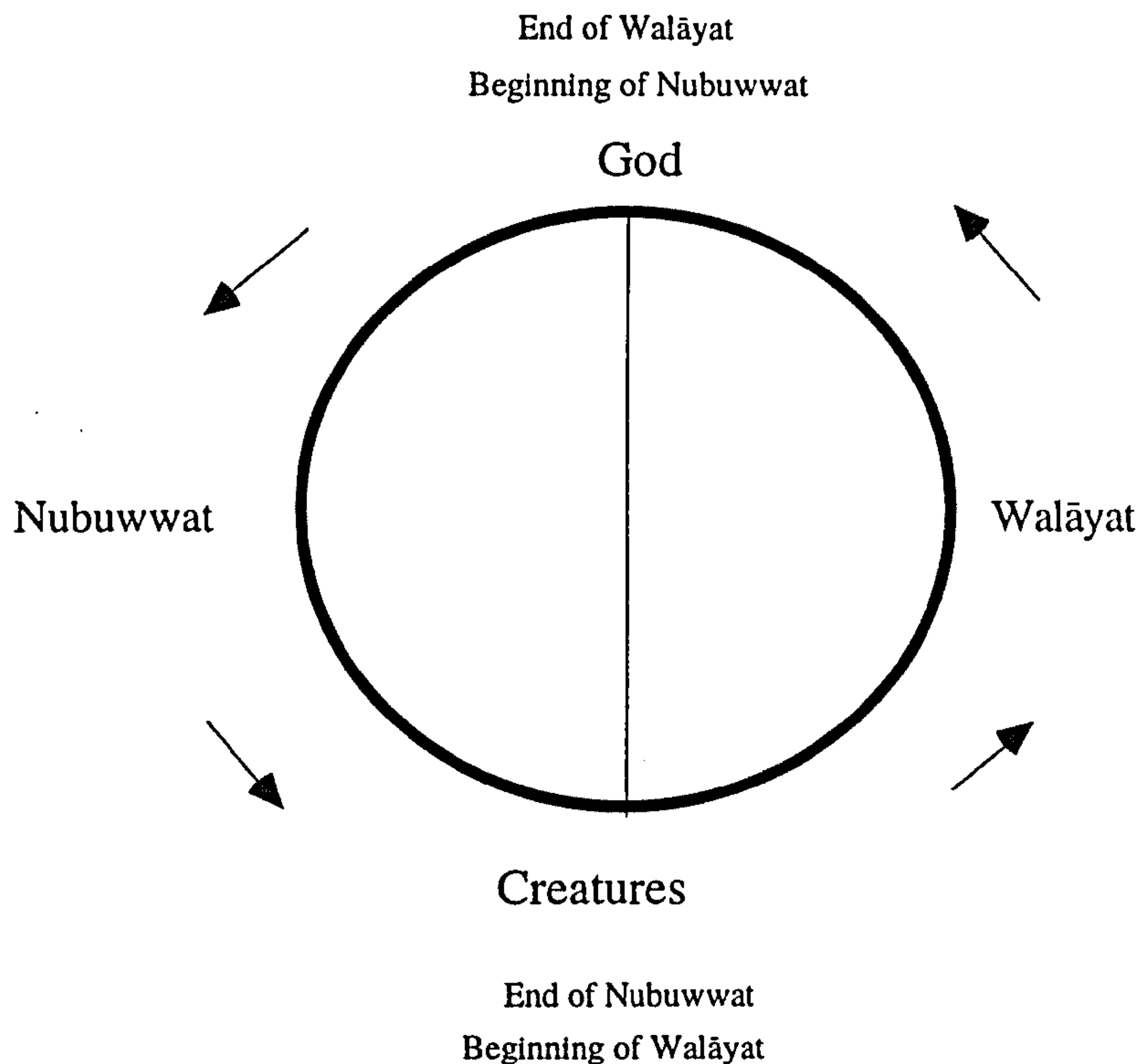
Know that the beginning of Prophecy is the end of Friendship because the Prophet comes from the Truth to the creatures and the Friend of God goes from the creatures to the Truth. But in the same way that the end (*intihā*) of Friendship is the beginning (*ibtidā*) of Prophecy, the end of Prophecy is the beginning of Friendship. (This is) because the end of the Friend of God is from form (*ṣurat*) with meaning (*ma'anī*) and

⁶⁴ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 246.

⁶⁵ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 103-104.

the beginning of the Prophet is from meaning with form, so the beginning of that is the end of this, and the end of this is the beginning of that.⁶⁶

This can be represented diagrammatically:



(2). The continual existence of the Perfect Man in the world after the sealing of Prophecy raises important questions. Since the Perfect Man enjoys the same spiritual station as the prophets and understands the esoteric meaning of God's revelations, it is little surprise that some of the secular authorities and members of the '*Ulamā*' looked at this interpretation of Sufism with fear and suspicion. Such esoteric interpretations could easily instigate social or political upheaval. Related to this point is the possibility of Shi-ite tendencies within such ideas as espoused by Nasafī and this would have been perceived as an additional threat to the orthodox Sunni '*Ulamā*'. Therefore it is necessary to investigate in more detail the nature of the Perfect Man following the sealing of Prophecy.

⁶⁶ Sa'd al-Din Hammuyā, *al-Miṣbāḥ fi 'l-taṣawwuf*, p. 137.

6:5 The Friends of God as Heirs to the Prophet

Inheritance and being an heir of the prophets are the central points in the relationship between Prophecy and Friendship of God. It is not surprising then that Nasafī refers to the Friends of God as heirs of the Prophets:

O dervish! Since the Perfect Man recognises God and is permitted to encounter God and he knows and sees a thing as it is and the fundamental structure of a thing as it is, after recognition and encounter with God he does not see one task or understand one duty as equal or better than consoling the people and he does not see any comfort better than saying something and doing something with the people so that when they listen and perform that task, they pass their time in the world in an easy way, and they are safe from the calamities and misfortunes of this world and they become saved in the afterlife. And whoever does so is the heir of the prophets because the knowledge and deeds of the prophets are the children of the prophets. So their legacy also comes to their children.⁶⁷

Who then are the Friends of God and what does it mean to be an heir of the prophets? The idea of there being individuals who were the heirs of the Prophets is legitimised with reference to the *ḥadīth* “The learned are the heirs of the Prophets.”⁶⁸ Of course, there were various interpretations over who the learned were, for they could be the ‘*Ulamā*’, the Philosophers or the Sufis. For Sufis, the seeds of the concept of inheriting from the Prophets dated back to the era of mystics such as Sahl al-Tustarī (d.896).⁶⁹ Tustarī discussed the idea of the pre-eternal column of light which is the Muḥammadan Light, and is the source of all existence. Everything in existence inherits from the Muḥammadan Light, although the Prophets inherit in a more comprehensive manner. Moreover, Tustarī commented that there is a Friend of God who shares in the charisma of a prophet within the community. Three centuries after Tustarī, Ibn ‘Arabi developed this idea (focusing upon a Sufi tradition in which Muḥammad mentioned

⁶⁷ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 6.

⁶⁸ Reliable *ḥadīth*, quoted by Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, trans. H. Algar, op. cit., p. 445. Algar has found this *ḥadīth* in the collections of Būkhārī, Muslim, Abū Dā’ūd and Ibn Ḥanbal.

⁶⁹ See G. Böwering, *The mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam*, (Berlin-New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1980), p.65.

124,000 prophets and 313 messengers⁷⁰). For a full manifestation of the Prophets' legacy, the Sufis believed that there must be the same number of Friends of God in the world. Nasafī also refers to the number of Friends of God in a similar way, although he has some reservations about the exact number:

O dervish, the discourse of the Friends of God is well known and famous and has been written in many books. It is said that there are 124,000. It is better if the number is not fixed because no-one knows for sure. It was said to Muḥammad that we have spoken the affairs of some with you.⁷¹ Since the affairs of some were not told to Muḥammad then no-one knows for sure their true number. Of this total, some are prophets without a book (*nabī*) and some were prophets with a book (*rasūl*). Some are men of resolution. The seal is one. The seal is Muḥammad.⁷²

Nasafī's discussion of the heirs of the Prophets may be divided into two sections. The first represents an interpretation which was elaborated in more detail by other Sufis such as Ibn 'Arabī and Rūzbihān Baqlī (1128-1209). Since Nasafī's description of the heirs of the Prophets is somewhat limited, reference will be made to the beliefs of the other Sufis in order to make the significance of this point clearer. The second discussion of the heirs of the Prophets involves the question of Nasafī's position towards Shi-ism. Several contemporary scholars have suggested that Nasafī was sympathetic to twelver Shi-ism and this issue will be addressed following the next section concerning the Friends of God as custodians of the universe.

6:5:1 The custodians of the universe

Although the real number can not be determined, Nasafī describes a hierarchy of three hundred and fifty six Friends of God⁷³:

⁷⁰ See Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 56. See also Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, pp. 53-54.

⁷¹ This is a reference to the Koran, 40:78, "And certainly We sent apostles before you: there are some of them that We have mentioned to you and there are others whom We have not mentioned to you."

⁷² *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 323.

⁷³ Although Nasafī mentions three hundred and sixty five Friends of God, this figure seems to be referring to those Friends who know one another and act together. Other Sufis held that there are four

Know that there are three hundred and fifty six Friends of God in the world and these three hundred and fifty six are always in the world. When one departs from the world someone else takes his place. Therefore there is never less than three hundred and fifty six and they are always constant in God's court and attending upon His Presence. Their tranquillity is through the *dhikr* on God and their knowledge is through witnessing Him, and their tasting is through contemplating Him. There are six levels among these three hundred and fifty six people; three hundred people, forty people, seven people, five people, three people and one person.⁷⁴

Nasafi's explanation of the number of the Friends of God is orthodox in the Sufi world.⁷⁵ Virtually the same system was described by Hujwiri (d. ca. 1071) in his *Kashf al-mahjub*. There are three hundred individuals named *akhyar*, forty *abdāl*, seven *abrār*, four *awtād*, three *nukaba'* and the pole or *qutb*.⁷⁶ The functions of some of these was explained by subsequent Sufis: the seven continually move about and spread the Muslim faith in the world; the four live at the four cardinal points of the compass with reference to Mecca and every night they traverse the universe in thought and inform the Pole of any defects in order that he may remedy them.⁷⁷ Another distinction between the ranks of the Friends of God is given by Nasafi in his portrayal of their qualities:

... the three hundred people are upon the heart (*bar dil*) of Adam, and the forty people are upon the heart of Moses, and the seven people are upon the heart of

thousand other Friends who live hidden in the world and are unconscious of their own state. See Carra de Vaux, "Wali," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill), p. 1109.

⁷⁴ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 317.

⁷⁵ The only difference between Nasafi's explanation and that of other Sufis such as Hujwiri is that in Nasafi's scheme there is a group of five individuals whereas in Hujwiri's system there is a group of four rather than five. See Hujwiri, trans. R.A. Nicholson, *The "Kashf al-mahjub," the Oldest Persian Treatise on Sufism by al-Hujwiri*, (Gibb Memorial Series, no. 17. 1911; repr. London: 1959).

⁷⁶ Hujwiri, p. 214. In addition, Nasafi's hierarchy of three hundred and fifty six individuals resembles that of Rūzbihān Baqlī. However, the latter added four more individuals, making three hundred and sixty, "God has three hundred and sixty eyes each day and night," Rūzbihān Baqlī, *Sharh-i Shatḥiyyāt*, ed. H. Corbin, (Tehran: Department D'Iranologie de l'institute Franco-Iranien, 1966), p. 367. These four other individuals are identified as Idris, Khidr, Elijah and Jesus, who were "carried off alive from death." Ibn 'Arabī's own hierarchy is by far more detailed and complex than Nasafi's and Rūzbihān Baqlī's. For example, Ibn 'Arabī lists eighty four classes of spiritual men, thirty five of whom have a constant number of occupants at any given moment. (See Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p. 103) In Ibn 'Arabī's system, the first of these followed in the footsteps of Abraham, the second followed Moses, the third followed Aaron, the fourth followed Idris, the fifth followed Joseph, the sixth followed Jesus and the seventh followed Adam. The pinnacle of these thirty five is the Pole, followed by two Imams and four pillars (*awtād*) and seven substitutes (*abdāl*) and the list extends further, including other rankings.

⁷⁷ Carra de Vaux, "Wali," op.cit., p. 1109-1111.

Jesus, and the five people are upon the heart of Gabriel, and the three people are upon the heart of Michael and the one person is upon the heart of Israfil.⁷⁸

Again this appears to be an orthodox Sufi doctrine, for it also appears in the *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥīyyāt* of Rūzbihān Baqlī.⁷⁹ Nasafī's explanation of the Friends of God being "upon the heart" or Rūzbihān Baqlī's "resembling the heart" appears to be another way of saying that they are the inheritors of a particular Prophet or angel. Such ideas can also be found in Ibn 'Arabī's writings. He describes the inheritance of the Friends of God in terms of *'alā qadam*, literally meaning on the foot, or in the footsteps which is very similar to Nasafī's upon the heart (*bar dil*).

Yet Nasafī's spiritual hierarchy does not reach the pinnacle with the *abdāl* who follow the heart of Israfil, because he also describes a Friend of God who is the Seal of the Friends of God. Nasafī does not mention a Friend being the heir of Muḥammad, yet there can be little doubt that he knew of such a concept (perhaps even believing in it himself) because it was a central theme in Ibn 'Arabī's works and also those of Sa'd al-Din Ḥammuyā. The inheritance which the Seal of the Saints receives from the Seal of the Prophets is the same degree of spiritual insight. For this reason Ḥammuyā comments:

⁷⁸ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 319.

⁷⁹

"For God there is a connection (*paywasta*) to those of the ground; three hundred people whose hearts resemble (*mānad*) Adam's heart, and forty people whose hearts resemble Abraham's heart, and seven people whose hearts resemble Gabriel's heart, and five people whose hearts resemble Michael's heart and three people whose hearts resemble Israfil's heart and one person whose heart resembles 'Azrā'il's heart."

Rūzbihān Baqlī Shirāzī, *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥīyyāt*, ed. H. Corbin, p. 52-53. In the spiritual hierarchy described by Rūzbihān Baqlī was more comprehensive than Nasafī's. For example:

"Also greetings upon the twelve thousand hidden Friends of God who operate (*gardand*) in the directions of Turkestan, India, Africa and Ethiopia; and upon the four thousand special ones who operate in Anatolia, Khurasan and Iran; and greetings upon upon the four hundred who live in Shatt bahar; and upon the three hundred who have a convent on the shores of North Africa and Egypt; and greetings upon the seventy who live in Yemen, Ta'if, Mecca, Hijaz, Basra and Batiyih; and greetings upon the forty who are in Iraq and Syria. Also greetings upon the ten in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem; also greetings upon the seven who are always travelling and flying in the whole world; and greetings upon the three, one of whom is from Fars, one of whom is from Anatolia and one of whom is from Arabia. The Truth's greetings after all of them and their group, and through them greetings upon him who is called the Succour (*qhawth*) and the Pole (*qutb*)." p. 10.

Do not suppose that the Seal of the Friends of God is additional (*zā'id*) to the Seal of the Prophets, because they are locus of manifestation of one reality. But there are two forms (*shikl*) in creation. One is at the beginning of time and the other is at the end of time.⁸⁰

Muḥammad and Aḥmad are two names and they are manifested in one named thing (*musammā*). At the beginning of time it becomes clear through the Muḥammadan name, and he invites (*da'wat*), and calls the people from this world to the next world (*'uqbā*), and at the end of time he becomes clear in the Aḥmadan name and he invites the people from the next world to the Lord (*mawlan*) and to the origin of places and creatures and the secret of the Holy Law.⁸¹

The Seal of the Prophets and the Seal of the Friends of God are of one art (*ṣan'a*) and their source (*manshā'*) is one⁸²

Ibn 'Arabī also made the point that the Friend of God enjoys the same spiritual level :

As for the Seal of the Saints, he is the Saint, the Heir, the one whose (knowledge) derives from the source, the one who beholds all levels (of being). This sainthood is among the excellencies of the Seal of the Apostles, Muḥammad, first of the Community (of apostles) and Lord of Men as being he who opened the gate to intercession.⁸³

The idea that the Seal of the Friends is the heir of Muḥammad is implicit in Nasafī's ideas because he states that the Seal of the Friends of God is able to reach the same spiritual station as the Seal of the Prophets:

And it is said that the spirit of every person can ascend to its original station, and in addition it is said that the spirit of the Seal of the Prophets can ascend as far as the Throne. A group among the Sufis also says that the Seals can ascend as far as the Throne, that is the Seal of the Prophets and the Seal of the Friends of God.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ḥammuyā, *al-Miṣbāḥ fi'l-taṣawwuf*, p. 98.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 100.

⁸² Ibid, p. 100.

⁸³ Austin (trans), *Ibn al-'Arabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*, p. 67.

⁸⁴ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 110.

Yet Nasafī makes a distinction between the ascent of the Seal of the Prophets and that of the Seal of the Friends of God when he comments:

Know that there is another death before natural death for the Prophets and the Friends of God, that is, they die a voluntary death before natural death, and they can see before natural death what others see after it. And they can observe the states that exist after death and they can see from the stage of knowledge of certainty to the stage of the eye of certainty because man's body is a veil. When the spirit leaves the body, nothing else is its veil. The ascent of the Prophets is of two kinds; either the spirit without the body or the spirit with the body. The ascent of the Friends of God is of one kind, that is, the spirit without the body.⁸⁵

Having reached this point where Nasafī reveals it is possible for an individual to attain to the same spiritual level as the Seal of the Prophets, the question to be asked is what relevance this has to Nasafī's predominant theme of man's perfection. The answer lies in how Sa'd al-Dīn Hammuyā defines the Friend of God. He employs the term *abdāl* to cover all three hundred and sixty five of the Friends of God:

... the three hundred and fifty six people are not called Friends of God but substitutes (*abdāl*) and he is right because they do not and did not train or nurture people.⁸⁶

The term "substitute" (*abdāl*) is used because in the system portrayed by Nasafī (and also by Rūzbihān Baqlī and Ibn 'Arabī) when one of the Friends of God dies, another takes the place of the deceased Friend. Ibn 'Arabī comments:

... when they (*abdāl*) depart from a place and wish to leave a substitute (*badal*) in it, because they see it will be of profit either to themselves or to others, they leave a person who is so like them in seeming that whoever looks at him has no doubt that he has ^{seen} the being in question. In fact, it is not he, but a spiritual form that he leaves in place of himself, having in view the purpose that his knowledge has assigned (to this substitution).⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 107.

⁸⁶ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 322.

⁸⁷ Quoted by Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, p.103. Rūzbihān comments, "When one of them (*abdāl*) passes on to the next world, the heavens and land, the birds in the sky and the fish in the sea all weep.

In Nasafī's system, the process of substitution continues until the Pole is the last individual remaining in the world:

This one person is the Pole (*Quṭb*) and the world is established upon his blessed, glorified existence. The world will be destroyed when he departs from the world and there is none to take his place.⁸⁸

The significance of Nasafī's discussion of the *abdāl* in relation to his concept of perfection, is that it is possible for one individual of the world to join the ranks of the *abdāl*, and thus progress towards the ultimate perfection of the Pole.

O dervish! When the Pole departs from this world, one of the three may succeed him, and one of the five may succeed to the position of the group of three, and one of the seven may succeed to the position of the group of five, and one of the forty may succeed to the position of the group of seven, and one of the three hundred may succeed to the position of the group of the forty, and one among all the people on earth may succeed to the position of the three hundred so that there are always three hundred and fifty six in the world and no less than three hundred and fifty six.⁸⁹

Theoretically it is possible for anyone to become a Friend of God. Of course there are many factors which come in to play, such as the "four times" and man's constitution (*mizāj*). However these factors can not be known by man and therefore if he engages in ascetic discipline and religious effort and follows the Sufi path, he may just reach his perfection. This may result in him being admitted into the ranks of the Friends of God and from there he may even progress along the rankings towards the Throne.

God Almighty places one of three in his place. It is in the same way until (the rank) of the three hundred people. When one of the three hundred people passes away, one of common people takes his place." Rūzbihān Baqlī, *Sharḥ-i Shatḥiyāt* p. 53. For Nasafī's portrayal, see *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 319.

⁸⁸ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 317.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 317.

6:5:2 Nasafī and Shīʿism

In the middle of the twentieth century, western scholars frequently cited Nasafī as an example of a Shīʿite Sufi.⁹⁰ Such ideas resulted mainly from the influence of Henri Corbin who saw Twelver Shīʿite beliefs in the works of both Nasafī and Saʿd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā. According to Corbin, Nasafī was “a master of Iranian Shīʿite Sufism”⁹¹ and Ḥammuyā was a “fervent Shīʿite.”⁹² Other scholars have also noted the Shīʿite sympathies of the Kubrāwiyya order and the reverence for ‘Alī b Abī Ṭālib and the Shīʿite Imams shown by Najm al-Dīn Kubrā.⁹³ Likewise, Shaykh ‘Alā’al-dawla Simnānī, another Shaykh of the Kubrāwiyya order, held the family of the Prophet with just as much reverence as did Najm al-Dīn Kubrā.⁹⁴

Yet despite these claims of Nasafī’s support of Shīʿism, one is struck by the scarcity of explicit references to Shīʿism within his treatises. Therefore it is necessary to re-evaluate Nasafī’s position with regard to Shīʿism. This will be carried out by focusing upon several points which appear in Nasafī’s treatises which relate to Shīʿite ideas.

(I). Nasafī, as one comes to expect, does not relate his own opinions, yet he is prepared to explain the positions adopted by Shaykh Saʿd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā. One such passage has been taken to refer to his belief in Twelver Shīʿism:

God Almighty chose twelve people from the community of Muḥammad and made them His esteemed ones (*muqarrab-i khūd*) and He designated them for Friendship of God. He made them the deputies (*nayibān*) of his excellency

⁹⁰ See for example, J.S. Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders*, p. 99 and F. Meier, *Die Schriften des Nasafī*, p. 138.

⁹¹ H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 69.

⁹² Ibid, p. 298.

⁹³ H. Halm, *Shiism*, trans. Janet Watson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 74. See also M.Molé, “Les Kubrawiya Entre Sunnisme et Shiisme Aux Huitieme et Neuvieme Siecles de l’Hégire,” *Revue des études islamiques* 52 (1961): 61-141.

⁹⁴ J.J. Elias, *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of ‘Alā ad-dawla as-Simnānī*, p. 123. See also pp. 54-55. However, the fact that individual Sufis who held the Prophet’s family in esteem does not mean they were sympathetic towards Shīʿism.

Muḥammad, “the wise are the heirs of the Prophets.”⁹⁵ Concerning the truth of these twelve it is said, “The wise in my community are like the children of Israel.”⁹⁶ According to the Shaykh (Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥammuyā), the Friend of God in Muḥammad's community are no more than these twelve. And the last Friend of God who is the twelfth Friend of God is the Seal of the Friends of God and his name is the *Mahdī* and the Owner of Time.⁹⁷

The foregoing, by itself, is not enough to prove Nasafī's or Ḥammuyā's Shī'ite sympathies. More detailed passages which explain the nature of these twelve members of Muḥammad's community are required if Nasafī is to be associated with Shī'ism. However there are no such passages in any of Nasafī's known treatises.

(II). Nasafī discusses Shī'ism within the second chapter of *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, entitled “The Gnosis of Man.”⁹⁸ In this section Nasafī lists the various Shī'ite schools of thought, such as the Twelvers, Kaysanis and Ismā'īlīs. This discussion of Shī'ism may reflect the importance (or lack of importance) that Nasafī held the Sunni - Shī'ite question to have. In Nasafī's works the beliefs of the ‘*Ulamā*’ are explained first, followed by that of the philosophers and this is followed by the discourses of the People of Unity. Thus, it seems that the sections which Nasafī held as the most relevant are saved till last. Now, the aforementioned discussion pertaining to Shī'ism in *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* is presented within the explanation of the ‘*Ulamā*’s beliefs which come before those of the philosophers and the People of Unity.

It also needs to be stated that within the whole corpus of Nasafī's works there are very few explicit references to Shī'ism. This may be because he viewed the Sunni - Shī'ite question as insignificant when contrasted with the fundamental message of Sufism. This appears to be the position adopted by the author of *Kashf-i širāt* (who, as mentioned before, may have been Nasafī). In this work, the author adopts a conciliatory approach on the Shī'ite - Sunni conflict by stating that although some Sufis say *walāyat*

⁹⁵ *Hadīth*: Bukhari, ‘*Ilm* 10; Abū Dā’ūd, ‘*Ilm* 1; Ibn Maja, *Muqaddima* 17.

⁹⁶ This is a variant of the previous *hadīth*.

⁹⁷ *Manāzil-al-sā'irīn*, pp. 320-321.

⁹⁸ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, for the discussions on Shī'ism, see page 82.

arose from Abū Bakr and others say that it arose from ‘Alī, it is better to say that both Abū Bakr and ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib were in the station of *walāyat* and leave it at that.⁹⁹

This is the conclusion that Nasafī draws from the *ḥadīth* “My community will split into seventy three factions after my death, but all of them will be in the Fire except for one.”¹⁰⁰ Nasafī’s discussion concerns why there is no unity in the Islamic community and he cites Abū Manṣūr Māturīdī (d. 944 C.E.)¹⁰¹ and Muḥammad Ghazālī as advocates of the Sunni position and he offers Abū Ja‘far Ṭūsī¹⁰² as typical of the Shī‘ite side. He explains the views of both Sunnis and Shī‘ites but following this, Nasafī comments that their opinions are regarded as hypocritical (*takalluf*) by the Verifiers of the Truth (*muḥaqqiqān*) and Wise Men (*dānāyān*) because they know that the community is not split into seventy three sects, rather, they see that in one small area there are one hundred conflicting beliefs.¹⁰³ The significance of this discussion is of course, that Nasafī is repudiating both the Sunnis and Shī‘ites. Such a stance accords with the general spirit of Nasafī’s works, which is non-partisan and non-sectarian and perhaps is representative of the belief that any Shī‘ite - Sunni squabble is irrelevant and misses the essence of Sufism.

(III). The return of the Owner of Time (*ṣāhib al-zamān*), who is also^{known} as the Maḥdī, is a fundamental article of faith for Shī‘ites. Nasafī comments about the return of the Owner of Time with reference to the views of Ḥammuyā:

The locus of manifestation of Prophecy is the Seal of the Prophets and the locus of manifestation of Friendship of God is the Owner of Time...

Shaykh Sa‘d al-Dīn Ḥammuyā wrote many books about the truth of the Owner of Time and he said that he will appear in the time in which we are in now. But this helpless one (i.e. Nasafī) believes that the time of his appearance is unknown. O dervish, he will certainly appear, since his excellency Muḥammad

⁹⁹ *Kashf-i ṣirāt*, Veliyuddin no. 1767, fol. 236a.

¹⁰⁰ *Ḥadīth*. This is also quoted by al-Ghazālī in *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, (al-munqidh^{min} al-ḍalāl), op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁰¹ See D. B. MacDonald, art. “Māturīdī,” *Brill’s First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. V.

¹⁰² See R. Strothmann art. “Al-Ṭūsī,” *Brill’s First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. VIII.

¹⁰³ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 16.

spoke of his appearance and signs, but it is not known when he will appear. As a result of Sa'd al-Din Ḥammuyā's discourse, many people have become astonished and sworn to themselves "I am the Owner of Time and those signs concerning his truth will be manifested in us." But they were not manifested in them and they died in this regret and many other people come and die in this regret.¹⁰⁴

The concept of the Mahdī and his return to this world just before the Day of Judgement is a belief which is affirmed by both Shī'ites and Sunnites.¹⁰⁵ Therefore the above quotation is not sufficient to label Nasafī and Ḥammuyā as Shī'ites. Yet Ḥammuyā's views are interesting in ... that they may represent a reaction to the turbulent nature of the thirteenth century, in which there were several Mongol invasions, the capture of Baghdād and the execution of the Caliph, and also the millenarian propaganda of the Ismā'īlīs. Given such circumstances, it would hardly have been surprising if both Shī'ites and Sunnis were expecting the return of the Mahdi to restore justice to the devastated Islamic community.

Although Nasafī himself claimed contrary to Ḥammuyā that the present time may not be the moment for the Owner of Time to appear,¹⁰⁶ it may be the case that he held the return to be very near. The reason for this assumption is due to the fact that in Nasafī's dream mentioned in the beginning of *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*,¹⁰⁷ the Prophet told him not to reveal his treatise until seven hundred years had elapsed since the hegira. At such a time, the various religious schools and beliefs would no longer exist, they would all be replaced by a single belief and then people would be able to study and understand his treatise.

¹⁰⁴ *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, p. 245-46.

¹⁰⁵ A.A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1981), p. 69.

¹⁰⁶ Another example is found in *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 321.

One day I said "O Shaykh, is it expedient to propogate about the truth of one who has not come yet? Perhaps it [i.e. the time of his appearance] may not be so." The Shaykh was very much vexed so I did not pursue the matter and did not speak of it.

O dervish, of whatever the Shaykh spoke, it was through gnosis, but many people were harmed by these discourses and many people were perplexed. My meaning is that in my lifetime I have seen several people in Khurāsān and Kirmān and Fārs who claimed to be the Owner of Time ... But it was not true and they died in deep regret and many other people come and make this claim and they also die in deep regret.

¹⁰⁷ See 1:2:1

There are two possible explanations of the significance of seven hundred A. H.. The first lies in the belief that the Islamic community is renewed or revived every hundred years. (This is based upon a *ḥadīth* which states: "At the beginning of every hundred years, someone belonging to that time will renew its religion.")¹⁰⁸ The "orthodoxy" of this belief is reflected by the fact that al-Ghazālī refers to this *ḥadīth* in his *al-munqidh^{min} al-dalāl*.¹⁰⁹ The second possible explanation is related to the belief in the Mahdī's return, which may also be connected to the cycles which Nasafī describes in the discourses of the Transmigrationists. The Transmigrationists believed in series of three cycles: after each period of one thousand years there is a lesser resurrection (*qiyāmat-i ṣuḡhrā*); after each period of seven thousand years there is a great resurrection (*qiyāmat-i kubrā*); and after each period of forty nine thousand years there is the greatest resurrection (*qiyāmat-i 'uẓmā*). With the lesser resurrection, peoples' customs and habits change, and the Holy Laws of the prophets (*payghambarān*) are annulled; with the great resurrection, it is easy for a prophet to establish a new Holy Law, whereas in other times it is not possible; with the greatest resurrection, this world is devastated by floods and storms and no life remains on earth until the process of life through plants, animals and man commences once again.¹¹⁰ Did Nasafī hold this chain of cycles as his own personal belief and in some way connect the year seven hundred A.H. with one of the resurrections, and did he somehow associate the Owner of Time with the resurrections? The answer is not clear, however, since the explanation of the cycles and these particular resurrections appear among the discourses of the Transmigrationists, they probably were not Nasafī's private beliefs.

Even though Nasafī was told by the Prophet Muḥammad in his dream that the circumstances of the Islamic community would change after seven hundred A.H., (whether this meant the appearance of the Mahdī or not) it seems that Nasafī remained somewhat sceptical:

¹⁰⁸ See A. J. Wensinck's *Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 1:324; Abū Dž'ūd, *Malāhim* 1.

¹⁰⁹ See al-Ghazālī in *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, (*al-munqidh^{min} al-dalāl*), op. cit., p. 81.

¹¹⁰ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, pp. 415-16.

In the opinion of this helpless one, the circumstances will always be just as they are in this very hour. The circumstances will not change by as much as one hair, although perhaps the conflicts between people may vanish in one or two regions...¹¹¹

One may also speculate over the nature of the Mahdī or hidden Imām that both Nasafī and Ḥammuyā had in mind, in other words, can one speak of two Mahdīs? The first is a cosmic Mahdī for each individual and the second is a Mahdī in the conventional sense who comes prior to the Resurrection. Regarding a cosmic Mahdī, it is interesting that Ḥammuyā comments “The hidden Imām will not appear before the time when people are able to understand, even from the very thongs of his sandals, the secrets of *tawḥīd*.”¹¹² In other words, the Mahdī or hidden Imām is internalised and appears at any time for each individual who has knowledge of him. Is this the identity of Nasafī’s Hidden Shaykh (*Shaykh al-ghayb*)¹¹³ that he occasionally refers to in his treatises? According to ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, “...it is the hidden Imām who directs man’s spiritual life and orients the inner aspect of human action toward God ... The Imām watches over men inwardly and is in communication with the soul and spirit of men even if he be hidden from their physical eyes.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 3.

¹¹² Cited by H. Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, p. 71.

¹¹³ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 241. Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (who was not a Shī‘ite) also mentions the *Shaykh al-ghayb*. For Kubrā, the *Shaykh al-ghayb* is not the eschatological figure in the exoteric Shī‘ite tradition who appears before the Resurrection. Rather, he is the wayfarer’s guide to the internalised spiritual journey. The reality of the *Shaykh al-ghayb* is infact the reality of the wayfarer himself.

“Know that there is a witness (*shāhid*) for the traveller and he is called the Invisible Shaykh. The traveller is taken to heaven and is made manifest there. The reason that he [the *Shaykh al-ghayb*] is his witness, rather, he is he [the traveller], is because the traveller moves and rests through the moving and resting of the *Shaykh al-ghayb*.”

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Fawā’ih al-jamāl wa fawātiḥ al-jalāl*, [69].

“The first spiritual opening is through the eye, then through the face, then through the breast, then through the whole body, and this is called “the man of light,” and what is in front of you is named “the leader of the people” (*al-qawm al-muqaddam*) and he is also called the Invisible Shaykh.”

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Fawā’ih al-jamāl wa fawātiḥ al-jalāl*, [66].

¹¹⁴ ‘Allāmah Sayyid Muḥammad ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, tr. S.H. Nasr, *Shi‘ite Islam*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), p. 214.

For Ḥammuyā, the return of the hidden Imām will be at a time when people have knowledge of him, and Nasafī internalises this belief as he describes four possible days of resurrection for each individual in the words of the People of Unity. The first day of resurrection is termed the “lesser resurrection” (*qiyāmat-i ṣuḡhrā*) which is when the individual is born and has a life of form (*ḥayat-i ṣurati*). The “intermediate resurrection” occurs when the child is able to distinguish wrong from right and commences the life of meaning (*ḥayat-i ma‘āni*). When the individual has belief and attains peace (*sakīna*), the “greater resurrection” takes place. Finally, the “greatest resurrection” is when the individual reaches the world of contemplation (*‘iyān*) and stability (*tamkīn*), which is the highest spiritual station as described in chapter five.¹¹⁵

These ideas concerning the Mahdī are not specific to Shī‘ism. The roles of the Sufi Invisible Shaykh and the Mahdī seem very similar once the wayfarer internalises the Mahdī as a spiritual guide. Thus, once again, Nasafī’s references to the Mahdī and his dream are not adequate proof to label him a Shī‘ite.

(IV). Another factor which may link Nasafī with Shī‘ism is his belief expressed in the very beginning of *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq* that he is in a state of infallibility (*‘aṣmat*) with God. This word is related to *ma‘ṣūm*, meaning infallible, which is a state attributed by Shī‘ites to the twelve Imams. Nasafī is told in a dream by the Prophet Muḥammad that he has this condition and the former then asks what is infallibility and who is infallible.

The Prophet said, “Infallibility is security (*amānat*) from oneself. Whoever brings his own hand and tongue under control is safe from himself and he becomes infallible since no nuisance or remorse comes to him through them.” When you have made clear the answer of the Prophet and you have understood the meaning of infallibility, now know that infallibility, protection (*ḥifz*) and continence (*‘āfiyat*) have the same meaning. However the *‘Ulamā* have used each one in a particular place for the sake of courtesy (*adab*). If this security (*amān*) is with a prophet, they say that he is in [a state of] infallibility with God. If it is with a Friend of God, they

¹¹⁵ *Kitāb-i tanzil*, fol. 66b lines 8-18. See also *Kashf al-ḥaqā’iq*, p. 209-211.

say that he is [in a state of] protection with God. And if it is with a believer, they say that he is [in a state of] continence with God.¹¹⁶

Thus Nasafī gives a meaning to infallibility which orthodox Twelver Shī'ites would find difficult to accept, since it encompasses mere believers. The attribution of infallibility to individual Sufis is not unique to Nasafī alone, for Rūzbihān Baqlī indicates that this was one of his characteristics.¹¹⁷ Infallibility then is not the preserve of the Shī'ite Imams, but one may consider it as yet another indicator of the close relationship between Shī'ism and Sufism during this period of Islamic history.

Conclusion

The Shi-ism of Nasafī or Ḥammuyā has yet to be proven, and recent scholarship has begun to question the belief of Corbin on this issue.¹¹⁸ The reality of Nasafī's and Ḥammuyā's beliefs are far from clear and more detailed research needs to be undertaken to determine their positions regarding Shī'ism. One suspects that there are very strong sympathies with Shī'ism beyond those which the usual reverence for the Prophet's family allows¹¹⁹ and also beyond the general convergence of Sufism with Shī'ism during the thirteenth century.¹²⁰ It is most likely the case that those who

¹¹⁶ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 4-5.

¹¹⁷ C. Ernst, *Rūzbihān Baqlī*, p. 48.

¹¹⁸ J.J. Elias has mentioned a treatise by Ḥammuyā entitled *Risāla fī zuhūr khatm al-walāya* (treatise on the appearance of the Seal of the Friends of God), in which the Seal is not the Shī'ite Maḥdī, (as one might suppose from reading Nasafī's works) but Jesus, which is more in line with Ibn 'Arabī's discussion of the Seal of the Friends of God. Indeed, Elias has also suggested that 'Alā' al-dawla Simnānī makes a criticism of Nasafī's "misinterpretation" of Ḥammuyā's beliefs regarding the nature of *walāyat*. See "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabād," *Iranian Studies*, volume 27, numbers 1-4, 1994, p. 71-72.

¹¹⁹ For example, Ibn 'Arabī comments on an interpretation of a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet asked Allah to "pray for Muḥammad and for the family of Muḥammad as You prayed for Ibrāhīm and the family of Ibrāhīm." See Y. Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 72. See also H. Algar, "Some observations on Religion in Safavid Persia." See also V. Danner, who states: "We have only to recall that the early Shī'ite Imams of the first century or so of Islam were also authorities in Sunnism and in Sufism precisely because they were the most prestigious of the Prophet's descendants." In "The Early development of Sufism," *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. S.H. Nasr (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 246-247.

¹²⁰ See H. Corbin, "De la philosophie prophétique en Islam Shī'ite," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1962 (Zürich, 1963), p. 75, and H. Halm, *Shiism*, pp. 72-74.

wanted to interpret Nasafī's treatises in a Shī'ite manner could certainly have done so.

M. Molé, in his introduction to Nasafī's *al-Insan al-kamil* states

Avec sa théosophie de structure ismaélienne et d'affinités dudécimaines, Nasafi apparait comme le représentant d'un^{de} ces mouvements shi'ites dont le bouillonnement est si caractéristique pour les deux siècles qui séparent l'époque des Mongols de celle des Safavides, et qui préparent le terrain pour le shi-isme safavide.¹²¹

It appears that there was a convergence between Shī'ism and the thought of Ibn 'Arabī with regard to issues such as successor and Friend of God after the Seal of the Prophets.¹²² But this becomes more apparent after Hammuyā and Nasafī in the works of Shaykh Haydār Āmulī (d. after 1385) who interpreted many features of Ibn 'Arabī's works in an explicitly Shī'ite manner. According to Āmulī, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib was the Seal of the Friends of God, not Jesus.¹²³

Returning to Nasafī, if it is true that he did hold some form of Shī'ite belief, then this may be an additional explanation for why he is so reluctant to reveal his own opinions. Although the particular environment in which Nasafī lived is shrouded in mystery, it is probable that the orthodox Sunni '*Ulamā*' would have regarded any views sympathetic to Shī'ism as a threat to their established position. Although the combination of Shī'ism and Sufism as propounded by certain descendants of Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn (1252-1334) became a threat to the established order and eventually succeeded in creating the Saḩavid state,¹²⁴ Nasafī's vision of Sufism and his consideration of Shī'ite ideas neither explicitly threatened the '*Ulamā*' nor posed a danger to the secular rulers.

¹²¹ M. Molé, *Kitab al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 27.

¹²² For such Shī'ite - Sufi parallels see Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Ashtiyānī's introduction to *Rasā'il-i Qaysari*, (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Anjuman-i Islāmī-yi ḩikmat wa falsafa-yi Irān, 1975). p.1, and 'Allāmah Tabātabā'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, p. 114.

¹²³ Sayyid Haydār Āmulī, *Inner Secrets of the Path*, trans. Assadullah ad-Dhaakir Yate, (Dorset: Zahra Trust, 1989), p. 125.

¹²⁴ See M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 101.

6:5:3 The political and social significance of Nasafī's perfection

Having attained perfection and returning to this world in a sober state, Nasafī then states it is also necessary to become "free" (*āzād*).

Know that it has been said that the Perfect Man is the person for whom there are four things to perfection; good words, good acts, good character traits and gnosis. The Perfect Free Man is the person for whom there are eight things to perfection; good words, good acts, good character traits, gnosis, abandonment (*tark*), seclusion (*'uzlat*), contentment (*qanā'at*) and anonymity (*khumūl*).¹²⁵

Having defined the Free Perfect Men, Nasafī proceeds to classify them into two groups:

Two groups appear when (the Free Perfect Men) have carried out abandonment and become free and released (*fāriḡh*). After abandonment, some choose seclusion, contentment and anonymity and others choose satisfaction (*riḡā*), surrender (*taslīm*) and spectating (*niḡara*), but the aim of all of them is freedom and release.¹²⁶

That group which chooses seclusion, contentment and anonymity know that disunity (*tafraḡa*) and confusion (*parākandagī*) come with association with the people of this world. So they are afraid and flee if by chance, something worldly or a worldly person appears before them. The other group which chooses satisfaction, surrender and spectating, knows that man can not understand in what his fate lies. So if something of this world or a worldly person appears before them they do not flee and they are not afraid because this encounter may be beneficial to themselves and also to others of this world.¹²⁷ Nasafī himself comments that he has spent time among both groups, but since

¹²⁵ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 8.

¹²⁶ *Ibid*, p.9.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 9.

he can perceive advantages and disadvantages in both, he is unable to decide which one has chosen the correct path.¹²⁸

Yet in other places within his treatises, it would seem that Nasafī gives preference to the group which accepts association with worldly people. Nasafī's own definition of the perfect person is the one for who there are good words, acts, character traits and gnosis,¹²⁹ and he also states that gnosis is not possible without seclusion (*khilwat*) but that the acquisition of good character traits comes only with association (*ṣuḥbat*) and interaction (*ikhtilāṭ*) with people.¹³⁰ Thus perfection requires both seclusion and association. Once gnosis and good character traits have been acquired, the task of the Perfect Man is to help others:

The Perfect Man does not see any obedience better than correcting this world and finding correctness among the people, removing bad habits and customs from them, placing good rules and regulations among them, calling the people to God, informing them of God's magnanimity, greatness and unity, praising the next world very much and informing the people of its eternity (*baqā'*) and permanence (*thābat*), and warning them about this world - describing its changability and impermanence, speaking of the advantages of mendicity (*darwishī*) and anonymity until mendicity and anonymity become sweet to them ...¹³¹

This idea of there being no better obedience than correcting this world rather than fleeing from it is reconfirmed in other passages:

As far as it is possible, do not cause harm to others since there is no disobedience other than causing harm. And as far as it is possible, bring comfort to everything and every person since there is no obedience other than bringing comfort. Know for sure that he who does anything does that thing to himself. If one causes harm, one harms oneself. If one brings comfort, one comforts oneself.¹³²

¹²⁸ Ibid, p.10.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 4.

¹³⁰ *Kitāb-i tanzil*, fol. 76b, lines 13-16.

¹³¹ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 6.

¹³² Ibid, p. 182.

However this guidance for the benefit of worldly people is merely one of advice-giving. There is no compulsion involved for the worldly people to accept the recommendations of the Perfect Man since he does not have the political power to enforce his wishes. In any case, making people conform to God's commands and compelling them to be obedient to God would remove the necessity for God's Judgement. Therefore, the Perfect Man advises people and they heed his counsel if they are wise. Concerning the Perfect Man and political power, Nasafī comments:

... this Perfect Man does not have power (*qudrat*) despite this perfection and greatness he possesses and he lives with unfulfilled desires (*nā-murādi*) yet passes his time in comfort. He is perfect in terms of knowledge and character traits but is incomplete in terms of power and desires.

O dervish, there is a time when the Perfect Man is the possessor of power and he is a ruler (*hakīm*) or king (*pādshāh*). However it is clear that human power is weak (*chand*) and when you look at the reality, man's inability is greater than his power and his unfulfilled desires and more than his fulfilled desires. The Prophets, Friends of God, kings and sultans have desired many things to be and they were not, and they desired many things not to be and they were. So it is clear that all people, from the complete to the incomplete, from the wise to the ignorant, from kings to subjects are incapable and helpless and live their lives with unfulfilled desires. When some of the Perfect Ones saw that man does not have the power to fulfil his desires and that power can not be obtained through one's own effort or endeavour and that it is necessary to live with unfulfilled desires, they knew there was nothing better for man than abandonment, and there was no obedience equal to freedom and release, so they abandoned everything and became free and released.¹³³

In addition, the Perfect Man does not actively seek political power nor the approval of those around him:

O dervish, do not suppose that there is not a house and lodging or garden and orchard for the Free Person. There may be a house and lodging or garden and orchard for the Free Person. He may be a ruler or king but he is not happy if kingship is given to him and he is not sad if it is taken from him. The coming and going of

¹³³ Ibid, p. 7-8.

kingship is the same for him and the rejection and acceptance by the people is (also) the same thing for him. He does not say "I want to be rejected" if they accept him, and he does not say "I want to be accepted" if they reject him.¹³⁴

There was no real consensus among Sufis regarding contact with secular rulers. Several leading Shaykhs are known to have had connections with the secular leaders of society. One famous example is Shaykh 'Ubayd Allāh Aḥrār (1403-1490) of the Naqshbandiyya order who considered it necessary to keep contact with the rulers and influence them to protect the Islamic Laws and its community.¹³⁵ However Sufis affiliated to the Kubrāwiyya order are generally regarded as preserving themselves from the worldly corruption that comes along with power and kingship.¹³⁶

O dear friend, do not eat or accept [*that which*] comes from the property or court of kings because their property hardens the heart. And do not eat or accept [*that which*] comes from the property of religious bequests (*waqf*) because the property of religious bequests blackens the heart.¹³⁷

Nasafī follows a hard line with rulers and connections with political power:

O dervish, you will not find this Wise Man and Verifier of Truths in mosques preaching and admonishing at the *minbar* and you will not find him in (either) the religious schools giving lessons or in high positions among the Bookish People and Idol worshippers. You will not find him in the *Khānaqāh* prostrating himself among the People of Imagination and worshipping himself. Out of a thousand persons there is one who recognises God or a Verifier of Truths in these

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 139.

¹³⁵ See K.A. Nizami, "The Naqshbandiyyah Order," in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. S. H. Nasr, (New York: SCM Press, 1991), p. 173.

¹³⁶ D. DeWeese has suggested that the earlier Kubrawī shaykhs such as Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī and 'Alā al-Dawla Simnānī ultimately rejected political connections and this general policy may account as one of the reasons why this particular order declined in Central Asia and was eclipsed by the Naqshbandiyya order. (See D. DeWeese, "The eclipse of the Kubrawiyyah in Central Asia," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 21, Nos. 1-2, 1988). Yet not all of the early Kubrawiyya Shaykhs were non-political. DeWeese himself cites the case of Sayf al-Dīn Bakharzī (d.1261) who was involved in *waqf* administration and was responsible for the education of the Mongol khān Berke. In addition, there have also been suggestions that Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥammuyā was collaborating with the Il-khānid state, (see J.J. Elias, "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabad: Sa'd al-Dīn and Sadr al-Dīn Ḥamuwayi," p. 73).

¹³⁷ *Kitāb-i tanzīl*, fol. 78b, lines 12-13.

three places, and (such a person) acts for God. O dervish, the Wise Man, the Verifier of Truths and the Men of God are beneath domes which are their keepers and guards and become their fortress and armour and are the cause of their cleanliness and purity ... o dervish, their manifest dimension is like the manifest dimension of the common people and their non-manifest dimension is like the non-manifest dimension of the elite. They do not give access to any leader or chief and they do not make claims of leadership (*sarī*) or lordship (*sarūrī*). Each one is engaged in an occupation or task which is necessary to him and their occupation is their means of livelihood. They flee from the property of kings and tyrants ...¹³⁸

Nasafī's personal advice to his dervishes is that they need to be aware that the love of leadership is inherent in the soul of all men. Therefore the remedy to this problem is to oppose the soul and sever this love from one's heart in order to become free:

O dervish! The love of being a king, minister, master, director, leader, shaykh, preacher, judge, teacher of a religious school, and others like these, are all the doors of hell. The ignorant person is he who tries every day to make these doors wider and larger for himself. The wise man is he who tries to shut these doors or make them more narrow for himself. Closing the doors of hell for oneself is the abandonment of fame.

O dervish! There is no world without these [i.e. kingship, minister ship, etc.], and it is necessary for them to exist in the world. But it is not necessary for you to be [one of them]. So when the wayfarer relinquishes these cruel wildernesses and abandons leadership, he is released. The wayfarer is in terror for as long as he has not relinquished these cruel wildernesses and there is no security for him.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq*, p. 28-29.

¹³⁹ *Manāzil al-sā'irīn*, p. 454.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this thesis, it was noted that there are three main tasks for research in the field of Sufism. These are providing translations, analysis of their contents and linkage with current discussions in the field of religious studies. An attempt has been made to satisfy all three of these qualifications: the first by including extensive quotation within all six chapters of this thesis; the second by focusing upon the major themes in Nasafī's treatises, which are ontology, epistemology, practical Sufism, the mystical experience and the perfection of man; the third by comparing Nasafī's descriptions of the mystical experience with the theories of modern scholars in the field of comparative religion. However, the scope of this thesis has not permitted a thorough investigation of the third point and for this reason it is necessary to limit any conclusions to the analysis of Nasafī's treatises. The obvious question that arises after studying Nasafī's treatises is what contribution did he make to the existing Sufi beliefs in thirteenth century Central Asia and Iran? This is a very difficult question to answer because this was a period of unity in multiplicity, in other words, it was a time when so much of the Sufi doctrine had become "orthodox" and much of what the majority of Sufis were saying was already being said by someone else. Thus one can find the same fundamental themes and messages in the works of famous Sufis such as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā and the Sufis of the Kubrāwiyya order, Ibn 'Arabī and the *wujūdī* school, and of course, 'Azīz Nasafī. Nevertheless, there were new discoveries in spiritual understanding and different ways to contemplate old ideas. For example, Ibn 'Arabī's esoteric interpretation of the Koran¹ probably cannot be matched

¹See M. Chodkiewicz, *An Ocean Without Shore: Ibn 'Arabī, The Book, and the Law*, trans D. Streight, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993).

by any other Sufi, and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's explanation of the ascent of the soul through visionary experience was quite unique during his lifetime.²

Nasafī is not an innovator in the same manner as Ibn 'Arabī and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā. Although Nasafī hints at the themes and new ideas expressed by the foregoing Sufis, he rarely delves in depth into the details found in their treatises. An example of this is Najm al-Dīn Kubrā's *Shaykh al-ghayb* who Nasafī mentions in passing, but he does not portray its reality. Another example is God's self disclosure taking a form. For the Sufis of the *wujūdī* school, this self disclosure takes place in the imagination, and Ibn 'Arabī and several of his interpreters extrapolated this idea into examinations of the nature of the soul's existence in the grave. Nasafī's treatises deal with the imagination but not in relation to the soul's existence in the grave.

Despite such shortcomings, there are several factors why Nasafī should be considered as one of the most important of Sufis during the thirteenth century.

(1). Nasafī's importance lies in his ability to both incorporate all the major elements of Sufi belief as discussed by others and also to present them in a coherent fashion for novices of the Sufi path. Thus many familiar themes appear in a summarised yet lucid fashion including God's incomparability and similarity, the ultimate station of bewilderment, the all-encompassing nature of Sufism (*hama ūst*), spiritual creating through *himmat* and the perfection of man in the form of *walāyat*.

This simple and clear version of Sufism is demonstrated well in the systematisation of the Sufi ontological and epistemological beliefs. From the ontological perspective, one need only refer to Nasafī's discussion of the six spiritual stations as proof of the order in his treatises. In addition, the four stages of mystical knowledge, from *dhikr* to *fikr*, and then to *ilhām* and finally to contemplation (*'iyān*) which is the

² Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Fawā'ih al-jamāl wa fawā'ih al-jalāl*.

station of stability (*tamkīn*) reveals the quest for a hierarchy and structure in Nasafī works.

It is highly probable that such treatises provided the basis for many Sufi novices to progress to the more profound works of Sufi masters such as Ibn ‘Arabī and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā. During Nasafī’s lifetime, the people of Central Asia and Iran were largely ignorant of Arabic and most likely they would have found the treatises of Ibn ‘Arabī and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā very difficult to understand. Thus Nasafī may be considered as a major figure in strengthening and developing Sufism in Central Asia and Iran. How else can one explain the existence of numerous manuscripts of Nasafī’s treatises in Turkey, Iran, Central Asia, China and Egypt?

(2). Nasafī’s “orthodox” Sufi treatises continue the trend of presenting Sufism using the terminology of the *kalām* and of the Philosophers as well as employing their logic to demonstrate the “Islamicity” of Sufism. His aim was to communicate the Sufi message to an audience, who probably would have been familiar with the terminology of the Koran and *kalām*, and may even have had some knowledge of the language and ideas of the Philosophers. Had Nasafī composed his treatises in the fashion of Sa‘d al-Dīn Ḥammuyā’s highly enigmatic and esoteric works, such as *Miṣbah fi’l taṣawwuf*, it is unlikely that the audience which Nasafī desired would have understood very much.

(3). If a characteristic feature in Nasafī’s treatises has to be highlighted, then one may point to his explanation of the various interpretations of *Mulq*, *Malakūt* and *Jabarūt* (which appears in each one of his works). This discussion once again indicates another distinctive trait in his works, and that is his impartiality when portraying the discourses of the various Islamic beliefs, which include the ‘*Ulamā*’, the Philosophers, the Transmigrationists and the Sufis (who include the People of Unity). Since everything is a self disclosure of God, then every belief is a genuine expression of Islam and for this

reason Nasafī attempts to discover some benefit in all beliefs. This again, is not something unique in the tradition of Sufi treatises, for al-Ghazālī, among others, composed works describing Islamic beliefs other than those of the Sufis. Yet Nasafī's systematic division of treatises such as *Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq* into several chapters in which the views of all Islamic beliefs are discussed relatively objectively, is a trait that distinguishes Nasafī from more apologetic writers.

(4). Nasafī's version of Sufi belief is not extreme and adherence to it probably would not have caused excessive difficulty to novices. The discussions on ascetic discipline and religious effort, abandonment and other Sufi practices, constantly advise moderation. Moreover, his Sufism is strictly personal, in other words, between the novice, the Shaykh and God. For example:

O Dervish! Make your non-manifest dimension resemble [that] of other people. You should live in the same way that others live since this is the legacy of the Friends of God and the dome (*qubba*) of the Friends of God, and everyone is beneath this dome.

O Dervish! If there is interaction (*mu'āmalā*) for you with God, [then] these are the states (*aḥwāl*) of the heart and there is no awareness for anyone else about them. The progress and ascent pertain to [one's] inside (*andarūn*), and your advantage (*imtiyāz*) over others is at the inside not at the outside (*bīrūn*). The advantage of the hypocrites over others is at the outside, not the inside.³

Such advice from Nasafī may well be indicative of the times during which he lived. The foregoing quote works on several levels, on the one hand, it is a warning against those who make claims and use Sufism for their own gain, for the true Sufi holds values such as humility and selflessness, and on the other hand it provides a way for preserving the teachings of Sufism should any danger arise. The hazards to Sufism came from unsympathetic political rulers, yet Nasafī adopted a politically quiescent position which did not threaten the ruling élite. Another possible source of opposition to Nasafī's form of Sufism would have come from the 'Ulamā'. Indeed, one is struck by Nasafī's

³ *al-Insān al-kāmil*, p. 290-291.

refusal to discuss matters pertaining to the letter of the law, that is, to the externalities of the *Sharī'a*. However, the reason ~~why~~ such issues do not appear in Nasafī's treatises is ~~that~~ he assumes that his novices already have a sound knowledge of the *Sharī'a*. Why else does he repeat that the dervishes must first attend the *madrasa* and then progress to the *khānaqāh*?

Related to this issue of not antagonising the "established" powers in society in the problem surrounding Nasafī's Shī'ism. While some Sufis (such as Haydār Āmulī) may indeed have witnessed such a nexus between Sufism and Shī'ism, Nasafī's own beliefs remain a highly contentious issue. If one is concerned with Nasafī's own convictions, it appears that the problem of Shī'ism is really quite peripheral to his Sufi message of perfection through ascetic discipline and religious effort.

As a result of the four points mentioned above, one can conclude that Nasafī's Sufism was able to thrive during one of ^{the} most traumatic periods of Islamic history. His greatest contribution to Sufism in Central Asia and Iran was an interpretation of Sufism which was acceptable to most groups in society. It did not alienate the Mongol rulers or the '*Ulamā*' and at the same time his uncomplicated and summarised version of themes explained by Ibn 'Arabī and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā found new audiences among the masses, ensuring that Sufism would survive until the present day.

Bibliography

I. Works by Nasafī

- Bayān-i tanzīl.* Oxford: Bodleian Library, Ms. Pers. e 35.
- al-Insān al-kāmil.* ed. M. Molé. (Tehran-Paris: Institut Franco-Iranien, 1962).
- Kashf al-ḥaqā'iq.* ed. A. Mahdawī Dāmghānī. (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjuma wa Nashr-i Kitāb, 1965).
- Kashf-i širāt.* Istanbul Veliyuddin no. 1767, folios 204-244.
- Kitāb-i tanzīl.* Manchester University: John Rylands Library, C112 folios 38-84.
- Manāzil al-sā'irīn.* ed. M. Molé. (Tehran-Paris: Institut Franco-Iranien, 1962).
- Maqṣad-i aqṣā.* Appended to Jāmī's *Ashī''at al-lama'āt*, ed. H. Rabbānī, Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi 'Ilmīyya-yi Hāmidī, 1973.
- Zubdat al-ḥaqā'iq.* ed. Ḥaqq-wardī Nāsirī. (Tehran: Kitābkhāna-yi Tahūrī, 1985).

II Others

- Addas, C. *Quest for the Red Sulphur*, trans. P. Kingsley. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1994.
- Affifi, A.E. "Ibn 'Arabi," in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. I, ed. M.M. Sharif. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963.
- Algar, H. "Some observations on Religion in Safavid Persia," *Iranian Studies* 7 (1974)
- Amūlī, S.H. *Inner Secrets of the Path*, trans. Assadullah ad-Dhaakir Yate. Dorset: Zahra Trust, 1989.
- Ansari, M. *Sufism and Shari'ah*. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1986.

- Arberry, A.J. *Fifty Poems of Hāfiz*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1947.
- Arnold, T.W. *Painting in Islam* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965)
- Ashtiyānī, J. *Rasā'il Qaysari*. Tehran: Intishārāt-i ANjuman-i Islāmī-yi ḥikmat wa falsafa-yi Irān, 1975.
- Austin, R. *Ibn al-'Arabī: The Bezels of Wisdom*. New York: Paulist Press, 1980.
- Baldick, J. *Mystical Islam*. London: I.B. Taurus, 1989.
- Barthold, W. *Turkestan down to the Mongol invasion*. London: Luzac, 1928.
- Bausani, A. "Religion under the Mongols," *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. V. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Böwering, G. *The mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam*. Berlin-New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1980.
- Boyle, J.A. *'Ala al-Din 'Ata al-Malik Juvaini, The History of the World Conqueror*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958.
- _____ *The Mongol World Empire*. London: Valerium Reprints, 1977.
- Butterworth, C.E. *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Chittick, W. "Rūmī and waḥdat al-wujūd," *The Heritage of Rūmī*, eds A. Banani and G. Sabagh. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- _____ *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.
- _____ *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1983.
- _____ *Imaginal Worlds*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1994.
- _____ *Faith and Practice*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1992.
- _____ "The Five Divine Presences," *Muslim World* 72, (1982).
- _____ "Death and the World of Imagination in Ibn 'Arabi's eschatology." *Muslim World* 78, (1988)

- Chodkiewicz, M. *Seal of the Saints*, trans. L. Sherrard. Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993.
- _____ *An Ocean Without Shore*, trans. D. Streight. Albany: SUNY Press, 1993.
- Corbin, H. *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabî*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969.
- _____ *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Liadain Sherrard. London: Kegan Paul International, 1993.
- _____ "De la philosophie prophétique en Islam Shī'ite," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 1962 (Zürich, 1963).
- _____ *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*, trans. N. Pearson. London/Boulder: Shambhala, 1978.
- Coslovi, F. "Liste des manuscrits Arabe et Persans microfilms (Fond Molé) de L'Institut De Recherche Et D'Histoire Des Textes," *Studia Iranica* 7 (1978).
- "Second Liste De Microfilms Des Manuscrits Arabes Et Persans Du Fond Molé," *Studia Iranica* 14/2 (1985).
- Davidson, H. *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Averroes on intellect*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- DeWeese, D. "The eclipse of the Kubraviyah in Central Asia," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 21, Nos. 1-2, 1988.
- Elias, J.J. *The Throne Carrier of God: The Life and Thought of 'Ala ad-dawla as-Simnani*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995.
- _____ "The Sufi Lords of Bahrabad: Sa'd al-Dīn and Sadr al-Dīn Ḥamuwayi," *Iranian Studies*, volume 27, numbers 1-4, 1994,
- _____ "A Kubrawi treatise on mystical visions: the Risāla-yi Nūriyya of 'Alā' ad-Dawleh as-Simnānī," *The Muslim World*, Vol. 83, no.1 (1993).
- Ernst, C.W. *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1985.
- _____ *Rūzbihān Baqlī*. Richmond: Curzon, 1996.

- Field, C. *al-Ghazālī: The Alchemy of Happiness*. London: 1910; repr. Octagon Press, 1980.
- Friedmann, Y. *Prophecy Continuous*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.
- Furūzānfar, B. *Aḥādīth mathnawī*. Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1982.
- Gairdner, W.H.T. *al-Ghazālī's "The Niche for Lights:" Mishkāt al-anwār*. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1915; repr. Lahore: SH Muḥammad Ashraf, 1952.
- Graham, W.A. *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*. The Hague: Mouton, 1977.
- Goodman, L.E. *Avicenna*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Halm, H. *Shiism*, trans. Janet Watson. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.
- Ḥammuyā, S. *Miṣbāḥ fi'l taṣawwuf*. Tehran: Intishārāt Mawlā, 1983.
- Hodgson, M. *The venture of Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1974-77.
- Hujwiri. *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, trans. R.A. Nicholson. London: Luzac, 1911; repr. London: 1976.
- Huxley, A. *The Doors of Perception*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1954.
- Irving, C. *Crossroads of Civilization*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979.
- Izutsu, T. *Sufism and Taoism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- _____ "The Theophanical Ego in Sufism," *Sophia Perennis*. Tehran: the Bulletin of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, Vol.IV, no 1. (1978).
- _____ *Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: Essays in Islamic Mystical Philosophy*. Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1994.
- Jones R.H. *Mysticism Examined*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1993.

- Katz, S. *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- _____ *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*. London: Sheldon Press, 1978.
- Kubrā, Najm al-Dīn. *Fawā'ih al-Jamāl wa fawātiḥ al-Jalāl*, ed. F. Meier. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1957.
- _____ *al-Sā'ir al-Hā'ir*. Tehran: Naqsh-i Jahān, 1361.
- _____ *Ilā alhā'im al-Khā'if min lawa lā 'im*. Tehran: Sāzmān i intishārāt-i kayhān, 1364.
- Leaman, O. *An introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Lewisohn, L. *Beyond Faith and Infidelity*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1995.
- Meier, F. "Das problem der natur im esoterischen Monismus des Islams," *Eranos-Jahrbuch* 14 (1946). Translated into English as "The Problem of Nature in the Esoteric Monism of Islam," *Spirit and Nature: Papers from the Eranos Yearbook*, ed. J. Campbell. New York: 1954.
- _____ "Die Schriften des 'Aziz-i Nasafi," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 52 (1953).
- Melville, C. "Pādishāh-i Islām: the Conversion of Sultan Maḥmūd Ghāzān Khān." *Pembroke Papers I: Persian and Islamic Studies in honour of Peter Avery*, ed. C. Melville. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Michon, J.L. "Sacred Music and Dance" *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. S.H. Nasr. London: SCM Press, 1991.
- Mohammad, O.N. *Averroes doctrine of immortality*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984.
- Molé, M. "Les Kubrawiya Entre Sunnisme et Shiisme Aux Huitième et Neuvième Siècles de l'Hégire," *Revue des études islamiques* 52 (1961).

- Momen, M. *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Morewedge, P. *Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1992.
- _____ *Neoplatonism and Islamic thought*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1992.
- Monzavi, A. *Comprehensive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in Pakistan*. Vol II. Islamabad: Iran-Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies, 1984.
- Morgan, D. *The Mongols*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
- Morris, J. "Ibn 'Arabī and his interpreters," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106 (1986).
- Mueller, A. *Excerpta manuscripti cujusdam Turcici*. Coloniae Brandenburgicae: 1665.
- Murata, S. *Tao of Islam: a sourcebook on gender relationships in Islamic thought*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1992.
- Murata and Chittick. *The Vision of Islam*. New York: Paragon House, 1994.
- Nakamura, K. "Imam Ghazali's cosmology reconsidered with special reference to the concept of jabarut," *Muslim World*, (1994).
- Nasr, S. H. *Three Muslim Sages*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964)
- Naushānī, S.A. *Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the National Museum of Pakistan at Karachi*. Islamabad: Iran-Pakistan Institute of Persian Studies, 1983.
- Netton, I.R. *Allah Transcendent*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- _____ *Al-Farabi and his school*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- _____ *Muslim Neoplatonists*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1982.
- Nicholson, R.A. *The Mystics of Islam*. London: G. Bell & Sons, 1914.

-
- Selected Poems from the Diwan-i Shams Tabrizi*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1898; repr. Richmond: Curzon Press, 1994.
- Nizami, K.A. "The Naqshbandiyyah Order." *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. S.H. Nasr. London, SCM Press, 1991.
- Nizāmī. *Makhzan al-asrār*: Tehran, Matba'a Armaghān, 1313. For an English translation see Gholām Hosein Dārāb's *The Treasury of Mysteries*. London: Arthur Probsthain, 1945.
- Palmer, E.H. *Oriental Mysticism: a Treatise on Sufiistic and Unitarian Theosophy of the Persians*. London: 1867; second edition, 1938.
- Paul, J. "A Propos De Quelques Microfilms Du 'Fond Molé.'" *Studia Iranica* 18 (1989).
- Petroshevsky, I.P. "The socio-economic conditions of Iran under the Il-Khans," *Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. V, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- Philips, D.E. *The Mongols*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969.
- Pike, N. *Mystic Union*. London: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Plotinus. *Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, VI.9.6. London: Penguin, 1991.
- Rahman, F. *Avicenna's Psychology*. London: Oxford University Press, 1952.
- Rāzī, Najm al-Dīn. *Mirṣad al-'ibād*, trans. H. Algar: *The path of God's bondsmen from origin to return*. New York: Caravan Books, 1982.
- Rice, C. *The Persian Sufis*. London: Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1964.
- Ridgeon, L. "The Life and Times of 'Azīz Nasafī," *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism*. XXII (1994): 31-35.
-
- "'Azīz Nasafī and Visionary Experience," *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism*. XXIV, (1995): 22-28.

- _____ "The Felicitous Life in Sufism," *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism.*,
XXVIII, (1996): 30-35.
- _____ "Aziz Nasafi's six ontological faces," *Iran*, 1996 forthcoming,
Roper, G. *World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts*, Vol IV, London: al-
Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1994.
- Rūzbihān Baqli. *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyyāt*, ed. H. Corbin. Tehran: Department
D'Iranologie de l'institute Franco-Iranien, 1966.
- Sachedina, A.A. *Islamic Messianism*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1981.
- Al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-luma' fī'l-taṣawwuf*, ed. R.A. Nicholson. Leiden and
London: E.J. Brill, 1914.
- Saunders, J.J. *The History of the Mongol Conquests*. London: Routledge &
Kegan Paul, 1971.
- Schimmel, A. *As through a veil*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
_____ *And Muhammad is His Messenger*. Chapel Hill: The University
of North Carolina Press, 1985.
_____ *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: University of North
Carolina Press, 1975.
- Smith, M. *al-Ghazālī the mystic*. London: Luzac, 1944; repr. Lahore:
Hijra International Publications, 1983.
_____ *Rābi'a the Mystic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1928.
- Stade, R.C. *al-Ghazālī's Maqṣad al-asnā*, "The Ninety Name of God in
Islam." Ibadan, Nigeria: Caystar Press, 1970.
- Ṭabāṭabā'i, M.H. *Shi'ite Islam*, trans, S.H. Nasr, Albany: SUNY Press, 1977.
- Takeshita, M. *Ibn 'Arabī's theory of the Perfect Man and its place in the
history of Islamic thought*. Tokyo: Institute for the study of
languages and cultures of Asia and Africa, Tokyo University of
Foreign Studies, 1987.
- Thackston, W.M. *Intimate Conversations*. New York: Paulist Press, 1978.

- Tholuck, F.A.G. *Ssufismus sive theosophia Persarum Pantheistica*. Berlin: 1821.
- Trimingham, J.S. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Waley, M.I. "Contemplative Disciplines in Early Persian Sufism." *Classical Persian Sufism: from its Origins to Rūmī.*, ed. L. Lewisohn. London: KNP, 1993.
- Ware, T. *The Orthodox Church*. London: Penguin, 1987.
- Watt, W.M. *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, (al-munqidh^{min} al-ḍalāl), London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1953.
- Wensinck, A. J. "On the relation between Ghazālī's cosmology and his mysticism." Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen. Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1933.
- Zaehner, R.C. *Mysticism, sacred and profane*. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.
- Zarrinkūb, A.H. *Justujū dar taṣawwuf-i Irān*. Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1983.