

A CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF ABŪ AL-A'LĀ AL-MAWDŪDĪ'S READING OF SUFISM

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Abstract: There is a problem of persistence of anti-Sufi image of Syed Abū al-A'lā al-Mawdūdī owing its genesis partly to tangential engagement with key doctrinal issues of Sufism and certain ambivalence regarding it in him and, more significantly, due to Mawdūdī' scholarship's atomistic reading of his key statements. For addressing this key problem, this paper critiques atomistic reading and explores certain background methodological issues and reflections on definitions of Sufism besides key points in his life and work. Our analysis of his work shows he entered into a dialogue with Sufism, acknowledged his debt to it, and we better approach him a contributor to the debate on Sufism and not its simplistic denier/outsider. Evidences include, among others, his moral mysticism, his respect for major Sufi Masters and celebration of his Sufi ancestry, his attempt to visit Sufi Masters, his early poetry in Sufi vein, his involvement with (and influence from) the *al-Asfār al-Arba'a* of Mulla Sadra, and his reworking/appropriation of certain key Sufi themes and Sufi organizational structure in the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Keywords: Abū al-A'lā al-Mawdūdī, Sufi, Anti-Sufi, Sufism, Sharia, Muslim Modernism.

Introduction

Sufism has been a significant element of Muslim intellectual and spiritual legacy and modernity brought its own lenses to either dismiss it or appropriate it or politicize it for various ends. Both Muslim modernists and revivalists responded critically towards it, especially its claims that were perceived antithetical to their own projects. Almost all influential Muslim intellectuals and significant fraction of influential Ulama though coming from Sufi families while reacting or responding to complex challenges of colonial times and later

developments that modernity brought with it called for censoring or selective appropriation of classical heritage of Sufism.

Engaging with Sufi ambiance of inherited cultures, revivalist and modernist movements succeeded in questioning inherited organizational structure of Sufism and contributed to the decline of *khanqahi* culture. Sufism was even singled as a factor for inertia and decline of Muslim power. However, the challenge of secularization called for opposite response in the same breath—the crisis of losing faith and divesting of the later from spiritual-intellectual founts required revisiting resources of Sufism for more sophisticated and engaging critiques of dominant culture of secular modernity. It is also a noteworthy point that Sufism has been so central to Muslim identity in the Indian subcontinent, especially that no scholar could imagine ignoring it or not engaging with it. Our attitude towards Sufism determines the answer to the complex question of our identity in matters personal and political—our view of religious/secular other.

Syed Mawdūdī has been amongst the most influential and debated Muslim scholars of previous century in whose shadow we live. His attitude towards variety of issues has gradually penetrated a significant section of Muslims. Here we take a look at his attitude towards Sufism that has been so little studied but so influential for debates on the pulpit and streets and so consequential for destiny of Muslims in particular and their quest for identity and dignity.

Syed Abū al-A‘lā al-Mawdūdī’s Ambivalence towards Sufism

Syed Abū al-A‘lā al-Mawdūdī (1903-1979) early on resolved to engage with Sufism and kept reviewing Sufi heritage throughout his career. He sought to imagine it or frame it in his own idealized version of what ought to be the case.¹ On the one hand, he foregrounded his allegiance to Sufi background—he belonged to reputed Sufi family of Chistis, his father was a vocal and committed Sui practitioner, he made it a point to meet many Sufis and practice suggested *wazayif*, read Sufi classics and translated part of no less a work than *al-Asfār al-Arba‘a*—treasured as a classic of Sufism inflected metaphysical and philosophical work—in his early years. He has himself, in his autobiographical accounts and scattered reflections, specifically underscored his connection with Sufism, wrote at a very

¹ Syed Asad Gilani, *Maududi: Thoughts and Movement* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1984), 21; Naem Siddique, *Al-Maududi* (Lahore: Al-Faisal, 2006).

young age poetry with a Sufi tinge, kept visiting and debating Sufi figures and appropriated Sufi idiom in his later writings and partly assimilated/adapted Sufi organizational structure for his own Jamaat-e-Islami. Sufism was often in background when he addressed his fellow workers, and he had no qualms regarding his mission of rejuvenating/reinventing spiritual content of Islam in his own way. He was eager to highlight his respect for Sufi heritage. He even concedes, in principle, traditional understanding of *Taşammuf* as spirit or interior dimension of Islam. He writes in *Towards Understanding Islam* that *Fiqh* and *Taşammuf* complement each other and noted that “What concerns itself with the spirit of conduct is known as *Taşammuf*” and “the true Islamic *Taşammuf* is the measure of our spirit of our obedience and sincerity, while *Fiqh* governs our carrying out commands to the last detail. In his thinking, Sufism became a moral code meant to instill self-discipline as opposed to an esoteric Islamic reality, which complemented his conception of an ideal Muslim.”² Maulana Mawdūdī mentions in *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam* regarding *Taşammuf*:

True to God, I bear no personal grudge against the *taşammuf* presented by these great reformers; in spirit it was indeed the real *taşammuf* of Islam, nothing different from *ihsān*. But what I think should be carefully eschewed are the mystic allusions and metaphoric references, the mystic language, and the continuance of a peculiar mystic lore, customs and traditions. Obviously, the real Islamic *taşammuf* does not stand in need of this particular mold. Some other forms and some other languages may be adopted for its expression, mystic allusions and references may be avoided, and the master-disciple traditional relationship in all its allied forms may be replaced. After all, what is the necessity of sticking and adhering to a form which has been corrupted by un-Godly practices for a long time? The large-scale diffusion of these mystic abuses among the common people has in fact produced the worst religious and moral degeneration too well known to the right-minded people. Things have now come to a pretty pass. A person may present the real teachings of Islam, but as soon as he adopts the traditional mystic lore and customs all

² Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (California: Ishi Press, 2017), 67.

the weaknesses and abuses associated with it through usage for centuries also return.

Just as a pure and lawful thing like water is prohibited when it is deemed to be harmful to a patient, so what has become the cult of *taṣannuṭ*, though technically allowable, needs to be eschewed and laid aside.³

Syed Mawdūdī has clearly stated his debt to the Sufis. "I have often benefited from association with Sufis. For quite some time, I frequented every saintly person I heard about. I have attempted to get attention and practices of many Sufis. I am not an outsider to Sufism and know both Sufism and Sufis. I have no hesitation in benefiting from major Sufis." And one can show that he did benefit from them and his moral mysticism is a testimony of this engagement.

It is instructive to note that Syed Mawdūdī's family had a long-standing tradition of spiritual leadership, and a number of his ancestors were outstanding leaders of Sufi Orders. It is also important to note that though it has been possible for some scholars to criticize certain aspects of his conduct during the eventful history of the Jamaat-e-Islami and he doesn't appear to be free from the human margin in his struggle to secure the Jamaat effective role,⁴ it is remarkable that, at the most testing moments, he showed exemplary ethic that has been the hallmark of Sufis. One may cite, for instance, his resolute turning down the opportunity to file mercy petition in the backdrop of the charge of writing a seditious pamphlet on the Qadiani problem. He cheerfully expressed his preference for death to seeking clemency from those who wanted, altogether unjustly, to hang him for upholding the right. With unshakeable faith that life and death lie solely in the hands of Allah, he told his son as well as his colleagues: "If the time of my death has come, no one can keep me from it; and if it has not come, they cannot send me to the gallows even if they hang themselves upside down in trying to do so." His family also declined to make any appeal for mercy."⁵

³ Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, *A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*, trans. Al-Ash'ari (Markazi Maktaba Islami: Delhi, 2009), 92-93.

⁴ See, for instance, Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

⁵ Ibrahim Suleiman and Ya'u Idris Gadau, "Sayyid Mawdudi's Contribution towards Islamic Revivalism in the Contemporary Islamic Political Thought", *International Journal of Islamic Business & Management* 2, no. 1 (March 8, 2018): 35-48, <https://www.cribfb.com/journal/index.php/ijibm/article/view/51>.

The commentators on the Jamaat's stance towards Sufism have noted its ambivalence and relatively positive or less extreme views. For instance, Yoginder Sikand writing especially in the context of JeI in Kashmir, has commented that compared to the *Ahl al-Hadith* movement, the Jamaat's views were quite moderate and that it "even chose to operate within the existing Sufi frameworks in order to present its teachings as the true teaching of Sufism untainted by added layers of superstition." He further points out that Qari Saifuddin, the influential leader of the JeI, was himself.

The chairman of the famous Sufi shrine at Khanyar, Srinagar and translated the works of the fourteenth-century Sufi saint Hazrat Nuruddin Nurani. Sa'aduddin translated Mir Sayyed Ali Hamadani's works from Persian to Urdu and wrote works reinterpreting Sufi practices and ideas to align with the Jamaat's concerns about the proper observance of *sharia*.

However, despite all these things, the Jamaat failed to dispel the anti-Sufi charge against it by political adversaries and at a more popular level.⁶

On the other hand, we find him displaying strong reservations about contemporary form and influence of Sufism that he sought to rethink and even counter at places. It is no wonder that his attitude towards Sufism has been generated much controversy despite clarifications or apologies that continue to pour in. It appears he is himself responsible for certain ambivalence regarding both his presentation and reception of his views.

Syed Mawdūdī's attitude towards Sufism was critical but respectful. Certain ambivalence in his attitude shows he was not quite clear on key claims of Sufism which demand the whole of man in response. This ambivalence is clear from his silence to questions and remarks of Maryam Jameelah who reports that:

During a personal conversation with the Maulana at his house during an evening in the summer of 1970, I told him I thought the numerous Sufi saints in the country, which included many of his own ancestors, were proof of the spiritual strength of Islam in India. I also asked him if he did not believe that hatred between Hindus and Muslims was deliberately sown by the British in introducing the previously unknown concepts of

⁶ Yoginder Sikand, "The Emergence and Development of the Jama'at-i-Islami of Jammu and Kashmir (1940s-1990)", *Modern Asian Studies* 36, no. 3 (July 2002): 705–751, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X02003062>.

communalism and nationalism in their policy of divide and rule. I added that when the power of the Muslim rulers in India was strong, these communal disturbances were almost unknown. Before the English arrived, Hindus and Muslims appeared to be quite capable of living side-by-side together in relative harmony peace. The Maulana remained silent and did not answer.⁷

Afterward, as Maryam reports, although Maulana broke his silence with a critical remark but didn't comment about Sufism's first point as constituting spiritual strength of Islam in India. In fact, his whole approach to the question of Muslim identity and endorsement of Muslim vs. other binary in religio-political thought was premised on a critique of Sufi view of religious/political other.

The Jamaat's schismatic relations with traditional Islam were "at least in part a result of Mawdūdī's attitude toward Sufism. Like some Islamic reformers who preceded him, and true to the spirit of contemporary revivalist thought, Mawdūdī and the Jamaat were disdainful of Sufism and the traditional institutions associated with it" as Vali Reza Nasr notes.⁸ Nasr further cites the following points substantiating this attitude:

In a lecture at the Islamiyah College of Lahore in 1939, he argued that the spiritual powers of the Sufi masters were as relevant to the fundamental questions of existence as were the physical attributes of a wrestler. Elsewhere, he held Sufism accountable for causing the decline of Islam throughout history, referring to it as *chuniya begum* (lady opium). He believed that Sufism had misled Mughal rulers like Emperor Akbar and his son Dara Shukuh into gravitating toward syncretic experiments. Their accommodation of Hinduism, as is evident in Akbar's *din-i ilahi* (divine religion) and Dara Shukuh's book *Majma' al-Bahrayn* (Conglomeration of the Two Seas), which relied on an esoteric marriage between Islam and Hinduism, was not just religiously suspect but caused the Mughals to miss a unique opportunity to convert the whole of India to Islam.⁹

⁷ Maryam Jameelah, "An Appraisal of Some Aspects of Maulana Sayyed Abu Ala Maududi's Life and Thought," *Islamic Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1987); Maryam Jameelah and Abul A'āl Mawdūdī, *Correspondence between Maulana Maudoodi and Maryam Jameelah* (Lahore: Mohammad Yusuf Khan, 1969).

⁸ Syed Vali Reza Nasr, *Maududi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996), 122.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

While referring to overindulgence in Sufism became one of the major impediments to the success of Muslim revivalists such as Mujaddid Alf Thani and Shah Waliullah.¹⁰ Although there has been an attempt on his part to what appears to Nasr as placating Sufi camp as well—Syed Mawdūdī, unambiguously, denied that the Jamaat was antagonistic toward Sufism and in his later career made reference to Sufi ancestors and, following correspondence with his Naqshabandi relative ‘Alauddin Shah, accepted “the truth of Sufism, though only as practiced by the venerated shaikh, not the popular Sufism of the Chishtiyya and the Qādiriyya orders, whose structures of authority were based on Sufi shrines and the festivals and rituals associated with them.”¹¹ However, the point is that his redefinition of Sufism or plea for reformed Sufism stops short of being esoteric dimension of Islam or deeper ground, ultimate fulfillment and very foundation of *dīn* and just an aspect of it or complementing it. It is in light of this dimension that religion gets legitimated, and vice versa isn’t the case. As Nasr notes, Mawdūdī’s redefinition made Sufism merely a gauge to measure “concentration” and “morals.”¹² Mawdūdī sought to appropriate such Sufi terms as cleansing the soul (*taẓkiyat al-nafī*), dedication to God (*ta‘alluq billāh*), spiritual charisma (*karāmah*); reflections (*tajalliyāt*), epiphanies (*maẓāhir*), and realizations (*mushābadāt*) of God gradually found their way into Mawdūdī’s discussions, and his ideological formulation became his Sufi path (*sulūk*). His organizational thinking concerning the Jamaat also showed the influence of Sufism.¹³

There has been an attempt to downplay his strong criticism after his migration to Pakistan and an attempt to appropriate rather than dismiss key elements of Sufi legacy. There has also been an attempt to show that he sought to instill fresh spirit in the structure or working of Sufi organizations and in turn got influenced by them for organizing his own activism. None of the scholars within the Jamaat-e-Islami camp has shown any great engagement with the details of Syed Mawdūdī’s critique of Sufism. The great legacy of Sufism hasn’t been engaged in detail by the Jamaat scholarship. True significance or

¹⁰ Syed Abul Ala Maududi, *Tajdeed-o-Ahyaa-e-Deen* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1999), 119.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

radical implications of Mawdūdī's project haven't been realized or engaged with. Mainstream Sufi scholarship, in turn, hasn't given detailed attention to him either. We have few scattered references or slim volumes loosely assembling his views on Sufism. A point by point, detailed engagement with him by modern scholarship has not been forthcoming.

One needs to also factor in Syed Mawdūdī's standpoint on religious other—he is mostly silent about Qur'ānic verses that recognize, on face value, possibility of salvation for the People of the Book or applaud select people amongst other faith communities. He downplays non-exclusivist/pluralist exegetical possibilities in various ways. This point has been especially noted in detail in a study comparing him with Fazlur Rahman. Given Sufism has especially been noted for a more positive estimate of religious other or less exclusivist exegesis of the canon, this needs to be kept in consideration while assessing Mawdūdī's stance.¹⁴

Inadequate Attention to Sufism in Mawdūdī Scholarship

One can find in Syed Mawdūdī scholarship woefully inadequate attention to the problem of the mystical. The author of *Mawlana Mawdudi Anr Tasawwuf* has documented the negative responses that Mawdudi's attacks on Sufism generated. In Sayyid As'ad Gilani's *Sayyid Mawdudi: Bachpan, Jawani, Barbapa* (Lahore, 1978), we find argued the case for Mawdūdī universalizing Sufism, bringing it out of the Sufi cloisters into society. Incidentally, Javed Ahmed Ghamidi has read Tableegi Jamaat as a mobile Sufi organization. Interviews with disciples of Alau'ddin Shah are illuminating in the sense that the debate between Mawdūdī and the Pir ended with the former's acknowledgment of Sufism in the following terms: "I accept Sufism as you practice it." *Tasawwuf anr ta'mir-i sirat (Sufism and the Building of Character)* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1972) is a brief but useful treatment of a key theme or objective of Sufism in terms Syed Mawdūdī advocates. It helps us to push the case for Sufistic reading of Mawdūdī further. However, to date, it is the case that Syed Mawdūdī is largely perceived as an adversary of Sufism and not a

¹⁴ Imam Mamadou Bocoum, "How do Abul A'la Maududi and Fazlur Rahman position Jews and Christians in the Qur'an?" <https://www.faieth-matters.org/scholars-corner-how-do-abul-ala-maududi-and-fazlur-rahman-position-jews-and-christians-in-the-Qur'an>.

contributor to the debate, discussion, and meaning in the modern world. This paper seeks to read Syed Mawdūdī's dialogue with Sufism and dispel the impression that he was its adversary or mutilates it to frame his ideological purpose. He should be read in juxtaposition with his junior associate Amin Ahsan Islahi who has made a brilliant attempt to express in non-Sufi idiom what is essential to Sufism in his work *Taẓkiya-e-Nafs*. The either-or reading of pro-Sufi/anti-Sufi is too simplistic to comprehend Mawdūdī's case. I think we need to revisit the debates between Sufi authorities and their modern interlocutors to better put in perspective the contribution of Syed Mawdūdī.

I don't think justice has been done to Mawdūdī's "secularized" reading of Sufism. He has something important to say that would be appreciated by modern philosophy of religion and scholars of comparative mysticism and secular interpreters of mysticism. Take his attempt to equate the Sufi *zikr* (mystical recitations) with remembering God and doing His work.¹⁵ One is compelled to conclude from a slim volume on the issue on *Maulana Mawdudi and Tasawwuf* published by Markazi Maktabai Islami that although he was essentially positive estimate of the essence of *tasawwuf*, he had rather tangential and simplistic engagement with a great tradition, a move unexpected from someone associated with the project of translating classic of *'irfān* and Muslim philosophy *Asfar-e- Arba'a*). We need to build on scattered reflections of Mawdūdī to see his case for a reading of Sufism that has analogies in certain significant modern philosophers' take on mysticism.

Appropriating Sufism

Having noted this, we shouldn't miss the point that he transposed and appropriated many elements of Sufism in his reinterpretation of Islamic lore and applied in his movement a Sufi work ethic—a worker de-creates himself in utter obedience to the Divine Will, lives for the work, for the other, for God and is accountable for taking account of himself and subtle temptations of the self in periodically held *ih̄tisāb* sessions. It is the work on what are classified as stations in Sufism (repentance, watchfulness, detachment, spiritual poverty, patience, trust, and satisfaction) that constitutes the training course for a Jamaat worker. Exemplary heroism of many

¹⁵ Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics, and Identity among British Muslims* (I.B. Tauris: London, 1994), 107.

Jamaat workers including their founder displayed in trying moments shows how deeply the Sufi ideals of patience (*sabr*) and satisfaction (*riḍā*) have been interiorized. Syed Mawdūdī was a great example of Sufi ethics. If, as cautioned by Syed Mawdūdī, we don't confound Sufism with ecstatic adventures and dabbling with occult powers and see it as quintessentially seeking beauty/perfection in every action or thing (that is what *iḥsān* in the famous *badees-i-Jibriel* connotes) we have no difficulty seeing him along with his spiritual inspiration or soul-mate Muhammad Iqbal as seekers seeking to realize the Sufi ideals of spiritual democracy. Far from being against the saints of Islam, he embodied the best in saintly ideals embodied in the world of action and certain other domains in his life and work. The label of *bada'atiqadi* suited certain class that exploited it for political gain.

Sufism is not basking in particular states of mystery or pursuing mystifying occultistic power games, but a fellowship of God granted to truly humble and obedient servants of Him. The JeI's founder's contribution to Sufism lies in distinguishing its core of annihilation of personal will in utter obedience to the commands and truth of the Real from associated dispensable narratives or speculations. It appears that he is interested in safeguarding the moral-spiritual affirmation that follows from perfecting humility, sincerity, and devotion to God. And this is indeed the objective of Sufism. The Sufis could well be active Jamaat workers and vice versa. In fact, there are great examples of Sufi Jamaat workers. In Kashmir, especially the most distinguished Jamaat figures had a reputation as Sufis.

In a world rife with injustice and desacralization of all institutions, a Muslim can't afford to be indifferent. Prophetic activist mysticism has inspired many of its great political personalities and thinkers. The Jamaat-e-Islami is one of the responses to the call and the challenge of secularizing modernity.

Certain analysts have noted mystical element in social activism and community-centric voluntary organizations. Seen in this light, exemplary community work by arguably one of the world's largest NGOs, JeI, calls for gratitude from all of us.

Vali Reza Nasr has noted in his study *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* that Mulla Sadra's philosophy influenced Syed Mawdūdī.¹⁶ Nasr further notes that young Mawdūdī's poetry reveals "hitherto hidden mystical tendencies far removed from the reformist

¹⁶ Ibid., 24-25.

zeal he would soon display.”¹⁷ Written under the pen name “*Tālib*” (seeker—a word with strong Sufi connotations), the poems provide, as Nasr argues, “a rare glimpse into Mawdūdī’s thinking at this juncture in his life. Although telling in their concluding counsel, the poems reflect a mystical and poetic soul in anguish and confronted with an ‘unjust’ world wherein realities belie ideals.”¹⁸ Mawdūdī used Sufi idiom to express his basic convictions that would inform his later work. “We believe in cash [*naqd*], not in credit [*tisr*], so why narrate to us the story of paradise.” Nasr’s another passage may be quoted at length to show that Syed Mawdūdī reworked certain key Sufi and Sadrean (sage-philosophical) notions in his endeavor to present Islam as the transformation of the self and getting new life of spirit.

In later years, Mawdūdī recalled that he began his path to faith from doubt, from *lā ilāh* (there is no god) to *illā Allah* (other than God). The formulation described by Mawdūdī resembles the Sufi teachings on contemplation and meditation (*dhikr*), where the incantations emphasize the distinction between *lā ilāh* and *illā Allah* and carry the Sufi from the first to the second.¹⁹

Nasr invites our attention to an important point regarding evil and utopia to mark the distance between Mawdūdī and predecessors. Noting that God alone is perfect or good and the world can’t but be contaminated by evil, he builds the case against any attempt that locates the Kingdom of God on earth:

Moreover, the world, by definition, is the privation of God. Hence, the source of evil cannot possibly serve as the complete vehicle for the realization of the divine truth, nor as its embodiment, as Mawdūdī intended the Islamic state to be. In fact, the very notion of a worldly Utopian order is inconsistent with Islamic mysticism’s logic. Mankind, the Sufis, and the theologians have argued, can only combat evil by transcending the worldly reality, escaping from the terrestrial order’s trappings, and thus beginning the journey back to God. It is only in Him, and outside the worldly order that issued away from Him, that divine truth may be realized. Nu’mani, himself a Deobandi ‘*alim*, believed that this metaphysical perspective, as it was reflected in the works of mystics such as Ḥasan al-Baṣṣī (the patriarch of Islamic mysticism, d. 728), Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī (founder of the Qādiriyya Sufi order, d. 1166),

¹⁷ Ibid., 28.

¹⁸ Ibid., 28.

¹⁹ Ibid., 29.

and Ahmad Sirhindi (an important figure in Naqshbandiyya Sufism, d. 1624) is central to the traditional Muslim perspective. They serve as models for the “correct” interpretations of the aim of the Islamic revelation, as seen in Mawlana Iliyas’s Tablighi Jamaat, and insofar as Mawdūdī’s views clearly violated their spirit, accounted for his departure from the norms of traditional orthodoxy.²⁰

It is hard to agree with the extreme conclusion of Nasr here. Syed Mawdūdī has explicitly maintained that justice can’t be done here but is truly done in the hereafter. He has conceded the possibility of utter failure in worldly terms regarding Islamic movements and eulogized the path of a martyr whose kingdom lies not here but elsewhere. He has also clearly distinguished between sanctified or sacralized world and the world we ordinarily construe as divested of *ākhirā* or otherworldly reference. He has time and again reiterated that those who are truly fighting in God’s way might be forced to swallow poison or get persecuted here. This world is a place of trial, and our success (*ḡalāḡ*) shouldn’t necessarily be measured in this-worldly terms.

Syed Mawdūdī has issues with what he sees as divinization of guide attitude and servile mentality of disciples resulting in the incapacity of all mental powers of discrimination and criticism of thinking and reasoning, and the disciple is completely obsessed with the guide’s personality and authority as if he were his Lord. Then the reference to divine inspirations further strengthens the shackles of mental servility, and the mention of mystic allusions and metaphoric references so deepens and enhances the imaginative and superstitious faculty of the ignorant followers that. Being detached from the world of reality, they become wholly absorbed in the world of wonders and mystery.²¹

Syed Mawdūdī largely revives Ibn Taymiyya’s classification of Sufis and accordingly seeks to:

Propagating what he sees as worth emulating (which has no philosophy or way of life of its own and is totally derived from and conforming to the Qur’ān and Sunnah and aims at the Islamic ideal of devotion to and contemplation of Allah). He follows Ibn Taymiyya in listing such early Sufis as al-Fudayl b. Iyād, Ibrāhīm b. Adham, Ma‘ruf

²⁰ Ibid., 113

²¹ Mowdudi, *A Short History*, 113

al-Karkhī, Sarī al-Saqatī, al-Junayd al-Baghdādī, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, Shaykh Hammād, Shaykh Abū al-Bayyān, in this camp.²²

Rejecting what is condemnable due to admixture of Greek and Stoic, Zoroastrian and Vedantic philosophies and incorporation of “monastic and yogic practices and customs and polytheistic ideas which recognizes the *sharia*, *tariqa*, and *ma’rifā* as independent and more often contradictory aspects of life, and which aims at training man for other purposes than training him for his duties as Allah’s vicegerent on the earth.”²³

Purifying or reforming that which has “conjoined in its traits and features of both the first two kinds” and whose ends are more or less different from those desired and cherished by Islam” and fails to prepare man for his “duties of Allah’s vicegerency” or have “a comprehensive view of Religion,” or qualified to establish it.²⁴

Many points follow from this exposition, among others: *silsilah* framed guide-disciple oriented Sufism fails in its objectives or gets associated with cultic servile attitude; esoterism has no *locus standi* as a deeper or higher spiritual current that transcends/grounds exoteric religion; the problems lie with what Muhammad Iqbal called speculative philosophical Sufism²⁵; *sharia*, *tariqa*, and *ma’rifā* constitute independent and often contradictory aspects of life; and the end of the last two isn’t compatible with the Islamic ideal of man as vicegerent.

Appraisal of Key Criticisms

A critical appraisal of key points raised in Syed Mawdūdī’s reading of Sufism above is in order. The argument regarding certain pathologies creeping in most of the people associated with the traditional institution of initiation chains, guide-disciple relationship and certain mystifying occultist and cultist framing besides the tendency to indulge in states instead of working hard for the perfection of virtues of stations has been widely noted, and even

²² Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim dan Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad (eds.), Vol. 11 (Kairo: Dār al-Raḥmah, n.d.), 21-24.

²³ Ibid., 111.

²⁴ Ibid., 112.

²⁵ Stephan Popp, “Muhammad Iqbal – Reconstructing Islam along Occidental Lines of Thought,” *Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society* 5 (2019), 201–229, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30965/23642807-00501011>.

traditional Sufi scholars such as Ahmed Javaid largely concede its force. It is hard to refute it empirically, seeing the majority of disciples are indeed guilty of servile attitude and fail to be self-critical or critical of their guides who may well be selling their own personalities to them instead of God.

One may see this as constituting not an indictment of the whole or essence of *silsilah*/guide centric Sufism but a declaration of this traditional framing's extremely limited success in contemporary times. However, the question is how far can we go in evolving an alternative to this paradigmatic form. Here the answer is not clear and has not been provided by the critics either. New Age Mystics who often take recourse to this guide/*silsilah* bound esotericism bashing idiom to have themselves failed to supplant the criticized paradigm. We need to engage with the standard expositions of initiation and role of guide and need for strict obedience to the guide. This engagement is not found in Syed Mawdūdī.

If esoterism is not recognized, religion loses its conviction for the intellectual and spiritual elite. It is true religion is enough to save people, but it is not salvation only that is the be-all and end-all of human odyssey or interest. Religion gets its deepest ground and fulfillment in the Absolute, which is the pure object of esoterism. Faith, when deepened into gnosis, tastes this esoteric aspect that is its own reward or justification. Religion is always in danger of turning into parochial ideological force or fanaticism or rigid dry formalism against which esoterism provides a balancing resource. Religion fails to face deeper challenges from modernity and philosophers, and it is in esoterism that the best minds have ever found refuge or access to God.

Sharia, *tariqa*, and *ma'rifa* haven't been conceived as independent in integral Sufism of great Sufi Masters but constitute a hierarchy in which subsequent terms embrace/transcend and not negate the prior ones. They are not contradictory either. Syed Mawdūdī hasn't, again, substantiated his assertions with any evidence. In the exposition of such Masters as Ibn 'Arabī, we find the most comprehensive ground for preparation of the role of vicegerency of God. We know the Sufis have done more than anyone else, especially the exoteric authorities, to spread God's word and even defend it against inimical forces. Many great Sufis spearheaded jihad movements and embraced

martyrdom. What else would establishing God's religion require, especially in the sense Syed Mawdūdī understands it?

It also needs to be emphasized that the end of the mystic journey is not in any way contradictory to the end of devotion to God; it is, in any case, the deepening of this devotion. Proximity to God/gnosis/'*irfān* is not man becoming Lord but unfolding of what is divine in man. It is well known that greater humility before the Divine is by the Sufis. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī interpreted "*Anā al-Ḥaqq*" of al-Ḥallāj as an extreme statement of humility.²⁶

What is read as an admixture of foreign and polytheistic philosophies or ideas has been shown by more careful scholars and historians of ideas to be echoed in diverse idioms of a single truth or primordial tradition. The spirit finds varied vehicles for its expression, and one could discern the same saving truths in diverse myths, folklore, and doctrines when read with various tools provided by modern scholars of comparative religion, mythologists, metaphysicians of traditionalist school, and many others.

Mysticism is not the science of states, but stations, and one can take his critique of world-wary intoxicating bliss pursuing indulgent Sufism in a positive light. Great Masters of Sufism would thank Syed Mawdūdī for feedback on dangers of abnegating reason, eschewing self-criticism and cultist servile following of so-called spiritual guides and pleading for nonattachment to particular forms and idiom in which Sufism has hitherto been clothed. Sufism is not basking in particular states of mystery or pursuing mystifying occultist power games, but a fellowship of God granted to truly humble and obedient servants of Him. They would also side with his denunciation of *sharia* ignorant pseudo-Sufis. Syed Mawdūdī's contribution to Sufism lies in distinguishing its core of annihilation of personal will in utter obedience to the commands and truth of the Real from associated dispensable narratives or speculations.

The Sufis could well be active Jamaat workers and vice versa. In fact, there are great examples of Sufi Jamaat workers. In Kashmir, known for mystical orientation as a region, especially the most distinguished Jamaat figures had a reputation as Sufis. However, one key point of tension between the JeI and mainstream *wujūdī* Sufism

²⁶ Jabez L. Van Cleef, *The Tawasin of Mansur al-Hallaj, in Verse: A Mystical Treatise on Knowing God, & Invitation to the Dance* (USA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2008), 21.

remains—the apprehension that transcendence of God is compromised by the later and accordingly perception of much of popular Sufi practices from venerating shrines to prayer food culture as involving some sort of *shirk*.²⁷ The best defense against such apprehensions is reading the most influential exponents of *wujūdī* Sufism Ibn 'Arabī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, Farid al-Dīn al-'Attār, Syed Ali Hamadani and down to Mulla Sadra (who has been little noticed and subtle influence on Syed Mawdūdī) and Shah Waliullah and if we go to his near contemporaries Pir Mehr Ali Shah, Mawlana Thanwi and Allama Anwar Shah Kashmiri. Key charges against Sufism—it disrespects/eschews *sharia*, is intoxicating or world-denying, lulls nations to sleep and is responsible for Muslim decline, a product of alien ideological/philosophical ideas and not integral to Islamic Tradition, compromises *tamhīd*, is status quoist/quietist—have all been dismissed by careful scholars of Islam/Sufism and comparative mysticism.

Syed Mawdūdī missed the comprehensive significance of metaphysic of beauty and connection between art/craft and initiation and deeper understanding of *ihsān* as the pursuit of perfection/beauty in every act and event and essentially metaphysical as distinguished from the theological character of Sufism and it is no wonder we find his engagement with or critique of certain aspects of Sufism as practiced especially in the Indian subcontinent tangential and problematic though on points, foregrounded above, not insignificant that, however, echoes criticism of its abuse by Sufi authorities themselves.

It appears Syed Mawdūdī didn't take the trouble to refute what he considered antithetical doctrines of Sufis or engage very closely with any great Sufi metaphysician, but he did take the trouble of translating the core moral and spiritual content of Sufism understood as a struggle with the lower self and perfection of virtues in the pages of his work that exudes the perfume of discovery of God by a self-consumed in obedience to the Divine Will. Reading Syed Mawdūdī, one finds that one is led to take God seriously and divine see everything else in the light. History and our odyssey get a new meaning with a fellowship of God.

²⁷ For a deeper understanding of this, read Alexander D. Knysh, *Ibn 'Arabi in the Later Islamic Tradition: The Making of a Polemical Image in Medieval Islam* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).

Syed Mawdūdī's key criticisms of historical developments in Sufism are essentially shared by major Sufi authorities. For instance, he laments the pollution of “the pure spring of Islamic *Taṣawwuf* with absurdities that could not be justified by any stretch of the imagination on the basis of the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth. Gradually a section of Muslims appeared who thought and proclaimed themselves immune to and above the requirements of the *sharia*. No Sufi has the right to transgress the limits of the *sharia*.” “Islamic *Taṣawwuf* is not anything distinct from *sharia* but sincere interiorization of the same and infusing love and fear of God in obedience to Him.”²⁸ Now we can find similar expressions amongst Sufi writers from Ḥujwīrī to Pir Mehr Ali Shah.

Interestingly almost all key figures responsible for the revival of *ummah* acknowledged by Syed Mawdūdī—Umar bin Abdil Azeez, the four Imams viz. Imām Abū Hanīfa, Imām Mālik, Imām Shāfi‘ī, and Imām Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Imām al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya, Mujaddid Alf Thani, Shah Waliullaah, Sayid Ahmad Shaheed, and Muhammad Ismail Shaheed are all, arguably, Sufis and it is such revered authorities as Ḥujwīrī who lists four imams as Sufis. About Ibn Taymiyya, it has been established now that he was initiated in Qādiriyya *silsilah*.²⁹

However, what is important from the viewpoint of reclaiming the Sufi element (repressed for ideological reasons, to be sure), is to note moral mysticism or what is called prophetic activist mysticism informing the Jel’s grand vision and practical plan. What is that moves a worker of Jamaat-e-Islami? What sustains him in prisons and against all kinds of tribulations? What is this volunteering for funding and working on countless welfare projects for the needy? What is this utter submission to the Divine Will if not *fanā*? What is this elaborate sustained, and comprehensive interpretative effort that shows key terms of Islamic canon to constitute a call for utter abandonment of personal will or desire so that God’s will alone reign in every sphere? What does it mean to say no to every ideology/idol/object in the name of the Transcendent God/Other? What does it imply to wage

²⁸Mowdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, 68.

²⁹ Muhammad Hisyam Kabbani, *Self-Purification and the State of Excellence: Encyclopedia of Islamic Doctrine*, Vol. 5 (Chicago: Kazi Publications, Inc., 1998); George Makdisi, “Ibn Taymiyya: A Sufi of The Qadiriyya Order”, *the American Journal of Arabic Studies* 1 (1973).

jihad against every oppressive structure anywhere so that nothing obstructs the exercise of freedom? Doesn't the JeI seek to subject every temporal action and political struggle to Eternity's demand and die every moment to God/Other? Man's every project is laid at the altar of God, and if all this is not mysticism, what else is? What Vali Reza Nasr sees, in his work on Syed Mawdūdī and Jamaat-e-Islami, as reformist zeal far removed from mystical is itself an expression of mysticism as far as we can see in its care and compassion for the other/other's salvation and coloring all things in the divine color. Mystics have been known to be reformists in Islamic and other traditions.

A JeI worker is an activist for life whose life work consists of caring for the demands of the non-self/ other/God. The problematic element of the Jamaat from the viewpoint of objectives of mysticism/Sufism is its failure to truly submit and open up to the other and see all others in God as it makes Islam into an ideological project or construes it as a system; it is inadequately open to the openness that Islam embodies (and historically embodied in lives and works of sages, saints and poets), less ready to acknowledge the human character of interpretative efforts and consequently tendency to arrogate to Itself the task of correctly understanding and implementing the Divine Will and create all kinds of others in the process as it judges other manifestations of the divine in other philosophical, religious, mystical and artistic or cultural formations as more or less idolatrous or wedded to merely human non-divine ends.

The JeI shouldn't have been tagged as anti-Sufi/*bada'iqadi* as its primary focus was not on reacting to Sufism but developing another facet of Islamic critical consciousness, and that may explain why Syed Mawdūdī didn't deem it necessary to engage in detail with it. The JeI is only bound by its vision of transforming the self and society in light of Divine Nomos. It hastily commented on certain developments of Sufism and found its popular form problematic on both theological and political grounds. Ambivalence in the Muslim intellectual-spiritual elite's attitude towards Sufism can be gleaned from the fact of divergent assessment amongst towering Muslim scholars within and across seminaries such as Deoband and Nadwa and divergence vis-à-vis Syed Mawdūdī between Muhammad Hasan Askari's and his most gifted associate Saleem Ahmed.

I think we all agree that Sufism has many colors. It is more than the speculative or philosophical system a praxis, and one is a better Sufi if one has a better ethic. Sufism's spirit may well be better manifest in our devotion to our work and activism of all kinds, and one is required to be nobody—have perfect humility—in Sufism. There is none who can claim to be a Sufi in the sense of being somebody. The task is to keep working on oneself and the good of the community, and that is where Muslims are all united, irrespective of labels given by others. We are all fellow travelers, and as guests of God in the feast called life, we shouldn't indulge in name-calling or fighting as Hafiz said.

Syed Mawdūdī's overemphasis on what Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi called *ḥākīm-maḥkūm* or Lord-servant polarity and marginalization of other dimensions that include God's love for men that Sufism has especially emphasized and his reification of Islam as something that is against not only the whole of the modern world (he hastily dubs as incurably ignorant/defiant of Spirit/Divine) but also against the largely transcendence/sacred centric traditional ancient and medieval worlds and as an ideology that requires certain political formations for realization are demonstrably problematic theses that cost him the support of traditionally better grounded Ulama fraternity and more educated modern intellectuals—who view Sufism as integral to Islamic tradition.

Prophetic activist mysticism has inspired many of its great political personalities and thinkers, and Syed Mawdūdī's special case may be better understood in terms of his attempt to reclaim loyalty to this prophetic mysticism.

If in the name of Sufism somebody advocates this or that thing, we have every right to censure from the perspective of the Qur'ān and the Sunna—a point usually reiterated by various more recent revivalist scholars from M. Sayyid Urooj Ahmed Qadri (*Islami Tasawwuf*) to Ghulam Qadir Lone (*Mutala-e Tasawwuf*). But what constitutes the perspective of the Qur'ān and the Sunna? In answering this question, we may very well consider Sufism as *the* perspective of the Qur'ān and the Sunna. You can't judge higher (metaphysical, esoteric, universal, integral, supra-individual, supra-formal, comprehensive, unconditioned perspective or dimension of the Qur'ān) by the lower one (exoteric, theological, juristic, anthropomorphic, individual, limiting, formal, sentiment affected).

Subjecting the essence of Sufism to exoteric critiques is an exercise in reductionist vein, and there can't be a greater heresy than this. Those who claim to know a priori the position or perspective of Islam and, in light of that, proceed to judge Sufism or traditional metaphysics are unwittingly applying this reductionism besides. A critic must first establish his credentials, and then alone, he will be heard. A blind man is no judge of colors. One recalls Rumi's rebuttal of exotericist (*ẓāhir parast*) authorities that he has taken the essence of the Qur'ān and left bones for them. How can those who have tasted God heed those who have known only about God and that too through hearsay, through secondhand sources? This doesn't mean the exoteric dimension can be ignored, but only that it can't be absolutized. If, as explicated by such Sufi metaphysicians as Shaykh Abdul Wahid Yahya, metaphysics is properly understood as the science of the Real, as what is validated by intellection that achieves *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, as what pertains to truth as such, and religion as something that embodies saving truth and not truth as such or truth as filtered by screens of individuality and emotion so that salvific function is operative, and theology is an inadequate translation, in conceptual language, of what has been seen firsthand in Revelation/Intellection this point may be easy to comprehend.

None of the great names in Islamic history could be characterized as anti-Sufi in the strict sense. All Muslims are also Sufis, even the most literalist exotericist Salafi or Wahabi or "*bada'itqadi*." The very proclamation of Islam implies one takes spiritual realm to be more fundamental, otherworld or eternity to be more primary, God to be the object of all of our endeavors, and what else is real Sufism but the perfection of these things. Of course, one can't deny that there have been certain extremists from both camps—Sufis and exotericist. Sometimes spirituality has been misidentified with ecstasy and loss of consciousness rather than a state of superconsciousness. At times people forgot that they are after all conditioned because they have a body or are situated in space and time and claimed to be gods. Man is a slave of Allah and nothing, no spiritual progress on his part, can erase his status as a creature and make him one with God in every sense.

The critics of Sufism need to note that Sufism is not an ideology; it is not occultism and faith healing business. It is not a theory about anything but realization, tasting. It is not a philosophical

school among other schools but a *darsana* or vision. It is not one particular interpretation of Islam that rivals other interpretations but, by definition, the core, the essence of all approaches that contribute in any sense towards the elucidation of truth or reality behind the words or symbolized by the words. It doesn't negate theology but only verifies it at a higher plane and gives it a more universal and deeper metaphysical grounding. Sufism is not a system of beliefs but a code of discipline for the self, and it is open to anybody, and its claims can be verified or tested by anyone serious enough to make all kinds of sacrifices for the discovery of truth. Very few dare to be such great adventurers of the territory of spirit as very few can sell everything dear to them (or detach themselves from them) that is prerequisite for the knowledge of truth or God may necessitate. Sufism is not *pir parasti* and grave worship. It worships the Living God (*al-Hayy*), the principle of all life. It acknowledges ultimately no external authority of *pir* but finds true guide or *shaykh* within.

Al-Qushayrī, Junayd al-Baghdādī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Ibn 'Arabī, Ahmad Sirhindi, and other great masters of Sufism have always been critical of corruptions in Sufi practice at the hands of ignorant dervishes, addicts, madmen, occultists, so-called pirs posing as Sufi masters or libertine pseudo-Sufis. Most Sufi authorities would loathe modern forms of *samā'*. Just a few remarks of Ibn 'Arabī on his contemporary dervishes: "They have no knowledge of the prohibited (*al-ḥaram*) to make them return"; and "They don't know the conditions of the *sunna* or the obligatory works, they aren't even fit to serve as a servant in the toilets." Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzī and such things as the chapter on Sufism in *Talbīs Iblīs* have great value for separating the satanic from the divine in Sufism poses. People selling amulets and involved in the business of djinns are not to be identified as Sufis. Most of true Sufis are hidden—extraordinarily ordinary persons—whom you can't guess easily as being elevated souls. A very simple test of a good Sufi is his character—how far he resembles the Prophet whose function was the perfection of morality or virtue—his state of *ṣabr*, *riḍā*, *tawakkul*, etc. He can't be self-centered. Apparently, supernatural things, predictions, mind reading, faith healing can't be trusted as evidence of being genuine Sufi. Self-praise and boosting are indications of one's degradation.³⁰

³⁰ Jamāl al-Dīn Abī al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, n.d.), 187-188.

Genuine Sufis have no interest to be respected, praised, served and in money minting. They respect shrines but are not *asthan parast* as the greatest shrine is the human heart, and God's residence is there only. They will help the poor more than they will be interested in celebrating *urs* with great pomp. They will not readily beg even God for worldly things—their prayer is not petition and they prefer God to His gifts constituting the worldly amenities—not to speak of going from shrine to shrine. They are more interested in saving their souls rather than in processing the files of the clients regarding worldly matters.

Regarding the criticism of quietism against Sufism or associating Muslim decline with *wujūdī* Sufism, a point implicated in Syed Mawdūdī, one may consider the point that Sufism has produced front-ranking leaders of resistance movements in Islamic history besides the counternarrative on this point developed by various scholars including Seyyed Hossein Nasr. A great number of major Sufistic/*Irfānī* figures from classical times to more recent figures such as Sirhindi to Shah Waliullah to Abdul Qadir Jazairi to Pir Jamaat Ali Shah and many stalwarts in Iranian revolution took an interest in/engaged with matters political/political community spaces. One also needs to note the self-avowed and widely believed notion that the Sufis play a decisive role in influencing politics or what is called the secular sphere by executing works of *'alam al-amr* through the parallel spiritual empire.

Key definitions of Sufism bypass speculative doctrinal disputes. To paraphrase some important definitions of *Taşawwuf*:

Attention to breath implying centering consciousness on the present, service of the Other, doing everything as it should be ideally done, the sincerity of purpose, guarding against *nafs* and all its disguises, one-pointed focus on God alone or exclusive attachment to the Real, cultivating love/gnosis, science of stations/virtues, freedom, *adab*, giving everything its due, seeing everything in terms of beauty, as a journey within from the self/ego to the non-self/Self, psyche to Spirit.³¹

These are all universally treasured aspirations of mankind. If Sufism is guilty of deviation from the Revealed Norm, indulgence in ecstasies, escapism, worship of desires or airy abstractions or

³¹ Muhammad Maroof Shah, "Who is not a Sufi? Tasawwuf for All Seasons" *Daily Times* 15 July 2020.

transgressions of various kinds, it has never been the self-understanding or standard understanding of major Sufi authorities.

It may be significant to note that no critique of Sufism succeeds in dislodging key formulations of it by the Masters because they are framed in deconstructive terms or acknowledge the problematic status of all positions taken with regard to it or on behalf of it. Consider, for instance: “Sufism is nothing but idolatry, for its purpose is to preserve one’s heart from all that is not God; but there is nothing other than God” (Shibli). “Anyone who would express his thoughts on Sufism is not a Sufi; anyone who bears witness to Sufism is not a Sufi. In order to live Sufism, one must be ‘absent’ from it” (Ibn Bākhilā). Or consider what Ibn ‘Arabī has to say for whom, a saint can’t brag about being a saint as saintliness is not *his* but in him and its presence makes him disregard the “I”. “For Shibli, the fact that “the Sufis had been given a name is due to their having fouled their egos and if they had been really ‘transparent,’ devoid of their own attributes, no name could have been attributed to them.” “We may thus say that one can’t claim to be a Sufi; one can’t assert one has arrived or achieved perfect openness to unveilings of Being. Like justice, it can only be approximated.”³² Keeping these considerations in mind we can see how Syed Mawdūdī has a point in questioning certain of these approximations or what are perceived as constructions of the inebriated. But his point is well conceded by Sufi authorities in the internal criticism that has been institutionalized in the history of Sufism.

Concluding Remarks

The Jamaat’s view of Sufism—anti-occultists anti-pseudo-spiritual interpretation of Islam—has been construed to accuse it of disrespecting saints or *badaetiqaḍi* by certain regimes and exploiting it for political gain. What is, however, to be noted is it hardly engaged with either Muslim philosophers or mystics or artists that are central to the evolution of Islamic intellectual heritage. Despite the strong note of what has been called prophetic activist and moral mysticism in life and work of Mawdūdī, the self-avowed influence of and debt to Sufism and an attempt to assimilate its benign influence in the organizational structure of Jamaat-e-Islami, we can’t avoid the conclusion that there is in him inadequate recognition of the rights

³² Ibid.

and depths of the esoteric domain and this in turn contributes to his problematic attitude towards both the secular and the religious other.

However, given the abuse of Sufism at the hands of intellectually, morally, and spiritually suspect people of all hues, Syed Mawdūdī's warnings against indulging in readily available contemporary pathologies sold in the name of Sufism more popular in the Indian subcontinent in general and Kashmir, in particular, are timely. His worth reckoning though not the original point was that Islam's world-affirming, history-valuing spirit can't be compromised in the name of stretched asceticism and fatalism of pseudo-Sufis.

All these critics of traditional Sufism were essentially Sufis if we don't allow monopolizing of Sufism from certain quarters who claim to be the sole inheritors of Islam's spiritual legacy. The generality of Ulama rightly warned against the subtle influence of Satan (*talbīs-i Iblīs*) in the name of mysticism. These critics of Sufism have mostly criticized its supposed deviations from *sharia*, its otherworldly or ascetic orientation, its irrationalism, its speculative flights, its transgressions against ethical norms, its tendency to fatalism etc.

All these charges apply only to abused Sufism or misinterpretation and misappropriation of Sufism. If we read its acknowledged masters such as Junayd al-Baghdādī, 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Ibn 'Arabī and the like, none of these charges could be really substantiated. In Kashmir as in the Indian subcontinent, many people claim association with Sufism and indulge in Sufi rituals even though they have not taken any trouble to acquaint themselves with traditional religious sciences (as was the case in classical Islamic paradigm) and don't take cognizance of what is called intellection and need of ruthless self-criticism and finding the due place for judgments of reason and instead call for the suicide of reason and almost border on shrine worship and complacent posturing towards *sharia*. The greatest shrine is the human heart that is often taken casually by these claimants of Sufism who look down upon exoteric authorities or commoners. *Sharia* is not taken seriously because of the ignorance of secrets of it and its inalienable connection with *ḥaqīqa*.

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