

Sunni Shi'a, Sufism And Philosophy

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Sunni v/s Shi'a

- 1. Explain the meaning and importance of the term Shi'at 'Ali (Party of 'Ali)**
- 2. Explain the significance of the battle of Siffin and the massacre of Karbala' in the development of Shi'i Islam.**
- 3. The events that led to the emergence of the Shi'ah are often seen as tragic in Islamic history. Outline these events and explain their significance in Islam.**

There have been many sects since the time of the prophet (ﷺ). According to the latter (ﷺ), there will be 73 groups in Islam and Shi'a is among them. All groups have their original starting point in history and their distinctive features. The partisans of that group exist all around the world but mainly in Iran. The Shi'a known as Shi'atou 'Aliy (شيعة علي)– or Shi'ah 'Ali means the party of 'Ali (رضي الله عنه). The name of the group suggests that this group is pro Hazrat Ali and they are the partisans, fellowmen and supporters of 'Ali (رضي الله عنه). Here reference is made to Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه). They are also known as the Shi'te. However, there is a history behind that name. 'Ali's supporters were a myriad of disenchanting people, some of whom had grievances with Caliph 'Uthman (رضي الله عنه). These became the "Partisans of 'Ali" or the Shia't Ali.

Indeed, these Partisans of Ali (رضي الله عنه) were simply recently converted Bedouins from a Mushrik (polytheist) concept as well as conquered Persians who clung to their Zoroastrian ways. They were weak in faith, ignorant, and barbaric. They were not a religious sect, but rather a political party. They were not interested in the religion of 'Ali as Islam but they were more interested in the political views of not accepting the Umayyad clan and preferring the Hashim clan. The term "Shi'ah Ali" was not used to denote a distinct religious sect; in fact, the partisans of Mu'awiyah would be called "Shi'ah Mu'awiyah" at a time. Both the Bedouins and the Zoroastrians were accustomed to their former pagan beliefs and had a difficult time adjusting to Islam, and often-times they would mix Islam with pagan thought. The Shi'ah first formed an identifiable movement in Islamic history during the First Civil War among Muslims, which tore the Muslim Community apart between 656 and 661 C.E during 'Ali's (رضي الله عنه) caliphate. According to Shi'ah doctrine, 'Ali was meant to assume leadership of the Community upon the Prophet's (ﷺ) death in 632. They affirmed that the Prophet (ﷺ) had explicitly designated him as his successor, but the jealousy and ambition of his enemies prevented him as a succession of three other leaders, Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) (632–634), 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) (634–644), and 'Uthman (رضي الله عنه) (644–656), were chosen instead. They would base themselves on the Ghadir Khum declaration where the prophet (ﷺ) said that the "one who has me as leader (mawla) has 'Ali as leader" (Sunan Ibn Maaja Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 121). Shi'a as a movement bursts into full view with the assassination of Hazrat 'Uthman (رضي الله عنه) and the resulting civil war. According to the Shi'a, in 656 Hazrat 'Uthman (رضي الله عنه) was assassinated in Madina by

Muslims angered by his supposedly open preferential treatment in making appointments to lucrative (profitable) governorships in the newly conquered provinces. They were the Kharijites. At this point, Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) was chosen as caliph, but soon met opposition from the Umayyah clan, the Prophet's (ﷺ) widow Hazrat 'Aisha (رضي الله عنها), and others, who accused him of complicity in 'Uthman's (رضي الله عنه) assassination. These were the Shi'a allegation.

Then came the incident of the battle of camel. Accordingly, Talha (رضي الله عنه) and Zubair (رضي الله عنه) went to Hazrat 'Aisha (رضي الله عنها) in order to find the culprit of Hazrat Uthman's (رضي الله عنه) death. However, 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) as caliph didn't approve that any army would leave his kingdom without his order. He thus sent his sons and army to halt the ongoing army. They continued talks for weeks but when it seemed that there will be peace, mischief mongers from both sides started the battle. One of the reasons for this battle was that the partisans of 'Ali would never accept anyone opposing the caliph. They would consider that as an act of disrespect and disloyalty. Anyone who went against the regime of 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) was not from his nation. That was the shi'a concept. Men from Hazrat 'Ali's (رضي الله عنه) forces among the Shi'a killed Talhah (رضي الله عنه) and al-Zubayr (رضي الله عنه) and captured Hazrat 'A'isha (رضي الله عنها). However, she was returned to Madina with honour by 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) though his supporters wanted otherwise. They were never satisfied with what they had. Sometimes they would ask for justice and other times they would simply ask for self-arbitration. War was declared, pitting (fighting) 'Ali's (رضي الله عنه) supporters, centered in Kufa in Iraq, against forces in Basra and Syria. They would never accept anyone going against 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) and they would retaliate. As they were accustomed with the Nomadic life and the Persian warring style they were always ready to wage war. The following year, Mu'awiyah (رضي الله عنه) didn't pay allegiance to 'Ali (رضي الله عنه). That was again an insult to the partisans of 'Ali (رضي الله عنه). At the same time Mu'awiyah (رضي الله عنه) who was the governor of Syria took his army to face the Khawarij who killed Hazrat Uthman (رضي الله عنه). Again it was a decision without the approval of 'Ali (رضي الله عنه). For the shi'a it was disobedience and a means of creating chaos and fitna on the Islamic territory. For the partisans of 'Ali, looking for the murderers of Hazrat 'Uthman (رضي الله عنه) was not that vital as he was among the Umayyah. Their motto was to accept 'Ali and the Ahlul Bait at all cost and allegiance with sincerity to be prevailed.

As such there was the battle of Siffin. During that battle men of Mu'awiyah (رضي الله عنه) played a trick to stop the battle by placing pages of the Qur'an on top of the lances and swords. Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) didn't want to stop fighting but a section of his army turned against him and asked for a halt and an arbitration. Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) lost the battle of Siffin in the Syrian desert after his deputy bungled arbitration with the agent of Mu'awiyah (رضي الله عنه), the governor of Damascus. A large group of Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه)'s supporters, angered that he had submitted to arbitration, left him at this point. Known as the Khawarij (or Kharijites, "deserters"), they became Hazrat 'Ali's (رضي الله عنه) bitter enemies. In the meantime these situations created sympathy in the hearts of his partisans for Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه). The latter retreated to Kufa and defeated a Kharijite army at Nahrawan in 658. Again his supporters were with him and totally accepted to fight the Khawarij. That was all they were good at, that is fighting. In 661, he was assassinated by the Khariji ibn Muljim in Kufa. This led to sympathies for his family and the Ahlul Bait. His supporters recognized his eldest son Imaam Hasan (رضي الله عنه) as their leader. As a matter of fact they would only recognize the members of the Ahlul Bait and the prominent Ashab from the Prophet (ﷺ)'s house. They would reject the other ashab especially the first three caliphs. They had enmities with the Umayyah and were fiercely against anyone opposing Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه). Throughout Umayyad rule, the Shi'a engaged in periodic uprisings against the illegitimate caliphs (according to them), rebelling in the name of various members of Ahlul Bait. The most famous of these incidents is the revolt of Husayn (رضي الله عنه).

Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه)'s second son, on the death of Mu'awiya (رضي الله عنه) and the accession of his son Yazid in 680. Imam Husayn (رضي الله عنه) was summoned to Kufa to lead the revolt. He set out from Madina with a small contingent, but Umayyad forces halted him in the Iraqi desert, preventing him from reaching his supporters in Kufa. Rather than surrender, Husayn (رضي الله عنه) and his followers fought; most were slaughtered, and Imaam Husayn's head was delivered to Yazid in Damascus. In this battle many of the Ahlul Bait were killed and 73 persons from the side of Imam Husayn (رضي الله عنه) died.

The martyrdom of Imaam Husayn (رضي الله عنه) and his followers is retold and re-enacted by the Shia on the day of 'Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram in the first month of the Islamic calendar. They propound the view of lamentation and human mutilation. Four years later, Kufan Shia known as al-Tawwabun ("the Penitents") led a revolt, reflecting their dedication to the cause of Imaam Husayn (رضي الله عنه) and their regret that they had not come to his aid. Their main slogans are the five pious persons like Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), Faatima (رضي الله عنها), Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه), Hasan (رضي الله عنه) and Husayn (رضي الله عنه). The Abbasid revolution that toppled the Umayyads in 750 began in part as a Shi'a movement, adopting the slogan *al-rida minal bayt*, "the acceptable candidate from the family of the Prophet (ﷺ)". Upon victory, a descendant of the Prophet (ﷺ)'s uncle 'Abbas assumed rule as caliph. In a clear pro-Shi'a movement, the new dynasty established its capital in Iraq, first at Wasit, then at Baghdad, founded in 761. The Abbasids, however, soon turned on their Shi'a allies and eventually took over the Umayyad's role as illegitimate rulers and the nemesis of Shi'a aspirations. Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya ("the Pure Soul") led a Shi'ite revolt against the Abbasids in 762. The Abbasid period would witness countless more revolts in the name of 'Alid (following the name of 'Ali) leaders. Attempts at reconciliation, the most notable being al-Ma'mun's appointment of 'Ali al-Rida, the eighth imam of the Twelver Shi'a line, as his successor in 816, were short-lived.

The Shi'a movement was developed first of all when the Bedouins and the new converts of the Persian empire were against the regime of their time. They wanted that someone from the Ahlul Bait to become the leader. They thus started their campaign. Any objection, threat, rejection, misconduct or disobedience from anyone would meet the Shi'a of 'Ali on their way. That led to battles of Camel, Siffin, Nahrawan and Karbala as events leading to the development of Shi'a movement.

Why were the leading descendants of 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) and Fatimah (رضي الله عنها) known as Imams?

As historians point out, the Shi'a has emerged as a group siding with the family of the Prophet (ﷺ). That is why we can see in the history of Shi'a Islam that much importance is given to the Prophet (ﷺ), Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه), Faatima (رضي الله عنها), Hasan (رضي الله عنه) and Husayn (رضي الله عنه) among others. They are deeply attached to them. As a matter of fact they consider these dignitaries as Imam. Literally, an Imam is someone who is in front and he is leading the line, the group of the movement. Moreover he is a leader for the five daily prayers, the accomplishment of Umrah and the performance of Hajj as a pillar of Islam. An Imam is someone who is considered as a leader in all fields and when it comes to the idea of the Shi'a, an Imam is a leader of the social, economic, cultural, political, religious and spiritual domains. He is a complete personality. There were different Imam since the time of the Prophet (ﷺ) and their names may differ due to the existence of different groups among the Shi'a itself. Among the names we can have Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, Imam Jafar as Swadiq, Imam Musah Kazim, Imam Ali Ridha, Imam Muhammad at Taqi, Imam Ali al Naqi, Imam Hasan Askari and Imam Muhammad al Mahdi. All of them are famous and renowned scholars. They were known as Imam for specific reasons. Firstly, Allah says in the Qur'an that "We appointed from among them leaders who guided by Our command". As

such, those descendants were known as Imams. According to them it is a title given to them by Allah. They adopted the same name. Secondly, as being from the blessed family of the Prophet (ﷺ) and Hazrat ‘Ali (رضي الله عنه) having been given the title of Imam by the Prophet (ﷺ), for the Shi’a, it is clear that only descendants of the Prophet (ﷺ) are rightly called. Thirdly, according to the Shi’a, the real successor of the Prophet (ﷺ) is no more than Hazrat ‘Ali (رضي الله عنه) who has been chosen by the Prophet (ﷺ). They considered the Ghadir declaration as proof that the real Imam and successor is Hazrat ‘Ali (رضي الله عنه) .

Based on these concepts the Shi’a pay great importance to the Imam. **Firstly**, they consider their Imam as the supreme authority. Whatever is decided by him must be accepted and abided by the followers. **Secondly**, they are so much inspired by the imam that all his words, sayings, sermons, advices are considered as law and form part of their Shari’ah. **Thirdly**, they consider the words of their imam as revelation from Allah and as such they are infallible, that is they are deprived of sins, errors, mistakes and defects. For them he is just perfect. **Fourthly**, they love their Imam so much that they exemplified him through their love and loyalty towards him. He is thus venerated exaggeratedly. **Fifthly**, the imam is considered as their leader as he is considered from the family of the prophet (ﷺ). He is thus blessed by Allah. **Sixthly**, for the shi’a people, the imam will receive way or revelation directly from Allah. He is pure and nothing can change him. **Seventhly**, some of the extremists of the Shi’a consider the Imam as the reincarnation of Allah. **Eighthly**, they say that their imam is divinely appointed either by Allah directly, or through the words of the Prophet (ﷺ) directly before his death or by the preceding ones telling or pinpointing the next imam. **Ninthly**, the way they believe in their leaders will automatically create a strong society through solidarity and brotherhood. **Tenthly**, the descendants of the Prophet (ﷺ) were known as leaders as they followed the footsteps of the Prophet (ﷺ), Ali (رضي الله عنه), Hassan (رضي الله عنه) and Hussain (رضي الله عنه) verbatim. This elevates the status and honour of the Imam. **Tenthly**, on the 18th of Dhul-hijjah, the day when the Prophet (ﷺ) stayed at Ghadir Khum after his return from Hajjat-ul-wadā to Madina, and surrounded by the Companions (رضي الله عنهم) he declared while raising the hand of Hazrat Alī (رضي الله عنه) that the “One who has me as his master has Alī as his master” (Sunan Ibn Maaja Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 121). In this the Prophet (ﷺ) used the term Mawla. Accordingly Mawla is an Imam and a leader. So for them the family of Hazrat ‘Ali (رضي الله عنه) is to be considered as the lineage for Imamate.

Another very important fact why the Shi’a considered the descendants of Hazrat ‘Ali (رضي الله عنه) as Imam is through the rejection of accepting Hazrat Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) as caliph. Indeed, Imam Ali (رضي الله عنه) refused to give his allegiance to Hazrat Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) for a period of six months. He gave his allegiance to Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) only after the martyrdom of his wife Fatimah al-Zahra (رضي الله عنها), daughter of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), six months after the departure of Prophet (ﷺ). (See Swahih al-Bukhari, Arabic-English version, Tradition 5.546). If refusal to give allegiance to an elected nominee was prohibited in Islam, Imam Ali (رضي الله عنه) would not have allowed himself to delay in giving his allegiance. However, we can use the same logic here in order to justify why Mu’awiyah (رضي الله عنه) didn’t accept Hazrat ‘Ali (رضي الله عنه) and give his allegiance to him as caliph. In the same tradition in Swahih al-Bukhari, Imam Ali (رضي الله عنه) said that he had some rights in Caliphate which was not honoured, and he complained why Hazrat Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) should have not consulted him in deciding upon the ruler. However, it is important to note here that Hazrat Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) took the post of khilafat after Umar took his hand and swore allegiance to him. It was a critical moment and it was imperative to have a caliph the soonest possible. He later gave his allegiance when he found that the only way to save Islam is to leave the isolation which occurred due to his refusal of giving the oath of allegiance. Whatever the reason behind the delay in giving oath to Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه), the shi’a or the supporters of Hazrat ‘Ali (رضي الله عنه) considered the situation in a bitter way and as from then were totally against not only Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه)

عنه) but against all those who were not among the Ahlul Bait. As such they accepted only a caliph form the descendant of Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) .

As can be seen the Shi'a has been created since the time of the Salaf and till today they are numerous in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran and many other different places of the world. Their continuous concepts prevail throughout the world and are still against the sunni.

- 1. Discuss the importance of the line of Imams in early Shi'i Islam.**
- 2. Give reasons why Shi'ites attach great importance to the succession of the Imams.**
- 3. Discuss the main spiritual differences between the position of the Imam in Shi'i beliefs and of the Khalifah in Sunni beliefs.**
- 4. Compare and contrast the differing understandings of authority in Sunni and Shi'i Islam.**
- 5. Why was the position of Imam so powerful for early Shi'i Muslims?**

Throughout the history of Islam there have been so many groups with their specific views and concepts. Among them the Shi'a is second to the Sunni in this present world. Both the shi'a and the sunni have their own creed or 'Aqeedah and their own fields of authority and importance. For the shi'a their authority is in the hands of the Imam and for the sunni it is the Khalifa. These following paragraphs will elaborate on the importance of both Imam and khalifa and their authority.

Firstly, the main framework and back stone of the shi'a is based on a verse of the Qur'an where Allah says that "we have made among them leaders who guide by our command" (32: 24) where Allah uses the word "Aimmatan" which is the plural of Imaam and Allah says that they act as per His order and command. Based on that the shi'a established themselves as a nation which will be led by such leaders, that is divinely guided leaders. However, the sunni take a verse from the Qur'an where Allah says that "I am about to place a viceroy on earth" (2: 30) and Allah has used the word "Khalifah". As such, they will stick to it that a khalifah can be anyone (from the Ummah) who has the ability and aptitude to lead his people. **Secondly**, the shi'a establish their belief that the one who can be an Imam must be from the family and descendant of the Prophet (ﷺ) and Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) . They based themselves on the hadith declared in the Ghadir Khum where the Prophet (ﷺ) said that the "one who has me as leader (mawla) has Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) as leader" (Sunan Ibn Maaja Vol. 1, Book 1, Hadith 121). So their spiritual leader must be from the Ahlul Bait. However, the sunni derive their belief on a verse of the Qur'an where Allah says that "he only shall tend Allah's sanctuaries who believes in Allah and the Last Day and observes proper worship and pays the poor due and fears none save Allah. For such (only) is it possible that they can be of the rightly guided" (9: 18). From this verse, anyone having these characteristics and qualities can rule over the houses and orders of Allah. **Thirdly**, according to the shi'a, the imam is supposed to be nominated directly from God or from the words of the prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) or from the last Imam but for the sunni the caliph must be elected by the people and population and must be a capable one.

Fourthly, for the shi'a, the imam is considered as the supreme authority and no one has the right to contradict or disobey his command, but for the sunni the caliph is considered as a leader and a guide where his order and command can be reviewed based on circumstances. **Fifthly**, the shi'a consider the imam's discourse and khutbah as sacred and divinely guided and are compiled as source of guidance (shari'ah), but for the sunni the caliph's discourse and sermons are not sources of Shari'ah but merely advices and words of an ordinary person (Muslim). **Sixthly**, for the shi'a imam angel Jibril (عليه السلام) made the mistake by sending wahy upon the prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) instead of Hazrat Ali (رضي الله عنه) but the sunni caliph

advocates for the angel Jibril (عليه السلام) is devoid of the capacity to commit mistakes and disobey Allah. So for the shi'a the Prophet (ﷺ) of Islam should have been Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه). **Seventhly**, the shi'a people consider their imam as infallible, that is deprived of sins and mistakes whereas the sunni people consider their caliph as a normal human being with the weakness of committing errors, mistakes or sins. **Eighthly**, the shi'a people love their imam and are loyal to him to such an extent that they venerate him exaggeratedly whereas the sunni people love their caliph but in case he is wrong or cruel, then they won't be loyal to him. It is a question of trust and responsibility. **Ninthly**, for the shi'a the time of reign of the imam is not determined, meaning that as long as he is alive he will be the imam but for the Sunni caliph once his mandate is over, there will be another election. It depends on the public vote.

Tenthly, for the shi'a the imamate is a question of dictatorship where his followers and those residing in his country have to abide and comply by his rules but for the Sunni it is a question of democracy where there is dialogue among the different parties in the society in the interest of the public. **Eleventh** point is that for the shi'a, the Islamic law which is applied on the population by the imam is from their (odd) fabricated Qur'an which has an additional 10 chapters, their limited Hadith (which are only from the Prophet (ﷺ), Ali (رضي الله عنه), Faatima (رضي الله عنها), Hasan (رضي الله عنه), Husain (رضي الله عنه) and their lineage), and the imam own explanation and his sermons. For the sunni, it will be from the Qur'an, Hadith, Ijma', Qiyas, Ijtihad and Fatwa of the 'Ulama. **Twelve** point is that for the shi'a their imam receives wahy and commands from Allah and before his death he passes on his spirituality to his successor but for the Sunni caliph wahy has stopped at the death of the Prophet (ﷺ). It is only through Ilham (inspiration) and good morality which is needed to have the help from Allah and to guide Mankind. **Thirteenth** point is that the Imam has so much importance that though after their death they are venerated by the shi'a. Shrines over their grave are built and they are venerated. However for the sunni though shrines are often built over the grave of the prophets and their great awliya or caliph, they are not venerated. **Fourteenth** point is that for the shi'a, the last Imam known as Imam Mahdi has already come but is hidden and will soon reappear. However for the sunni he is still to come. **Fifteenth** point is that the extremist of the shi'a people consider their imam as reincarnation of Allah up to the extreme of being god. This is undoubtedly exceeding the extreme. However for the sunni there is only one God and that is Allah.

As can be seen for the shi'a their Imam is considered as a high personality whose words are considered as sacred and as such they are venerated. There are also other points which differ from the sunni. Examples can be found in the call for prayer where the name of Hazrat 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) is mentioned, the swalaat itself where the shi'a used to merge swalaat and the human mutilation where it is lawful and recommended to the shi'a to mutilate the body on the day of 'Ashourah. The importance of their Imam lies in the belief the people have in the Imam.

Sufism

1. Outline the distinctive characteristics of Sufi Islam.
2. Describe the relationship between Sufism and Islam.
3. Discuss the principal features of the teachings of Sufism.

Islam is a religion that has been sent through the last prophet (ﷺ) as a code of conduct. That code deals with both the external and internal appearances of the Muslims. According to the famous hadith Jibril (Muttafaq ‘alaih hadith in both Swahih Al Bukhariy Book 65, Hadith 4777, Swahih Muslim Book 1, Hadith 5), the angel Jibril (عليه السلام) came to the Prophet (ﷺ) with three questions based on Islam, Iman and Ihsan. In this way the three constitute the external and internal aspects of a Muslim. From Ihsan, a field of study known as Tasawwuf or Sufism has emerged.

There are many opinions regarding the origin of this word, Tasawwuf (تصوف) – Sufism. Some people associate Sufism to the Ahlus-Sufaah (people of As-Sufaah) who was at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). That group of people was very poor and they stayed in the courtyard of the mosque of the holy prophet (ﷺ) in devotional acts. Some say that Sufism comes from As-Saff al-Awwal (First Row), implying that some companions of the holy prophet (ﷺ) would stay in the first row in the mosque of Madinah. Their main aim was to study Islam in depth. Some claim that the term is derived from As-Safaa meaning clearness, purity, sincerity. Some accept the opinion that the term Sufism refers to the wearing of woollen clothing (Suf). This is so because many scholars known to be Sufis used to wear woollen cloth. According to the 4 Imams, Sufism has its place in Islam. Imam Abu Hanifa (رضي الله عنه) (85 H. - 150 H) said that “If it were not for two years, I would have perished.” He said, “For two years I accompanied Sayyidina Ja’far as-Sadiq (رضي الله عنه) and I acquired the spiritual knowledge that made me a Gnostic in the Way.” (Ad-Durr al-Mukhtar, vol 1. p. 43). Imam Malik (رضي الله عنه) (95 H. - 179 H.) said that “Whoever studies Jurisprudence (tafaqaha) and doesn’t study Sufism [tasawwuf] will be corrupted; and whoever studies Sufism and doesn’t study Jurisprudence will become a heretic; and whoever combined both will be reaching the Truth.” (‘Ali al-Adawi, vol. 2, p 195.) Imam Shafi’i (رضي الله عنه) (150 - 205 AH.) said that “I accompanied the Sufi people and I received from them three knowledges: (1) how to speak; (2) how to treat people with leniency and a soft heart, (3) and they guided me in the ways of Sufism.” (Kashf al-Khafa, ‘Ajluni, vol. 1, p 341). Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (رضي الله عنه) (164 - 241 AH.) said that “O my son, you have to sit with the People of Sufism, because they are like a fountain of knowledge and they keep the Remembrance of Allah in their hearts. They are the ascetics and they have the most spiritual power.” (Tanwir al-Qulub p. 405)

According to a Hadith Hazrat An-Nu’mān bin Bashir (رضي الله عنه) said that the holy Prophet (ﷺ) said that “... Surely there is in the body a small piece of meat; if it is good the whole body is good and if it is corrupted the whole body is corrupted and that is the heart.” (al-Bukhari: Vol 2, Book 1, Hadith 49) (Muslim: Book 10, Hadith 3882) and Hazrat Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه) said that the holy Prophet (ﷺ) said (emphasizing on the heart) that “Verily Allah does not look to your bodies nor to your faces but He looks to your hearts,” and he pointed towards the heart with his fingers.” (Swahih Muslim: Book 32, Hadith 6220). As such the Sufis try to link the theoretical concept known as Iman with the practical concept known as Islam through its excellence and beauty known as Ihsan. In trying to do so, the Sufis Masters have developed both the internal and external conducts and principles. In fact the following will deal with these concepts and teachings of Sufis and how they must lead their inner selves to practice Islam. **Firstly**, there is the concept of Tawbah which is the repentance for all small and big sins. The first step is to avoid all sins

from all parts of the physical and spiritual bodies. This is proven from the Qur'an (66: 8): 'O ye who believe, Turn unto Allah in sincere repentance!' (Tawbatan Naswouha). **Secondly**, the sufi adopts the concept of Muhaasabah which is the analysing of our nafs. It deals with scrutinising deep into our own selves of our weaknesses or sins and tries to change them. This is proven from the Qur'an (59: 18): 'O you who believe! Fear Allah, and let every soul consider what it has sent forth for tomorrow, ...'. **Thirdly**, the sufi lives in Khawf which is the fear for Allah. It is the sweet fearing of Allah's wrath, greatness and magnificence. It is said in the Quran (49: 13): 'Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most god-fearing of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware.' **Fourthly**, the sufi cultivates the concept of Rajaa which is the hope we place in Allah. It is an everlasting and joyful hope for His kindness, goodness and generosity in this world and the next. It is said in the Qur'an (17: 57): 'and they hope for His mercy, and fear His punishment'. **Fifthly**, there is Swidq which is the attestation of truth. Whether we have seen Allah or not we must attest of His existence with firm faith with feeling of it. It is said in the Qur'an (9: 119): 'O those who believe, fear God, and be with the truthful ones'.

Sixthly, the sufi develops the concept of Ikhlaas which is the sincerity in faith and action. Ibaadah without sincerity is worthless in the eyes of Allah. All actions and intentions must be sincere for Allah only. It is reported in the Qur'an (98: 5): 'And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth ...'. **Seventhly**, a sufi adopts the concepts of Swabr which is patience in worldly and spiritual affairs. In whatever situation a sufi finds himself, he just accept it with patience and perseverance. Allah says in the Qur'an (2: 155): 'and give good tidings to the patient ones'. **Eighthly**, a sufi treads the path of Waraa which is abstaining from haram and doubtful. He is conscious that haram will lead him to darkening of the heart and doubtful will never resolve the problem of darkness. Allah says in the Qur'an (23: 3): 'and those who turn away from impious talks' and (2: 172): 'O believers! Eat of the good things that We have provided you'. **Ninthly**, a sufi will adopt the concept of Zuhd which is abstaining from love of worldly luxuries. The sufi is not interested in luxuries. He will lead his life as any human being with his family and job but will not run after this world. Allah says in the Qur'an (6: 32): 'What is the life of this world but play and amusement? But best is the home in the hereafter, for those who are righteous. Will ye not then understand?'. **Tenthly**, the sufi will adjust himself to the concept of Radwaa which is the satisfaction from what Allah gives. He will never complain of his situation whether he is ill, poor or at ease. He accepts any state and condition from his Lord who says in the Qur'an (98: 8): 'God is well-pleased with them, and they are well-pleased with Him; that is for him who fears his Lord'. **Another step** adopted by the sufi is Tawakkul which is complete Trust in Allah in all circumstances. He depends on Allah alone and is committed only to Him. Allah says in the Qur'an (65: 3): '...And whosoever puts his trust in God, He shall suffice him. God attains his purpose...'. The **last code** of conduct put into practice internally is Shukr which is the everyday thanks to Allah for everything. He knows that whatever he has or will have is thank to Allah. He exists because of Allah and as such he always thanks Allah. Allah says in the Qur'an (14: 7): 'And when your Lord proclaimed, "If you are thankful, surely I will increase you, but if you are thankless My chastisement is surely terrible"'. All the above mentioned concepts are real concepts of the Qur'an and the Hadith / Sunnah and are not challengeable. Through all the above concepts the Sufi Master helps people to incorporate spirituality in the hearts of Man thus joining Islam, Iman and Ihsan all together.

Now turning to the external concepts and practices the sufi adopts different ways. **Firstly**, there is the Dhikr. It is most likely the most frequent form of prayer. Among the orders of Muslims that practice dhikr, there are some who advocate silent, individual prayer, while others join together in an outward, group expression of their love for God. There are also a number of hadiths that give emphasis to remembrance of God (Swahih Bukhariy Hadith 7405). It is the constant remembrance of Allah through any kind of Ibaadah

especially the frequent recitation of the Shahadah – Laa Ilaaha Illallah as it is said in Jami' al Tirmidhi (hadith 3383): 'the best of dhikr is Laa Ilaaha Illallah' and it is said in the Qur'an (33: 41) 'o you who believe, make abundant remembrance of Allah'. There are some Sufi orders that perform a ritualized form of Dhikr in groups termed "hadra" (literally presence) standing as mentioned in surah 3 verse 191: 'Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides'. Another method of dhikr, but which is most commonly associated with Sufism, is the repetition of the Arabic name "Allah" like "Call upon Allah, or call upon the Merciful (Ar Rahman)" (17: 110). When the Dhikr involves the repetition of particular phrases a specific number of times, the beads are used. It is said in Sunan Ibn Majaa hadith 3795 : 'Always keep your tongue moist with the remembrance of Allah, the Mighty and Sublime'. Dhikr can be done at any time but most preferably during the night and in early morning. **Secondly** there is the practice of Muzaakarah. It is the seeking of guidance from the Shaikh for Shari'ah and spirituality. It is said in the Qur'an (16: 43): 'question the people of the Remembrance, if you do not know'. The aspirant sufi or the student is deprived of the knowledge of the shari'ah and spirituality. He is in need of a guide and of someone who has already taken and gone along the path of shari'ah and spirituality. Like a patient will depend on the advice of his doctor for curing his cancer, likewise the student or aspirant sufi will depend and trust his teacher or shaikh for the inner purification of his heart and ego and the outer purification of his body and conduct. Muzaakarah is important for the aspirant as the way towards Allah is so difficult with the presence of Shaitaan. At any time Shaitaan may tempt the student. The shaikh is the pole, guide, light and way to make him reach his goal that is Allah who says (18: 17): 'He whom Allah guides is the guided, but he whom He leaves astray - never will you find for him a protecting guide'.

Thirdly, there is the concept of Khalwah. The literal meaning of Khalwah is seclusion or retreat, but it has a different connotation in Sufi terminology. It is said in the Qur'an (2: 51): 'And (remember) when We appointed for Musa forty nights'. It is the act of total self-abandonment in desire for the Divine Presence. In complete seclusion, the Sufi continuously repeats the name of God as a highest form of Dhikr. It is recommended for the aspirant to spend at least one hour per day for Khalwah. It is the complete abstinence of this world to seclude oneself in one's room to praise Allah. It can be in different form like reading of the Qur'an or making tasbihaat. It is said in swahih Bukhariy hadith 1423: '...a person who remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes get flooded with tears'. It can be more than one hour depending on the level of the aspirant sufi. However for the sufi master it can be for a whole night from swalaat Isha till Fajr. It is said that the prophet (ﷺ) spent days and nights in seclusion in the cave of Hira (Bukhariy hadith 3) and Allah says (73: 8): 'And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with (exclusive) devotion'. **Fourthly**, there is the concept of Muraaqabah. It is the sincere concentration on Allah in all Ibaadah. It can exist in different stages. The first one is making muraaqabah on our sins. We ponder on our weaknesses and try to reform them. It is said (39: 53): 'Say: "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful'. Muraaqabah is where you concentrate on Allah, so from one side you are taught how to recognize and avoid the doings of Shaitaan, and on the other, how to establish a nisbah (relationship), or closeness with Allah. It is said (13: 28): 'Those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction'. This is done in a special way, which is by dedicating a special time for Allah, where you will try to only reflect on Allah by way of His Asmaa (names) and His creation. This increases the love of Allah in your heart. As we know when one remembers someone a lot, that person becomes dear to us, hence if we remember Allah all the time, He becomes dear to us. It is said in swahih Muslim hadith 2750 'and if your state of mind is always the same as it is at the time of remembrance of Allah, the Angels would shake hands with you and would greet you on the path by saying: As-Salamu-Alaikum'. The word Muraaqabah is derived from the

attribute of Allah, ar Raaqib – the one who is ever watchful as ‘Allah is watchful over everything’ from (33: 52). It is said in (50: 18): ‘Not a word does he utter, but there is a watcher by him ready (to record it)’. The sufi is careful of what he says, thinks and does.

Fifthly, there is the concept of Khanqa. A Khanqa is a building designed specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood, or tariqa, and is a place for spiritual retreat and character reformation. In the past, and to a lesser extent nowadays, they often served as hospices for Sufi travellers (saalik / soulouk) and Islamic students. It is said (3: 37) concerning the retreat of Hazrat Maryam (رضي الله عنها) in the mosque to learn and study: ‘So her Lord (Allah) accepted her with goodly acceptance. He made her grow in a good manner and put her under the care of Zakariya. Every time he entered Al-Mihrab to (visit) her, he found her supplied with sustenance ...’. It is similar to a Dar ul ‘Uloom. Khanqa are very often found adjoined to dargah (shrines of Sufi saints), mosques and Madrasah. It is said () that a mosque was built over the graves of the youngsters of the cave by the believers: ‘Construct over them a structure. Their Lord is most knowing about them.’ Said those who prevailed in the matter, “We will surely build over them a masjid.’ It is also known as zawiyya. All Khanqa, regardless of size, feature a large central hall. The daily swalaat are held in this hall, as are the specifically Sufi forms of Dhikr, meditation and celebration of the divine. Large Khanqa often grew up around the tomb of a tariqa’s founder or the mausoleum of a Sufi saint. It is said in Hadith Bukhariy 488 (Book Swalaat hadith 135) that ‘there are two or three graves by the side of a mosque on a plateau. There was a mould of stones over the graves ... the prophet (ﷺ) prayed swalaat Zohr in that mosque’. Some Khanqa include dwellings for the Sufi sheikh, and his family, or cells for Sufis who wish to pursue their Dhikr in quiet and isolation. They may also include lodgings for travelling Sufis and pilgrims and premises for charities such as hospitals. This is similar to the mosque of Madina where there is the place for prayer, the house of the prophet (ﷺ), the house of Hazrat Faatima (رضي الله عنها) and place for Ashaab us sufah. **Sixthly**, there is the concept of Silsila. It is an Arabic word meaning chain, often used in various senses of lineage. In particular, it may be translated as "religious order" or "genealogy". Centuries ago, Arabia did not have schools for formal education. Students went to masters who taught them. Upon completion of their study, they received ijazah (permission) which acted as the certification of education. It is said in Swahih Bukhariy hadith 7172 and in Swahih Muslim hadith 29 of book 1 that Hazrat Mu’adh bin Jabal (رضي الله عنه) said that the prophet (ﷺ) sent him as the governor of Yemen and instructed him. A graduate then acted as a master having his own students. This chain of masters was known as Silsila. The shaikh gives his disciples permission (ijaaza) to practice the tariqa and he may also authorise one or more of them to teach it to others. It is also said in Swahih Bukhariy hadith 3924 that the prophet (ﷺ) sent Hazrat Mu’adh bin ‘Umair (رضي الله عنه) as the first envoy to madina to teach the people there. It is a major conduit of the baraka (blessing) of any genuine Sufi school, and links the mureeds (students) of that order with the combined spiritual power of their spiritual antecedents and with the unseen transformative forces that transpire behind the outward manifestation of the Chain, which is called the Silsila ("chain" or "pedigree"). The representation of the chain of transmission is called the Shajara (tree).

Seventhly, following the silsila, there is the relationship between the Murshid (teacher or shaikh) and the Mureed (student or aspirant seeker). The seeker must submit to the will of the shaikh and to obey him in all his orders and advice, because the shaikh has more experience and more knowledge in haqiqat, in tariqat and in shari'ah. . It is said (18: 69) when Hazrat Musah (عليه السلام) met Hazrat Khidr (عليه السلام) the former said that ‘If Allah wishes, you will find me patient and I shall not disobey any of your orders’. As such it is the principle and respect of a student. The seeker must not object to the way the shaikh instructs and controls the murids. Each shaikh has his own way, which he has been permitted by his own shaikh to

use. It is said in Swahih Bukhariy hadith 5028 that 'The most superior among you are those who learn the Qur'an and teach it'. Imam Ibn Hajar al-Haythami said, "Whoever opens the door of criticism against shaikhs and their behaviour with their murids and their actions will be punished and will be isolated from receiving spiritual knowledge. Whoever says to his shaikh, 'Why?' will never succeed." [al-Fatawa al-Hadithiyya, p. 55]. The seeker must respect and honour the shaikh in his presence and his absence, if only because the shaikh can see with the eye of the heart. The murid must be sincere and loyal to the company of his shaikh. It is said in Jami' Tirmidhi hadith 1919 that 'He is not one of us who does not have mercy on our young and does not respect our elders.'. It is the same respect that we have for our teachers or Ustadh in madrasah or dar ul 'uloom. As it is not appropriate to rebuke or go against our teacher / ustadh in Tajweed, alike we must respect our teachers in shari'ah. The mureed must love his shaikh with an extraordinary love. He must not look to any other than his shaikh, though he must keep respect for all other shaikhs. He must agree with the opinion of his shaikh completely, as the patient agrees with the physician. He must behave well in the association of the shaikh, by avoiding yawning, laughing, raising the voice, talking without authorization, extending the feet, and always sitting in a respectful manner. He must serve his shaikh and make himself as useful as possible. He must attend the association of the shaikh. Even if living far away, he must make an effort to come as often as possible. These above external concepts help Man to leave this materialistic world and to get a spiritual touch with a spiritualised environment. Sufism helps Man to put Islam in practice both inwardly and outwardly.

Islam and Sufism are connected like the spokes and the hub of a wheel. Islam is the outer (exoteric) side of the religion, the wheel, and sufism is the hub around which the wheel rotates. The spokes connecting the outer wheel to the hub are the different paths (Tariqa) upon which the seeker may discover the inner reality of religion. Imam Nawawi (620 - 676 AH.) said that "The specifications of the Way of the Sufis are ... to keep the Presence of Allah in your heart in public and in private; to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) ... to be happy with what Allah gave you..."[in his Letters, (Maqasid at-tawhid), p. 201]. Ibn Qayyim (691 - 751 AH.) said that "We can witness the greatness of the People of Sufism, in the eyes of the earliest generations of Muslims by what has been mentioned by Sufyan ath Thawri (رضي الله عنه) (d. 161 AH), one of the greatest imams of the second century and one of the foremost legal scholars. He said, "If it had not been for Abu Hisham as-Sufi (رضي الله عنه) (d. 115) I would never have perceived the action of the subtlest forms of hypocrisy in the self... Among the best of people is the Sufi learned in jurisprudence." [Manazil as-Sa'ireen.]. Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (1115 - 1201 AH.) "My father Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab and I do not deny or criticize the science of Sufism, but on the contrary we support it, because it purifies the external and the internal of the hidden sins, which are related to the heart and to the outward form. Even though the individual might externally be on the right way, internally he might be on the wrong way. Sufism is necessary to correct it." [ad-Dia'at mukathaffa did ash-Shaykh Ibn Abdul Wahhab,p.85]

As such Sufism contributes to social Cohesion through love, patience, help, charity, tolerance, and solidarity. It helps the Economic Development as economically they wage war against ignorance, poverty and conflicting ideas. It helps in the Democratic Process through Participation in political and social affairs for better life. It helps in the Civil Society as the Sufi engaged in helping people to accept any kind of differences without criticising. Sufism helps in the Religious Plurality as the Sufis convey Respect of other religions and other groups within Islam. It helps to understand Sufism through elaborating on the real concepts of Islam and it helps to erase Misconceptions as Sufis help us to crush all misconceptions and wrong says about Sufism. Sufi Masters are not those people who will impose on Man to practice their concepts but rather they will explain these concepts to us and it will be up to us to decide. As the Qur'an

says, “there is no compulsion in religion”, the Sufi Masters leave it to Man as a code of conduct to be chosen or not depending on what we want in life. Sufism has been so much criticised because of the so called false sufi people with false innovations and concepts but the real Tasawwuf practiced by the real Sufi Masters is praiseworthy. According to Dr. Muhammad Musa Al-Shareef who studied at the Umm ul Qura University and being an assistant professor in the Department of Islamic Studies, King Abdul Aziz University, Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi (رضي الله عنه) is the master of Tasawwuf and it (Sufism) has its place in this world where materialism is taking over the hearts of Man.

1. Explain how Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali attempted to relate Islamic observances to their spiritual significances in his *Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din* (‘Revival of the Religious Sciences’).
2. What would you say are the main contributions of Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali to the relationship between Muslim belief and practice?
3. How far did al-Ghazzali succeed in his attempt to reform Sufi beliefs?
4. What are the main teachings of al-Ghazzali’s *Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din* (‘Revival of the Religious Sciences’)?
5. How would you defend or reject the view that this book is one of the most important Islamic religious texts ever written?
6. How far did al-Ghazzali succeed in reconciling Sufi beliefs with the beliefs of the majority of Muslims of his day?

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazzali (رحمة الله عليه) (born 1058 C.E. in Tus, Khorasan province of Persia in modern day Iran and died in 1111 C.E. in Tus) was one of the greatest jurists, theologians and mystical thinkers in the Islamic tradition. At a certain period of his life, he did not attend any more to philosophy and applied himself totally to Sufism and to the renewal of orthodox religion. Al-Ghazzali (رحمة الله عليه) composed a great work known as *The Revivification of the Sciences of Religion* (*Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din*).

He is known to have reconciled Sufism and orthodoxy. According to him Sufism is the best doctrine in comparison with philosophy or theology, because Sufism leads to a positive knowledge of God and nature. When one engages on this way, it is imperative to avoid the unlawful and the blameworthy behaviour. In opposition to these reprehensible attitudes, al-Ghazzali suggests commendable conduct, among which of great importance are repentance, self-discipline and fear of God. According to Imam al-Ghazzali (رحمة الله عليه) we must repent sincerely for all our sins and be firm on this way with Dhikr and Tawakkul as part of the basics of our lives. Then the murid (student) will be annihilated – Fana – in the love of Allah. Anyway, the *fana’* or ecstatic grasp is only a short and transient instant (al-Ghazzali (1970): 62) and does not concern any kind of *hulul* (state) or descent and incarnation of God in the mystic. Al-Ghazzali strongly rejects every immoderate claim of some Sufis, such as the utterances by al-Hallaj (I am the Truth), because they are dangerous and can lead through incomprehension to heresy and polytheism (*shirk*). Rather, al-Ghazzali emphasizes the importance of love (*mahabbah*). According to al-Ghazzali “a true learned man loves only God Most High; and if he loves somebody who is not God, he loves him for God, the Almighty and Sublime” (al-Ghazzali (1970): 257). The highest degree of love involves a full confidence in God: this is the meaning of *tawakkul*, such a complete trust in the Creator that the believer gives himself up to Him "like a dead man in the hands of a corpse-washer" (al-Ghazzali (1970): 249; al-Ghazzali (1985), 4: 242-3). An important issue is to point out that the Sufi way did not imply for al-Ghazzali the neglect of

the orthodox practices of worship and the careful fulfilment of the *Sunnah* (al-Ghazzali (1967a): 71-2). Al-Ghazzali is persuaded that exteriority leads to interiority (al-Ghazzali (1970): 102ff).

Thus al-Ghazzali built his system on God as starting point and foundation, unlike the philosophers who started with senses or reason. He anchored reason in iman, whence it drew its ultimate postulates; and then gave it the freedom to be as critical as it wished. Without such anchoring, reason is fallible and untrustworthy. God is knowable through His works, His order and design of nature, His omnipresent providence - all of which reason is capable of discerning in tentative but not definitive form. Between God and the world stands the realm of *malakut* and *amr*, by which al-Ghazzali meant the realm of values constituting the ought of all that is or will be, a realm that is absolute, a priori and transcendent (inspirational) (*malakut*). Knowledge of it is *yaqin* (certainty) and such knowledge is the ground of all other knowledge. Al-Ghazzali, we may concede, taught the primacy of axiological knowledge (Axiology refers to ethics and aesthetics. Ethics investigates the concepts of "right" and "good" in individual and social conduct. Aesthetics studies the concepts of "beauty" and "harmony."), which relates man to God, over the knowledge of the world, which would be faulty and groundless without the first." [pp. 300-1]. Finally, Sufism is not for al-Ghazzali simply an individual path to reach perfection but a whole conception of life including ethics and morality, behaviour and belief, cosmology and metaphysics. The contribution of the Sufis to society lies in their sincere and dedicated struggle to find a unity for the various elements that make up its totality. They appreciate the multi-racial, multi-religious and multilingual pattern of the society. Their efforts are directed towards the creation of a healthy social order free from dissensions, discords and conflicts. In love, faith, toleration and sympathy they find the supreme talisman of human happiness. In fact, peace and goodwill between human beings was the end all and be all of Sufi endeavours.

This book of Al Ghazzali, the *Ihya*, is so important that there are many 'ulama and authors praising it. 'Abdallah bin 'Alawi al-Haddad has said: "Al-Ghazzali is a graceful favour bestowed by Allah upon this nation (*ummah*). He has investigated the sciences and weaved them. No '*alim* can have his rank", "The books of al-Ghazzali quench thirst for they are a cure of the heart's sicknesses", "To love al-Ghazzali is an incomparable gift, and you will see this in *akhira*. Only the believer whose heart is enlightened and who deals justly with his self loves the books of al-Ghazzali, he has guided us with his books and the *barakat* of his secrets", and "The one who engages in reading the *Ihya*' is gaining firmly established knowledge, for the reading of it may suffice as a teacher and a *shaykh*. Nothing is more beneficial to the people of this time than to read the *Ihya*', for it is life and happiness in *akhira*". Ibn al-Subki said that "It ranks among the books which Muslims must look after and spread far and wide so that many people may be guided by reading them. Seldom has someone looked into this book except he woke up on the spot thanks to it. May Allah grant us insight that shows us the way to truth, and protect us from what stands between us and the truth as a veil." Al-Safadi said that "It is among the noblest and greatest of books, to the extent that it was said, concerning it, that if all books of Islam were lost except the *Ihya*', it would suffice for what was lost." Fakhr al-Din al-Razi said that "It was as if Allah gathered all sciences under a dome, and showed them to al-Ghazzali."

Professor Yasin Ceylan one of the leading Muslim journals in US (vol. 12, no. 4, Winter 1995) published a paper titled "Al Ghazzali between Philosophy and Sufism". The author describes al Ghazzali's experience with sufism in these words: "His disillusionment with philosophy was derived from its destructive effect on the fundamentals of religion, while his attraction to Sufism was rooted in the fact that ethical refinement and the purification of the soul were necessary conditions in this discipline." [p. 584] "Al Ghazzali mentions three fundamental features related to his mystical experience: a) the purification of the

soul from those evils and worldly desires that hinder moral perfection; b) those spiritual dispositions or explorations that occur after the process of purification reaches the level of maturity; and c) that these dispositions are not explicable through reason." [p. 587]. In his work, The Cultural Atlas of Islam, Professor Ismail R. al Faruqi writes, "Reaffirming his view that Tasawwuf is both knowledge and action, al-Ghazzali chastised those who sought to reach the mystical experience in a hurry. He also rejected the sufi claim that in the mystical experience one reaches God through fusion into or unity with the divine Being. Such a claim he regarded as blasphemous. By reaffirming that Islam implies action, al-Ghazzali meant to repudiate those sufis who preached the way of the monks and cells and the withdrawal from society, any form of asceticism (abstinence) or mortification (humiliation), or no obligation to observe the rituals and all other laws of the shari'ah. Al-Ghazzali thus made Tasawwuf respectable and conformant with the shari'ah and spirit of Islam.

Al-Ghazzali seeks to demystify Islam. He maintains, for example, that in order to be a Muslim it is sufficient to hold the beliefs that have been laid down by God and his Prophet (ﷺ) in the Quran and sunnah, and that knowledge of the complex arguments advanced by the theologians is not requisite of faith. The essence of religion is experience, not mere profession, and the sufis are the ones who are able to experience the realities that theologians only talk about. [vol. 2, pp. 61-63].

- 1. Why has the orthodoxy of Sufism often been doubted?**
- 2. Explain why Sufi teachers were often regarded as a threat to orthodox Islamic believers.**

Tasawwuf is a technical term which describes the state of Ihsan, as mentioned in the famous hadith of Jibril, and the process of Tazkiyat an-Nafs (purification of the self) which is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. That is acceptable in Islam, as long as it does not contain superstition or foolish concepts. We accept Tazkiyat an-Nafs and the state of Ihsan, purification of the heart, as it is an important part of the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. However due to some false sufis (they are not Sufis) and misconceptions Tasawwuf is criticised.

The term Tasawwuf was not known in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). However, even though the name is new, the essence of it is part and parcel of the religion and cannot be separated out from it. The purpose of Tasawwuf is to purify the heart from all kinds of bad desires and inclinations and the dirtiness that accumulates upon it due to sins and wrongdoing, either externally or internally, and to remove these bad manners and sins and to clean the self and to dress and decorate the heart with the good behaviour and good manners that are demanded by the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ). Its purpose is to create the state of Ihsan, perfection of character, which was the state of the Prophet (ﷺ), and the state which each of his Companions was striving to achieve. The term Tasawwuf was used to identify the way of cleansing the heart, originally called Tazkiyat an-Nafs in the Qur'an, but which became known later as the Science of Tasawwuf. Originally this 'ilm (science) was known by the terms the Science of Austerity (Zuhd), the Science of Purification (Tazkiyah) and the Science of Perfection of Character (Ihsan). The terms Zuhd, Tazkiyat and Ihsan were the terms used in the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). Through the passing of time, those practicing Tasawwuf, known as Sufis Masters, have elaborated an internal and external code of conduct or practices to be adopted. For internal conduct we have Tawbah, Muhaasabah, Khawf, Rajaa, Swidq, Ikhlās, Swabr, Waraa, Zuhd, Radwaa, Tawakkul, Shukr. For external concepts we have Dhikr, Muzaakarah, Khalwah, Muraaqabah, Khanqa, Silsila and Mursheed and Mureed. However, since long, there have been many critics raised against the whole concept of Sufism in Islam. These criticisms are still based

on the real origin and concepts and practices of the Tasawwuf. The following will shed light on how questions are set against the topic of this work.

It must be noted here that according to Dr Muhammad Musa Al Shareef, an associate professor at the King Abdul Aziz University, there were 3 phases of Tasawwuf in history. The first phase was from the 2nd century till the 4th century of Islam. The second phase started from the 5th century till the 7th century. The third phase was from the 8th century till today. According to him criticism started in the third phase. **As such**, according to those against Sufism, they say that it was a movement in the 8th century against the prevailing impersonal and formal nature of Islam. The idea here is that if really Sufism is an Islamic concept, then it should have been existed in the holy Quran and the Sunnah of the holy Prophet (ﷺ). However, it must be noted as listed above that the aim of Tasawwuf in the purification of the heart and this is attained through the internal and external practices which no doubt are according to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. None of these practices can be challenged. Whether we change the name to Zuhd, Ihsan or Tazkiyah, the principles will be the same. **Secondly**, the idea that wealth was enjoyed during the period of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) for military purposes was the response against Sufi concept of going against the materialistic world. That thought emerged as many so called sufis left their daily activities and family members to retreat in mountains or the wilderness. However, the life of a Real Sufi Master revolves around both the rights of Allah and the rights of Human Being. He has his family life as anyone else. Concerning retreat in mountains or wilderness, it is a sunnah of the prophet (ﷺ) to go for a retreat or seclusion for a limited amount of days in a secluded area or simply a room at home. The Prophet (ﷺ) did it in the cave of Hira. **Another criticism** is that the whole concept of Sufism is generated from other various religions like Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Neo-Platonism and Manichaeism, for instance, the grave worshipping and the idea of fire-temple. This is so because the false sufis used to go to these shrines and worship the dead people. However, this is against the concepts of Tasawwuf and Islam. Real Sufi Masters don't adhere to that practice. Real Sufi Masters and their aspirants do never worship or make sajdah in front of graves of Awliya. This may be the acts of false sufi but it has been attributed to real Sufi. It is incorrect. **Fourthly**, according to Sufis, there are verses of the holy Qur'an and Hadith of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) having deeper meaning, that is esoteric aspects. However, the critic says that the Sufis force the meaning of the holy Qur'an and the Hadith they use are not from the sound Hadith books. However, it is a fact that things that we can't perceive and understand are considered as strange but to what extent are they right or wrong depends on the level of education, understanding and inspiration from Allah. According to Dr Muhammad Musa al Shareef of King Abdul Aziz University, there is a secret which is shared between Allah and the real Mu'min that not only we don't know but angels also are unaware of it. It is said in Swahih Bukhariy hadith 120 that Hazrat Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه) said 'I have memorized two kinds of knowledge from Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) . I have propagated one of them to you and if I propagated the second, then my pharynx (throat) would be cut (i.e. killed)'. Are we going to accuse Hazrat Abu Huraira (رضي الله عنه) of blasphemy or kufr?

Fifthly, those who are against Sufism say that the further one delves into Sufism from an academic perspective, the clearer it becomes that both the origins and content of Sufism clearly show the inclusion of religious ideas and influences contrary and contradictory to orthodox Islam. However according to Imam Abu Hanifa (رضي الله عنه), Imam Malik (رضي الله عنه), Imam Shafi'i (رضي الله عنه) and Imam Ahmad bin Hambal (رضي الله عنه) it is recommended to study and practice Tasawwuf. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (رضي الله عنه) said "O my son, you have to sit with the People of Sufism, because they are like a fountain of knowledge and they keep the Remembrance of Allah in their hearts. They are the ascetics and they have the most spiritual power." (Tanwir al-Qulub p. 405). Were the four above mentioned scholars unorthodox?

Sixthly, it is criticized that their practices also bear close similarities to those of Hinduism and other mystical religions of the East. The Sufi orders are led by Shaykh, who play the same role as Hindu gurus. Some of the Shaykh were described as having “pronounced psychic powers.” However, the Sufi orders and Khanqa are similar to a Madrasah or a Darul Uloom where the students can stay there for education and they are supposed to respect the teachers and follow their advices. This is discipline to shape the character and akhlaaq (good manners) of the students. Concerning the so called powers criticised by the opponents of Tasawwuf, it is proven in Islam and as such Dr Muhammad Musa said that these are miracles that the men and friends of Allah can do. However it is not to forget that there are those who don’t possess any of these qualities and are pretending to have them. It is mentioned in the Qur’an (27: 40) when Hazrat Sulaiman (عليه السلام) being in Palestine wanted that the throne of Bilkiss be brought to him from Yemen ‘One with whom was knowledge of the Scripture said: "I will bring it to you within the twinkling of an eye!" then when (Sulaiman (عليه السلام)) saw it placed before him, he said’. That person was not a prophet. How was he able to do it? Is that farfetched? It is but from the Qur’an. **Seventhly**, the mystical quest of the Sufis is pursued through a number of mental and physical exercises. The opponents of Sufism criticise these whirling dances “intended above all to plunge the dancer into a state of concentration upon Allah.” However, according to Imam Ahmad bin Hambal (رضي الله عنه) in his Musnad Volume 3 Page 152 (Imam Maqdisi said that it is Swahih) there is a hadith where Hazrat Anas (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Ashab used to dance in front of the holy prophet (ﷺ) while reciting and saying “Muhammadun ‘Abdun Swalih”. The word “Raqsw” (Ra Qaf Swad) meaning to dance has been used. According to al Ghazzali (رحمة الله عليه), Imam Suyuti (رحمة الله عليه), Imam an Nawawi (رحمة الله عليه) among others we can’t repudiate those practicing Sufi dance and Hadra (a form of standing Dhikr in group). After all what is controversial is that those saying that Sufi dancing is haram, accept and practice “tribal dancing with swords in hands” known to be a “tribal custom”. This is seen in the Arab world. It is also said in Swahih Bukhariy (949 and 950) and Swahih Muslim (892) being a Muttafaqun ‘alaih hadith that Hazrat ‘Aisha watched two Abyssinian (Egyptian) girls of Bani Arfida using the tambourine, chanting the songs of Buath and dancing. **Eighthly**, there are “invocations of the Divine Name,” also known as Dhikr, which can be done either silently or in a chant. However, the opponents of Tasawwuf say that here also there are similarities with Hindu mantras. They say that the Sufi doctrine of the Dhikr coincides with that taught by the 19th century Hindu saint Rama-krishna, who succinctly summed it up in the phrase: “God and His Name are one”. However, we no doubt know that Dhikr done is for the best of oneself. In Swahih Bukhari hadith 7405 it is stated that Hazrat Abu Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said that Allah Says: “I am just as My slave thinks I am, and I am with him if He remembers Me. If he remembers Me in himself, I too, remember him in Myself; and if he remembers Me in a group of people, I remember him in a group that is better than they ...”. These are criticism against Sufism only to discredit the Sufi Masters and the field of Tasawwuf.

Ninthly, there are some sayings of some Sufis that could not explain at that time. For example there is much criticism against the words of Mansur al Hallaj which are “Anal Haqq” – “I am the Truth”. Those against Tasawwuf adamantly criticise him. As such, when speaking on characters in Sufi Islam who have eternally distorted the image of Sufi Islam in the eyes of critics, two particular people come to mind, Abu Yazid al-Bistami, and Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj. Abu Yazid Al-Bistami, in the eyes of Mainstream Muslims, had committed blasphemy upon reaching an “intoxicated state” (for which his particular Sufi sect is labelled “Intoxicated Sufis”). He felt he had attained a union with God, and in light of his discovery proclaimed “Glory be to me! How great is My Majesty!”. Many Muslims scolded Bistami, whose claim was interpreted as praise for himself instead of the divine. Al-Ghazzali strongly rejects every immoderate claim of some Sufis. His intentions and interpretation of those words were subject to much scrutiny, but some prominent Muslims still held him in high regard, including the “sober” Sufi, al-Junayd Baghdadi (رحمة الله

عليه). Al-Junayd (رحمة الله عليه) wrote commentary on the utterances of his Murid (Disciple), Abu Yazid Bistami, and interpreted the sayings in accordance with Mainstream teachings. As for Al Bistami, his achievement of fana (annihilation) marked the beginning of the concept of ascension as a spiritual goal in Sufism, continued by other controversial figures like Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj. **Tenthly**, Al-Junayd Baghdadi (رحمة الله عليه), as a Pir (Master) who mentored such Murids as Abu Yazid al-Bistami, could not ignore the actions of al-Hallaj. Al-Hallaj quickly became one of the more controversial and divisive figures in Islamic History. Beginning as a mutasawwif (a student on the path of Tasawwuf), he could not stay with one Shaikh for any given period, and continuously switched from one to another without the previous Shaikh's consent. Al-Hallaj ended up as a martyr for his convictions. His refusal to denounce his famous words "ana al-Haqq" ("I am the Truth") infused rage in the Mainstream Muslim community over such blasphemy; a rage that subsequently cost him his life. Mainstream Muslims interpreted his words in the literal sense, because, if one is not in the same mind-state, it is hard to interpret such a direct phrase any other way. Al-Hallaj, however, was likely referring to his absolute identification with the divine after the achievement of fana.

The state in which al-Hallaj was in, during the time of his blasphemous utterance could be understood in an allegory he liked to use; a human soul was like a moth and God was like a flame, engulfed with fascination for the flame, the moth eventually drifts closer until finally consumed. Mainstream Muslims, however, interpreted al-Hallaj's utterances one way, literally. Perhaps this can be attributed to the influence of the Hanbali School of Thought on the Caliphate of the time. Hanbali thinking proclaimed all things in relation to God must be taken in the literal sense, that one should not ask questions about God, and that if one committed a "grave sin", one must be punished accordingly and proclaimed a non-Muslim. Al-Hallaj was punished for his blasphemy; Mainstream Muslims did not believe one could attain a union with God in the present life, and to claim unity with God was questioning the very foundation of Islam; the oneness of God. Misinterpretation of Sufi Mystic rituals also stems from their unwillingness to describe many attributes of their experiences. While some Sufis claim that description of the attainment of unity, or closeness to God is indescribable, others claim one must not describe the experience. Those that claim one must not describe the experience to the curious are told to say the following, according to al-Ghazzali, "There was what was of what I do not mention: So think well of it, and ask for no account". Those that cannot grasp the concept must not be granted the knowledge that is attained when one enters such a state. This concept adheres to the exclusivity and exoteric (outer) notions of Sufism. Since most Sufi rituals and practices are very personal to the practitioners, it is natural that the attainment of closeness with God remains an experience between man and God. It is also believed that only an 'Arif (a learned person in spirituality) can achieve fana and it is unlikely that one who does not possess piety or ma'rifat (mystical intuitive knowledge of spiritual truth) would be able to comprehend the beauty of such an experience, and for that reason, they should not be told.

There are also those who believe that the experience should be shared, but it is indescribable in actual words, and thus, to portray the beauty of such an experience, one can only use metaphors, similes, and allegories. For example, Jalaaluddin Rumi (رحمة الله عليه) allocates the feelings he experiences into similes, using words like "celestial birds" to describe his 'flight' into the highest of high stages, as well as a freer consciousness, and "sugary cubes" for the pleasant taste left in his heart and mind once he 'comes back down to earth'. Thus, those who share their experiences are unable to describe the experience in direct terms and thus, use abstract descriptions through poetry to portray it to those who have not attained it. If the notion of achieving an absolute God-centred state is possible, according to Mainstream Muslims, then, like the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), Sufis, too, should be able to describe their experience. Mainstream Muslims

perhaps cannot see past the esotericism (mystery) in Sufi practices because they, themselves, have never truly attempted to experience fana. It may also be because of the greater emphasis on esoteric Islam practiced by Mainstream Muslims that makes it difficult for them to understand the exoteric aspect of Sufism. This lack of understanding of esoteric and allegorical Islam is then the cause for misinterpretation of Sufi rituals and practices by Mainstream Muslims.

However there are false Sufis because of whom Tasawwuf is discredited for many reasons as follows. These false Sufis steal the words of the Sufis and present them as their own. They do not have true knowledge of that which they are speaking; it is only on their lips but not from their hearts. These people take the title of "Sufi" because it gives them a certain amount of prestige and power among people in the society. They are despicable, weak, incapable, morose, without any exit from uncertainties, and deficient in all their senses. They steal away all your attainments and will not benefit neither in this world nor the next. They are like blind men who cure eyes but in fact will be worsened. They have no scent or trace of God, but their claims are greater than those of Hazrat Shiite (عليه السلام) or Hazrat Adam (عليه السلام). They are not embarrassed to keep on saying that they are of the saints and even greater but in fact they are only liars. They steal many of the words of the dervishes, so that people may think they really are someone, having knowledge and spirituality. They are destitute of the bread and provisions of heaven. They are engaged in revealing to their disciples things that they don't know and they are pretending to know the future. They are attached to the jinns asking for their help. They are unaware of the reality of Shari'ah and commit much mistake. Their lives are not compatible with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. They are the mischief-mongers of the society and are destroying the real Islam. They say that they possess supernatural power. They say they can predict the future. They say they can do miracles. They say they can travel throughout time and space. Some of them advice their followers not to perform Swalaat and in return they will perform the ibaadah for the followers. Some spend their time in the ruins away from the society and their family. They order their students things against Shari'ah.

Tasawwuf has existed since long but in other different names like Tazkiyah of Nafs. If one doesn't like the term *Tasawwuf* he shouldn't use it. He can use some other term, of which there are many. However, just because one doesn't like the term *Tasawwuf*, perhaps because of some negative connotations that have been attributed by modernists and Orientalist, that doesn't mean great scholars didn't define the term and explain it, as a science in Islam and an essential part of the Din. Ibn Taymiyya did so in 1400 pages of Volume 10 (Ilm as-Sulook) and Volume 11 (at-Tasawwuf) of his lifework, "The Gathered Fatawas of Ibn Taymiyya" ("Majmu'a Fatawi Ibn Taymiyya").

Philosophy

Islamic Philosophy Main Characteristics

Explain the main characteristics of Islamic philosophy [falsafah] in the classical Islamic period.

Early Islamic philosophy or classical Islamic philosophy is a period of intense philosophical development beginning in the 2nd century AH of the Islamic calendar (early 9th century CE) and lasting until the 6th century AH (late 12th century CE). This period starts with al-Kindi in the 9th century and ends with Averroes (Ibn Rushd) at the end of 12th century.

Some of the significant achievements of early Muslim philosophers included the development of a strict science of citation, the isnad and the ijihad among others. Early Islamic philosophy can be divided into clear sets of influences, branches, schools, and fields, as described below. The life of prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) which generated both the Qur'an (revelation) and hadith (his daily utterances and discourses on social and legal matters), during which philosophy was defined by Muslims as consisting in acceptance or rejection of his message. Together the Sirah (life biography) and hadith constitute the Sunnah and are validated by isnad to determine the likely truth of the report of any given saying of prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

Philosophy has many branches like Kalam. With Kalam, questions about the Sirah and Hadith, as well as science (Islamic science) and law (fiqh and Shari'ah), began to be investigated but philosophy remained subordinate to religion. "Kalam" generally referred to the Islamic tradition of seeking theological (religious) principles through dialectic (discussion). A second branch is Falsafa (philosophy). From the 9th century onwards, owing to Caliph al-Ma'mun and his successor, Greek philosophy and Hellenistic (relating to Greek history, art and architecture) philosophy were introduced among the Persians and Arabs, and the Peripatetic (nomadic) and Neo-Platonism (modern term used to designate a tradition of philosophy that arose in the 3rd century AD) schools began to find able representatives among them; such were al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd, all of whose fundamental principles were considered as criticized by the Mutakallamun (a scholar of kalam / debate on religious matters).

During the Abbasid caliphate a number of thinkers and scientists, some of them non-Muslims, played a role in transmitting Greek, Hellenistic, Indian and other pre-Islamic knowledge to the Christian West. Three speculative thinkers, the Turk al-Farabi, the Iranian Ibn Sina and the Arab al-Kindi, combined Neo-Platonism (term for a school based on philosophies of Plato a Greek philosopher of 3rd century) Aristotelianism (term for a school based on philosophies of Aristotle a Greek philosopher and student of Plato) with other ideas introduced through Islam. They were considered by many as highly unorthodox and a few even described them as non-Islamic philosophers.

Philosophy has many schools like Farabism. Al-Farabi was a founder of his own school of Islamic philosophy but which was later overshadowed by Ibn Sina. Al-Farabi's school of philosophy "breaks with the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle and moves from metaphysics (field dealing with fundamental nature of being and the world) to methodology, a move that anticipates modernity", and

"at the level of philosophy, Al farabi unites theory and practice [... and] in the sphere of the political he liberates practice from theory". His Neo-platonic theology (doctrine) is also more than just metaphysics as rhetoric (art of speaking or writing fluently). In his attempt to think through the nature of a First Cause, Al farabi discovers the limits of human knowledge". A second school is Avicennism of which Ibn Sina was the founder. Due to Ibn Sina's successful reconciliation between Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism along with Kalam, ibn Sina eventually became the leading school of Islamic philosophy by the 12th century. Ibn Sina had become a central authority on philosophy by then, and several scholars in the 12th century commented on his strong influence at the time. Another school is Ibn Rushd who is most famous for his commentaries on Aristotle's works.

Philosophy has different ethics. Environmental ethics is the concept where due to resource scarcity in most Islamic nations, there was an emphasis on limited use of natural capital. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is considered a pioneer of environmentalism for his teachings on environmental preservation. We have also medical ethics. The ethical standards of Muslim physicians was first laid down in the 9th century by Ishaq bin Ali Rahawi, who wrote the Adab al-Tabib (Conduct of a Physician), the first treatise dedicated to medical ethics. He regarded physicians as "guardians of souls and bodies", and wrote twenty chapters on various topics related to medical ethics, including. There is also Humanism. Many medieval Muslim thinkers pursued humanistic, rational and scientific discourses in their search for knowledge, meaning and values. A wide range of Islamic writings on love poetry, history and philosophical theology show that medieval Islamic thought was open to the humanistic ideas of individualism.

Another branch of philosophy is logic. In early Islamic philosophy, logic played an important role. Islamic law placed importance on formulating standards of argument. Early forms of analogical reasoning, inductive reasoning were introduced in Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Shari'ah (Islamic law) and Kalam (Islamic theology) from the 7th century with the process of Qiyas. The first original Arabic writings on logic were produced by al-Kindi (805–873), who produced a summary on earlier logic up to his time. The first writings on logic with non-Aristotelian elements were produced by al-Farabi. Ibn Rushd was the last major logician from al-Andalusia, who wrote the most elaborate commentaries on Aristotelian logic. Ibn Sina developed his own system of logic known as "Avicennian logic" as an alternative to Aristotelian logic. Ibn Hazm (994-1064) wrote the Scope of Logic, in which he stressed on the importance of sense perception as a source of knowledge. Al-Ghazzali (1058–1111) had an important influence on the use of logic in theology, making use of Ibn Sina's logic in Kalam.

Another field of philosophy is metaphysics. Metaphysics is concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of being and the world. Ibn Sina's proof for the existence of God was the first ontological argument (argument on the existence of God). Ibn Sina's proof of God's existence is unique in that it can be classified as both a cosmological argument and an ontological argument. The cosmological argument is an argument for the existence of a First Cause to the universe, and by extension is often used as an argument for the existence of a "supreme" being, usually then identified as God. There is also the topic of resurrection. Ibn al-Nafis wrote on "the system of Islam and the Muslims' doctrines on the missions of Prophets, the religious laws, the resurrection of the body, and the transitory of the world."The book presents rational arguments for bodily resurrection and the immortality of the human soul, using both demonstrative reasoning and material from the hadith corpus as forms of evidence. Another topic is the soul and spirit. The Muslim physician-philosophers, Ibn Sina and Ibn al-Nafis, developed their own theories on the soul. They both made a distinction between the soul

and the spirit. We have the philosophy of mind which was studied in medieval Islamic psychological thought, which refers to the study of the nafs in the Islamic world.

There is also the philosophy of education. In the medieval Islamic world, an elementary school was known as a Maktab, which dates back to at least the 10th century. Like Madrasah (which referred to higher education), a maktab was often attached to a mosque. In the 11th century, Ibn Sina, in one of his books, wrote a chapter dealing with the maktab entitled "The Role of the Teacher in the Training and Upbringing of Children", as a guide to teachers working at maktab schools. He wrote that children can learn better if taught in classes instead of individual tuition from private tutors, and he gave a number of reasons for why this is the case, citing the value of competition and emulation among pupils as well as the usefulness of group discussions and debates. Ibn Sina wrote that children should be sent to a maktab school from the age of 6 and be taught primary education until they reach the age of 14. During which time, he wrote that they should be taught the Qur'an, Islamic metaphysics, language, literature, Islamic ethics, and manual skills. Ibn Sina refers to the secondary education stage of maktab schooling as the period of specialization, when pupils should begin to acquire manual skills, regardless of their social status. He writes that children after the age of 14 should be given a choice to choose and specialize in subjects they have an interest in, whether it was reading, manual skills, literature, preaching, medicine, geometry, trade and commerce, craftsmanship, or any other subject or profession they would be interested in pursuing for a future career.

Another field of philosophy is experimental medicine. Ibn Sina is considered the father of modern medicine, for his introduction of experimental medicine and clinical trials, the experimental use and testing of drugs, and a precise guide for practical experimentation in the process of discovering and proving the effectiveness of medical substances. Another field of philosophy is eschatology which is concerned with the Qiyamah. Eschatology relates to one of the six articles of faith of Islam. Islam teaches the bodily resurrection of the dead, the fulfilment of a divine plan for creation, and the immortality of the human soul, the righteous are rewarded with the pleasures of Jannah, while the unrighteous are punished in Jahannam.

Islamic Philosophy v/s Theology

What are the main similarities and the main differences between Muslims who called themselves theologians and Muslims who called themselves philosophers?

Divine Law calls upon man to search for the secrets of God's creation; to learn the secrets of the Law itself, especially in matters of God's attributes, the character of the revelation, and man's responsibilities. The two most influential concepts in Islamic jurisprudence are the philosophical concepts of kalam (speculative theology / doctrine) and falsafa (Arabized Greek philosophy).

Kalam was founded by Wasil ibn Ata (700–748) who sought to investigate and justify Islamic process by means of logic. This was especially important as Islam was spreading from simple pagan regions to regions of deep philosophical and intellectual heritage. Ibn Ata and those who followed him felt that in order for Islamic authority to be maintained and the new Legal System to be respected by these newly

conquered peoples, the Faith would have to stand up to any philosophical challenge posed by them. Two main schools of thought evolved out of the kalam movement: the Ashari and the Mutazilah.

Around the same period in Abbasid Iraq's *House of Wisdom* (Bait al-Hikma), Arabs, Persians and Jews were joined by refugee Christian scholars in the translation to Arabic of Aristotelian philosophical writing inherited from conquered lands and appropriate it to the new multi-cultural Arab civilization. This arabized philosophy was given the name falsafa. Credited with this movement is Iraqi scholar, abu Yusuf ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (801-873) whose works, "introduced the idea of the validity of philosophical investigation by itself, independently of formal kalam affiliation." In the twelfth century, as result of a decline in political, economic, social and military power of the Caliphate, Islamic territories began to break down into regional dynasties. The influence of the *House of Wisdom* waned and the mutakallimun began to gain influence. This was sealed with Al-Ghazzali's attack on falsafa, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*.

There are some similarities between Kalam and Falsafa as follows. The earliest theological thought developed among the Qur'an memorizers and early Islamic intellectuals. Their concerns tended to be highly practical: the legitimacy of political succession in Islam, the nature of God and the Qur'an, the relationship between faith and works (for people who said they were Muslims - including Caliphs - were sinning), and the relationship of free will to predestination.

The early relations between *falsafa* and *kalam* were far from being hostile. Al-Kindi, the first of the 'philosophers', was often considered as belonging also to Mu'tazili *kalam*, and *'ilm al-kalam* has its place in the 'Catalogue of the sciences' (*Ihsa' al-'ulum*) of al-Farabi. It is interesting that the Abbasid Caliph, al-Ma'mun who permitted and patronised the introduction of Greek philosophy and science also declared the Mutazilah School of kalam as official doctrine of Islam between 833 and 848. Despite his persecution of any who rejected his declaration, the Ash'ariy school of kalam however, remained opposed, mainly due to the insistence of the Mutazilah Mutakallimun and the falsafa (philosophers) that divine Revelation needed to be *justified* by man's intellect.

Despite their internal misgivings however, both kalam and falsafa philosophies did enjoin man to strive to *know* God by the use of their intellect. Prerequisite of this pursuit is of course, a common belief in the existence of a God. Belief in a God follows on that such Being possesses dominion over existence and oversees laws which exist to maintain harmony in the universe. Both the falsafa (philosophers) and mutakallimun (theologians) held the rights of God and of the universe supersede (surpass) the rights of man. In obligation to these rights, a view of the universe which requires man to "understand his place in (the) comprehensive order of things" is advocated in preference to an individualist existence is preferred.

Another important common factor in falsafa and kalam is belief in the importance of virtuous, respectable, civil character. According to Muhsin Mahdi (author of the critics of 1001 nights), the chief virtue in both the city constructed by the philosophers and the city constructed by the divine Law is justice. True justice can only be overseen by the virtuous leader who rules in accordance to divine Law channelled to mankind from God through the Philosopher - Prophet. Both kalam and falsafa require this leader (philosopher, Caliph, Sultan) to be God-fearing, ethical, just, inscrutable, mighty, and dedicated to the happiness of his people.

However there exist differences between Kalam and Falsafa. In translating the works of Greek philosophers, many terms had to be adapted to a new monotheist audience. For instance, Aristotle's "First Mover" or "Unmoved Mover" was substituted with the word "Allah" but the understanding of the nature of this Being remained the same. For example, ibn-Rushd held that Aristotle's belief that the Unmoved Mover,

is Himself part of the matter, exerting influence through chains of cause-and-effect events, is closer to the truth than position of the mutakallimun who generally took the position that God is in fact the Creator of matter and exists outside of and separate from His creation from where He exerts His influence and control on the universe. He is the declarer of natural laws and may choose to avoid them if He pleases (in the form of miracles).

It should be noted however that although agreeing with ibn-Rushd on the most, fellow falasifa / philosophers, believed that the endeavour to know God is a vain one and beyond man's capacity. He contended instead that God can only be known negatively i.e. we can only know what God isn't and not what He is. Although the Holy Scriptures describe Him as Good, Just, Merciful etc..., this cannot be understood in accordance with our ideas of these attributes; they can however be understood in accordance with our ideas of what these attributes are not. An example of is the following mutakallim (Mutazilah School) challenge: "If the good or bad actions of the individual are predetermined by God, and then if God punishes a person in this world and in the Hereafter for his bad actions, then there is no justice in it and God being Just, this is not possible."

Criticism Against Islamic Philosophy

- 1. Al-Ghazzali wrote a major work in which he condemned philosophy in Islam. Why would a Muslim theologian wish to attack philosophy?**
- 2. Explain why many great theologians of Islam condemned the thinking of the philosophers as inconsistent with Islamic teachings.**
- 3. Explain why Islamic theologians have traditionally been hostile towards philosophy.**

Throughout history the place of philosophy in Islamic thought has been controversial. Philosophy can be described as the way of thinking, an ideology, a concept based on proof or not. When we deal with Islamic philosophy it must deal with the concepts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. However when these views are influenced by Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle then it is not Islamic. The vast majority of the early traditional Sunni Muslim scholars have either criticized or prohibited it. Imams such as Imam Abu Hanifa (رضي الله عنه) prohibited his students from engaging in philosophy, stating that those who practice it are of the 'retarded ones' (al-Makkee, Manaaqib Abee Haneefah, pg. 183-184). Imam Malik ibn Anas (رضي الله عنه) referred to philosophy in the Islamic religion as being 'detested' (Dhammul-Kalaam (B/194)), and that whoever 'seeks the religion through philosophy will deviate' (Dhammul-Kalaam (Q/173/A)). In addition Imam Shafi'i said that no knowledge of Islam can be gained from books of philosophy, as philosophy 'is not from knowledge' (Dhammul-Kalaam (Q/213) and Dhahabi, as-Siyar (10/30)) and that 'It is better for a man to spend his whole life doing whatever Allah has prohibited – (besides shirk with Allah) rather than spending his whole life involved in philosophy' (Ibn Abi Hatim, Manaaqibush-Shaafi'ee, pg. 182).

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (رضي الله عنه) also spoke strongly against philosophy, stating his view that no one looks into philosophy unless there is 'corruption in his heart', and even went so far as to prohibit sitting with people practicing philosophy even if they were defending the Sunnah, and instructing his students to warn against any person they saw practicing philosophy. Today criticism of philosophy also comes from modern day scholars of the Salafi movement who base their argument on the views held by the early Imams of the Sunni Muslims. However other contemporary scholars such as Nuh Ha Mim Keller,

a Sheikh in the Shadhili Order hold that the criticism of philosophy from early scholars was specific to the Mu'tazilah, going on to claim that other historical Muslim scholars such as Al-Ghazzali, As-Subki, An-Nawawi and even the four Madhhab saw both good and bad in it and cautioned from the speculative excess of unorthodox groups such as the Mu'tazilah and Jahmiyya.

Another scholar who criticized philosophy was Al Ghazzali. In his book '**The Incoherence of the Philosophers**' (the Tahafut) which is the title of a landmark 11th century work by he criticized Ibn Sina's school of early Islamic philosophy. Muslim philosophers such as Ibn Sina and Al-Farabi are denounced in this book. The text was dramatically successful, and marked a milestone in the ascendance of the Ash'arite school within Islamic philosophy and theological discourse. The tahafut is organized into twenty chapters in which al Ghazzali attempts to refute Ibn Sina's doctrines. He states that Ibn Sina and his followers have erred in seventeen points (each one of which he addresses in detail in a chapter, for a total of 17 chapters) by committing heresy. But in three other chapters, he accuses them of being utterly irreligious. Among the charges that he levelled against the philosophers is their inability to prove the existence of God and inability to prove the impossibility of the existence of two gods. Some of the twenty points are the inability of philosophers to prove the existence of the Creator, the inability of philosophers to prove the impossibility of the existence of two gods, the philosopher's doctrine of denying the existence of God's attributes, their inability to demonstrate that the First is not a body, refuting their assertion of the impossibility of the annihilation of the human soul, refuting their denial of bodily resurrection and the accompanying pleasures of Paradise or the pains of Hellfire. The three irreligious ideas are as follows: (1) the theory of a pre-eternal world. Ghazzali wrote that God created the world in time and just like everything in this world time will cease to exist as well but God will continue on existing, (2) God only knows the universal characteristics of particulars - namely Platonic (nonphysical – spiritual) forms and (3) the Bodily resurrection will not take place in the hereafter only human souls are resurrected.

"Ibn Sina had a number of heterodox (unorthodox) beliefs. First, he believed that the world is beginninglessly eternal, while Muslims believe that Allah created it after it was nothing, second, he believed that Allah knows what is created and destroyed only in a general way, not in its details, while Muslims believe that Allah knows everything; and third, he held that there is no bodily resurrection, while Muslims emphatically affirm in it. Taj al-Subki's says: "Is he not ashamed before Allah Most High to espouse (adopt) the ideas of Ibn Sina and praise him – while reciting the word of Allah "Does man not think We shall gather together his bones? Indeed, We are well able to produce even his index finger" (Qur'an 75:7) – and mention in the same breath Ibn Sina's denial of bodily resurrection and gathering of bones?" (Mu'id al-ni'am, 80). Imam Ghazzali, despite his magisterial breadth of perspective in `aqida issues, held it obligatory to consider Ibn Sina a non-Muslim (kafir) for these three doctrines (al-Munqidh min al-dalal, 4445, 50)." Al-Haafidh Ibn Hajr (رضي الله عنه) said about Ibn Sina, "The shaafi'ee scholar, Ibn Abi Al-Hamoowee said: the Scholars have all agreed that Ibn Sina used to say that the universe has always been in existence, and that the bodies will not be raised physically on the day of judgment. It has also been said that he used to say that Allah does not have knowledge of the specifics (of everything that takes place); rather He is aware of what takes place in the general sense. Thus, the scholars in his time and those after them, those scholars whose statements carry weight in matters of fiqh and Usool ul-fiqh, have unequivocally (clearly) declared him and al-Farabi to be kuffar (unbelievers), because of their beliefs regarding these matters for they contradict the beliefs of the Muslims. (Lisaanal-Meezaan, (2/293))

Siddeeq Hasan Khaan al-Qannawjee said about him, "Ibn Sina said in al-Ishraat, based on the statement of the philosophers, that Allah has knowledge of general affairs, not the specifics of things that

take place, and this is clear kufr that cannot be misconstrued. This is one of the reasons why the Muslims have considered the philosophers to be kuffaar. They have many other destructive beliefs, so do not be swayed (influenced) by the ideas, deep knowledge, and wisdom that they claim to have, for there is not one of them except that he contradicts the truth or he is on the brink (edge) of the fire.” (Abdjadal-Uloom, (1/23)). Ibn al-Qayyim said: “Ibn Sina, as he stated about himself, said that he and his father were from the esoteric Qaraamitah sect (a shi’a sect) who do not believe in the beginning of creation, the resurrection, the Creator, nor the Messengers. Those zanaadiqah (heretics) used to adopt Shi’aism and claim to be from the lineage of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) family as a guise in order to hide their disbelief, whereas the Prophet (ﷺ)’s family is not at all related to them with regards to lineage, their actions and their beliefs. They used to kill the people of knowledge and the people of Imaan, and they would leave the people of shirk and kufr. They did not consider what is haraam to be haraam, nor what is halaal to be halaal.” (Ighaathah Al-Lahfaan (2/266))

Another philosopher was Al Kindi. Deeply rooted in Aristotle’s thought, al-Kindi attempted one of the first efforts to “Islamize” Greek philosophy. He adopted certain concepts from the Aristotelian tradition and proposition; from the Platonist tradition, he takes speculation on the soul in its relationship with the body and with the divine light and on its ascent to and beyond the heavens. Another philosopher is Ibn Rushd. The Ash’arites maintain that the world is created and that it must "necessarily have a Maker who created it." However, Ibn Rushd objects to them, because they cannot answer the mode of the existence of the Maker of the world whether He is eternal or created, yet they want to show that the world is created in time, whereas God is eternal. If the Maker is eternal, then His *actions* must be eternal. Consequently, the world that is produced by an act of God must be eternal. This philosophy was considered to be irreligious in Muslim Spain where the society was formulated on true Arabic lines. Being a rational philosopher, his ideas were incompatible with the religious sentiments of orthodox Muslims and he was accused of being an atheist. Ibn Rushd was criticised for suggesting that revelation must be guided by reason. In his view, the noblest form of worship was to study God through His works using the faculty of the mind. Thus his Muslim contemporaries persecuted him while Muslim posterity (future generation) almost ignored him, allowing his works to be lost.

We can conclude that the moment any thinker introduces any un-Islamic concepts from any un-Islamic source, his concepts are rejected. This is why theologians don’t agree with people like Ibn Sina, Al Farabi, Ibn Rushd and al Kindi due to the fact that they derive many of their concepts from Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle.