

The Evolution of Sufi Poetry: A Study of “*The Spiritual Manifestations in Islam*”

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Abstract :

This research paper examines the origins of "Sufi poetry" in the first and second centuries of the Hijra and its development in the fourth and fifth centuries and beyond. It aims to describe the various stages that Sufi poetry has undergone, relying on the book *Spiritual Manifestations in Islam: Sufi Texts Throughout History*, which has significantly influenced both the East and the West since its original composition in Arabic and its subsequent translation into Italian. The book categorizes Sufi poetry into two main levels: the pre-Hallaj phase (d. 309 AH / 922 CE), characterized by a few fragments of Sufi poetry without complete poems, and the post-Hallaj phase, where complete Sufi poems emerge. This evolution led to the creation of notable collections, such as the *Diwan* of Hallaj, the *Diwan* of Ibn al-Farid, and the *Diwan* of Ibn Arabi. The study poses several hypotheses: Did Sufi poetry experience different stages? If so, what are the defining characteristics of each stage? Additionally, how did Sufis use poetry to express their spiritual experiences? How does Sufi poetry convey "divine love"? Lastly, how did they utilize contradictory terms (e.g., "near/far") in their symbolic representations of God, viewing Him as both an exalted essence and an immanent presence?

Keywords: *Sufi Poetry, Spiritual Manifestations in Islam, Mysticism, Literature, Sufi Heritage.*

تطور الشعر الصوفي: دراسة عن كتاب "التجليات الروحية في الإسلام"

الملخص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى اكتشاف ومناقشة البداية الأولى لظهور "الشعر الصوفي" في القرنين الأول والثاني الهجريين نشأة؛ ثم تطوراً وازدهاراً في القرنين الرابع والخامس الهجريين وما تلاهما، كذلك يهدف البحث إلى محاولة وصف المراحل المختلفة التي مر بها "الشعر الصوفي"، ونظراً لأن هذا الموضوع من أصعب الموضوعات تعقيداً في الخبرة الروحية المسماة بـ "التصوف"، فإن البحث سيعتمد في استكشاف وقرأة الشعر الصوفي على كتاب: "التجليات الروحية في الإسلام: نصوص صوفية عبر التاريخ"، هذا الكتاب الذي ترك تأثيراً قوياً في الشرق والغرب، بدءاً من تأليفه باللغة العربية وانتهاءً بترجمته إلى اللغة الإيطالية. وقد اشتمل هذا الكتاب عرض وسرد للمراحل المختلفة للشعر الصوفي حتى بات من اليسير تقسيم هذه المراحل إلى مستويين الأول: مرحلة ما قبل الحلاج (ت: ٣٠٩هـ / ٩٢٢م) وفي هذه المرحلة نجد شذرات من الأبيات الشعرية القليلة للمتصوفة ولا نجد فيها قصيدة صوفية كاملة. المستوى الثاني: مرحلة ما بعد الحلاج وفي هذه المرحلة نجد قصائد صوفية كاملة؛ ثم تطور الأمر أكثر حتى أصبحنا نجد عدة دواوين شعرية صوفية مثل (ديوان الحلاج)، (ديوان ابن الفارض)، (ديوان ابن عربي)، وغيرهم من الصوفية. وتأتي فروض الدراسة ماثلة في النقاط التالية: هل شهد الشعر الصوفي مراحل مختلفة؟ وإن كانت الإجابة بنعم فما أبرز خصائص كل مرحلة؟ والأهم: كيف تمكن الصوفية من توظيف الشعر في التعبير عن خبرتهم الذوقية والروحية؟ وكيف عكس المتصوفة بالشعر الصوفي تعبيرهم عن "الحب الإلهي"؟ وكيف اعتمدوا على الكلمات المتناقضة (مثل: قريب/ بعيد) في إشارتهم الرمزية لله واعتباره جوهرًا متساميًا في نفس الوقت؟

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشعر الصوفي، التجليات الروحية في الإسلام، التصوف، الأدب، تراث التصوف.

1- INTRODUCTION

Sufi poetry holds a profound significance in expressing the mystical experience within the Islamic spiritual tradition. Through the evocative language of poetry, Sufi practitioners and thinkers have been able to convey the depth and subtlety of their spiritual encounters with the divine. At the heart of Sufi poetry lies the metaphor of the lover and the beloved, which is a powerful means of articulating the intense yearning and longing of the human soul for union with the divine. The lover, representing the individual seeker, is depicted as passionately pursuing the beloved, who symbolizes the divine essence. This metaphorical language allows Sufi poets to capture the essence of the mystical experience, which is often characterized by a sense of profound intimacy, ecstasy, and the dissolution of the individual self. Sufi poetry also employs the language of paradox and ambiguity to convey the inherent complexity and ineffability of the divine. Poets may describe the beloved as both near and far, both hidden and revealed, reflecting the Sufi understanding of the divine as simultaneously immanent and transcendent. This paradoxical imagery challenges the rational mind and encourages the reader to engage with the spiritual dimension on a deeper, intuitive level. This paper will explore the development of Sufi poetry, as presented in the book *The Spiritual Manifestations in Islam*, from the concise, evocative verses of early Sufi poets to the expansive, sophisticated poems.

1.1. The Sufi Poetry: Historical Background

It is well known that many Sufis have excelled in presenting their deep spiritual ideas and experiences through verses, poems, and even complete poetic collections. The emergence of this phenomenon can be traced back to the rise of Islamic Sufism in the first and second centuries of the Hijri calendar. We can say that: with the development of Sufism, its terminology, concepts, and ideas, what can be called "Sufi Poetry" has evolved alongside it.

By the end of the third century of the Hijri calendar and the beginning of the fourth, we started to observe the existence of more than a hundred definitions of the term "Sufism." At the same time, we have the first collection of "Sufi Poetry," which is the Divan of al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 309 AH/922 CE), known as the "*Divan of al-Hallaj*." As Sufism, its theories, and its various orientations developed

and advanced, Sufi poetry evolved alongside it. Unfortunately, this Sufi poetry has not been granted the systematic and scholarly investigation it deserves, except for a few rare individual attempts. The same applies to the "Sufi Writings," which have lacked scholarly and systematic investigation, with few exceptions. Notably, the beginnings of the individual attempts that have exerted efforts and achieved creativity in the critical edition of Sufi poetry started with the Orientalist movement, especially in the last century, as part of the distinguished Orientalist efforts aimed at the critical edition of the Sufi heritage as a whole.

The major Sufi writings were published in critically edited editions for the first time through the diligence of the Orientalists. The examples of this are numerous, including what the English Orientalist Reynold Nicholson (d. 1945) accomplished in critically editing the book "*Al-Luma' fi al-Tasawwuf*" in 1914, what the English Orientalist Margaret Smith (d. 1954) accomplished in critically editing the book "*Al-Ri'āya li-Huqūq Allāh*," and what the English Orientalist John Arthur Arberry (d. 1969) accomplished in critical editing: "*Kitāb al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Tasawwuf*," "*Kitāb al-Mawāqif wa-al-Mukhāṭabāt*," and "*Kitāb al-Ṣidq*," as well as many other Sufi texts that were critically edited and published through the efforts of the Orientalist movement. If we were to search for the earliest Orientalist efforts in the critical edition of Sufi poetry, we would find that they began with the English Orientalist Reynold Nicholson's publication and critical edition of the "*Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*" Divan in 1911. Subsequently, we found the efforts of the French Orientalist Louis Massignon (d. 1962) in his diligence in the critical edition and publication of the "*Divan of al-Hallāj*," which was later republished with a review and critical edition by Paul Nwyia (d. 1980).

2.1. Trends in Sufi Poetry: The orientations of Sufi poets have varied, representing two main trends:

The First Trend: The adherents of this trend utilized poetry in specific Sufi literature to present a unique and distinctive "ethical philosophy" within Islamic civilization. This aimed to delve into the deepest recesses of the human psyche, analyze its most intimate secrets to uncover its flaws, and understand how to elevate it, ultimately preparing it for what Sufis call the transition from self-denial (*takhalli*) to self-adornment (*tahalli*) and then self-disclosure (*tajalli*). Among the pioneers of this trend, we find for example Dhu al-Nun al-Misri (d. 246

AH/861 CE), al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (309 AH/922 CE), Abu Bakr al-Shibli (334 AH/945 CE), 'Umar ibn al-Farid (632 AH/1235 CE), and Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi (638 AH/1240 CE). These poetic verses were employed in what is known as the "spiritual training of the disciples (murids)," a phenomenon that has persisted to the present day among most Sufi orders (turuq) spread throughout the world.

The Second Trend: The adherents of this trend expressed their Sufi experiences and insights related to various Sufi terms and concepts, such as: (unity and differentiation, ecstasy and existence, annihilation and subsistence, sobriety and intoxication). They did so in the form of poetic compositions, to the point that the subject matter of these poems evolved to include symbolic allusions conveying the deepest Sufi experiences, addressing topics such as: (the spiritual stations and states), (the Muhammadan Light), (the Divine Light), and (Divine Love). Perhaps the most prominent poet of this trend is the great Egyptian poet 'Umar ibn al-Farid (632 AH/1235 CE), author of the poem "*al-Tā'iyyah al-Kubra*" (The Great Ode Rhyming in Tā'), the longest poetic composition in the entire Arabic Sufi tradition, consisting of seven hundred and sixty-one verses.

3.1. Examining *The Spiritual Manifestations in Islam: an overview of the book and its focus on the evolution of Sufi poetry*

The book *Spiritual Manifestations in Islam* provides a comprehensive overview of this poetic development, tracing the evolution of Sufi poetry from its earliest, concise forms to the more expansive and sophisticated works of later centuries. By examining the stylistic and thematic changes in Sufi poetry, the book offers insights into the broader transformations within the Sufi tradition, as it navigated the challenges and opportunities of different historical contexts. This paper will closely analyze the development of Sufi poetry, as presented in *Spiritual Manifestations in Islam*, to shed light on the rich and nuanced spiritual expression of the Sufi tradition.

As explored in *The Spiritual Manifestations in Islam*, the Sufi poetic tradition offers a profound and engaging counterpoint to the uncertainties and anxieties of the contemporary condition. The book highlights how the Sufi poets' exploration of the quest for inner peace, the nature of the divine-human relationship, and the transformative power of love continue to resonate deeply with audiences today. In a

time marked by social, political, and environmental upheaval, the Sufi emphasis on the inward journey toward self-knowledge and spiritual enlightenment provides a compelling antidote to modern life's materialism and fragmentation. Moreover, the book underscores the universal language of symbolism and metaphor employed by Sufi poets, which transcends the boundaries of culture and religion to speak to the shared human experience. Through its nuanced analysis, the book demonstrates how the timeless wisdom and poetic artistry of the Sufi tradition continue to resonate powerfully in the contemporary context, providing a much-needed avenue for spiritual and creative expression.

The Spiritual Manifestations in Islam is a comprehensive exploration of the rich and multifaceted traditions of Islamic mysticism, with a particular emphasis on the evolution of Sufi poetry. This work delves into the historical, cultural, and theological factors that have shaped the development of Sufi verse over the centuries, shedding light on the profound role it has played in the spiritual life of the Islamic world. The book begins by tracing the origins of Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, and its rise to prominence across the Middle East, Central Asia, and beyond. It examines how the Sufi emphasis on the direct, ecstatic experience of the divine provided the philosophical and theological foundation for the poetic outpouring that emerged from this spiritual tradition.

2- QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

1. What core spiritual and philosophical concepts underpin the thematic and symbolic richness of the Sufi poetic tradition, and how are these concepts expressed through motifs like the "beloved," the "intoxication" of divine love, and the paradoxes of the spiritual journey?

2. How did the interaction of Persian and Arabic poetic forms influence the development of Sufi poetry in the 7th century Hijri, and in what ways have Sufi poets integrated local poetic techniques into their mystical verses?

3. How have contemporary Sufi poets and scholars built upon the legacy of their predecessors to maintain the vitality of this literary tradition, and how do the thematic and stylistic innovations of modern Sufi verse reflect the evolving needs of today's audiences?

3- LITERATURE REVIEW

The rich and multifaceted tradition of Sufi poetry has long captivated the attention of scholars and enthusiasts alike, with a growing body of research exploring the profound spiritual and artistic significance of this literary heritage. At the heart of this scholarly discourse lies a deep fascination with how Sufi verse has the power to transcend cultural and religious boundaries, speaking to the universal human experience of the search for the divine.

One of the key themes that has emerged in the literature is the exploration of the core spiritual and philosophical concepts that underpin the thematic and symbolic richness of Sufi poetry. Scholars such as Arjun Nairhave (2023) in his paper, *Poetry and Sufi Commentary: A Case of/for Religious Reading in Premodern Sufism*, has delved into how Sufi poets have employed motifs like the "beloved," the "intoxication" of divine love, and the paradoxes of the spiritual journey to convey the ineffable experiences of mystical union with the divine. This study has illuminated how Sufi verse serves as a profound expression of the human longing for transcendence and self-discovery.

Alongside this exploration of the spiritual underpinnings of Sufi poetry, researchers have also examined the complex web of cultural and literary influences that have shaped the evolution of this tradition over the centuries. Scholars like Kermani (2015) and Ahmed (2010) have demonstrated how Sufi poets have seamlessly integrated diverse local poetic forms, motifs, and techniques into their mystical verses, creating a syncretic literary tapestry that reflects the cross-pollination of traditions within the Islamic world and beyond.

The universal resonance of Sufi poetry has also been a focus of scholarly inquiry, with researchers such as Homerin (1985) and Omid (2001) examine how the poets' masterful use of symbolic and metaphorical language has enabled their works to transcend linguistic and cultural barriers. These studies have shed light on how Sufi verse, with its timeless wisdom and artistic brilliance, has secured a place in the global literary canon, speaking to the shared human experience across the globe.

4- METHOD

This comprehensive research paper will employ an interdisciplinary approach to examine the profound significance of the Sufi poetic tradition. It will delve into the spiritual and philosophical underpinnings of Sufi verse, exploring how the poets' mystical experiences and the core tenets of Sufism have shaped the thematic and symbolic richness of this literary heritage. Complementing this, the study will undertake a rigorous examination of the literary and cultural influences that have contributed to the evolution of Sufi poetry over the centuries. Additionally, the research will explore the universal resonance of Sufi verse, shedding light on how the masterful use of symbolic and metaphorical language has allowed these works to transcend linguistic and cultural boundaries. By synthesizing these analytical and historical perspectives, the proposed paper will offer a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the enduring significance of the Sufi poetic tradition and its profound influence on both the spiritual and literary landscapes.

At the core of this analysis will be a deep dive into the spiritual and philosophical underpinnings of Sufi verse, exploring how the poets' own mystical experiences and the core tenets of Sufism have shaped the thematic and symbolic richness of this literary tradition. Drawing on the insights of Islamic scholars and theologians, the paper will elucidate the central motifs of the "beloved," the "intoxication" of divine love, and the paradoxes of the spiritual journey as profound expressions of the human yearning for the divine.

5- DISCUSSION

The verses of early Sufi poets are renowned for their profound and evocative expression, conveyed through a remarkable concision of language. These mystic poets, who arose in the Islamic world used their poetry as a vehicle to explore the deepest realms of the spiritual experience. The verses often revolve around central Sufi concepts like the search for the divine beloved, the ecstasy of union, and the anguish of separation. Yet these abstract ideas are rendered with a striking immediacy and tangibility. Sufi poets employed vivid natural imagery - flowers, wine, candles, and the like - as symbolic conduits to evoke the ineffable experience of the spiritual seeker. Moreover, Sufi poetry displays a masterful use of paradox, metaphor, and ambiguity to suggest the simultaneous unity and duality of the human and divine realms. A

single line may contain multiple layers of meaning, challenging the reader to peel back the surface to uncover deeper spiritual truths.

This compression of profundity into compressed forms reflects the Sufi belief that the divine cannot be fully captured in language. The poets thus aimed to gesture towards the mystical through the skillful manipulation of words, rather than through exhaustive explication. Their verses become portals into realms of transcendent experience, where the reader is invited to intuit the hidden significances that lie beyond the printed page. Overall, the concise yet evocative style of early Sufi poetry stands as a testament to the poets' mastery of language and their unwavering commitment to conveying the ecstasies and agonies of the spiritual quest.

1.5. The Sufi Poetry in the Ascetic Movement of the First and Second Centuries of the Hijri Calendar:

1.1.5 The Beginnings of Sufi Verse (2nd-4th Hijri Centuries)

In the early centuries of Islam, the foundations of Sufi poetry were laid in the second century of the Hijri calendar. This was a time when the mystical dimension within the Islamic faith was taking hold and gaining prominence. Pioneering Sufi figures such as Hasan al-Basri, Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya, Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, and Mansur Al-Hallaj played a crucial role in shaping the development of Sufism during this period. It appears that the emergence of Sufi poetry came at an early stage, this stage historically known as the "Ascetic Movement" in the first and second centuries of the Hijri calendar. The clearest evidence for this is the few poetic verses attributed to some personalities such as al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110 AH/728 CE), Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 185 AH/801 CE), and reaching the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century of the Hijri calendar with: Dhu al-Nun al-Misri (d. 246 AH/861 CE), and others. However, we must remember that these poems are a few scattered fragments that appeared in some Sufi writings.

This suggests that Sufi poetry emerged in parallel with the development of the Sufi worldview and thought during the Ascetic Movement in the first and second centuries of the Hijri calendar. The poetic expressions of the early Sufis were still limited and fragmented, not yet reaching the level of complete poetic collections or the depth and sophistication of later Sufi poetry. Nevertheless, these early poetic

snippets indicate the beginnings of the Sufi poetic tradition that would later flourish and evolve.

2.1.5. Hasan al-Basri (d. 110 AH / 728 CE)

Hasan al-Basri was a seminal figure in the early development of Sufi poetry during the second Hijri century. As a prominent Sufi mystic and theologian, his poetic works reflect the emerging spiritual perspectives and themes that define the Sufi literary tradition. Al-Basri's poetry is characterized by its focus on the transient nature of worldly existence and the importance of cultivating a deep spiritual awareness. His verses often explore the themes of humility, detachment from material pursuits, and the recognition of the ephemeral nature of human life. Through his poetic expressions, al-Basri sought to instill a sense of urgency in the seeker, encouraging a shift in focus from the material to the divine. His pioneering role in shaping the early Sufi poetic voice laid the groundwork for the subsequent flourishing of Sufi poetry in the centuries to come.

The young man rejoices in the piety he has shown,
When he knows the ailment that is his undoing.
The world is not everlasting for the living,
Nor is the living one everlasting on this world.

(Translation by me)

The lines suggest a sense of humility and self-awareness. The young man, in his piety and religious devotion, felt a sense of pride or self-satisfaction. However, Hasan al-Basri reminds us that this outward show of piety is not a cure for the deeper "ailment" or spiritual malady that ultimately undoes the individual. Also, they express a profound understanding of the ephemeral nature of the material world and human existence. Hasan al-Basri reminds us that the world is not eternal, and neither is the human life that inhabits it. This recognition of the impermanence of worldly existence is a common theme in Sufi poetry, which emphasizes the need to transcend the attachment to the material and focus on the spiritual.

They reflect the early Sufi perspective that true piety and spiritual fulfillment lie not in outward displays of religiosity, but in a deep understanding of the transient nature of the physical world and a cultivation of the inner spiritual life. This early Sufi poetry sought to cultivate a sense of humility, detachment, and focus on the divine, laying

the groundwork for the more extensive and sophisticated Sufi poetic tradition that would emerge in the centuries to come.

3.1.5. Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 185 AH / 801 CE)

Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya was a prominent figure in the early development of Sufi poetry during the second Hijri century. As a female Sufi saint and mystic, her poetic expressions of divine love and devotion were particularly influential in shaping the emerging Sufi literary tradition. Rābi'a's poetry is characterized by its profound intensity and intimacy with the divine. She is renowned for her emphasis on the love of God as the central focus of her spiritual journey, often using metaphors and imagery to convey the depth of her yearning for union with the Beloved. Her poems reflect a deep sense of humility, a rejection of worldly attachments, and a burning desire to transcend the limitations of the physical realm to commune with the divine. Rābi'a's pioneering voice as a female Sufi poet helped to establish the foundations of a mystical poetic tradition that would continue to resonate and inspire generations of Sufi writers and seekers.

I love You with two kinds of love:
The love for the sake of loving,
And the love because You are worthy of nothing but love.
For the love for the sake of loving
Is in the remembering of only You,
But the love because You deserve the love,
Is Your unveiling for me Your Veil,
So that I may see You, and the praise
Which is in this and that is all of it for You

(Smith, trans., 1928, pp. 41-48)

This poignant poem by Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya eloquently expresses the dual nature of her love for the divine. In these lines, she articulates two intertwined strands of her devotion: The first is a love for the sake of love itself, where the sole focus is on the remembrance and contemplation of the divine. This is a love that transcends any expectation or reward, rooted solely in the desire to be consumed by the presence of the Beloved. The second is a love born out of recognizing that the divine is worthy of nothing but love. The divine's self-revelation catalyzes this love, the "unveiling of the Veil," which allows the seeker to behold the divine's true majesty and splendor. This love is

characterized by praise and adoration, as the devotee realizes that all praise and honor belong to the Beloved alone. Rābi'a's poem encapsulates the depth and complexity of the Sufi experience of divine love in its early formative stages.

4.1.5. Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246 AH/861 CE)

Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī was a seminal figure in the early development of Sufi poetry during the third Hijri century. As an Egyptian Sufi saint and mystic, his poetic works reflect the profound spiritual insights and experiences that helped shape the emerging Sufi tradition. Dhu'l-Nūn's poetry is characterized by its emphasis on the transformative power of divine love and the interplay between the human soul and the divine. His verses often explore the themes of ecstatic union, the annihilation of the self, and the journey towards the divine. Through his poetic expressions, Dhu'l-Nūn conveyed the mystical experiences of the Sufi seeker, capturing the essence of the spiritual quest and the longing for transcendence:

I die, but my longing for you does not cease,
Nor have I fulfilled the truth of your love's desire.
My aspiration, the very essence of hope, is you,
And you, the wealth, all the wealth, in my coffers.
You are the reach of my plea and the goal of my wish,
The place of my dreams and the hidden of my heart.
(Translation by me)

This poetic excerpt, attributed to the Sufi figure Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī, expresses the profound depth and intensity of the devotee's love and longing for the divine. The poet acknowledges that even in the face of death, their desire for the Beloved remains unquenched, for they have yet to realize the true essence of divine love fully. The Beloved is the very core of their aspiration, the embodiment of all their hopes and dreams. The Beloved is the ultimate goal, the hidden treasure within the devotee's heart, the fulfillment of their deepest pleas and wishes. The poem conveys the Sufi's unwavering commitment to the quest for union with the divine, expressing a profound sense of longing, yearning, and the recognition that true wealth and fulfillment lie in the attainment of the Beloved's grace and presence.

5.1.5. Al-Husayn ibn Mansur al-Hallaj (d. 309 AH/922 CE)

Mansur Al-Hallaj was a pivotal figure in the early stages of Sufi poetry, known for his ecstatic expressions of divine union and his profound impact on the development of Sufism. Al-Hallaj's poetry is characterized by its bold and unconventional nature, often challenging the conventional religious norms of his time. His verses reflect a deep sense of intimacy with the divine, expressed through the metaphor of passionate love and the concept of annihilation of the self. Al-Hallaj's poetic language is infused with paradoxes and paradoxical statements, reflecting the inherent complexity and mystery of the Sufi spiritual experience. His controversial teachings and ultimate martyrdom further cemented his legacy as a seminal figure who pushed the boundaries of Sufi thought and expression, laying the groundwork for the continued evolution of Sufi poetry in the centuries to come:

I am He whom I love,
and He whom I love is I:
We are two spirits
dwelling in one body.
If thou seest me,
thou seest Him,
And if thou seest Him,
thou seest us both.

(Nicholson, trans., 1989, pp.52-56)

This powerful and enigmatic poem attributed to Mansur Al-Hallaj encapsulates the Sufi concept of divine union and the dissolution of the individual self into the divine. The speaker declares a profound oneness with the Beloved, stating that they are the same – two spirits inhabiting a single body. This statement transcends the duality of the self and the divine, suggesting a mystical state of complete integration and identification. The poem asserts that to see the speaker is to see the Beloved, and vice versa, emphasizing the complete and inseparable unity between the devotee and the divine. This radical expression of unity challenges the traditional boundaries between the human and the divine, reflecting the Sufi seeker's aspiration to dissolve the ego and achieve a state of total immersion in the Absolute:

"Thy Spirit is mingled in my spirit even as wine is mingled with
pure water.

When anything touches Thee, it touches me. Lo, in every case
Thou art I!"

(Nicholson, 1989, p. 73)

This rich verse by al-Hallaj sheathes the Sufi concept of unity between the mystic and the divine, where the individual self becomes inseparable from the spiritual essence. The metaphor of wine mingling with water symbolizes the mystic's complete absorption and annihilation of the ego, achieving a transcendent oneness with the Divine.

6.1.5. Ahmed Ibn Abu al-Hussain al-Nuri (d. 294 AH/907 CE)

Ahmed Ibn Abu al-Hussain al-Nuri was a renowned Sufi saint who was born in Baghdad and became a prominent figure within the Sufi tradition. Al-Nuri was known for his deep devotion to spiritual practices and his unwavering commitment to the path of Sufism. He was renowned for his asceticism, his disciplined meditation, and his ability to undergo profound states of ecstatic experience. Many of his contemporaries and followers were drawn to his spiritual wisdom and his ability to guide others on the Sufi journey. Throughout his life, al-Nuri emphasized the importance of purifying the soul, overcoming the ego, and cultivating a deep connection with the divine. His teachings and writings, which have been preserved over the centuries, continue to inspire and influence Sufi practitioners and scholars around the world. He said in one of his poems:

I had supposed that, having passed away
From self in concentration, I should blaze
A path to Thee, but ah! No creature may
Draw near thee, save Thy appointed ways.
I cannot longer live, Lord, without Thee;
Thy Hand is everywhere: I may not flee.

(Perry, trans., 2000, pp. 73-74)

This poem reflects the profound spiritual longing and struggle experienced by the Sufi poet al-Nuri. The verses express his desire to transcend the self and attain a direct connection with the divine, but he acknowledges the limitations of the human condition. Despite his efforts to "blaze a path" to God, he realizes that one can only approach the divine through the appointed ways, as per God's will. The poet's anguish is palpable in the line "I cannot longer live, Lord, without Thee,"

highlighting his deep dependence on the divine presence. The final line conveys a sense of resignation, as the poet recognizes that there is no escape from God's all-encompassing dominion.

The pioneering Sufi poets distilled their profound spiritual experiences and insights into compact poetic forms, imbuing them with intensity, intimacy, and profound metaphysical significance. Their work reflected the incipient Sufi tradition's emphasis on the transcendence of the self, the quest for divine union, and the exploration of the mystical dimensions of the Islamic faith. This early Sufi poetry paved the way for the emergence of a rich and multifaceted literary tradition that would continue to inspire and captivate audiences for generations to come.

2.5. The role of metaphor and symbolism in conveying the mystical experience

The poetry of early Sufi mystics is replete with a rich tapestry of metaphors and symbols that serve as conduits for expressing the profoundly subjective and elusive nature of the spiritual encounter. These poets recognized the inherent limitations of literal language in capturing the multi-layered complexities of the mystical experience and thus turned to the power of figurative expression to hint at the ineffable. A prime example is the recurring motif of the "beloved" - a symbolic representation of the divine that is simultaneously transcendent and immanent, utterly remote and intimately nearby. The beloved is often depicted in sensual, erotic terms, evoking the intense longing and ecstatic union sought by the spiritual seeker. This metaphorical framing allows Sufi poets to gesture towards the paradoxical nature of the divine-human relationship, where the divine is both tantalizingly present and frustratingly elusive.

Likewise, the motif of "wine" functions as a powerful symbolic vehicle to convey the rapturous intoxication of mystical realization. The consuming, transformative experience of divine love is likened to the inebriation produced by earthly wine, suggesting a state of consciousness that transcends the mundane and ordinary. *Khamriyyat*, or "wine poems," hold a prominent place in the rich tapestry of Sufi poetry. These verses harness the metaphor of intoxicating wine to symbolize the mystic's ecstatic union with the divine. Far from mere depictions of physical inebriation, *Khamriyyat* employs the imagery of wine, taverns, and drunkenness as a means to convey the Sufi's

transcendent experience of spiritual intoxication. The recurrent motifs of the "Beloved," the "Cupbearer," and the "wine of divine love" serve to encapsulate the mystic's longing for the ineffable, as well as the paradoxical nature of the spiritual journey characterized by both rapture and anguish. In Rumi's Divan, he said:

Oh Cupbearer! Fill the soul from that pre-existent cup, that thief
of the heart, that
ambusher of formal religion.

Fill it with the wine that springs from the heart and mixes with
the spirit, the wine
whose bubbling intoxicates the God-seeing eye.

That grape wine – it belongs to the followers of Jesus; but this
Hallajian¹

wine, it belongs to the followers of the Qur'ān.

Vats of this wine, vats of that: until you break that vat, you will
never taste this wine.

That wine frees the heart from sorrow for an instant: never can it
snuff out sorrow,
never can it uproot malice.

(Chittick, trans., 1981, pp. 193-20)

In this evocative poem, al-Hallaj contrasts the intoxicating "wine" of Sufi mysticism with the more conventional "grape wine" of organized religion. The Sufi wine, which springs from the heart and mixes with the spirit, is depicted as a transformative elixir that can transport the seeker to a state of divine vision and ecstasy. However, al-Hallaj cautions that this mystical wine can only be attained by breaking free from the confines of formal religion, signified by the metaphor of breaking the vat. While the former wine may offer temporary respite from sorrow, it cannot truly uproot the deeper ills of the human condition.

3.5. The Maturation of Sufi Poetic Expression (4th-7th Hijri Centuries)

As Sufism gained prominence and the spiritual experiences of the mystics deepened, the Sufi poetic tradition also evolved in scope and complexity. During the 4th to 7th Hijri centuries, Sufi poetry witnessed the emergence of longer, more sophisticated verses that delved into the intricacies of the mystical path and the ineffable nature of the divine-

human relationship. Prominent among these Sufi poets were Abu Bakr Al-Shibli and Abdul Malik Al-Kharkoushi, renowned for their mystical verses that reflected profound spiritual insights and unwavering devotion to the divine. Their poetic works explored the nuances of the Sufi's spiritual journey, conveying the depth of their connection with the divine in intricate and evocative language. The expansive and spiritually-charged poems of Al-Shibli and Al-Kharkoushi marked a significant development in the Sufi poetic tradition, as it delved deeper into the metaphysical dimensions of the mystic's experience.

1.3.5. Abu Bakr al-Shibli (d. 334 AH/945 CE)

Abu Bakr Al-Shibli was a seminal figure whose poetic contributions exemplified the maturation of Sufi verse during the 5th-7th Hijri centuries. As a renowned mystic and spiritual guide, Al-Shibli's poetry reflected the profound depth and subtlety of the Sufi path. In his verses, Al-Shibli explored the ineffable nature of the divine-human relationship, delving into the nuances of mystical experience and the soul's longing for union with the Beloved. His poems conveyed the ecstasy and anguish of the spiritual journey, articulating the mystic's intense love and devotion through metaphors and imagery that evoked the transcendent realms of Sufism. Al-Shibli's poetic voice embodied the sophistication and expansiveness that characterized Sufi poetry during this period, as it transcended the concise forms of earlier Sufi verse to encompass the intricate complexities of the mystic's inner world:

Beloved, your love dwells within my soul,
Your presence in my heart is beyond control.
You who have banished slumber from my sight,
Of my trials and tribulations, you are the erudite.

(Translation by me)

This brief yet evocative verse captures the Sufi's all-encompassing love and devotion to the divine Beloved. The speaker expresses how the Beloved's presence consumes their soul, leaving no space untouched by this profound spiritual connection. The lines convey the mystic's total surrender, acknowledging the Beloved as the source of both their trials and their enlightenment. This interdependence between the seeker and the divine reflects the Sufi's aspiration to transcend the boundaries of the self and merge with the Beloved, a central theme in the maturation of Sufi poetic expression during the 5th-7th Hijri centuries.

2.3.5. Abdul Malik Al-Kharkoushi (d. 407 AH to 1016 CE)

Abdul Malik Al-Kharkoushi was a revered Sufi poet whose works embodied the sophisticated and expansive nature of Sufi verse. As a mystic deeply immersed in the spiritual realm, Al-Kharkoushi's poetry reflected the profound depths of the divine-human relationship. In his verses, Al-Kharkoushi delved into the intricacies of the Sufi's spiritual journey, articulating the ecstatic union with the Beloved as well as the anguish of separation. His poems conveyed the mystic's absolute surrender and intense longing through intricate metaphors and evocative imagery, transporting the reader into the transcendent realms of Sufism. The complexity and nuance of Al-Kharkoushi's poetic expression exemplified the maturation of the Sufi literary tradition during this period. His works expanded the scope of Sufi verse, moving beyond the concise forms of earlier eras to encompass the multifaceted nature of the mystic's inner experience:

What criminal has committed a crime and then confessed,
And tried to repent from what he had transgressed?
Like the one who persisted, but did not show remorse,
For the misdeeds he had committed in the course.

(Translation by me)

This brief yet thought-provoking poem contrasts two types of criminals - one who confesses and tries to repent, and another who persists in their misdeeds without remorse. The first criminal, despite committing a crime, has taken the step to acknowledge their wrongdoing and seek atonement. This reflects a glimmer of conscience and the desire for redemption. In contrast, the second criminal remains unrepentant, continuing down a path of unabated transgression. This lack of remorse and self-reflection suggests a more hardened, unremorseful character. The poem's concise structure and use of juxtaposition invite the reader to reflect on the complex moral and psychological dimensions of crime, confession, and the possibility of transformation. It underscores the significance of self-awareness, regret, and the pursuit of redemption in the face of wrongdoing.

4.5. The Transition to Expanded, Sophisticated Sufi Poetry: factors contributing to the evolution of Sufi poetry.

The rich and multifaceted tradition of Sufi poetry emerged from a confluence of historical, cultural, and spiritual influences that shaped its

distinctive character over the centuries. One key factor was the spread of Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, which provided the philosophical and theological foundation for much of this poetic output. As Sufism gained prominence across the Islamic world, from Persia to Andalusia, Sufi poets drew inspiration from the order's emphasis on the direct, ecstatic experience of the divine. This spiritual worldview imbued their verses with a deep sense of longing, devotion, and the search for divine union.

Additionally, the cultural and literary traditions of the regions where Sufism took root also left an indelible mark on Sufi poetry. Persian, Arabic, and Turkish poetic forms, motifs, and techniques were all woven into the evolving Sufi poetic style, creating a diverse tapestry of expression. Furthermore, the historical context of the Sufi poets' lives - the political upheavals, cultural efflorescence, and intellectual currents of their eras - shaped the thematic and stylistic development of Sufi verse. Poets often responded to the social and spiritual needs of their time, using their art as a means of navigating the complexities of the human condition. Taken together, these multifaceted influences contributed to the rich, nuanced, and enduring tradition of Sufi poetry that continues to captivate readers across the globe.

5.5. Expansion of poetic forms and structures

As Sufism spread across the Islamic world, Sufi poets drew upon and adapted a diverse array of poetic forms and structures to express the depth and complexity of their spiritual experiences. While early Sufi verse was primarily composed in the classical Arabic *qasida* (ode) and *ghazal* (lyrical poem) forms, over time the tradition expanded to incorporate a wide range of other poetic structures. One notable development was the rise of the *Masnawi*, a long-form narrative poem characterized by rhyming couplets. Exemplified by Rumi's magnum opus, the *Masnawi*, this expansive poetic form allowed Sufi poets to weave intricate allegorical tales and philosophical meditations into their verses. The *Masnawi's* capacity for extended storytelling and discursive exploration became a hallmark of the Sufi poetic tradition.

Sufi poets also embraced the concise, lyrical form of the *ghazal*, which often revolved around the central motif of the "beloved" – a symbolic representation of the divine. The *ghazal's* structure of independent, yet interconnected, couplets provided an ideal vehicle for

the poets to explore the paradoxical nature of the spiritual quest through the use of vivid imagery and paradoxical language. Furthermore, Sufi verse incorporated innovative structures such as the rubai (quatrain) and the *wasokht* (a form featuring a repeated refrain), further expanding the formal repertoire of the tradition. This diversity of poetic forms reflects the Sufi poets' commitment to exploring the boundless mysteries of the spiritual realm through the skillful manipulation of language and structure.

6.5. Increased complexity and depth of the mystical themes

As Sufism gained prominence across the Islamic world, the poetry associated with this mystical tradition evolved to encompass increasingly nuanced and multifaceted explorations of the spiritual experience. The Sufi poets, driven by their profound encounters with the divine, sought to convey the complexities and paradoxes inherent in the quest for enlightenment. A central theme that permeates Sufi verse is the longing for union with the "beloved" – a symbolic representation of the divine that is simultaneously transcendent and immanent, infinitely distant and intimately near. The poets employed sensual, erotic imagery to evoke the intense desire and ecstatic realization of this mystical union, blurring the boundaries between earthly and divine love. This motif speaks to the Sufi belief in the inherent divinity of the human soul and its capacity to achieve a state of profound oneness with the divine.

Intertwined with this theme of union is the recurring metaphor of "intoxication" – the rapturous, transformative experience of divine love that transcends the mundane realm of ordinary consciousness. Sufi poets likened this state of mystical inebriation to the consuming effects of earthly wine, suggesting a plane of existence that defies rational comprehension. Moreover, Sufi verse grappled with the paradoxical nature of the spiritual journey, where the seeker simultaneously experiences the divine as both present and absent, accessible and inaccessible. This dialectic of presence and absence, union and separation, is a hallmark of Sufi poetic expression, mirroring the poets' struggles to reconcile the dualities inherent in the human-divine relationship. Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi (d. 398 AH /1008 CE), a great Sufi, composed these verses:

If being sober, I No more descry
Save what is He, what Higher truths a wait
in drunkenness, which is the nobler state?

Now come sobriety,
or let me be
Intoxicated: work out thy design:
Drunken or sober, I am ever thine.

(Arberry, trans., 1966, p. 121)

In these verses, the Sufi poet Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi eloquently captures the tension between the states of sobriety and intoxication on the spiritual path. The speaker acknowledges that in sobriety, they can only perceive the divine, while in the state of drunkenness, higher truths are unveiled. Faced with this dilemma, the mystic expresses their willingness to surrender to the divine's design, whether in the clarity of sobriety or the ecstasy of intoxication. The underlying message is one of absolute devotion and surrender, where the individual self dissolves into the infinite love of the Beloved, regardless of the outward state of consciousness.

Moreover, the cyclical nature of spiritual intoxication and enlightenment depicted in Sufi poetry reflects a philosophical dialogue with other religious and mystical traditions. For example, the paradoxes inherent in the spiritual journey—such as the simultaneous experience of unity and separation—echo themes found in various mystical traditions, including Neoplatonism and even elements of Eastern philosophies. By critically engaging with these connections, we can better appreciate how Sufi poetry not only draws from its immediate cultural context but also engages in a broader discourse on spirituality and the human condition. This analysis reveals the depth of Sufi poetry as a dynamic literary tradition that continually evolves, inviting readers to explore the complexities of faith, love, and the quest for transcendence while remaining relevant to contemporary spiritual seekers navigating their paths in an increasingly interconnected world.

7.5. The Efflorescence of Sufi Poetry (7th Hijri Century)

The 7th century witnessed an unprecedented efflorescence in Sufi poetry, as the mystical tradition continued to flourish and the poetic expression of Sufi themes reached new heights of sophistication and complexity. Prominent among the celebrated Sufi poets of this era was the Egyptian Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235), whose masterpiece, "*al-Tā'iyyat al-Kubrā*," stands as a towering monument of Sufi verse. In this expansive and elaborate poem, Ibn al-Fāriḍ chronicles his mystical

journey, from the anguish of separation to the ecstasy of union with the Beloved, employing a rich tapestry of symbolism and metaphor to convey the profound depths of his spiritual experience.

Through his poetic mastery, Ibn al-Fāriḍ's work captures the nuances and complexities of the Sufi path, reflecting the maturation of the mystical tradition's literary expression during this period. His verses delve into the ineffable nature of the divine-human relationship, evoking the transformative power of the seeker's quest for union with the divine Beloved. The enduring legacy of Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poetic genius continues to inspire and captivate generations of Sufi devotees and enthusiasts.

1.7.5. 'Umar ibn al-Farid (d. 632 AH/1235 CE)

Out of the way of love,
I have no other way to go,
Should I deviate from it,
I would part with my religion.

(Scattolin, trans., 1992, pp.1-4)

These poignant lines convey the ibn al-Farid's absolute devotion and commitment to the path of divine love. The speaker declares that they have no other way to go besides the way of love, implying that this spiritual journey has become the sole focus and purpose of their existence. The verses express the notion that to deviate from this path of love would be tantamount to abandoning their very faith and religious convictions. This profound statement underscores the centrality of love in Sufi spirituality, where the love for the divine Beloved transcends all else and becomes the very essence of one's religious and mystical experience. The unwavering resolve and single-minded dedication reflected in these lines exemplify the depth of the Sufi's surrender and the transformative power of divine love. They convey the mystic's absolute immersion in the quest for union with the Beloved, a theme that permeates much of the sophisticated Sufi poetry that flourished during this period:

You will never love me
as long as you have not been annihilated in me,
and you will never be annihilated
as long as my image is not be made manifest in you.

.....

Such is love: if you do not die,

you will never win any wish of your Beloved;
so, choose this [= to die for love]
(Scattolin, trans., 1992, pp. 99-102)

In these lines, the poet expresses the idea that true love requires a profound transformation and self-annihilation. The first statement suggests that the lover cannot be fully loved until they have been "annihilated" or completely surrendered to the beloved. Conversely, the beloved cannot be "annihilated" or fully absorbed by the lover until the lover's image is fully manifested in them. The second statement emphasizes that for love to be fulfilled, the lover must be willing to "die" or completely give themselves up to the beloved. This reflects a mystical perspective on love as a process of mutual transcendence and the dissolution of the individual self.

2.7.5. Muhvi al-Din ibn 'Arabi (d. 638 AH/1240 CE).

Ibn 'Arabī, the renowned Andalusian Sufi poet, made significant contributions to the Sufi poetic tradition. Regarded as the "Greatest Master" (al-Shaykh al-Akbar) of Sufism, his poetic works, such as the "*Tarjumān al-Ashwāq*" (The Interpreter of Desires), delved deeply into the themes of divine love, mystical union, and the concept of the "Perfect Human" (*al-insān al-kāmil*). Ibn 'Arabī's poetry explores the intricate and multifaceted relationship between the human self and the divine. His works examine the process of spiritual transformation, where the individual transcends the boundaries of the ego and merges with the divine, achieving a state of unity and oneness. The concept of the "Perfect Human" features prominently in his poetry, representing the pinnacle of human spiritual development, where the individual embodies the divine attributes and becomes a reflection of the divine essence. Through his poetry, Ibn 'Arabī delves into the complexities of the mystical journey, offering insights into the profound and transformative nature of divine love and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment:

Approach the dwelling place of the dear ones who have taken
covenants – may clouds of incessant rain pour upon it!

And breathe the scent of the wind over against their land,
in desire that the sweet airs may tell thee where they are.

I know that they encamped at the ban tree of Idam,
where the arar plants grow and the shih and the katam.

(Nicholson, trans., 1989, pp.52-56)

This poetic passage expresses a longing for the dwelling place of beloved ones who have made sacred commitments. The speaker wishes for incessant rain to pour upon their abode as if the heavens mourn their absence. The speaker also desires to breathe the wind that blows over their land, hoping the sweet air will reveal their location. The passage then provides specific details about their encampment, mentioning the *ban* tree of *Idam*, where arar plants, *shih*, and *katam* grow. This suggests a vivid, pastoral scene and a deep emotional connection to the missing individuals. The overall tone is one of yearning and a wish to reconnect with those who have departed:

My heart has become capable of every form; it is a pasture
for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,
And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'ba and the
tables of the Tora and the book of the Koran.
I follow the religion of Love: whatever way Love's
camels take, that is my religion and my faith.

(Nicholson, trans., trans., 1989, pp.52-56)

This passage expresses a profound spiritual openness and acceptance. The speaker's heart has become capable of embracing all forms of belief and religious expression. It is described as a pasture for gazelles, a convent for Christian monks, a temple for idols, the pilgrim's Ka'ba, the tables of the Torah, and the book of the Quran. This imagery conveys a heart that is expansive, inclusive and transcends the boundaries of any single faith. The speaker declares that the religion of Love is their only creed, stating that they will follow wherever Love's camels lead, regardless of the specific path. This reflects a deeply universal and inclusive spiritual perspective, one that celebrates the diverse manifestations of the divine.

3.7.5. Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (672 AH/1273 CE)

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, a renowned Persian Sufi mystic, left an indelible mark on Sufi literature with his epic masterpiece, the "*Mathnawī*." This work, often referred to as the "jewel in the Persian language," is celebrated for its poetic brilliance and profound spiritual depth. Rūmī's poetic genius and ability to convey profound spiritual insights have captivated readers throughout the ages, inspiring and influencing countless Sufi writers and poets who followed in his footsteps. His poetry transcends the boundaries of any single faith, embracing a universal spiritual perspective that has resonated with

people from diverse backgrounds. Rūmī's impact on Sufi literature and his contribution to the larger realm of spiritual expression is widely recognized, making him one of the most influential Sufi poets of his time and a figure whose legacy continues to inspire and guide spiritual seekers across the globe.

Everything other than love for the most beautiful God
though it be sugar- eating.
What is agony of the spirit?
To advance toward death without seizing
hold of the Water of Life.

(Nicholson, 1989, trans., pp.52-56)

This poem conveys a powerful message about the primacy of love for the Divine, the "most beautiful God," over all other pursuits. The speaker asserts that anything other than this love, even if it is as sweet as sugar, is ultimately meaningless. The true "agony of the spirit," the speaker suggests, is to advance toward death without grasping the "Water of Life" - a metaphor for the Divine essence that can quench the soul's thirst. This emphasizes the urgency and importance of cultivating a deep, unwavering love for the Divine, which is the only true path to spiritual fulfillment and liberation. The passage underscores the Sufi belief in the transformative power of divine love and the need to orient one's entire being towards the Beloved.

specific literary traditions and cultural contexts have shaped the development of this genre across different regions. For instance, the Persian poetic tradition, with its intricate use of imagery and symbolism, played a crucial role in the evolution of Sufi verse, particularly during the medieval period. Poets like Rumi drew heavily from the rich tapestry of Persian literature, infusing their works with the lyrical beauty and philosophical depth characteristic of the era. Rumi's *Mathnawī*, often regarded as one of the greatest masterpieces of Sufi literature, exemplifies this synthesis by intertwining personal spirituality with universal themes of love and longing. The influence of Persian aesthetics can be seen in Rumi's use of ghazals and other metaphors, where the interplay of love and metaphysical inquiry invites readers to reflect on the nature of divine connection and the quest for truth.

8.5. Influence of cultural and literary traditions on the development of Sufi poetry

The rich and diverse tradition of Sufi poetry was profoundly shaped by the cultural and literary contexts in which it flourished across the Islamic world. As Sufism spread from its origins in the Middle East to regions as far-reaching as Persia, Central Asia, and Andalusia, Sufi poets drew upon the unique poetic forms, motifs, and techniques of these local literary traditions. In Persia, for instance, Sufi poets such as Rumi and Hafiz incorporated the *ghazal* - a lyrical poem characterized by a repeated refrain - which was a hallmark of the Persian poetic canon. This form, with its capacity for exploring the themes of love, longing, and mystical transformation, became a central vehicle for Sufi verse.

Sufi poets in the Arabic-speaking world, meanwhile, were influenced by the classical *qasida* (ode) structure, with its formal elements of panegyric, description, and moral reflection. They adapted this form to serve as a platform for their spiritual meditations, imbuing it with a distinctly Sufi character. Additionally, Sufi poetry drew inspiration from the rich symbolic and metaphorical language of Sufism's philosophical and theological foundations, as well as from the broader literary symbolism of the Islamic world, such as the motifs of the rose and the wine of divine love. Through this seamless integration of diverse cultural and literary influences, Sufi poetry evolved into a vibrant and multifaceted tradition that continues to captivate readers across the globe.

In the Middle East, for example, the Arabic poetic tradition provided a foundational framework for early Sufi poets. The pre-Islamic use of *qasida*, or ode, with its intricate rhyme schemes and thematic exploration of love, loss, and longing, was adapted by Sufi poets to express their mystical experiences and yearning for the Divine. Poets like Al-Hallaj and Ibn Arabi drew from classical Arabic poetry, employing its stylistic conventions while infusing their works with spiritual depth. Al-Hallaj's use of paradoxical language and vivid imagery exemplifies how he transformed traditional forms to articulate the complexities of divine love and the soul's journey toward unity with God.

Similarly, the influence of Persian literature on Sufi poetry cannot be overstated, particularly during the medieval period when Persian became the *lingua franca* of intellectual and artistic expression

in much of the Islamic world. The ghazal, a poetic form that originated in Arabic but flourished in Persian literature, became a primary vehicle for Sufi expression. Poets like Rumi and Hafez utilized the ghazal's lyrical structure to convey profound spiritual insights, often employing metaphors of love and beauty to explore the relationship between the seeker and the Divine. Rumi's "Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi," for instance, reflects the rich cultural tapestry of Persian literature, blending personal narrative with universal themes of love and transcendence.

Moreover, the impact of regional cultural influences extends beyond Persian poetry, as Sufi poets have engaged with the local traditions and languages of the communities in which they lived. In the Indian subcontinent, for example, the fusion of Sufi thought with regional vernacular languages like Punjabi and Urdu gave rise to a unique poetic expression that resonated deeply with the local populace. Poets such as Bulleh Shah and Amir Khusro skillfully blended Sufi themes with folk elements, creating verses that not only conveyed profound spiritual insights but also celebrated the cultural identity of their audiences. Bulleh Shah's poetry, rich in metaphor and accessible language, reflects the syncretic nature of Sufism in India, where Islamic and Hindu motifs coexist, illustrating the universal nature of the spiritual quest:

The mullah and the torch-bearer
Hail from the same stock;
They give light to others,
And themselves are in the dark.

(Shāh, 1986, p. 57)

In "*The Mullah and the Torch-Bearer*," Shāh Bullhe critiques the hypocrisy and superficiality of religious and societal leaders who, despite guiding others, remain spiritually unenlightened themselves. The mullah symbolizes rigid adherence to dogma, while the torch-bearer represents those who possess knowledge but fail to practice it authentically. The poem highlights the irony of their roles, prompting readers to question the nature of true enlightenment and the significance of self-awareness. However, the juxtaposition of their roles with the phrase "and themselves are in the dark" reveals a deeper irony. This line highlights a critical perspective on those who occupy positions of authority and responsibility; despite their outward role as sources of enlightenment, they may lack true understanding or spiritual illumination

within themselves. Ultimately, it emphasizes that genuine illumination comes from within, urging individuals to seek personal truth rather than relying solely on external authorities for guidance.

9.5. Research Interests in Authenticating Sufi Poetry

We can say that there is no significant interest in the scholarly authentication (*tahqiq*) of Sufi poetry, whether classical or contemporary (affiliated with Sufi orders). We cannot say that there is an established Arab or Western school or approach that has taken upon itself the task of authenticating Sufi poetry, except for some individual attempts - which we have mentioned and will refer to in this research paper. This has resulted in the publication of Sufi poems in editions that are not scholarly authenticated, sometimes leading to the texts being inaccurate and imprecise, which has contributed to the loss or distortion of part of the meaning and depth, especially since we are not dealing with ordinary poems, but rather Sufi poems imbued with symbolism based on referring to deep emotional, aesthetic, and religious experiences. These are experiences that have rejected being measured by the logic of the apparent and have instead clearly declared their belonging to the logic of taste, the heart, the inner, the allusion, and the symbol.

If we move from Sufi poetry to Sufi writings in general, we will find that the majority of them - unfortunately - have not been subjected to scholarly and methodological authentication (*tahqiq*) in the true sense of the word. We can provide very clear examples of the most important Sufi books, such as: *Hilyat al-Awliya'*, *al-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah*, *'Awarif al-Ma'arif*, and many other works. The methodological and scholarly errors in the authentication of some Sufi writings are strikingly evident, to the extent that even the title of the book itself has been distorted! Not to mention that most of the Lebanese editions of Sufi writings - unfortunately - have been derived from the initial editions of the Orientalists without mentioning the publishing houses responsible for that. This indicates a clear lack of serious academic interest in the scholarly authentication of Sufi poetry and writings, both classical and contemporary, which has led to the publication of many texts in an inaccurate and imprecise manner, contributing to the loss or distortion of part of their meaning and depth, especially given the symbolic and allusive nature of Sufi literature.

The Sufi books that have not received scholarly attention in terms of their verification and publication have contained Sufi poems and verses, and the lack of their verification has led to the neglect of these poems that are included within them. The lack of scholarly efforts to critically edit and publish these Sufi texts has resulted in the poetic works contained within them being overlooked and unavailable for broader academic study and appreciation. Bringing these Sufi poems to light through rigorous scholarly analysis and publication would contribute significantly to a deeper understanding and preservation of this rich literary tradition.

6- CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the exploration of Sufi poetry through the lens of Prof. Scattolin and Prof. Ahmed Hasan Anwar’s *Spiritual Manifestations in Islam* reveals a profound and transformative tradition that transcends cultural and religious boundaries. This literary form, originating in the early Hijri centuries, has evolved into a rich tapestry of spiritual expression that reflects the deepening insights of Sufi mystics and their quest for divine connection. By weaving together themes of divine love, spiritual paradoxes, and the mystical journey, Sufi poets have crafted verses that resonate with the universal human longing for meaning and connection. The significance of this tradition lies not only in its historical evolution but also in its contemporary relevance. Modern Sufi poets and scholars continue to draw upon the rich legacy of their predecessors, infusing their works with innovations that address the needs and sensibilities of today’s audiences. This ensures that Sufi poetry remains a vital source of inspiration, offering guidance on the path to self-discovery and spiritual awakening. As we navigate a world often marked by division and intolerance, the universal appeal of Sufi poetry serves as a beacon of hope. It invites us to embrace our shared humanity and recognize the divine essence that unites us all. Ultimately, the enduring legacy of Sufi poetry stands as a testament to the transformative power of the human spirit, encouraging us to embark on our own journeys of self-exploration and to uncover the divine spark within. In doing so, we not only honor the rich tradition of Sufi poetry but also cultivate a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings, fostering a more compassionate and harmonious world.

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