

## **Waḥdat al-Wujūd and Waḥdat al-Shahūd: Some Observations with special reference to Punjabi Poetry**

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There are the Sufis who believe waḥdat al-wujūd, the ‘esoteric Monism’ or the ‘Unity of Existence’ or the ‘Oneness of Being’ or ‘Unity in Essence of the Creator and the Created. According to them, there is nothing in being except God. He is the only reality and all finite beings have no substantial reality of their own. He is one and all, the all comprehensive, eternal, absolute, self-existing Being and the independent existence of finite beings if only an appearance – appearance without genuine reality.<sup>1</sup>

The founder of this School of mystics is Ibn al-‘Arabi (d. 1240).<sup>2</sup> Probably, no mystic of Islam has surpassed him in influence, fecundity or abstruseness. He maintains that Being is one – it is that which exists by itself and is conceived by itself. This Being is God. God is further believed to be the Absolute Knower. In knowing Himself God knows all things in Himself and distinguishes them from Himself as objects of His knowledge. That is to say ‘knowing’ implies ‘knowledge’ and the ‘object known’. God knows His own thought, and these beings are the objects of His knowledge. How if God’s knowledge is perfect, His ideas or thought, are also perfect in every way. But God has knowledge, is a knower, from eternity. Therefore his ideas are also eternal. They are uncreated. Knowing is an attribute of God and cannot, therefore, be separated from Him. It constitutes the very essence of God. As God is eternal or uncreated, His knowledge (or ideas) is also uncreated or eternal. The difference, of course, does not impair the essential unity of knowledge, knower and known, but is nonetheless inherent in the name of things.

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As an alternative or corrective of the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, a specific recognized doctrine is known and that is *waḥdat al-shuhūd* ‘the oneness of witnessing’, or ‘unity of vision’ or ‘testimonial monism’. According to this doctrine, the world was a reflection and not a manifestation or revelation of the Divine Being and that existence is separate from and external to existence.

With the Wujūdiyyah School, the external existence is the existence of God Himself. With the Shuhūdiyyah, the ‘*adam* (Non-being) is conjoined with the reflex or illumination of the *asmā*’ (names) and *ṣifāt* (attributes) of God.<sup>3</sup>

This doctrine is explicitly expounded by Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1642), who is generally known as the Mujaddid-i-Alf-i Thani, “the Renovator of the Second Millenium” (after the hijra) and “Imam Rabbani”, “the divinely-inspired leader”.<sup>4</sup> He believes that Ibn al-‘Arabi’s *waḥdat al-wujūd* contravenes the religion of the Holy Prophet, and does not present the final truth which is revealed in mystic experience.<sup>5</sup> He challenged Ibn al-‘Arabi’s philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujūd* and evolved the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, which effectively opposed the Marījan Molé has interpreted Sirhindi’s theology and explains the *tawḥīd-i wujūdi* as an expression of ‘*ilm al-yaqīn*, and *tawḥīd-i shuhūdi* as ‘*ain al-yaqīn*. That means that the *tawḥīd-i wujūdi* is the intellectual perception of the Unity of Being, or rather of the non-existence of anything but God, whereas in *tawḥīd-i shuhūdi* the mystic experiences the union by the “view of certitude” not as ontological union of man and God. The mystic eventually realizes, by *ḥaqqu al-yaqīn*, that they are different and yet connected in a mysterious way.<sup>6</sup>

Amidst the heated and hairsplitting discussions about the two salient mystical schools, Shah Waliullah (d. 1762) attempted to reconcile these antithetic theories. In his *Maktūb-i Madani*,<sup>7</sup> he has pointed out that if we leave simile and metaphor aside, these two doctrines - *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd* – are essentially the same. He rightly maintains that if there is any difference between them, it is so insignificant that it need not be taken into account. In order to bridge the gap, he stressed that if facts are taken into account and studied without the grab of similes and metaphors, both the doctrines will appear almost the same.<sup>8</sup>

The influence of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s thoughts, that is to say, the impact of his ideas of Unity of Being on Indian Sufism in general and on this metaphysical vision of nature in particular was very profound. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the interest in the works of moderate Sufism, the theosophy of Ibn al-‘Arabi and his disciples became popular in India. A number of commentaries on his *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and many other books were composed to explain his theories. From the late 15<sup>th</sup> century on, his ideas became influential everywhere in this sub-continent. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami,<sup>9</sup> Bruce B. Lawrence,<sup>10</sup> William C. Chittick<sup>11</sup> and some other eminent scholars have underlined the central role played by Sufis such as Gesu Darāz (d.1422) and ‘Abdul Quddūs Gangohi (d. 1538) and observed how Indian Sufism was tided by the theories of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, although there were wide divergences of opinion about Ibn al-‘Arabi’s thought among the different Sufi orders.

In pre-Mughal India, Sufis were slow to respond to the penumbrous doctrine ascribed to Ibn al-‘Arabi and labeled *waḥdat al-wujūd*; but during the latter half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century immigrants from Iran and Central Asia who were convinced of the truth of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s teachings, joined the Chishti *silsila*. They felt an urge to propound Ibn al-‘Arabi’s construction of *taṣawwuf*; others felt an urge to refute it. Both groups resorted to writing.

Of the three saints of the 14<sup>th</sup> century – Mas‘ud Bakk, Ashraf Jahangir Simnāni and Gesu Darāz, the first two were supporters of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, though Mas‘ud was less explicitly an advocate of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s views than Simnāni. Gesu Darāz was wary of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s speculations.

Fakhr ad-Din’s (d.1289) *Lama‘āt* has gained special fame, both because it gives poetical expression to Ibn al-‘Arabi’s monistic speculations and because it was imitated by Jami in his 15<sup>th</sup> century work by the same name. Bu Ali Shah Qalander of Panipat (d. 1371), a pupil of Simnāni, taught the principles of *waḥdat al-wujūd* with contagious zeal.

During the reigns of Akbar (1556-1605) and Jahangir (1605-1628), numerous Sufis were writing books and treatises that one might classify as belonging to the school of Ibn al-‘Arabi. Indeed, by this time, it was difficult to write anything on Sufi theory without employing the technical terminology of this school. This is not to say that all these authors had

necessarily read any of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s works or considered themselves his followers, but rather that his school of thought had played a major role in shaping the intellectual language of the day.

Although Sirhindi may be the best-known Sufi author of this period, this should not lead us to think that he was also the most important or the most representative, as we find many other authors of the same period deserving serious study and perhaps much more worthy than Sirhindi of being considered important. Among such Sufis, probably the most careful student of Ibn al-‘Arabi’s works and the most faithful representative of his school of thought was Moḥibb Allah Ilaḥābadi, who died 24 years after Sirhindi, in 1648. His many works in Persian and Arabic are based squarely on the text of the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*. He also wrote two commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, a short commentary in Arabic and much longer commentary in Persian.

Under the influence of the theory of Unity of Existence, some Indian mystics might see some points of correspondence between Sufi thought and the Vedānta system of Hindu philosophy and attempt to bring about and approximation between Muslim and Hindu thought. In addition, various sects, confraternities and movements owed their existence to the interaction of Islam and Hinduism such as the Bhakti movement, Kabir-Panthi sects, Guru Nanak’s Sikhism, the Bhagat poets,<sup>12</sup> the pioneering efforts of Akbar the Great (d. 1605) for promoting the inter-faith dialogue<sup>13</sup> and the “mystical humanism” of Dara Shikoh.<sup>14</sup>

In India, Islam and Hinduism have remained oil and water, though a subtle influence has perhaps been exercised upon late Islamic mysticism and magic by the surrounding Hindu atmosphere. On the contrary, the individual endeavours of Akbar and Dara Shikoh to introduce Hindu thought and speculation in Persian literature have remained isolated.<sup>15</sup>

This subject has been scarcely touched. Louis Massignon and Clément Huart annotated and translated into French the conversations between Dara Shikoh and Baba Lal Das, held in Lahore in 1652.<sup>16</sup> Abdul Wali has dealt with the relations between Dara Shikoh and Sarmad.<sup>17</sup> The most fundamental discussion, however, of Indian influence on Sufism, seems Max Hörten’s book which still provides useful information on the subject.<sup>18</sup>

No doubt, all those divergent factors contributed a lot in promoting the process of medley of Sufism and Hinduism – a current that was viewed with great distrust by the orthodox, but they deeply influenced some of the creative minds of our local languages including Punjabi.

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Punjabi Sufi poetry is the manifestation of mysticism for which this land of Punjab has an unbroken tradition. Punjabi has a powerful altruistic Sufi poetry which has moulded, and is moulded by, the simple, unpretentious, patient and hardy character of the Punjabi people.

Punjabi Sufi poetry's central teaching is the closeness of God to man. This teaching of closeness of man's soul to the godhead has evolved into the Sufi doctrine of their identity and is popularly known as *waḥdat al-shuhūd*. Man would realize this all pervading unity but on account of distractions of worldly love apprehends it only now and then in glimpses. A second characteristic of Sufi teaching and practice in the Punjab has been the complete absence of religious intolerance. A third characteristic of Sufi teaching is stress on meaning and spirit of religious exercise rather than on their outward form.

The number of Punjabi Sufi poets is myriad. It is regretted that here only a few of them can be referred and that too, perfunctorily. *Waḥdat al-shuhūd* was the main platform of Punjabi Sufi poets on drawing antagonism from their own co-religionists.<sup>19</sup>

As the main theoretician and author of the concept of Unity of Being, Ibn al-ʿArabi was probably completely unknown among the writers in the Punjab, and hence his influence as a Sufi thinker can only be indirectly acknowledged. Nonetheless, certain theoretical works based on his doctrines, ascribed to mystics otherwise considered to be simple ecstasies, can be found. One such mystic was Sultan Bāhū (d. 1691), a poet who came from the district of Jhang in the southern Punjab and whose *siḥarfi* (Thirty-Letter poem) is known to everyone who reads Punjabi, as it contains one of the finest treatments of the relationship between man and God. His lovely short poem with the refrain: "All flakes of cotton are equally white", depicts the extremely rich symbolism utilized by the Indo-Muslim Sufi poets to express their feelings for the Unity of Being. Using this finest image,<sup>20</sup> another famous poet, Bulhe Shah (d. 1752) explains

that the differentiations of the oneness of the cotton (=being) into a multiplicity of garments (=phenomena) occurs only when cotton is spun and woven into various types of fabrics. In another image (in the last verse of this *siḥarfi*), Sultan Bāhū notes that although silver (=Reality of Being) is but a single metal, the silversmith makes of it various types of ornaments (=multiplicity) such as nose-rings, earrings, necklaces, anklets and bracelets, yet leaving the reality of the basic silver, are unaltered.

There was very little theoretical treatment of the topos of Unity of Being by the Persianate Sufi poets writing in the vernacular languages in Mughal India. These folk poets very much endorsed the idea that “everything is Him” (ہمہ اوست), i.e. that everything is God, who manifests Himself both through the much-referred Sufi martyr Ḥallāj (d. 922) and also through the judge who gave the infamous *fatwa* for his execution. One finds lengthy poems in Punjabi in which the single, undifferentiated unity of everything, the divine immanence which embraces all beings, is expressed. However, as Annemarie Schimmel explains “in studying such poetry it should always be kept in mind that it is meant to be sung and audited by the ear of the heart, rather than theologically dissected for the purposes of uncovering doctrinal truths couched in the orthodox language of dogmatic theology.”<sup>21</sup>

A prominent feature of Punjabi mysticism is the combination of the theme of Unity of Being with the spiritualized interpretation of the native romantic folk tales like *Hīr Rānjha* etc. The insertion of these folk tales into the context of mystical thought is a typical tradition of the religious poetry of the province.<sup>22</sup> The poets of these tales, in the course of their narratives, indulge in a didactic note and sometimes use them as vehicles for the expression of mystical experiences thereof. Bulhe Shah, surnamed “the Rumi of Punjab”, relates the story of the love of Rānjha, son of a wealthy landlord, for Hīr, daughter of the king of Jhang, with whom he is finally spiritually united (only in death, of course), in the following verse Hīr appears as a symbol of the woman-soul longing for the divine beloved, Rānjha.

*Rānjha Rānjha kardi ni main aapay Rānjha hoee.*  
(Repeating Rānjha, Rānjha in my mind, I myself have become Rānjha)<sup>23</sup>

Wāris Shah, after relating the whole story of Hīr and Rānjha (completed around 1794) gives an interesting mystic interpretation. Is the Hīr is the soul and Rānjha the body and thus the whole incident assumes a new shape and meaning for the reader. “Hīr is our soul” – one of the characteristics of Punjabi poetry is that the longing soul is always depicted as a woman.

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Ḥallāj’s name (frequently used in Punjabi poetry as Manṣūr or Shah Manṣūr) occurs in most of the mystical Punjabi songs of the poets like Bulhe Shah and Hāshim Shah as the representative of love, contrasted with the dry asceticism of the theologians and the bookishness of the mullahs. Most of the mystic poets described him as a pantheist and also recognized his strong religious commitment and saw in him one of the few who had attained to an experience of the divine, higher than that of ordinary people. In our classical and Punjabi poetry, Manṣūr has been portrayed as a staunch aspirant of freedom of the masses from the yoke of the tyrant rulers. Poets like Sultan Bāhū, Baba Ghulam Farīd, Bulhe Shah, Shah Husain and Wāris Shah challenged the ruling theocracy. They wrote about common people, their sufferings and hopes. Most of the Sufi poets used mystical poetry to express resistance against the clergy who colluded with the establishment.<sup>24</sup>

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In our popular Sufi tradition, there exists a sizeable minority of mystics and ascetics who live in an “idiorhythmic” way – footloose, free and independent, estranged from civil or religious establishments, pursuing a life of renunciation. These unusual individuals are usually known as Qalandar, Malang, Fakir, Majzub, Sāin, Sadāsuhāgan, or Malāmati.<sup>25</sup> They often belong to fraternities or orders classified as *bi-shar‘* (“outside the religious law”), which ignore or even deliberately break the rules of the *shari‘a*. With their peripatetic lifestyle, practice of celibacy, use of drugs and flamboyant dress, these *bi-shar‘* dervishes are not only opposed to the norms of scriptural, orthodox Islam, but are also quite different from the more “sober mainstream” Sufis and dervishes who belong to the established, well-organized *bā-shar‘* fraternities.

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The rustic and very idiomatic Punjabi was an excellent media to express mystical feelings, though not mystical theories. The mystical works centre around the endless yearning of the soul, burning love, longing for pain, which is the very blessing of God. These themes were sung time and again in forms inherited from the Indian past.

While discussing the general characteristics of Punjabi poetry, A.C. Woolner (d. 1936) very rightly points out that "...its imagery is drawn from country life and simple crafts, One might make a comparison with the Provençal poetry of Southern France, Provençal also is more old-fashioned than French; its poetry belongs to the countryside, to the farm and tiny market town and is instinct with a simplicity and sincerity that is rare in the more classical languages. Punjabi poetry signs mainly of Love and God. By the Sufis these two themes are interwoven..."<sup>26</sup>

Primarily, Punjab's economy is entirely based on agriculture and all its geographical and ecological factors have played a vital role in shaping the life-patterns and mind-set of the people. The rural patterns of daily life affected all their simple intellectual pursuits including poetry in which mysticism is more predominant than materialism. It is devoid of all complexity of expression, the artificial and ornate style, the jingle of words and bombastic language. Instead, the Sufi poets tried to convey the devotional emotions in a simple and understandable way of expression. Similes were taken from everyday life and were used with skillful restraint. Though this poetry lacked dazzling brilliancy and poetic conceit, but it always maintained dignity, order, and sincerity. Briefly, one can say that its chief merit lies exclusively in its beauty of fundamentals and not in its details.

In fact, Punjabi Sufi poetry was nursed in the towns and villages; therefore it bore impressions of its surroundings. So, its whole imagery is generally taken from the daily life of the villagers, from gardening and planting. In Punjab, a preference for the motif of spinning<sup>27</sup> and weaving can be observed, a natural propensity in a cotton-growing country. In the three processes of cotton manufacture – clearing, spinning and weaving – the Sufi poets made ample use of the vocabulary of this industry and took similes from it. According to them, the world was a spinning-wheel and the villager's own self or soul the young girl who was supposed to spin and prepare her dowry. His good actions were like spinning, and the yarn

thus spun was his dowry which, like the young girl, he would take to the husband (God) and the result was the eternal union with the Beloved (God). Further, the *zīkr* (remembrance) could also be compared to the act of spinning (the aptness of the image is enhanced by the similarity of the humming sounds). Such spinning can turn the heart into fine, precious thread which God will buy on Doomsday for a good price.

Dr. Muhammad Iqbal (d. 1938), a reputed poet-philosopher of Pakistan, was born in Sialkot (1877) and his mother-tongue was Punjabi but he never wrote anything in this language.<sup>28</sup> Through his Persian and Urdu poetry, he deeply influenced our approach to Sufism. He seems to have had mystic tendencies from his early life but in his later age, much development took place. According to some Iqbalists, there are pantheistic strains discernible in Iqbal's works produced during the last decade of his life. Perhaps, *waḥdat al-wujūd* continued to lurk in his subconscious and surfaced at the time of inspired moments ... To Iqbal, religion with mystic touch was hollow.<sup>29</sup>

#### References

1. For various meanings given to the term *waḥdat al-wujūd*, in the primary and the secondary sources, see William C. Chittick, "Rumi and waḥdat al-wujūd", in *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 70-111 and also *ibid.*, "waḥdat al-shuhūd", article in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, XI (Leiden, 2002), pp. 37-39 (= Hereafter EI<sup>2</sup>).  
"The various attempts by scholars to explain *waḥdat al-wujūd* by employing labels such as "pantheism" or "esoteric monism" succumb to the same assumption and fail to clarify what exactly was an issue in the texts." (Chittick, "waḥdat al-shuhūd", p. 37).
2. "..., if Ibn al-'Arabi was considered its founder, this simply indicates that his writings mark Sufism's massive entry into the theoretical discussions of *wujūd* that before him had been the almost exclusive preserve of the philosophers and the *mutakallimun*." (*ibid.*).
3. Valiuddin, "Reconciliation between Ibn Arabi's waḥdat al-wujūd and the waḥdat al-shuhūd", pp. 43f.
4. EI<sup>2</sup>, I (1960), pp. 297-298 (art. Sh. Inayatullah).
5. Ansari, "Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi on Waḥdat 'I-Shuhud", p. 77.
6. Molé, *Les mystiques musulmans* (Paris, 1965).
7. "... *fi taḥqīq waḥdat al-wujūd wa-waḥdat al-shuhūd wa-jam'a bain al-qaulain*." See Fazl-e Mahmud Asiri, "Shah Waliullah's treatise on waḥdat al-wujūd and waḥdat al-shuhūd", Eng. tr. In *Studies in Urdu Literature*, Santiniketan 1954, pp. 115-146; and *ibid.*, "Shah Waliullah's views on waḥdat al-wujūd and waḥdat al-shuhūd" (in *Al-Hikama*, I, 1964), pp. 22-64; and EI<sup>2</sup>, II (1965), pp. 254-255 (art. A. S. Bazmee Ansari); and M. Ikram Chaghatai (ed.), *Shah Waliullah. His Religious and Political Thought* (Lahore, 2005), pp. 487-525 and Shah Waliullah (Urdu), Lahore, 2017.

8. Some of the learned members of Shah Waliullah's family continued this process of reconciliation between *waḥdat al-wujūd* and *waḥdat al-shuhūd*, like Shah Rafi'uddin (d. 1833), see his *Damgh al-Bāṭil* (Gunjanwala 1995 [1976]). The eldest son of Shah Waliullah, Shah Abdul Aziz (d. 1824) believed in *ūst* (اوست), instead of *hama ūst* (همه اوست) and *hama az ūst* (همه از اوست).
9. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami, "Shaykh Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi and Hindustan" [in Urdu], published in *Burhān*, Jan. 1950, pp. 9-25, mostly focused on the responses by Indian Muslims to the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.
10. Bruce B. Lawrence, *Notes from a Distant Flute. The Extant Literature in Pre-Mughal Indian Sufism* (Teheran, 1978).
11. See William C. Chittick, "The School of Ibn 'Arabi", in S. H. Nasr / O. Leaman (eds.), in *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London, 1996), pp. 510-523; and Chittick, "Notes on Ibn al-'Arabi's Influence in the Subcontinent", in *The Muslim World*, 82, issue 3-4 (1992), pp. 218-241.
12. In the first phase of the history of Punjabi literature (1526-1657), the major factor that dominated the poetry was the Bhakti cult. Most of the Muslim Sufi poets preferred to express their emotional life in Bhakti terminology. The main characteristics of the poetry of this period was that it was especially composed to be set on music. As time rolled on, the Bhakti element weakened and gave way to Persian vocabulary and idiom. In the second phase (1657-1707), the mystic trends had become very popular. Sufism liberated itself from the shackles of Bhakti terminology, so did the poetry of the period. Thus Punjabi poetry came more in line with 'Central Asian' poetry.  
See for detail Sayyid 'Ali Abbās Jalālpuri, *waḥdat al-wujūd and Punjabi Poetry* [in Punjabi] (Lahore, 2010 [1973]); and Abdul Ghafūr Quraishi, *The Story of Punjabi Literature* [in Punjabi] (Lahore, 199 [1987]), pp. 119-122; and Qazi Sarfraz Husain, *Tasawwuf and the Punjabi Poets* [in Punjabi], (Lahore, 1973); and Lajwanti Rama Krishna, *Punjabi Sufi Poets, A.D. 1460-1900* (London, 1938), comprehensively reviewed by Johann Fück in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 43 (1940), cols. 1-11, "Die sufische Dichtung in der Landessprache des Punjab". See also Waheed Quraishi, "A Survey of Punjabi Language and Literature", in *Oriental Studies* (Lahore, 1969), pp. 29 ff.; and Mohindar Pal Kohli, *The Influence of the West on Punjabi Literature* (Delhi, no date).
13. Akbar the Great built *Ibādat Khāna*, literally "House of Worship", the name of the chamber or building where religious discussions among the followers of different religions were held under the patronage of Akbar, first in Fathpur Sikri (1575) and then in Lahore, in his about fifteen years' stay in this city.
14. *ET*<sup>2</sup>, III, s.v.
15. Yusuf Husain Khan, *L'Inde mystique au moyen age. Hindous et Musulmans* (Paris, 1929).
16. Louis Massignon / Clément Huart (ed., trans.), *Les entretiens de Lahore (entre le prince Dara Shikuh et l'ascète hindou Baba Lal Das)* (Paris, 1932), with translation and annotations.
17. Cf. Abdul Wali's article in *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Calcutta), vol. xx.
18. Max Hörten, *Indische Strömungen in der islamischen Mystick* (Heidelberg, 1927-28). Its two parts contain bibliographical references.
19. Syed Abdul Quddus, *Punjab. The Land of Beauty, Love and Mysticism* (Karachi, 1992).

20. *The Abyāt of Sultan Bahoo*. Rendered into English by Maqbool Elahi (Lahore 1967, with text and notes); *Abyāt of Hazrat Sultan Bahu*. English translation (with text) by J. R. Puri and Kirpal Singh. Ed. By Maqsood Saqib (Lahore, 2004).
21. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1978).
22. *The adventures of Hir and Ranjha*. A translation into English prose by C. F. Osborne. Ed. By Mumtaz Hasan. (Karachi, 1966); R. C. Temple, *The Legends of the Panjab*. 3 vols. (reprinted, Patiala, 1962); Mulk Raj Anand, *Folk Tales of Punjab* (New Delhi, 1989); Sayyid Fayyaz Mahmud, *Folk Ramances of Pakistan* (Lahore, 1995); Denis Matringe, *Hir Waris Shah*, in M. Waseem (ed.), *On Becoming an Indian Muslim. French Essay on Aspects of Syncretism* (New Delhi, 2003), pp. 208-237.  
 “The basis of Punjabi literature is the ancient folk-lore which grew up among the peasants and linked closely with them are the verse romances. The folk romances form the basis of all Punjabi mystic poetry ...and it was to these romances that the Sufis turned to explain their mystic experience; for to them they had a deep spiritual meaning. In all the romances, the herolines stand for the Sufis who are continually striving for union with the Beloved; to the Punjabi Sufi, as to the mystics, the Beloved is God.” Quoted from Abdul Salam Khurshid, “Punjabi Literature”, in S. M. Ikram and P. Spear (eds.), *The Cultural Heritage of Pakistan* (Karachi, 1955), pp. 151-155.
23. Najim Hosain Syed, *Recurrent Patterns in Punjabi Poetry* (Lahore, 1968), (“Bulleh Shah and the Artist’s vision of History”, pp. 63-72”); *Bulleh Shah. A Selection*. Rendered into English verse by Taufiq Rifat (Lahore, 1982). In the introduction, the translator comments (p. 8): “Muslim scholars, their hackles up, first as assiduously pushed him back into the Islamic fold by pasting on him the exclusive label of Ibn Arabi’s *waḥdat al-wujūd*. But beyond and above, this communal humbug, Bulleh Shah seems to incorporate and transcend all the contemporary influences till only a voice remains, the essential and irreducible inflection of the speech of the common man living under the yoke of political and religious tyranny.”; *Bulleh Shah, Within Reach*. Vol. I: Text in Nasta‘liq, Gurumukhi, Roman, Extensive Glossary, poetic translation line-by-line discourse. By Muzaffar A. Ghaffar (Lahore, 2005-2006), 3 vols. (“The conception of *waḥdat al-wujūd* also took part in the minds of the people as a reaction against the vertically rigid Caste System...” (p. 9). Robin Rinehart, “Interpretations of the Poetry of Bullhe Shah” (in: *International Journal of Punjab Studies*, 3/i (New Delhi, 1999), pp. 45-63; *ibid.*, “The Portable Bullhe Shah. Biography, categorization and the authorship in the study of Punjab Sufi Poetry” in *Numen*, 46/i (1999), pp. 43-87.
24. See Shafqat Tanvir Mirza, *Resistance themes in Punjabi Literature* (Lahore, 1992). About the worldwide influence of Ḥallāj, R. A. Nicholson writes: “The power and vitality of this man’s ideas are attested by the influence which they exerted upon his successors. His ashes were scattered, swept away, as he prophesied, by rushing winds and running waters, but his words lived after him and we see them, all through the Middle Ages, rising like sparks and kindling to new life.” –*The Idea of Personality in Sufism* (Cambridge, 1923), p. 28.
25. Cf. Katherina Ewing, “Malangs of the Punjab: Intoxication or *Adab* as the path to God?” in *Moral Conduct and Authority. The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, (Ed.) B. D. Metcalf (California, 1984), pp. 357-371; Jürgen Wasim Frembgen, *Reise zu Gott. Sufis und Derwische in Islam* (München, 2000); *ibid.*: “From Dervish to

- Saint: Constructing Charisma in Contemporary Pakistani Sufism”, in: *The Muslim World*, April 2004, pp. 245-257; *ibid.*: *The Friends of God. Sufi Saints in Islam. Poster Art from Pakistan* (Karachi, 2006).
26. A.C. Woolner, preface to L. Rama Krishna’s book *Punjabi Sufi Poets, A.D. 1460-1900* (London, 1938), p. vii.  
Similarly, Abdul Salam Khurshid (“Punjabi Literature”, p. 151) states: “For their inspiration the writers of the Punjab have turned to the life of the villages rather than the towns, and it is from the happenings of the everyday life of the Punjab peasants that they have drawn their imagery.”  
In Bulleh Shah’s deceptively simple idioms and metaphors of Punjabi countryside we discover highly sophisticated Sufi ideals of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, *fanā* (annihilation of the individual ego) and *baqā* (subsistence in the Divine). Cf. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh, *Of Sacred and Secular Desire. An Anthology of Lyrical Writings from the Punjab* (London, 2012), p. 71.
27. The basic metaphor of Bulleh Shah is the *Charkha*, the spinning-wheel to which the career of a rural woman was predominantly linked. When she attains awareness she is taught to spin and is constantly rebuked when she neglects the spinning-wheel and is lured into games more natural to her age. After puberty, she is constantly reminded that she must spin more than an average output because whatever she spins would become a part of her dowry which she will take to her permanent home (means hereafter).  
See for details: I. Serebryakov, *Punjabi Literature. A Brief Outline* (Moscow, 1968), “Poetry of Weavers and Tanners” (pp. 24-32); Dr. Mohan Singh Diwana, *History of Punjabi Literature (1100-1932)* (reprinted, Lahore 1982); Darshan Singh Miani, *Studies in Punjabi Poetry* (Delhi, 1979); Sant Singh Sekhon and Kartar Singh Duggal, *A History of Punjabi Literature* (New Delhi, 1992), pp. 64-73; and C. L. Narang, *History of Punjabi Literature* (Delhi, no date), pp. 150-162.  
Many Punjabi poets have written separate poems under the titles “charkha-nāma”, “chakki-nāma” and “lori-nāma” and in their terminology explained the very intricate aspects of Sufism, particularly the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, in a simple way.
28. For a curious question asked by Rabindranath Tagore (d. 1941) to Afzal Iqbal during their meeting in Shantiniketan, see my book entitled *Iqbal and Tagore. New Avenues for their Comparative Study* (Lahore, 2008).
29. Iqtidar Husain Siddiqi, “Iqbal and Islamic Tasawwuf (with special reference to Ibn al-Arabi’s Sufism)”, in *Sufism and Indian Mysticism* in Akhtarul Wasey / Farhat Ehsas (eds.), *Sufism and Indian Mysticism* (New Delhi, 2011), pp. 307-317.

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### **Abstract**

Ibn al-‘Arabi’s influence reached Christian philosophers and mystics of the Middle Ages and has a deep effect on the mystical thought of some of the leading Sufis of the Indian Subcontinent. The views propounded by Ibn al-‘Arabi, were not left unchallenged. His books are carefully read and commented upon in detail.

Finally a new School, Shuhūdiyyah, emerged which maintained that the Not-being (‘adam) is conjoined with the reflex or illumination of the Names (‘asma”) and Attributes (ṣifāt) of God. This doctrine is clearly expounded by Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624 A.D.) who is generally known as Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Thani (the Renewer of Islam in the second millennium of the Islamic Era).

Apart from the conflicting views of the staunch followers of Wujūdiyyah and Shuhūdiyyah Schools, an attempt has also been made to find a way of reconciliation between them. As Shah Waliullah (1703-1762 A.D.), a revolutionary Indian thinker and theologian, points out that if we leave simile and metaphor aside.

These two Schools of Sufism deeply influenced many eminent representatives of Indian intelligentsia, especially the mystical poets of the Subcontinent e.g. Mir Dard, a follower of both Ibn al-‘Arabi and Ahmad Sirhindi and the great Punjabi poet, Bullhe Shah, who was surnamed “the Rumi of Punjab”.

**Keywords:** Ibn al-‘Arabi, Shuhūdiyyah, Ahmad Sirhindi, Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Thani, Wujūdiyyah, Mir Dard, Bullhe Shah, The Rumi of Punjab