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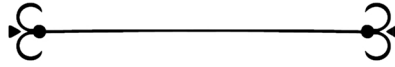
COLLECTED SUFI TEXTS



By Delphi Classics, 2025

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Collected Sufi Texts



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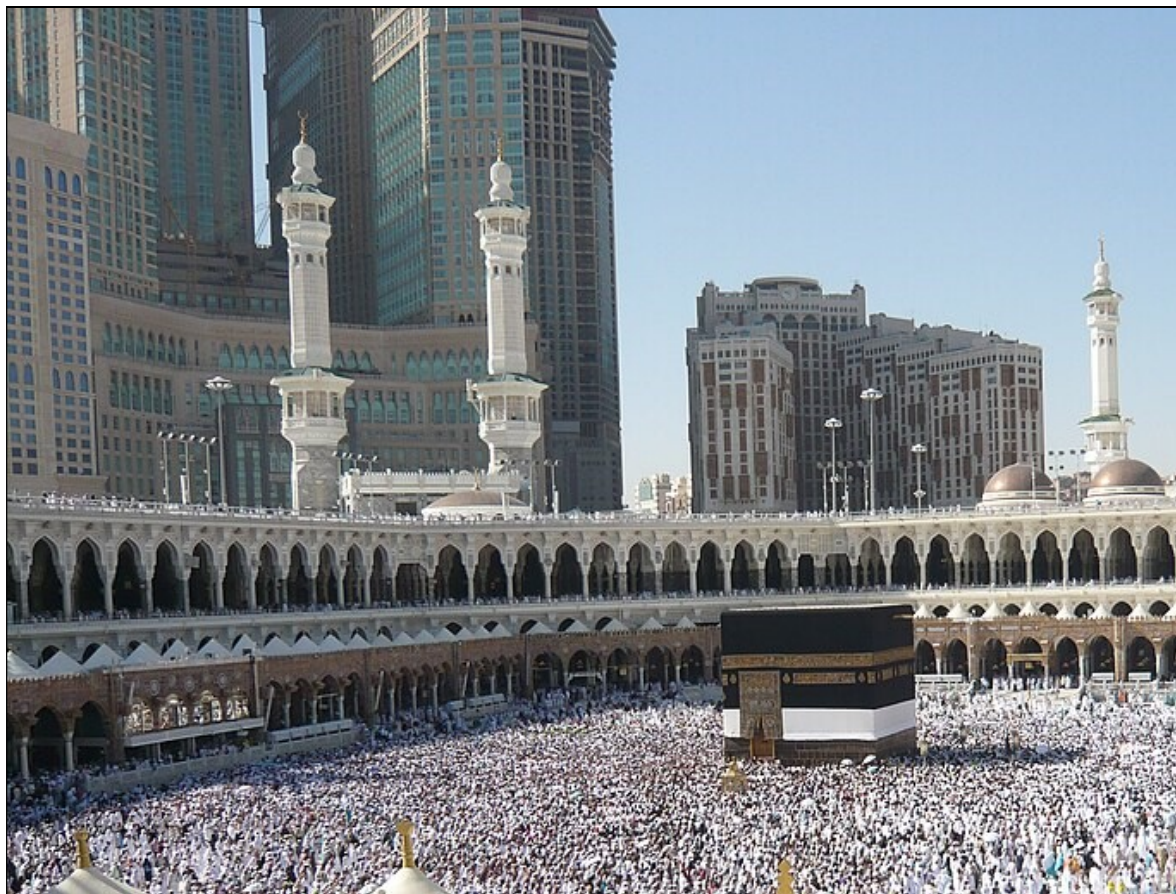
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The Translations



Islam's holiest site, the Kaaba in Mecca, Hejaz region — Sufism likely emerged in the Hejaz, present day Saudi Arabia, and it has existed as a practice of Muslims from the earliest days of Islam, even predating some sectarian divides.

Kashf al-Mahjub by Ali al-Hujwiri (c. 1070)



Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson, 1911

Sufism is a mystic body of religious practice that is characterised by a focus on Islamic purification, spirituality, ritualism and asceticism. Practitioners of Sufism are referred to as “Sufis” and historically typically belonged to orders known as *tariqa* — congregations formed around a grand *wali* (saint), who would be the last in a chain of successive teachers linking back to Muhammad, with the objective of undergoing *tazkiya* (self purification) and the hope of reaching the spiritual station of *ihsan*. The ultimate aim of Sufis is to seek the pleasure of God by endeavoring to return to their original state of purity and natural disposition, known as *fitra*.

Sufism emerged early in Islamic history, partly as a reaction against the expansion of the early Umayyad Caliphate (661-750) and principally under the tutelage of Hasan al-Basri. Although Sufis were opposed to dry legalism, they strictly observed Islamic law and belonged to various schools of jurisprudence and theology. Although the overwhelming majority of Sufis, both pre-modern and modern, remain adherents of Sunni Islam, certain strands of Sufi thought transferred over to the ambits of Shia Islam during the late medieval period. This particularly happened after the Safavid conversion of Iran under the concept of *irfan*. Sufis also played an important role in spreading Islam through their missionary and educational activities. An important focus of Sufi worship is *dhikr* — the practice of remembrance of God.

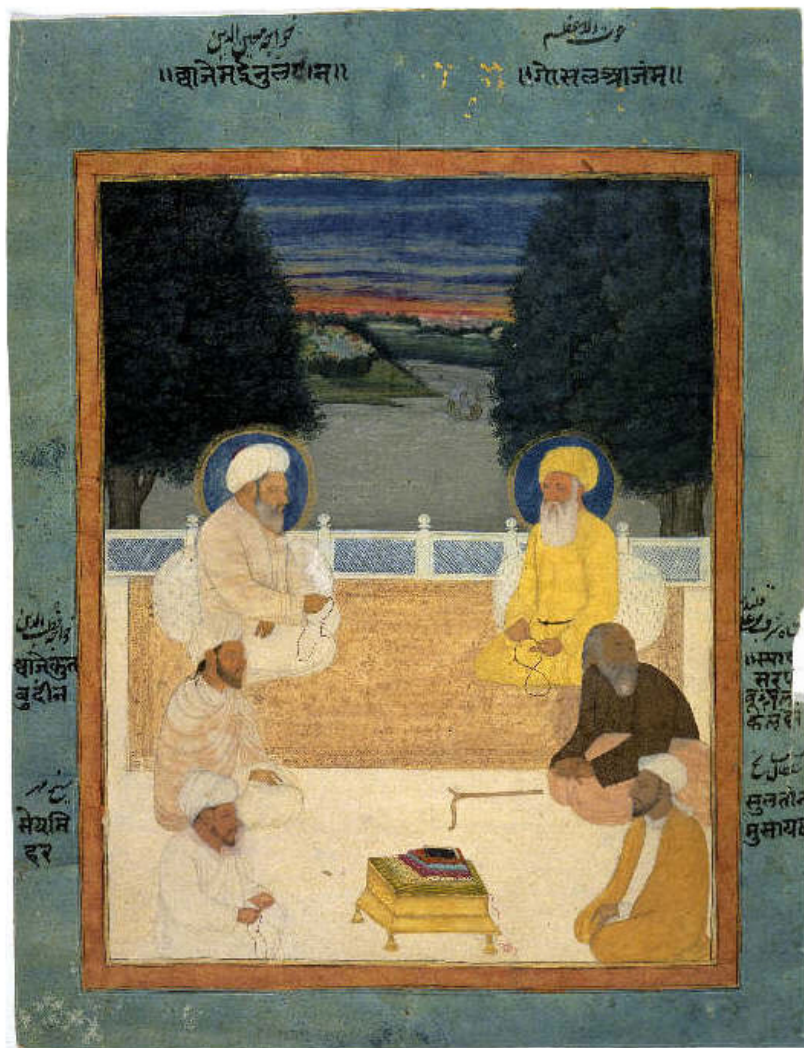
Ali al-Hujwiri (c. 1009-1072), known reverentially as ‘Data Sahib’, was an Islamic scholar and mystic, who authored *Kashf al-Mahjub*, the earliest treatise on Sufism in the Persian language. Born in the Ghaznavid Empire, al-Hujwiri is believed to have contributed “significantly” to the spread of Islam in South Asia through his preaching. He is venerated as the primary saint of Lahore, Pakistan by the Sufis of the area and his tomb-shrine, known as the Data Darbar, is one of the most frequented shrines in South Asia. According to the autobiographical information recorded in the treatise, al-Hujwiri travelled widely through the Ghaznavid Empire and beyond, spending considerable time in Baghdad, Nishapur, and Damascus, where he met many of the pre-eminent Sufis of his time. In matters of jurisprudence, he received training in the Hanafi rite of orthodox Sunni law under various teachers. As for his Sufic training, he was linked through his teacher al-Khuttalī to al-Husri, Abu Bakr al-Shibli (d. 946), and Junayd al-Baghdadi (d. 910). For a short period, the mystic is believed to have lived in Iraq. His brief marriage during this period is said to have been unhappy. Eventually, he settled in Lahore, where he died with the reputation of a renowned preacher and teacher. After his death, Ali Hujwiri was unanimously regarded as a great saint by popular acclaim.

In composing this treatise, al-Hujwiri was inconvenienced by the loss of his books he had left at Ghazna, Afghanistan. It must have taken him a considerable amount of time to compile the work. He met many Sufis during his travels, although he followed the Junaidia order of Junayd Baghdadi and hence, mystically accepted ‘sobriety’ over ‘intoxication’ to illustrate that no one is exempted from following the religious law. He upheld that Sufism was thoroughly consistent with the principles of Islam:

“I have met over three hundred saints in Khorasan alone residing separately and who had such mystical endowments that a single one of them would have been enough for the whole world. They are the luminaries of love and prosperity on the spiritual sky of Khorasan.”

Kashf al-Mahjub reveals that al-Hujwiri was fond of religious spiritualism and divine wisdom. Undoubtedly, he was in search of spiritual perfection. The treatise addresses the definition of Sufism and states that in this age, people are only obsessed with seeking pleasure and not interested to satisfy God. It is the intention of his great work to address this failing. Over the centuries, *Kashf al-Mahjub* has been translated into numerous languages. Manuscripts are preserved in several European libraries. It has been lithographed in Lahore, Pakistan. Reynold A. Nicholson is famous for translating *Kashf al-Mahjub* into English, as well as several other prominent Sufi texts. He was the teacher of Persian and Arabic language in the University of Cambridge.

One of the oldest extant Sufi works, *Kashf al-Mahjub* is a substantial treatise aiming to set forth a complete system of Sufism. This is achieved partly by the discussion of acts and saying of the great figures of the past, and partly by discussion of features of doctrine and practice and the examination of the different views adopted by various Sufi schools. The text is enlivened by episodes from the author's own intriguing experiences.



Six Sufi masters, as depicted on a painting in opaque watercolour and gold, c.1760

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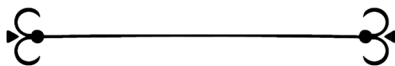
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The translator, Reynold A. Nicholson

PREFACE.



THIS TRANSLATION OF the most ancient and celebrated Persian treatise on Šúfiism will, I hope, be found useful not only by the small number of students familiar with the subject at first hand, but also by many readers who, without being Orientalists themselves, are interested in the general history of mysticism and may wish to compare or contrast the diverse yet similar manifestations of the mystical spirit in Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. The origin of Šúfiism and its relation to these great religions cannot properly be considered here, and I dismiss such questions the more readily because I intend to deal with them on another occasion. It is now my duty to give some account of the author of the *Kashf al-Mahjúb*, and to indicate the character of his work.

Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alí b. 'Uthmán b. 'Alí al-Ghaznawí al-Jullábí al-Hujwírí¹ was a native of Ghazna in Afghanistan.² Of his life very little is known beyond what he relates incidentally in the *Kashf al-Mahjúb*. He studied Šúfiism under Abu 'l-Faḍl Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Khuttalí³ (p. 166), who was a pupil of Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Ḥuṣrú (ob. 371 A.H.), and under Abu 'l-'Abbás Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ashqání or al-Shaqání⁴ (p. 168). He also received instruction from Abu 'l-Qásim Gurgání⁵ (p. 169) and Khwāja Muẓaffar⁶ (p. 170), and he mentions a great number of Shaykhs whom he had met and conversed with in the course of his wanderings. He travelled far and wide through the Muḥammadan empire from Syria to Turkistán and from the Indus to the Caspian Sea. Among the countries and places which he visited were Ádharbáyaján (pp. 57 and 410), the tomb of Báyzíd at Bistám (p. 68), Damascus, Ramla, and Bayt al-Jinn in Syria (pp. 94, 167, 343), Tús and Uzkand (p. 234), the tomb of Abú Sa'id b. Abi 'l-Khayr at Mihna (p. 235), Merv (p. 401), and the Jabal al-Buttam to the east of Samarcand (p. 407). He seems to have settled for a time in 'Iráq, where he ran deeply into debt (p. 345). It may be inferred from a passage on p. 364 that he had a short and unpleasant experience of married life. Finally, according to the *Riyāḍ al-Awliyá*, he went to reside at Lahore and ended his days in that city. His own statement, however, shows that he was taken there as a prisoner against his will (p. 91), and that in composing the *Kashf al-Mahjúb* he was inconvenienced by the loss of the books which he had left at Ghazna. The date of his death is given as 456 A.H. (1063-4 A.D.) or 464 A.H. (1071-2 A.D.), but it is likely that he survived Abu 'l-Qásim al-Qushayrí, who died in 465 A.H. (1072 A.D.). Rieu's observation (*Cat. of the Persian MSS. in the British Museum*, i, 343) that the author classes Qushayrí with the Šúfis who had passed away before the time at which he was writing, is not quite accurate. The author says (p. 161): "Some of those whom I shall mention in this chapter are already deceased, and some are still living." But of the ten Šúfis in question only one, namely, Abu 'l-Qásim Gurgání, is referred to in terms which leave no doubt that he was alive when the author wrote. In the *Safinat al-Awliyá*, No. 71, it is stated that Abu 'l-Qásim Gurgání died in 450 A.H. If this date were correct, the *Kashf al-Mahjúb* must have been written at least fifteen years before Qushayrí's death. On the other hand, my MS. of the *Shadharát al-Dhahab* records the death of Abu 'l-Qásim Gurgání under the year 469 A.H. a date which appears to me more probable, and in that case the statement that the author survived Qushayrí may be accepted, although the evidence on which it rests is mainly negative, for we cannot

lay much stress on the fact that Qushayrī's name is sometimes followed by the Moslem equivalent for "of blessed memory". I conjecture, then, that the author died between 465 and 469 A.H.⁷ His birth may be placed in the last decade of the tenth or the first decade of the eleventh century of our era, and he must have been in the prime of youth when Sultan Maḥmūd died in 421 A.H. (1030 A.D.). The *Risāla-i Abdāliyya*,⁸ a fifteenth century treatise on the Muḥammadan saints by Ya'qūb b. 'Uthmān al-Ghaznawī, contains an anecdote, for which it would be hazardous to claim any historical value, to the effect that al-Hujwīrī once argued in Maḥmūd's presence with an Indian philosopher and utterly discomfited him by an exhibition of miraculous powers. Be that as it may, he was venerated as a saint long after his death, and his tomb at Lahore was being visited by pilgrims when Bakhtāwar Khān wrote the *Riyāḍ al-Awliyā* in the latter half of the seventeenth century.

In the introduction to the *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* al-Hujwīrī complains that two of his former works had been given to the public by persons who erased his name from the title-page, and pretended that they themselves were the authors. In order to guard against the repetition of this fraud, he has inserted his own name in many passages of the present work. His writings, to which he has occasion to refer in the *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, are —

1. A *dīwān* (p. 2).
2. *Minḥāj al-dīn*, on the method of Ṣūfīism (p. 2). It comprised a detailed account of the Ahl-i Ṣuffa (p. 80) and a full biography of Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (p. 153).
3. *Asrār al-khiraq wa 'l-ma'ūnāt*, on the patched frocks of the Ṣūfīs (p. 56).
4. *Kitāb-i fanā ū baqā*, composed "in the vanity and rashness of youth" (p. 60).
5. A work, of which the title is not mentioned, in explanation of the sayings of Ḥusayn b. Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (p. 153).
6. *Kitāb al-bayān li-ahl al-'iyān*, on union with God (p. 259).
7. *Baḥr al-qulūb* (p. 259).
8. *Al-Ri'āyat li-ḥuqūq Allah*, on the Divine unity (p. 280).
9. A work, of which the title is not mentioned, on faith (p. 286).

None of these books has been preserved.

The *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*,⁹ which belongs to the later years of the author's life, and, partly at any rate, to the period of his residence in Lahore, was written in reply to certain questions addressed to him by a fellow-townsmen, Abū Sa'īd al-Hujwīrī. Its object is to set forth a complete system of Ṣūfīism, not to put together a great number of sayings by different Shaykhs, but to discuss and expound the doctrines and practices of the Ṣūfīs. The author's attitude throughout is that of a teacher instructing a pupil. Even the biographical section of the work (pp. 70-175) is largely expository. Before stating his own view the author generally examines the current opinions on the same topic and refutes them if necessary. The discussion of mystical problems and controversies is enlivened by many illustrations drawn from his personal experience. In this respect the *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* is more interesting than the *Risāla* of Qushayrī,

which is so valuable as a collection of sayings, anecdotes, and definitions, but which follows a somewhat formal and academic method on the orthodox lines. No one can read the present work without detecting, behind the scholastic terminology, a truly Persian flavour of philosophical speculation.

Although he was a Sunnī and a Ḥanafite, al-Hujwīrī, like many Ṣūfīs before and after him, managed to reconcile his theology with an advanced type of mysticism, in which the theory of “annihilation” (*faná*) holds a dominant place, but he scarcely goes to such extreme lengths as would justify us in calling him a pantheist. He strenuously resists and pronounces heretical the doctrine that human personality can be merged and extinguished in the being of God. He compares annihilation to burning by fire, which transmutes the quality of all things to its own quality, but leaves their essence unchanged. He agrees with his spiritual director, al-Khuttalī, in adopting the theory of Junayd that “sobriety” in the mystical acceptance of the term is preferable to “intoxication”. He warns his readers often and emphatically that no Ṣūfīs, not even those who have attained the highest degree of holiness, are exempt from the obligation of obeying the religious law. In other points, such as the excitation of ecstasy by music and singing, and the use of erotic symbolism in poetry, his judgment is more or less cautious. He defends al-Ḥallāj from the charge of being a magician, and asserts that his sayings are pantheistic only in appearance, but condemns his doctrines as unsound. It is clear that he is anxious to represent Ṣūfīism as the true interpretation of Islam, and it is equally certain that the interpretation is incompatible with the text.¹⁰ Notwithstanding the homage which he pays to the Prophet we cannot separate al-Hujwīrī, as regards the essential principles of his teaching, from his older and younger contemporaries, Abū Sa’id b. Abi ‘l-Khayr and ‘Abdallāh Anṣārī.¹¹ These three mystics developed the distinctively Persian theosophy which is revealed in full-blown splendour by Farīd al-dīn ‘Aṭṭār and Jalāl al-dīn Rūmī.

The most remarkable chapter in the *Kashf al-Mahjūb* is the fourteenth, “Concerning the Doctrines held by the different sects of Ṣūfīs,” in which the author enumerates twelve mystical schools and explains the special doctrine of each.¹² So far as I know, he is the first writer to do this. Only one of the schools mentioned by him, namely, that of the Malāmātīs, seems to be noticed in earlier books on Ṣūfīism; such brief references to the other schools as occur in later books, for example in the *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā*, are probably made on his authority. The question may be asked, “Did these schools really exist, or were they invented by al-Hujwīrī in his desire to systematize the theory of Ṣūfīism?” I see no adequate ground at present for the latter hypothesis, which involves the assumption that al-Hujwīrī made precise statements that he must have known to be false. It is very likely, however, that in his account of the special doctrines which he attributes to the founder of each school he has often expressed his own views upon the subject at issue and has confused them with the original doctrine. The existence of these schools and doctrines, though lacking further corroboration,¹³ does not seem to me incredible; on the contrary, it accords with what happened in the case of the Mu’tazilites and other Muḥammadan schismatics. Certain doctrines were produced and elaborated by well-known Shaykhs, who published them in the form of tracts or were content to lecture on them until, by a familiar process, the new doctrine became the pre-eminent feature of a particular school. Other schools might then accept or reject it. In some instances sharp controversy arose, and the novel teaching gained so little approval that it was confined to the school of its author or was embraced only by a small minority of the Ṣūfī brotherhood. More frequently it would, in the course of time, be drawn into the common stock and reduced to its proper level. Dr. Goldziher has observed that Ṣūfīism cannot be regarded as a

regularly organized sect within Islam, and that its dogmas cannot be compiled into a regular system.¹⁴ That is perfectly true, but after allowing for all divergences there remains a fairly definite body of doctrine which is held in common by Šúfis of many different shades and is the result of gradual agglomeration from many different minds.

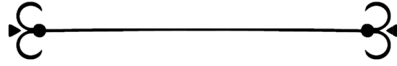
It is probable that oral tradition was the main source from which al-Hujwírí derived the materials for his work. Of extant treatises on Šúfiism he mentions by name only the *Kitáb al-Luma* by Abú Našr al-Sarráj, who died in 377 or 378 A.H. This book is written in Arabic and is the oldest specimen of its class. Through the kindness of Mr. A. G. Ellis, who has recently acquired the sole copy that is at present known to Orientalists, I have been able to verify the reading of a passage quoted by al-Hujwírí (p. 341), and to assure myself that he was well acquainted with his predecessor's work. The arrangement of the *Kashf al-Mahjúb* is partially based on that of the *Kitáb al-Luma*, the two books resemble each other in their general plan, and some details of the former are evidently borrowed from the latter. Al-Hujwírí refers in his notice of Ma'rúf al-Karkhí (p. 114) to the biographies of Šúfis compiled by Abú 'Abd al-Raḥmán al-Sulamí and Abu 'l-Qásim al-Qushayrí. Although he does not give the titles, he is presumably referring to Sulamí's *ṭabaqát Al-šúfiyya* and Qushayrí's *Risála*.¹⁵ The *Kashf al-Mahjúb* contains a Persian rendering of some passages in the *Risála* of Qushayrí, with whom al-Hujwírí seems to have been personally acquainted. A citation from 'Abdalláh Anšári occurs on p. 26.

Manuscripts of the *Kashf al-Mahjúb* are preserved in several European libraries.¹⁶ It has been lithographed at Lahore, and Professor Schukovski of St. Petersburg is now, as I understand, engaged in preparing a critical text. The Lahore edition is inaccurate, especially in the spelling of names, but most of its mistakes are easy to emend, and the text agrees closely with two MSS. in the Library of the India Office (Nos. 1773 and 1774 in Ethé's *Catalogue*), with which I have compared it. I have also consulted a good MS. in the British Museum (Rieu's *Catalogue*, i, 342). The following abbreviations are used: L. to denote the Lahore edition, I. to denote the India Office MS. 1773 (early seventeenth century), J. to denote the India Office MS. 1774 (late seventeenth century), and B. to denote the British Museum MS. Or. 219 (early seventeenth century). In my translation I have, of course, corrected the Lahore text where necessary. While the doubtful passages are few in number, there are, I confess, many places in which a considerable effort is required in order to grasp the author's meaning and follow his argument. The logic of a Persian Šúfi must sometimes appear to European readers curiously illogical. Other obstacles might have been removed by means of annotation, but this expedient, if adopted consistently, would have swollen the volume to a formidable size.

The English version is nearly complete, and nothing of importance has been omitted, though I have not hesitated to abridge when opportunity offered. Arabists will remark an occasional discrepancy between the Arabic sayings printed in italics and the translations accompanying them: this is due to my having translated, not the original Arabic, but the Persian paraphrase given by al-Hujwírí.

REYNOLD A. NICHOLSON.

INTRODUCTION.



IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE.

O Lord, bestow on us mercy from Thyself and provide for us a right course of action!

Praise be to God, who hath revealed the secrets of His kingdom to His Saints, and hath disclosed the mysteries of His power to His intimates, and hath shed the blood of Lovers with the sword of His glory, and hath let the hearts of Gnostics taste the joy of His communion! He it is that bringeth dead hearts to life by the radiance of the perception of His eternity and His majesty, and reanimates them with the comforting spirit of knowledge by divulging His Names.

And peace be upon His Apostle, Muḥammad, and his family and his companions and his wives!

‘Alí b. ‘Uthmán b. ‘Alí al-Jullábí al-Ghaznawí al-Hujwírí (may God be well pleased with him!) says as follows: —

I have asked God’s blessing, and have cleared my heart of motives related to self, and have set to work in accordance with your invitation — may God make you happy! — and have firmly resolved to fulfil all your wishes by means of this book. I have entitled it “The Revelation of The Mystery”. Knowing what you desire, I have arranged the book in divisions suitable to your purpose. Now I pray God to aid and prosper me in its completion, and I divest myself of my own strength and ability in word and deed. It is God that gives success.

SECTION.

Two considerations have impelled me to put my name at the beginning of the book: one particular, the other general.¹⁷ As regards the latter, when persons ignorant of this science see a new book, in which the author’s name is not set down in several places, they attribute his work to themselves, and thus the author’s aim is defeated, since books are compiled, composed, and written only to the end that the author’s name may be kept alive and that readers and students may pronounce a blessing on him. This misfortune has already befallen me twice. A certain individual borrowed my poetical works, of which there was no other copy, and retained the manuscript in his possession, and circulated it, and struck out my name which stood at its head, and caused all my labour to be lost. May God forgive him! I also composed another book, entitled “The Highway of Religion” (*Minháj al-Dín*), on the method of Šúfiism — may God make it flourish! A shallow pretender, whose words carry no weight, erased my name from the title page and gave out to the public that he was the author, notwithstanding that connoisseurs laughed at his assertion. God, however, brought home to him the unblessedness of this act and erased *his* name from the register of those who seek to enter the Divine portal.

As regards the particular consideration, when people see a book, and know that its author is skilled in the branch of science of which it treats, and is thoroughly versed therein, they judge its merits more fairly and apply themselves more seriously to read and remember it, so that both author and reader are better satisfied. The truth is best known to God.

SECTION.

In using the words “I have asked God’s blessing” (p. 3), I wished to observe the respect due to God, who said to His Apostle: “*When you read the Koran, take refuge with God from the stoned Devil*” (Kor. xvi, 100). “To ask blessing” means “to commit all one’s affairs to God and to be saved from the various sorts of contamination”. The Prophet used to teach his followers to ask a blessing (*istikhárat*) just as he taught them the Koran. When a man recognizes that his welfare does not depend on his own effort and foresight, but that every good and evil that happens to him is decreed by God, who knows best what is salutary for him, he cannot do otherwise than surrender himself to Destiny and implore God to deliver him from the wickedness of his own soul.

SECTION.

As to the words “I have cleared my heart of all motives related to self” (p. 3), no blessing arises from anything in which selfish interest has a part. If the selfish man succeeds in his purpose, it brings him to perdition, for “the accomplishment of a selfish purpose is the key of Hell”; and if he fails, he will nevertheless have removed from his heart the means of gaining salvation, for “resistance to selfish promptings is the key of Paradise”, as God hath said: “*Whoso refrains his soul from lust, verily Paradise shall be his abode*” (Kor. lxxix, 40-1). People act from selfish motives when they desire aught except to please God and to escape from Divine punishment. In fine, the follies of the soul have no limit and its manœuvres are hidden from sight. If God will, a chapter on this subject will be found at its proper place in the present book.

SECTION.

Now as to the words “I have set to work in accordance with your invitation, and have firmly resolved to fulfil all your wishes by means of this book” (p. 3), since you thought me worthy of being asked to write this book for your instruction, it was incumbent on me to comply with your request. Accordingly it behoved me to make an unconditional resolution that I would carry out my undertaking completely. When anyone begins an enterprise with the intention of finishing it, he may be excused if imperfections appear in his work; and for this reason the Prophet said: “The believer’s intention is better than his performance.” Great is the power of intention, through which a man advances from one category to another without any external change. For example, if anyone endures hunger for a while without having intended to fast, he gets no recompense (*thawáb*) for it in the next world; but if he forms in his heart the intention of fasting, he becomes one of the favourites of God (*muqarrabán*). Again, a traveller who stays for a time in a city does not become a resident until he has formed the intention to reside there. A good intention, therefore, is preliminary to the due performance of every act.

SECTION.

When I said that I had called this book “The Revelation of the Mystery” (p. 3), my object was that the title of the book should proclaim its contents to persons of insight. You must know that all mankind are veiled from the subtlety of spiritual truth except God’s saints and His chosen friends; and inasmuch as this book is an elucidation of the Way of Truth, and an explanation of mystical sayings, and an uplifting of the veil

of mortality, no other title is appropriate to it. Essentially, unveiling (*kashf*) is destruction of the veiled object, just as the veil destroys revelation (*mukáshafat*), and just as, for instance, one who is near cannot bear to be far, and one who is far cannot bear to be near; or as an animal which is generated from vinegar dies when it falls into any other substance, while those animals which are generated from other substances perish if they are put in vinegar. The spiritual path is hard to travel except for those who were created for that purpose. The Prophet said: "Everyone finds easy that for which he was created." There are two veils: one is the "veil of covering" (*hijáb-i raynî*), which can never be removed, and the other is the "veil of clouding" (*hijáb-i ghaynî*), which is quickly removed. The explanation is as follows: one man is veiled from the Truth by his essence (*dhát*), so that in his view truth and falsehood are the same. Another man is veiled from the Truth by his attributes (*ṣifat*), so that his nature and heart continually seek the Truth and flee from falsehood. Therefore the veil of essence, which is that of "covering" (*raynî*), is never removed. *Rayn* is synonymous with *khatin* (sealing) and *ṭab'* (imprinting). Thus God hath said: "*By no means: but their deeds have spread a covering (rána) over their hearts*" (Kor. lxxxiii, 14); then He made the sense of this manifest and said: "*Verily it is all one to the unbelievers whether thou warnest them or no; they will not believe*" (Kor. ii, 5); then he explained the cause thereof, saying: "*God hath sealed up their hearts*" (Kor. ii, 6). But the veil of attributes, which is that of "clouding" (*ghaynî*), may be removed at times, for essence does not admit of alteration, but the alteration of attributes is possible. The Ṣúfî Shaykhs have given many subtle hints on the subject of *rayn* and *ghayn*. Junayd said: *Al-rayn min jumlat al-waṭanát wa 'l-ghayn min jumlat al-khaṭarát*, "*Rayn belongs to the class of abiding things and ghayn to the class of transient things.*" *Waṭan* is permanent and *khaṭar* is adventitious. For example, it is impossible to make a mirror out of a stone, though many polishers assemble to try their skill on it, but a rusty mirror can be made bright by polishing; darkness is innate in the stone, and brightness is innate in the mirror; since the essence is permanent, the temporary attribute does not endure.

Accordingly, I have composed this book for polishers of hearts which are infected by the veil of "clouding" but in which the substance of the light of the Truth is existent, in order that the veil may be lifted from them by the blessing of reading it, and that they may find their way to spiritual reality. Those whose being is compounded of denial of the truth and perpetration of falsehood will never find their way thither, and this book will be of no use to them.

SECTION.

Now with reference to my words "knowing what you desire, I have arranged the book in divisions suitable to your purpose" (p. 3), a questioner cannot be satisfied until he makes his want known to the person whom he interrogates. A question presupposes a difficulty, and a difficulty is insoluble until its nature is ascertained. Furthermore, to answer a question in general terms is only possible when he who asks it has full knowledge of its various departments and corollaries, but with a beginner one needs to go into detail, and offer diverse explanations and definitions; and in this case especially, seeing that you — God grant you happiness! — desired me to answer your questions in detail and write a book on the matter.

SECTION.

I said, “I pray God to aid and prosper me” (p. 3), because God alone can help a man to do good deeds. When God assists anyone to perform acts deserving recompense, this is truly “success given by God” (*tawfiq*). The Koran and the Sunna attest the genuineness of *tawfiq*, and the whole Moslem community are unanimous therein, except some Mu’tazilites and Qadarites, who assert that the expression *tawfiq* is void of meaning. Certain Şúfi Shaykhs have said, *Al-tawfiq huwa ’l-qudrat ’ala ’l-ṭá’at ’inda ’l-isti’mál*, “When a man is obedient to God he receives from God increased strength.” In short, all human action and inaction is the act and creation of God: therefore the strength whereby a man renders obedience to God is called *tawfiq*. The discussion of this topic, however, would be out of place here. Please God, I will now return to the task which you have proposed, but before entering on it I will set down your question in its exact form.

SECTION.

The questioner, Abú Sa’íd al-Hujwírí, said: “Explain to me the true meaning of the Path of Şúfiism and the nature of the ‘stations’ (*maqámát*) of the Şúfis, and explain their doctrines and sayings, and make clear to me their mystical allegories, and the nature of Divine Love and how it is manifested in human hearts, and why the intellect is unable to reach the essence thereof, and why the soul recoils from the reality thereof, and why the spirit is lulled in the purity thereof; and explain the practical aspects of Şúfiism which are connected with these theories.”

ANSWER.

The person questioned, ‘Alí b. ‘Uthmán al-Jullábí al-Hujwírí — may God have mercy on him! — says: —

Know that in this our time the science of Şúfiism is obsolete, especially in this country. The whole people is occupied with following its lusts and has turned its back on the path of quietism (*riḍá*), while the ‘ulamá and those who pretend to learning have formed a conception of Şúfiism which is quite contrary to its fundamental principles.

High and low alike are content with empty professions: blind conformity has taken the place of spiritual enthusiasm. The vulgar say, “We know God,” and the elect, satisfied if they feel in their hearts a longing for the next world, say, “This desire is vision and ardent love.” Everyone makes pretensions, none attains to reality. The disciples, neglecting their ascetic practices, indulge in idle thoughts, which they call “contemplation”.

I myself (the author proceeds) have already written several books on Şúfiism, but all to no purpose. Some false pretenders picked out passages here and there in order to deceive the public, while they erased and destroyed the rest; others did not mutilate the books, but left them unread; others read them, but did not comprehend their meaning, so they copied the text and committed it to memory and said: “We can discourse on mystical science.” Nowadays true spiritualism is as rare as the Philosopher’s Stone (*kibrít-i aḥmar*); for it is natural to seek the medicine that fits the disease, and nobody wants to mix pearls and coral with common remedies like *shalithá*¹⁸ and *dawá al-misk*.¹⁹ In time past the works of eminent *Şúfis*, falling into the hands of those who could not appreciate them, have been used to make lining for caps or binding for the poems of Abú Nuwás and the pleasantries of Jáḥiz. The royal falcon is sure to get its wings clipped when it perches on the wall of an old woman’s cottage. Our contemporaries give the name of “law” to their lusts, pride and ambition they call “honour and learning”, hypocrisy towards men “fear of God”, concealment of anger

“clemency”, disputation “discussion”, wrangling and foolishness “dignity”, insincerity “renunciation”, cupidity “devotion to God”, their own senseless fancies “divine knowledge”, the motions of the heart and affections of the animal soul “divine love”, heresy “poverty”, scepticism “purity”, disbelief in positive religion (*zandaqa*) “self-annihilation”, neglect of the Law of the Prophet “the mystic Path”, evil communication with time-servers “exercise of piety”. As Abú Bakr al-Wásiṭí said: “We are afflicted with a time in which there are neither the religious duties of Islam nor the morals of Paganism nor the virtues of Chivalry” (*aḥlám-i dhawi 'l-muruwwa*). And Mutanabbí says to the same effect: — ²⁰

*“God curse this world! What a vile place for any camel-rider to alight in!
For here the man of lofty spirit is always tormented.”*

SECTION.

Know that I have found this universe an abode of Divine mysteries, which are deposited in created things. Substances accidents, elements, bodies, forms, and properties — all these are veils of Divine mysteries. From the standpoint of Unification (*tawḥíd*) it is polytheism to assert that any such veils exist, but in this world everything is veiled, by its being, from Unification, and the spirit is held captive by admixture and association with phenomenal being. Hence the intellect can hardly comprehend those Divine mysteries, and the spirit can but dimly perceive the marvels of nearness to God. Man, enamoured of his gross environment, remains sunk in ignorance and apathy, making no attempt to cast off the veil that has fallen upon him. Blind to the beauty of Oneness, he turns away from God to seek the vanities of this world and allows his appetites to domineer over his reason, notwithstanding that the animal soul, which the Koran (xii, 53) describes as “commanding to evil” (*ammáratun bi 'l-sú*), is the greatest of all veils between God and Man.

Now I will begin and explain to you, fully and lucidly, what you wish to know concerning the “stations” and the “veils”, and I will interpret the expressions of the technicologists (*ahl-i ṣaná'i*), and add thereto some sayings of the Shaykhs and anecdotes about them, in order that your object may be accomplished and that any learned doctors of law or others who look into this work may recognize that the Path of Šúfiism has a firm root and a fruitful branch, since all the Šúfí Shaykhs have been possessed of knowledge and have encouraged their disciples to acquire knowledge and to persevere in doing so. They have never been addicted to frivolity and levity. Many of them have composed treatises on the method of Šúfiism which clearly prove that their minds were filled with divine thoughts.

ENDNOTES

¹ Julláb and Hujwír were two suburbs of Ghazna. Evidently he resided for some time in each of them.

² Notices occur in the *Nafahát al-Uns*, No. 377; the *Safinat al-Awliyá*, No. 298 (Ethé's *Cat. of the Persian MSS. in the Library of the India Office*, i, col. 304); the *Riyáḍ al-Awliyá*, Or. 1745, f. 140a (Rieu's *Cat. of the Persian MSS. in the British Museum*, iii, 975). In the *khátimat al-ṭab'* on the last page of the Lahore edition of the *Kashf al-Mahjúb* he is called Ḥaḍrat-i Dátá Ganj-bakhsh 'Alí al-Hujwírí.

³ *Nafahát*, No. 376. Through al-Khuttalí, al-Ḥuṣrí, and Abú Bakr al-Shiblí the author of the *Kashf al-Mahjúb* is spiritually connected with Junayd of Baghdád (ob. 297 A.H.).

⁴ Ibid. No. 375. The *nisba* Shaqqání or Shaqání is derived from Shaqqán, a village near Níshápúr.

⁵ *Nafahát*, No. 367.

⁶ Ibid. No. 368.

⁷ The date 465 A.H. is given by Ázád in his biographical work on the famous men of Balgrám, entitled *Ma'áthir al-Kiráam*.

⁸ See Ethé's *Cat. of the Persian MSS. in the India Office Library*, No. 1774 (2). The author of this treatise does not call al-Hujwíri the *brother* of Abú Sa'id b. Abi 'l-Khayr, as Ethé says, but his *spiritual* brother (*birádar-i haqíqat*).

⁹ Its full title is *Kashf al-mahjúb li-arbáb al-qulúb* (Hájji Khalífa, v, 215).

¹⁰ The author's view as to the worthlessness of outward forms of religion is expressed with striking boldness in his chapter on the Pilgrimage (pp. 326-9).

¹¹ Many passages from the *Kashf al-Mahjúb* are quoted, word for word, in Jámi's *Nafahát al-Uns*, which is a modernized and enlarged recension of 'Abdalláh Anşári's *Tabaqát al-Şúfiyya*.

¹² A summary of these doctrines will be found in the abstract of a paper on "The Oldest Persian Manual of Şúfiism" which I read at Oxford in 1908 (*Trans. of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions*, i, 293-7).

¹³ Some of al-Hujwíri's twelve sects reappear at a later epoch as orders of dervishes, but the pedigree of those orders which trace their descent from ancient Şúfis is usually fictitious.

¹⁴ *JRAS*. 1904, p. 130.

¹⁵ Cf. however, p. 114, note.

¹⁶ See Ethé's *Cat. of the Persian MSS. in the India Office Library*, i, col. 970, where other MSS. are mentioned, and Blochet, *Cat. des manuscrits persans de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, i, 261 (No. 401).

¹⁷ The author's meaning appears to be that one consideration has a special reference to connoisseurs and competent persons, while the other has a general reference to the public at large.

¹⁸ An electuary used as a remedy for paralysis of the tongue or mouth.

¹⁹ See Dozy, *Supplément*, under *dawá*.

²⁰ Mutanabbí, ed. by Dieterici, p. 662, l. 4 from foot.



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