



SHAIKH IBN AL-ARABI

(رضي الله تعالى عنه)

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على
سيدنا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين

1. INTRODUCTION

Shaikh Ibn Al-Arabi is a well-known, Sahih-ul-Aqeedah, Sufi Shaikh of Ihsan. He is referred as Shaikh al-Akbar because of his contributions in Islamic theology. He has written over 350 books. Most famous among them are (i) 'Fusus al-Hikam' in which he has explained the inner meanings of wisdom of Islamic Prophets, and (ii) Futuhat al-Makkiyya which contains his encyclopedic knowledge about Islamic tradition, reasoning and Islamic insight.

His most famous contributions to Islamic theology are his explanation about (i) The Unity of Existence (وحدة الوجود), and (ii) The Complete Human Being (الإنسان الكامل). These concepts were elaborated by Shaikh Mohammad Abdul Qadeer Siddiqui in his famous book [Islamic Wisdom](#).

These concepts have been further elaborated by me in my book titled '[Allah and His Creatures](#)'.

In this book also, these concepts have been explained in detail in an easy understanding language. I am sure our readers will understand these issues easily and benefit from them in safeguarding their Iman.

Ibn Arabi's teachings are referred as Akbariyya school of thought which influenced many historical and contemporary Sahih-ul-Aqeedah Sufi Shuyookh of Ihsan, like (i) Abdur Rahman Jami (1414-1492), (ii) Shah Waliullah ad-Dahlawi (1703-1762), (iii) Shaikh Mohammad Abdul Qadeer Siddiqui (1871-1962), etc. (رحمته الله عليهم).

There are certain Universal (Perennial) Sufis like (i) Mulla Sadra (1571-1641), (ii) Shah Ni'matullah Wali (1330-1431), (iii) Abdul Hadi Aguéli (1869-1917), (iv) Javad Nurbakhsh (1926-2008), etc., who also claim to have been influenced by his teachings. These Sufis have mixed up mystic teachings of various religions/philosophies in their teachings.

2. BLESSED BIRTH

Abu Abdullah Mohammad, Ibn Ali, Ibn Mohammad, Ibn Al-Arabi al-Hatimi (أبو عبد الله محمد بن علي بن محمد ابن عربي الحاتمي رضي الله تعالى عنه (1165-1240) was born on Wednesday, July 28, 1165 (17 Ramadhan, 568 AH) in Seville, Andalusia (Spain). Shaikh's father belonged to Tai Arab tribe and his mother was from North African Berber tribe.



Andalusia was ruled by Muslims for over 700 years, during 711-1494 CE. Picture shows the Caliphate of Andalusia. Seville is situated in the South of Andalusia. During Shaikh's time, Seville was the center of Islamic learning.

Currently, Seville is the capital and largest city of the Spanish autonomous region of Andalusia. It is situated on the lower reaches of the River Guadalquivir, in the southwest of the Iberian Peninsula.

3. EARLY LIFE

Shaikh was known for his great visionary skills since his childhood. He also possessed great explanatory skills. His spiritual attainments were abundantly visible from an early age. Shaikh wrote, 'as a child I preferred spending more time on religious education rather than play'.

Shaikh studied Islamic sciences from numerous teachers in Andalusia and North Africa. He traveled a great deal and visited various cities of Spain, North Africa and Middle East in search of Sufi Shuyookh of Ihsan and learned under their able guidance.

It is reported that he had his first vision of God in his teens. His father, on noticing a change in him, mentioned this to his friend, philosopher, and judge, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (1126-1198), who showed interest in meeting the young man. In their meeting, Ibn Rushd was greatly impressed and was dumbfounded to know the depth of knowledge of Ibn Arabi. About this meeting, Ibn Arabi said, he learnt to perceive a distinction between formal knowledge of rational thought and the unveiling insights into the nature of things. Later, he adopted Sufism and dedicated his life to the Sufi spiritual path.

Shaikh Abu Madyan Shuaib (1126-1198) was the Grand Shaikh of (i) Shaikh Ibn Arabi, (ii) Shaikh Shadhili (1196-1258), and (iii) Shaikh Muhammad Ba 'Alawi (1178-1232), the founder of Ba' Alawiyya Sufi order of Yemen (رضى الله تعالى عنهم اجمعين).

Shaikh Abu Madyan traveled to many places in search of knowledge, including Makka, Madina, Baghdad, etc. When he was in Baghdad, he had the honor to meet Ghousul Azam Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (رضى الله تعالى عنه). It is reported that he stayed in Khankha-e-Qadriyya for some time and completed his studies under Ghousul Azam.

Ibn Arabi has related an incident which testifies his love and respect for his Grand Shaikh Abu Madyan as follows.

One day I happened to be in a mosque in Seville (Spain) on top of a mountain along with my Shaikh Abu Yakub bin Yakhlaf Qumi al-Abbasi, who had been a companion of my Grand Shaikh Abu Madyan for many years. After Asr prayer, Shaikh said, 'let us return to the town. He mounted his horse and I walked alongside him. Along the way he talked to me of the virtues and marvels (karamaat) of Abu Madyan. I was all ears, and forgot myself entirely, keeping my eyes fixed on his face the whole time. Suddenly he looked at me, smiled and spurring his horse and made me run to keep up with him. I succeeded in doing so. Finally, he stopped, and said to me, 'look what you have left behind.' I looked back and saw that the way along which we had come was full of thorn bushes that reached as high as my chest, and that the ground was also covered with thorns. He said, 'look at your feet!' I looked at them and saw no trace of thorns. He asked, 'look at your clothes?' On them too I found no trace of thorns. Then he said, 'that comes from the grace of our talk about Shaikh Abu Madyan'. **(Ruhul Quds Fi Munasahat an-Nafs by Shaikh Ibn Arabi)**

4. SHAIKH'S TRAVELS

It is reported that in 1198, while in Murcia, he saw a vision which he interpreted as a command to leave Andalusia. Thus, he traveled to Makka in early 1201. Shaikh was 36 years then.

Ibn Arabi wrote, 'in Makka I received a divine command to write the book Al-Futuḥat al-Makkiyyah'. This book was eventually spread to 560 chapters which took him many years to complete. This book is about his inner life and the esoteric practice of Islam as he understood and experienced.

During his stay in Makka, Ibn Arabi met a beautiful young girl. She was the daughter of Shaikh Abu Shuja Zahir. He was struck by the beauty of this girl and fell in love with her. He could not get married to her, but her memories were so dear to his heart that he eternalized them in a collection of love poems titled 'The Interpreter of Yearnings (ترجمان الشواق).

In the introduction to the Tarjuman al-Ashwaq, he wrote, 'Shaikh Abu Shuja Zahir had a virgin daughter, a slender child who captivated anyone who looked upon her and whose presence gave luster to the gatherings. Her name was Nizam (Harmony) and her surname 'Ain ash-shams (Eye of the Sun). She was religious, learned, ascetic, a sage among the sages of the holy places.'

His daring poetical expressions in Tarjuman al-Ashwaq about his beloved created a huge controversy. It drew criticism from Muslim orthodoxy, and they called him a pantheist and prohibited people from reading his poetry. Some scholars loved his poetry so much that they elevated him to the rank 'nearing the prophets'.

He later wrote a long commentary on his poems to prove to his critics that his poetry deals with spiritual truths and not profane love. He wrote 'I took her as a model for the inspiration of the poems, although I was unable to express a lot which my soul experienced and which the company of this young girl awakened in my heart'.

In 1204, Ibn Arabi met Shaykh Majduddīn Ishaq ibn Yūsuf a native of Malatya who was a man of great standing at the Seljuk court. This time Ibn Arabi was travelling north. First, he visited Medina and in 1205 he entered Baghdad. This visit offered him a chance to meet the direct disciples of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (رضي الله تعالى عنه). Ibn Arabi stayed in Madrasa Qadriyya for 12 days because he wanted to visit Mosul to see his friend Ali ibn Abdullah ibn Jami', a disciple of Shaikh Qaḍīb al-Ban (1079-1177). There he spent the month of Ramadhan and composed Tanazzulāt al-Mawṣiliyya (تنزلات الموصلية) and Kitāb al-Jalal wa'l-Jamāl (كتاب الجلال والجمال, "The Book of Majesty and Beauty").

In the year 1206 Ibn Arabi visited Jerusalem, Makka and Egypt. It was his first time that he passed through Syria, visiting Aleppo and Damascus. Later in 1207 he returned to Makka where he continued to study and write, spending his time with his friend Abū Shujā bin Rustem.

When he moved to Fez, in Morocco, Mohammed ibn Qasim at-Tamimi became his spiritual mentor. The next four to five years of Ibn Arabi's life were spent in these lands and he also kept traveling and holding the reading sessions of his works.

When he traveled to Anatolia and Qonya he met a young man, Ṣadruddin al-Qunawī, who became his most important follower and successor. Some people say Al-Qunawi was his

stepson as Ibn Arabi married his mother in Qonya, after the death of his father. From Qonya he traveled to Baghdad and Aleppo in Syria again.

By 1223 his long travels ended, and his fame spread all over the Islamic world. He spent the following 17 years of his life in teaching and writing. In 1229 he wrote his famous work Fusus al-Hikam containing 27 chapters.

Certain concepts of Islamic theology associated with Shaikh Ibn Al-Arabi are discussed below for the benefit of our readers.

5. THE UNITY OF EXISTENCE (وحدة الوجود)

In the understanding of relationship between the creator and creature (عبد و رب), there are six types of people or six schools of thoughts, viz., (i) the People of Textual Rhetoric; (ii) the People of Entrusting; (iii) the People of Interpretation; (iv) the People of Otherness; (v) the People of Monotheism; and (vi) the People of Research.

Ibn Al-Arabi belongs to the fifth category, the people of Monotheism, and this concept is known as 'The Unity of Being or Existence' (وحدة الوجود). He explained this concept in greater detail in his works.

A brief account of these schools of thoughts is given below.

5.1 The people of Textual Rhetoric

The people of Textual Rhetoric say whatever is there in the holy Quran must be accepted in toto without any doubt. There is no need for explanation in it. We do not want to involve in personal efforts in understanding them.

We believe in all the verses of Quran. We do not consider appropriate to translate those words which carry simile. We translate 'Wajha' (of Wajhullahi) as 'face of Allah'; and Yadullahi as 'the hand of Allah' only. We take the literal and textual meanings of the following verses.

It is in Quran - الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى [Rahman is sitting on the Empyrean] (Taha-5).

It is in Quran - وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ [His chair has the expanse of the skies and earth.] (Al-Baqara-255).

Meaning, he needs a massive chair to accommodate his body.

It is in Hadith - Anas (رضى الله تعالى عنه) narrated that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said, 'Hellfire will receive those thrown into it, and it will keep on asking is there anymore?' Until He (Allah) puts down His Foot, whereupon it will say, 'Enough! Enough!' (Bukhari).

From the above Hadith, the foot and leg of Allah are established.

How is the Empyrean (عرش)? How is His chair (كرسى)? How is His face (وجه الله)? How is His Leg? How is His foot? How are his fingers?

The answer to all the above questions is, these are all suitable for Him. We also say, there is no similarity between the physical body of Allah with Human being. His body is known to him. He is sitting on the Empyrean and towards the end of every night, before dawn, He comes to the First Sky and fulfills the objectives of the people who supplicate.

Wahhabis/Salafis/Ahle Hadith/Deobandis and likeminded groups belong to this school of thought. In their textual understanding of the Quran, they have created a Huge Sky God in their minds who has a physical body and is sitting on Arsh, above the skies.

Ibn Baz (1910-1999) the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia wrote, God has (i) a physical body (al-jism), (ii) He is physically sitting on the sky, and (iii) He has limbs, hands, eyes, tongue, face and other body parts.

Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328), one of the founders of Salafism, described the physical characteristics of God as follows.

QUOTE - God settles in a place. He is not everywhere. (ii) He cannot come near His servants. He knows about them only by his knowledge. (iii) He has six directions - up - down - left - right - front - back. (meaning, the Sky God has a physical body). The Sky God is sitting above the skies and his face is in a certain direction. (iv) He has limitations; only he knows about it. Even his place

(dwelling) has a limitation which is on the seventh sky. Thus, the Sky God has two limitations of movements. (v) God needs. (vi) He is divisible (meaning the Gods can be many, but ultimately it is one entity only - this belief is identical to the belief of Christians and Hindus). He has a size (of his body). (vii) He must be creating continuously. He can choose what to create but he cannot choose whether to create or not. (meaning, he is helpless, has no choice but to create continuously). (viii) He is not mixed with his creation but is sitting alone separately on the sky. (ix) He has two real eyes, two real hands, a real (human like) face, foot, legs, and other limbs. His face and other limbs are known to him only. UNQUOTE

Deobandis claim God can lie, and to lie is within His powers. They argue that when people can lie and it is in their power to lie, then to deny this power for Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is apostasy. They claim that there is a difference between saying - 'Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) lies' or Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) can lie, and they believe that Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) can lie.

Ismail Dehelwi, (1779-1831) one of the most famous scholar who is held in high respect by Deobandis wrote, 'to believe Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) to be free from time, place, form and body is a composite innovation. (Izaahul Haqq - Ismail Dehelwi).

5.2 The People of Entrusting

The People of Entrusting leave the meaning and purport of the Word of Allah (the Quran) to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) only. They say, we are the servants of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) who are created by Him. His being is primordial/eternal, and our existence is temporary. Our deeds are both good and bad. We believe in the clear message of Quran which has been understood by us, i.e., we believe in the versus of clear commands (آيات محكمات).

It is in Quran - وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ ۖ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا [Do not go after that of which you have no knowledge. Verily, the ear and the eye and the heart - every one of them shall have to answer for, in regard to the way it has functioned.] (Al-Israa - 36).

Thus, if we involve in the interpretation for divine ears, eyes, and heart, we will be held responsible for it. Why should we say something for which we will be

questioned for? For a thing which is not known to you, to say, Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) knows about it, is precise knowledge.

It is in Quran - وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا [You have been given little knowledge] (Al-Israa - 85).

The people of Entrusting do not want to think and seek the assistance of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and His Apostle (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) in understanding the facts of this Cosmos and its Creator.

It is in Quran - وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ [As for those who strive in Our cause, We will surely guide them to Our ways; Indeed, Allah is with the righteous. (Al-Ankaboot - 69).

The people of Entrusting are closer to 'the people of textual Rhetoric'.

5.3 The People of Interpretation

The People of Interpretation say that we should drive the meanings of Quran and Ahadith as per the idiomatic usage of Arabic language.

It is evident that Quran and Ahadith are in Arabic and the Arabs were the first addressee. The Arabs understood the Quran and derived the meanings of verses with the help of Arabic literature and its idiomatic usage. This is how the Quran is expected to be understood. Therefore, meanings of the Quran and Ahadith derived **against** the Arabic tradition will be regarded as deviation from the real meanings.

It is in Quran - الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى [Rahman is sitting on the Empyrean] (Taha-5).

In the above verse, the purport of Empyrean (عرش) is 'Absolute Government and Supreme Authority'.

1. Similarly, the purport of Divine Chair is 'exclusive government or partial governance. The purport of this is that Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) has attained the supreme authority or Absolute Government.

They say that the meaning of Wajha (face) should be derived in accordance with the Arabic idiomatic usage.

Imam Bukhari in the Book of Tafseer interpreted the verse Wajha in the verse - كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ [Everything is bound to perish except His Wajha.] (Al-Qasas - 88), as His 'Dominion'.

Similarly, from the word Ghazab (غضب), the meaning of torment or punishment are drawn.

Hadith Scholars, prominent scholars of Tafaseer of Quran belong to this school of thought. They draw the meanings of allegorical verses of Quran (آيات متشابهات) as per the idiomatic usage of Arabic. They consider Allah and the servants different from each other.

5.4 The People of Otherness

The People of Otherness are also known as 'People of Witness'. Ahmad Farooq Sirhindī (1564-1624), Mujaddid Alf Thani, belonged to this category.

The people of otherness always keep their humanity in their focus. They say that Allah is independent, and our existence is dependent upon Him. Therefore, Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and the servant are different from each other. The existence of servant is the gift of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ).

2. Those who do zikr of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) extensively, get proximity with Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and get focused to an extent that they forget their own selves. But Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) is Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and servant is servant. Like the iron gets red hot in the proximity of the fire and acquires all the attributes (characteristics) of fire and calls itself 'I am fire'. It also makes other things burn if they come in contact with it. But all of this is for how long? Till it is near the fire. The moment it is separated from the fire, it becomes the same iron, black and cold. Now it is neither like fire nor has the attributes of fire.

Certain statements of Awliya Allah in this kind of proximity of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) (Fana fillah) should be interpreted accordingly. In this state, Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (رضى الله تعالى عنه) declared, 'my foot is on the necks of all Awliya Allah (قدمي على رقبه كل ولي الله).

All Prophets, all Awliya Allah (اولياء الله) professed themselves to be servants only.

It is in Quran - لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ [Never would the Messiah (Isa- عليه السلام) disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor would His exalted angels.] (An-Nisa - 172)

It is in Ahadith, Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) supplicated, O' Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), without doubt I am your servant, and son of your (male) servant and son of your (female) servant. Hairs of my forehead are in your hands. Whatever you will command for me, will certainly happen and whatever you decide for me, will certainly be justice towards me. Thus, a person's greatness is because of the greatness in his servitude.

The people of otherness also drive the meanings of the Quranic verses and Ahadith as per the idiomatic usage of Arabic language.

5.5 The People of Monotheism

Shaikh Ibn Al-Arabi was the chief proponent of this school of thought.

The people of Monotheism say, 'Absolute Being is only for Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and all the things existing in the Cosmos are appearing in different shapes / forms as per the exigency of their existence in the Cosmos.

Considering servant to be independently existent, is polytheism (شرك). Is there anything which could claim its own existence in front of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ)?

When we see two people, say, Zaid and Amer, we find humanity common in both. Is commonality of humanity in both, wrong and against the fact of the matter? No. Certainly the humanity is common in both, and it is outside, and is a fact of the matter.

What is common between Human being, animals, vegetation, and trees? They are well known. If we include with them the mountains and Earth, then the commonality between them is, they have body (or mass).

If you include souls and angels, then the commonality between all of them is they are creatures.

Now include the creatures (who are dependent on Allah - عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and Independent (Allah - عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), then the commonality between them is 'the existence' (وجود), meaning the word existence is true for both.

However, the existence is of two types. One is absolute or independent existence and the other is contingent or relative existence. Absolute existence is only for Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and the existence of creatures is contingent, temporary, dependent.

Whatever is in the cosmos, is in existence.

When the absolute/independent existence is only for Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) , and the existence of His creatures is dependent upon Him, then there is only one real existence in the Cosmos which belongs to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). **This is what is meant by Wahtadat al-Wajood (Unity of Existence).**

It is in Quran - اللهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ [Allah is the Noor (existence) of the skies and earth). (An-Noor - 35).

Whatever is there in the Cosmos, is the manifestation of Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) effulgence (نور الهی) or His existence.

When evil/wasteful considerations are removed, the absolute existence of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) remains in focus. This is the Truth (حق). He is Allah - لا إله إلا الله [There is no God but Allah].

I have written a book titled '[Allah and His Creatures](#)'. Do read it. It is an important read for all those who are interested in this subject.

The people of Monotheism draw the meanings of the Quranic verses and Ahadith as per the idiomatic usage of Arabic language.

5.6 The People of Research

The people of Research are also referred as 'the people of realization'. They say, we are seeing this world. In it, there are houses, women, men, and children. Also, there are animals, vegetation, inorganic matter, stones, etc. Ask a Chemist about this world? He will say that it is the sum of a few minerals, inorganic matter, and gasses. Ask the same question to a Physicist. He will say that the world is only matter, the rest are its forms. Some say that it is Prima Matrix, molecules, and atoms, and some say it is protons and neutrons.

When more people talk about a subject, more will be the opinions. But all agree that the independent existence belongs to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) and the rest is dependent upon Him.

The people of research say that even though all existence belongs to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), the existence of creatures, though dependent, is also true in their own places.

The people of research deal with every existence as per its exigencies. They give right to everyone. They also keep in mind the rights of their own body/Nafs.

They respect Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) next only to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). They respect all dignitaries of Islam, Shuyookh of Ihsan and Awliya Allah. They give due right to everyone.

They are aware of the facts of things in the cosmos and deal with them accordingly.

The people of research draw the meanings of the Quranic verses and Ahadith as per the idiomatic usage of Arabic language.

Shaikh Mohammad Abdul Qadeer Siddiqui belonged to this school of thought.

Some people say that Ibn Arabi also belonged to this school of thought. Qunawi, the disciple and successor of Ibn Arabi differentiates Ibn Arabi's position from that of philosophy and scholastic theology (Kalam) by calling it 'the school of thought of Research (مشرب التحقيق). He said, Research is the cornerstone of Ibn Arabi's vast corpus.

6. THE COMPLETE HUMAN BEING (الإنسان الكامل)

It is established from Quran and Ahadith that Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) is the root of all creation.

It is in Hadith - It is related that Jabir Ibn Abd Allah (رضى الله تعالى عنه) said to Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم), "O Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, tell me the first thing Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) created before all things.' The Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) said : O' Jabir (رضى الله عنه), the first thing Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) created was the light of your Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) from His light.

The above Hadith was narrated by Abdur Razzaq (d. 211 AH) in his Musannaf according to Qastallani in al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah (1:55) and Zarqani in his Sharh al-Mawahib (1:56 of the Matba`a al-Amira edition, Cairo).

There cannot be any doubt as to the reliability of Abdur Razzaq as a narrator. Bukhari took 120 narrations from him while Muslim took 400.

Baihaqi also narrated the above Hadith with a different wording in "Dala'il al-Nabuwwa, according to Zarqani in his Sharh al-Mawahib (1:56 of the Matba'a al-Amira, Cairo). Also, Diyarbakir narrated it in 'Tarikh al-Khamis (1-20).

The authenticity of the above Hadith is also proved from the following Quranic verses and Ahadith.

(i) It is in Quran - [O' Prophet ﷺ)! Truly, We have sent you as a Witness, a Bearer of Glad Tidings and Warner (for the entire Cosmos); and as one who invites to Allah's (Grace) by His consent, and as a lamp spreading light (into the whole cosmos).] **(Al - Ahzaab 45-46).**

The above verse describes Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) as 'Lamp spreading light (into the whole cosmos). He is also referred as a Witness, a bearer of glad tidings and warner to humanity. A witness is the one who knows about all the physical and spiritual aspects of this cosmos.

(ii) It is in Quran - **الله نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ ۚ الْمِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ ۚ الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ ۚ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ۗ يَهْدِي اللهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ وَيَضْرِبُ اللهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ** [Allah is the Light of the Heavens and Earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (This lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon Light (نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ). Allah guides to His light whom He will. And Allah speaks to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things.] **(An-Nur - 35).**

Suyuti said in al-Riyad al-Aniqa : Ibn Jubair (رضى الله تعالى عنه) and Ka'b al-Ahbar (رضى الله تعالى عنه) said, 'What is meant by the second light [in Light upon Light (نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ)] is Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) (as it is also described in verse Al-Ahzaab- 46, above.

(iii) It is in Quran - **فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ** (From Allah has come to you a Light and a Book manifest.) **(Al-Maida - 15).**

The above verse is truly clear in describing Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) as 'Noor from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). In the exegesis (Tafseer) of the above verse, many well-known Ulema have confirmed that the 'light' refers to Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

References - (1) Suyuti in Tafsir al-Jalalayn. (2) Feruzabadi in the Tafsir Ibn 'Abbas entitled Tanwir al-miqbas (p. 72). (3) Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, in his Tafsir al-kabir (11:189). (4) Qadi Baidawi in his Tafsir entitled Anwar at-Tanzil. (5) Al-Baghawi in his Tafsir entitled Ma`alim at-Tanzil (2:23). (6) Al-Shirbini in his Tafsir entitled al-Siraj al-Munir (p. 360). (7) The author of Tafsir Abi Sa`ud (4:36). (8) Thana`ullah Pani Pati in his Tafsir al-Mazhari, (3:67). (9) Shaikh Mohammad Abdul Qadeer Siddiqui (رحمته الله عليه) in his Tafseer-e-Siddiqui. (10) Ibn Jarir al-Tabari in his Tafsir jami` al-bayan (6:92) (11) Al-Khazin in his Tafsir (2:28). (12) Al-Nasafi in his commentary entitled Tafsir Al-Madarik (1:276) and al-Qasimi in his Mahasin at-ta`wil (6:1921). (13) Ahmad al-Sawi in Tafsir al-Jalalayn (1:258). (14) Sayyid Mahmud al-Alusi in his commentary entitled Tafsir Ruh al-Ma`ani (6:97) and many others.

(iv) It is in Quran - وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمُسْتَوْدَعٌ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَفْقَهُونَ - [And look, He is Who have created you from single person (نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ) then there is (for you) a resting-place and a depository; indeed We have detailed our signs for the people who understand.] **(Al-An'aam - 98)**.

Some people say that the above verse refers to Prophet Adam (عليه السلام). Their contention is true as far as the Human beings are concerned. But as far as the entire creation is concerned, everything in this cosmos was created from the Noor of Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

(v) It is in Hadith - Narrated by Abu Huraira (رضي الله تعالى عنه). When Allah's Apostle (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) was asked since how long he is the Prophet, he replied, 'When Adam (عليه السلام) had not yet had his spirit joined to his body (Tirmidhi).

From the above, the fact of Prophet Mohammad (حقيقت محمدی صلی الله عليه و آله وسلم) is established which is the root of all creation.

Since Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) chose to manifest him in the shape of a human being, therefore, among human beings he is the 'Absolute or Complete Human' Being. He is the complete 'mirror' in which Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) can be viewed.

Since he is the mirror showing the Creator of this Cosmos, we do not prostrate in front of the mirror. We prostrate to the essence or person of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) who is hidden from us. This is the reason we respect Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) next only to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), but we do not worship him.

There are certain other human beings like Prophets, Awliya Allah and dignitaries of Islam who also come under the category of 'complete human beings.' But they are all the reflections of

some of the traits of the Absolute Human Being which is the person of Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

The above is the abstract of what Ibn Arabi wrote in his various books, particularly, in his famous book Fusus Al-Hikam.

7. THE SEAL OF WILAYA (خاتم الأولياء)

The concept of 'Seal of Wilaya' was first mentioned by Hakim Tirmidhi (820-910), one of the early authors of Sufism. He is **not** Imam Abu Isa at-Tirmidhi, the famous Hadith scholar.

Hakim Tirmidhi has written many books, which include "Siraat al-Awliya". Shaikh Ibn Arabi wrote two commentaries of "Sirat al-Awliya". The contents of these commentaries formed part of the second volume of Shaikh ibn Arabi's own work 'Futuh al-Makkiyya'. This shows Hakim Tirmidhi's text has been a source of inspiration for Ibn Arabi when he wrote second volume of Futuh al Makkiyya.

In Sirat al-Awliya, Hakim Tirmidhi described two categories of Awliya Allah, (i) 'Wali Allah', and (ii) 'Wali Haqq Allah'.

He explained that 'Wali Haqq Allah' acquires Wilaya by his efforts, walking on the path of Sufia-e-Karam, taking all the troubles in controlling his Nafs from worldly attractions.

However, 'Wali Allah' need not have to go through this path. He is exempt from all the tribulations of the path (suluk). He does not have to grapple with Nafs because his Nafs, by divine grace, right from the birth, remains unsoiled from worldly traces.

Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) draws Wali Allah to Himself in one blow, while Wali Haqq Allah walks step by step towards Him. They both are revered, but the rank of 'Wali Allah' is higher than the rank of Wali Haqq Allah.

Hakim Tirmidhi wrote that Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) holds the highest rank in creation. He is also the Apostle of the Divine Law. And his true successors are 40 chosen Awliya, through whom Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) communicates with people after the death of Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم). These 40 Awliya Allah (Abdaal) are guarantors of proper application of Divine law. They guarantee the existence of the world and Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) confers upon them

His inspirations and performance of wonders (karamaat) and rewards them with freedom from sin.

Shaikh Ibn al-Arabi also places Wilaya within a cosmological context in line with Hakim Tirmidhi. He also speaks of 'the seal of Wilaya', a term which Hakim Tirmidhi introduced in Sufi literature.

Awliya Allah are chosen people. They inherit their knowledge, stations, and states from the Prophets.

It is in Hadith - 'Whoever takes a **Wali of Mine** an enemy, I will wage war on him; and My slave will not perform any act with which he draws closer to Me, more beloved to Me than when he fulfills what I have ordained on him; and My salve will keep drawing closer to Me by performing the Nawafil (voluntary acts of worship) until I love him, and when I love him, I will be his hearing with which he hears, his sight with which he sees, his hands with which he strikes, and his legs with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him; and if he seeks refuge with Me, I will grant him refuge' **(Bukhari)**.

The emphasis on 'Wali of mine' in the above Hadith shows that this human being is the chosen one.

As per Ibn Arabi, the Seal of Wilaya has three connotations, **(i)** Hadhrat Isa (عليه السلام) - the Seal of Universal Wilaya; **(ii)** Imam Mahdi (عليه السلام) who will precede Hadhrat Isa (عليه السلام); and **(iii)** The Seal of Mohammadan Wilaya.

The above description of Ibn Arabi does not have even an oblique reference in the entire Islamic literature. It looks, there is no basis for this type of understanding.

As per Shaikh's understanding, the Seal of Mohammadan Wilaya is a man of noble Arab birth, living in his (Ibn Arabi's) time. And he declared in Futuhat al Makkiyyah as follows.

'I am the Seal of the Wilaya, no doubt, (the Seal of) the heritage of the Hashimite (Muhammad ﷺ) and the Messiah (Isa - عليه السلام).'

What he meant by the above statement? He has not clarified it.

There are three possibilities of the claim of Ibn Arabi from the above statement. **(i)** He is the biggest Wali Allah of all times. **(ii)** He is the seal of Wilaya and after him, there will not be any Wali in the world. **(iii)** After him, there is no big Wali Allah. We have discussed these possibilities below.

(i) He is the biggest Wali Allah of all times

Apparently, when Shaikh Ibn Al-Arabi looked at the bountiful mercy of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) showering upon him, he may have thought that it is the ultimate stage and station, a Wali Allah could reach. However, this understanding is not true.

Every Prophet is essentially a Wali, while every Wali is not a Prophet. The Wilaya of the Prophet is with reference to his association with Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). The Nabuwwa is his association with his Ummah. In this category, the highest category of Wilaya and Nabuwwa, both are associated with Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم).

Also, the greatness of Wilaya of Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddique (رضى الله تعالى عنه) and Hadhrat Ali (رضى الله تعالى عنه) and other Sahabah is accepted fact. Also, Ghousul Azam Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani's (رضى الله تعالى عنه) superiority in the field of Wilaya is accepted among all Sufi Salasil.

(ii) He is the seal of Wilaya and after him, there will be no Wali in the world.

The above possibility is also not true because it is in authentic Ahadith that Awliya Allah will be there in the world till Qiyamah. It is because of them the sustenance to the world is given. When there is no Wali in the world, then Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) will be establish Qiyamah. Ibn Arabi also believes that there will be Awliya Allah after him.

(iii) After him, there will be no Wali Allah equal in status with Ibn Arabi

Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) bounties are limitless. Therefore, there is limitlessness in the categories, stages, and stations of Awliya Allah.

It is in Hadith - It is reported that Prophet Mohammad (صلى الله عليه) (و آله وسلم) once said after the Salah, 'O' people! Listen to this, understand it and know it. Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) has servants who are neither prophets nor martyrs and whom the prophets and martyrs yearn to be like, due to their seat and proximity in relation to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). One of the Bedouins Arabs who came from among the most isolated of people twisted his hand towards the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) and said, O' Apostle of Allah (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم)

(وسلم)! People from humankind who are neither prophets nor martyrs and yet the prophets and martyrs yearn to be like them due to their seat and proximity in relation to Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ)! Describe them for us!"

'The Prophet's (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) face showed delight at the Bedouin's question and he said:'. "They are of the strangers from this and that place. They frequent this or that tribe without belonging to them. They do not have family connections among themselves. They love one another for Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) sake. They are of pure intent towards one another. On the Day of Resurrection Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) will place for them pedestals of light upon which He will make them sit and He will turn their faces and clothes into light. On the Day of Resurrection, the people will be terrified but not those. They are Allah's (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) friends (Awliya), upon whom fear comes not, nor do they grieve".

References - The above Hadith is related through several chains by (a) Abu Dawood, (b) Ahmad, (c) Baghawi in Sharh al-Sunna, (d) Hakim in the Mustadrak, (e) Ibn 'Asakir, (f) Ibn Abi al-Dunya in Kitab al-Ikhwān, (g) Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, (h) Ibn Abi Hatim, (i) Ibn Mardawayh, and others. (j) Haythami in Majma' al-Zawa'id says: 'Ahmad relates it, and (k) Tabrani relates something similar, and the men in its chain of transmission have been declared trustworthy".

It is in Hadith - Anas (رضي الله تعالى عنه) narrated that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه و آله وسلم) said, 'the similitude of my Community (Ummah) is as the rain, it is not known whether its greater good lies in its beginning or in its ending".

References - The above Hadith is in Sunan (book of Amthal), Ibn Hibban in his Sahih from `Ammar ibn Yasir (#2307), Ahmad in his Musnad in several places (3:143, 4:319), Baghawi in Sharh al-Sunna (1:405), Tabarani in his Kabir, Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir (7:493), al-Khatib in Tarikh Baghdad (11:114), Abu Ya`la, al-Daraqutni, al-Bazzar, and Ibn `Abd al-Barr".

Sufi Shuyookh / Awliya Allah will be there in the world all the time till Qiyamah. Imam Mahdi, who is from the Ahle Bait-e-Athaar, is yet to come, who will surely be greater in status than Shaikh Ibn Arabi. Our understanding is

based on the prophecies about him in authentic books of Ahadith. In addition, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) indicated that some latter day Awliya Allah will achieve higher ranks than the earlier ones.

From the above, we do not mean to downgrade Shaikh Ibn Arabi in any way. But it is important that we should search the facts in the light of Quran, Sunnah and Sufi intrinsic intuition. We are sure that Shaikh Ibn Arabi himself would have liked our approach and appreciated our understanding in this context.

8. SHAIKH'S DEATH

From 1223 till his death, Ibn Arabi stayed in Syria where he taught and trained his disciples. He wrote his famous book Fusus al-Hikam during this time.



Shaikh Ibn Arabi died on November 8, 1240 CE, corresponding to 22 Rabī al-Thānī 638 AH, at the age of 75. He was buried in Damascus.

9. SHAIKH'S WORKS

After Ibn Arabi's death in 1240 CE, his writings spread throughout the Islamic world. The central figure in this process was Sadr al-Din Qunawi, his foremost student, to whom he bequeathed his collection of books. Ibn Arabi's writings have been very influential, chiefly among elites and Sufi tariqas.

Ottoman Sultans and other prominent dignitaries of Ottoman empire were deeply influenced by Ibn Arabi's works. He was regarded in high respect during Ottoman rule.

In the recent past, there has been a focus on the writing of Ibn Arabi in the academic circles of the world, particularly in the US. Many of his books have been translated into English. A lot has been written in English explaining his works.

As per the definitive bibliography of Andalusian works, it is established that Shaikh Ibn Arabi wrote 350 books, and not 850 generally attributed to him.

A brief list of his prominent books is as follows. (i) Futuhat al-Makkiyya, (ii) Fusus al-Hikam, (iii) Diwan of Ibn Al-Arabi, (iv) Rooh al-Qudus, (v) Mashahid al-Asrar, (vi) Mishkat al-Anwar, (vii) Al-Fana fil Mushahada, (viii) Awrad, (ix) Risalah al-Anwar, (x) Ayyam ash-Sha'n, (xi) Unqa Mughrib, (xii) Al-Ittihad al-Kauni, (xiii) Al-Adwar al-A'ala, (xiv) Tarjuman al-Ashwaq, (xv) At-Tadbidrat al-ilahiyyah fi islah al-mamlakat al-insaniyyah, (xvi) Hilyat al-Abdal, etc.

