

Sufism and the Challenge of Postmodern Thought.

Postmodernism is against all "isms" and ideologies and cults – all grand narratives. Metanarratives of traditional theologies have become incredible. Despite this it could be argued that religion approached from a mystical perspective resists postmodern critique and is not to be dubbed as a metanarrative at all. The present paper unearths "postmodern" face of Sufism and argues against fashionable postmodernist characterization and critique of religion as a metanarrative.

One plausible geneology of post modernity begins with Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God. Derridean critique of metaphysics of presence and logocentricism defines deconstructive turn. Postmodernity is a state of incredulity towards metanarratives and the most important metanarrative against which it situates itself is religious metanarrative. Reason, knowledge, truth, logos, meaning, language, history, God, telos, man or self, salvation, law, values or ethics—all of them are traditionally closely associated with religion and their problematization or deconstruction by postmodernism shows seriousness of this challenge to religion. Postmodernism could be and in fact has been interpreted/appropriated/implicated in diverse and often contradictory ways. Its contours are indefinable by definition. It resists all categorising attempts. It stands for nothing and everything. It suspects everything and quite logically should suspect its own truth claim. In fact it claims that no claims could be made regarding the questions that concern us most vitally--our religion, metaphysics and philosophy (and even science). It believes in non-believing or suspension of all belief. It asserts that nothing could be asserted. It sees no meaning in anything, in any linguistic utterance. It doesn't mourn this state of meaninglessness but celebrates it. It asserts that one can't transcend language and

thus its trapping and in language one can't have access to pure Presence, Truth or God. It rejects traditional idea of God and its hypostates – such as reason and law. Mystery at the heart of existence remains impenetrable unassailable. Man can know nothing. He can only know the “fact” of his ignorance. Life has no meaning, no purpose or at least that there is no humanly discoverable meaning or purpose. It sees very notions of Meaning and Purpose or Truth as fictions. It is committed to no-commitment approach. It judges not, evaluates not, and assigns no value to anything whatsoever. It is beyond good and evil and in fact all binaries. Arguing against arguing it doesn't see any positive value in silence either as there is no such thing as the revelation of the unknown or God in silence. It leads to the silence of the grave and not the silence that is “so full of music” as the mystics would have it. It suspects all theories, narratives or metanarratives because they are guilty of marginalizations/exclusivisms. But thereby it doesn't pave way for some alternative all inclusive perspective. In fact there is no such thing as Reality (with capital R) for it. It suspects all representations. But it is also equally agnostic with respect to the claims of symbolism. There is no such thing as intellectual intuition for Derrida. It sees nothing beyond what senses can see and is committed to the “ontology of singular events.” In its antiepistemology there is no scope for reason or thought and logic. Truth (if it all it exists in some noumenal world) can't be given to mind, to thought, to logical and conceptual intellect tied to the surface view of things, to the world of phenomena It doesn't believe in the higher orders of existence, the basic postulate of al religion, although it would reject typical rationalistic naturalistic arguments against religion also. It rejects metanarratives of modern science and liberal humanism and isn't a priori committed to any explanatory/appropriating framework that explains religion, the realm of the intuitive, the realm of unreason away. It gives space for all marginalized voices and traditional religion and mysticism happens to be precisely among the marginalized voices. Problematizing the case of humanistic scientific reductionistic naturalistic positivistic rationalistic modern worldview, it strengthens the case for religion. Arguing against the

finality of any interpretation it allows in principle any interpretation whatsoever. But the problem is that it is unable to see how one could transcend the need of realm of texts and interpretation. It rightly suspects all talk about Reality or Truth but can't see how one lives breathes the Reality and transcends realm of about. It is unable to see how language trap could be thrown away and thus Meaning and Truth realized. It wallows in the mud of scepticism because nothing is known or knowable with certainty. Truth isn't just unreachable but it is fiction; it simply doesn't exist. Our search for Truth or Meaning is itself futile because there is no transcendental signified. Philosophy is just rhetoric. Language is through and through metaphorical. Reason pretensions and grand claims for objectivity, truth, certainty, clarity, rationality too are rejected. What remains after ejecting philosophy and science? Fiction? What remains after rejecting possibility of knowledge and possibility of transcending Realm of language/words? No speech comes without words. There is no state where speech comes without words. And words are subject to difference. They ultimately signify nothing. All grounds become groundless, all communication dialogue between the deaf. Nothing important can be conveyed. Everything boils down to silence. And silence doesn't reveal the unknown or God and isn't full of music. Silence doesn't answer metaphysical questions as in the East but it is simply failure of all meaningful communication, failure of speech, frustration of all attempts to make sense of any linguistic formulation. No question should be asked because nothing answers it. And this void that we encounter in deconstructionist philosophy isn't originator of everything, it isn't the plenitude of Being. Postmodernism rejects all totalizing discourses, all metanarratives, all belief systems, all ideologies, all isms, all attempts at comprehending/apprehending Reality, all God talk that smacks of the metaphysics of presence, all philosophies, all logical and thought constructions, all judgements, all attempts at demystifying existence, all essentialistic thought, all "structuralist" systematic oppositional discourses, all centering and defining and catagorizing endeavours, all "ologies." The centre is decentred, fragmentation celebrated as nothing holds things (as God or Unifying principle is declared dead). Diversity is there but

with no underlying unity. Humanism is no more credible as human subject has disappeared. There is no centre in man himself to be the centre of any universe; the universe itself has dissolved into multiverse, cosmos into chaos. There is no "I," neither the self nor the Self. All is text that ultimately reduces to nothing. God of metaphysician lives in reflected glory of signs. Everything is impenetrably opaque or dark in the misty world. According to postmodernism, logic is illogical. Rationality is irrational, information is misinformation. History is fiction. There is no knowledge and no wisdom. Modern man had gone farther from God and postmodern man has gone farther from himself and nearer to dust. There is no purpose, no teleology. We are here on a darkling plane where ignorant armies clash by night. Postmodernism leads to denial of hierarchy of existence. There is denial of even phenomena, of the visible world so we needn't speak of the invisible world. Everything becomes surd, darkness. Ethics too is rejected because choices and judgments marginalize and is dualist. All readings are misreadings. The logic of excess and deficit or logic of contradictions of postmodernists reduces everything to void.

In this context we closely analyze Islam's claim to be the Truth, the primordial truth. Islam claims to be the primordial religion, natural religion. All existence is Muslim. We all have witnessed to its truth in covenant made in pre-eternity with God. No age could be incredulous towards it. It isn't a metanarrative that postmodernity could problematize or be incredulous towards. Islam doesn't tell a story or promises anything. Its "grand narrative" has no subject or hero and no goal as Lyotard would understand it. It makes no truth claim; it is the truth itself, synonymous with it. Truth needn't claim truth. Light need not to be lighted. Nothing can deconstruct what is not a construction and by definition transcends conceptual intellect's constructions, the idols of senses, mind, and imagination. *Laysa Mislihi Shayin*. But we must distinguish between Islam as a message from heaven, the otherworld, as the language of the Self and the human construction. We must distinguish between Islam and the human construction/appropriation/interpretation of it. Even prophetic

receptacle "distorts" by necessity, by the very fact of it being a receptacle. Islam can't be identified with any human construction or interpretation of it. It can't be reduced to law or morality or theological system or ideology. Its signified is subject to difference. It cannot be caught in finalist terms by way of language or experience. Like a sign God's face is halfveiled and half revealed. One never reaches God as He is unattainable. One who reaches Him is no more a seeker, an individual or separate entity. Like any material particle that approaches velocity of light the human seeker has to negate the existentiating dimension, has to be annihilated to be one with the Light. The Spirit is not the thing of this world. It is Infinite; it is not pinpointable, freezable, catchable, signified of any intellectual, imaginative or even experiential process. It transcends all binaries, all dualities.

Islam is not a system of truths making parallel cognitive claims. Propositional framework of the Western Aristotelian logic and philosophy doesn't apply to Islam or any other religion. Islam is by definition all inclusive; everything that partakes of truth is thus appropriated. Any philosophy, theory or religion that partakes of truth (whole truth isn't to be found in any formulation, any interpretation, any concrete form, any creedal system as Sufism) is Islamic in the proportionate degree.

Transcendence of God that is characteristically emphasized by Islam implies that God can never be seen; He could not be revealed in all His glory. We can eternally approach Him but union is never possible. He can't be known as He is in Himself. Godhead remains always an ideal. Salik is involved in eternal travel. The goal is not reached. For it is the unspeakable, the impossible, the inconceivable, the unattainable. The goal is only glimpsed, sensed, and then lost. Meaning or Truth is never grasped in its fullness. It ever recedes. Truth escapes all our searching. We can have a vision of it, rather a faint glimpse of it through the phenomena which are His symbols. He transcends even transcendence, because Godhead isn't an object, a thing, a graspable entity. *Hahut* is unknowable and we can well say that it is Nothing to the conceptual intellect. Reason is rightly denounced.

To it the road to God is barred. Its wings are clipped and can't soar high into the sky of transcendence. It is Prophet and the saint who through revelation and intuition know God or know that we can know only His unknowability. But for all this ultratranscendence the mystic does see nothing but God. All the phenomena reflect His glory. Postmodernist too does not reject the relative value, the relative truth the relative rationality, the relative meaning. He only denies identification of them with the Absolute Truth, the Absolute Meaning. He sees Truth's immanence faintly reflected in the world of space and time, of things and places. and thus of relativity. But he denies that transcendence, the Absolute or the ultimate Truth could be known. Reason, logic and the like can't know it. God by definition transcends reason. If the mystic emphasizes transcendence and devalues the world of things, and our ordinary states of consciousness it is only to be true to religion (Islam) anti idolatrous genius. God resembles nothing in the world (*laysa kamithlihi shay*). The mystic rightly transcends (he never transgresses because there is no subject-object duality in his tawhidic or Unitarian perspective). Being is Goodness. Beauty, and truth and Bliss. Falsehood, evil and sorrow are relative and thus susceptible to destruction. (verily evil ought to disappear declares the Quran). So our normal discriminative experiences of truth and falsehood, good and evil, pleasure and pain can't be accorded absolute validity. Even Iblis as the personification of evil doesn't exist on its own. He isn't there either at the origin or at the End of the world. Sufi as true vicegerent of God internalizes or appropriates God's *akhlaq*. His names and attributes. He emerges as supra rational, supra moral and supra affective being as is the God. He reflects and radiates truth, goodness and Beauty. The perfect man is moral without being moralistic, rational without being rationalistic. He calls for a transformation of consciousness so that our will become God's will. Morality doesn't become acquiring to something from without. It is spontaneous. It flows spontaneously. Perfect man radiates only goodness. He needn't choose good over evil. God's hand becomes His hand. He no longer judges as Jesus didn't judge Man of God is beyond good and evil. "What after all, is right and what is wrong? That thought or action which takes you towards God is right, and that thought or

action which takes you away from God is wrong." Since a subject-object duality is transcendence in Unitarian or Tawhidic perspective (as Sufis interpret it) all distinctions, binaries, categories, judgements (which includes judgements of good and evil, right and wrong) lose their meaning as conceived in dualist framework or epistemology. As conceptual intellect is transcended, its categories lose their relevance in judging / critiquing what is revealed to the Sufi or mystic. Revelation comes the moment the realm of known ceases. It always comes from above, from God. The Prophet (as does saint) receives knowledge from God directly, intuitively without any role of conceptual intellect. Reason must be subservient to faith or intuitive knowledge as all would agree, including Haq in his *Postmodernity, Paganism and Islam*. And this is possible only if reason doesn't legislate or judge on matters divine, (mystical-prophetic). Both prophetism and mysticism agree on need of transcendence of merely rational logical intelligence to perceive God. Thus following statements of scriptures and mystics couldn't be critiqued on rational logical and moralistic grounds. Nothing that belongs or pertains to or dependent on the realm of the known, of knowledge, reason, logic, space and time could be relevant in critiquing revelation and intuition. Blind is no judge of colours by a mystic or prophet. Dualist epistemology and faith is incommensurable with Unitarian Tawhidic epistemology and faith. The crucial notions of Beyond Being (or Supraformal Essence or *Dhat*) Maya, Intellect (not Reason) must be kept in the background while examining these claims. The mystic's logic of contractions that resembles postmodern logic has to be respected and its critique of traditional Aristotlian logic granted while approaching these statements (that come from both mystical prophets).

It is Sufism that shows how Islam resists postmodern critique and also shows how to move beyond it. To start with we shall first focus on Nietzsche's notorious description of God's death at the hands of modern man. It is acute awareness of God's death that distinguishes postmodernity from modernity. God's death man's Truth is dead. Meaning is lost. Centre doesn't hold. With the disappearance of true world which is the unseen world the visible world also dies so to speak. It loses its

meaning. Alienations, absurdism is the logical outcome Immanentism takes over. Finitude now suffocates man, Spirit dies. The question is how can this God be reborn? Not the rhetoric or sophistry of theologian for the reign of conventional theology is almost over. Postmodern age saw the birth of negative theology and death of God theology. When the grand narrative of theology has become incredible how God as the Ground of Being can be still felt as living reality, as the Ground of our being? We are living in post-religious though post-secular age. Personal Godism doesn't work. Nietzsche's reading of recent history isn't easily dismissible. God is really felt as dead (Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus) absent (Heidegger), on leave (Kafka), irrelevant (Sartre), absence (postmodern theologians. This has culminated in death of man as a logical corollary in postmodernity. Meaninglessness, absurdism, relativism, skepticism – these are more characteristically post-modern phenomena. It is Sufism that recovers Meaning, Truth, knowledge, certainty by denying all of them at the relative, phenomenal plane. It is interpretation of *la illa* all the way. Ordinary Muslims or average believers of other religions that posit a personal God have hardly ever realized the depth and significance of denial of gods. It is only through *kufir* that one can reach *iman*. One has to encounter darkness at the heart of existence, encounter the dark night of the soul and then only will the phase of affirmation come. Ahad Zagar has beautifully put it "*kafir sapdith karum aqrar*" (I believed after first disbelieving). Nirvana is realized after one realizes one's nothingness, even nothingness of soul (*annata*). Seeker of God, or subject must be extinguished in *fana* to reach *baqa* (subsistence in God). God's utter transcendence or even transcendence of transcendence demands rejection of all idolatry-idolatry of all words, all signifiers or symbols, or subjects, of even God as Being who isn't Absolute. Tawhid is so difficult for realization and that is why most people don't believe or are *kafirs* and thus in hell in the Quranic parlance. Tawhid, especially the tawhid of the Elect or tawhid of Elect of the Elect is so rare and so hard to come by. "There is no god but God", this statement of Islamic *shahadah* could be translated as "There is no truth or Reality but Truth or Reality." There is no beauty but Beauty". Thus all relative truths

are denied/ transcended in tawhidic perspective as it centres on the Absolute. God has to be seen as Absolute and non-God as relative so that one rightly understands Islamic *shahadah*. Sufistic reading of tawhid also makes one subtle point which states that God alone is really a witness, *shahid* i.e., alone can say *shahadah*. In Unitarian perspective since only one exists absolutely to and all else is strictly nothing and there is no duality of knower and knower, subject and object, I and thou so affirmation in the deepest sense of the word can come only from God Himself. It is Spirit in us which recognizes and thus becomes witness to Spirit that is the essence of everything, that alone is absolute (it being Pure Consciousness). Nietzsche rightly realized that there can't be two gods – man and God. So either of them has to go, has to be killed. And he opted for the latter (killed God) so that man may live, so that his freedom his sovereignty could be affirmed. He said that man can't afford not to be God and man-God has to be there when God is gone. And he posited the conception of the Superman. And history is witness (history of postmodernism especially) that by killing God he paved the way of death of man. No Superman has arrived on the scene but only the devil or Superdevil. If God isn't there who is the Ground of our being now can being be there? Sufism squarely faces nihilism that is implied in the rejection of idolatry in denial of all relative truths, in denial of self or ego that exists in its own right. It denies the world. It denies all knowledge of the world. It denies self. It denies speech. It denies that there is any meaning in the world, any bliss in things finite, any beauty in the phenomenal or the perishable. 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity' in the Sufi perspective. Everything perishes. All relative meanings, relative truths are denied as only Absolute is absolute. The Sufi transcends all the worlds, all time and infected thought constructions. Postmodernists can't go any farther. It too denies that both God and non-God (man as self as ego) as independent "I" can) exist simultaneously. It too recognizes the fact that Freedom and knowledge are attributes of God only. But it proceeds beyond nihilism. It proceeds beyond God-man duality. It proceeds beyond the realm of the phenomena finitude or immanence or relativity to rest in Infinite transcendence, Absolute. He proceeds beyond all thought

constructions to see Truth face to face, to live truth be truth, Intellect perceives things without any distortion, any filtering medium in between because it is identical with Universal Intellect. All gods are denied but then the only God is affirmed. Indeed gods don't exist. It is only our ignorance that posits them. When our perception is cleansed of all conditionings the truth of God appears with dazzling brilliance. In fact everything, all phenomena partake of the Truth, manifest Truth. God is the Light of the World and as Ghazali said the light of our eyes that perceives the world. A gnostic sees none but God. Thus he basks in the Truth. He finds only Beloved's face everywhere. At creation, every atom, every leaf of grass praises Him. Cosmos becomes theophany, a revelation. Truth of that Supernal Sun gives truth and meaning to everything. There really exists nothing but Self and universe in its exteriorization. Gnostic traces everything to Source. God is perceived also as *Al-Zahir*. So life becomes celebration, a feast as it is dance, play of God. There is no other but Self perceiving Self. To be true to the Self is to be true to God. Sufism substitutes the Perfect Man or Godman for Superman. And Perfect Man appropriates God/or is appropriated by God. So duality disappears. One can easily declare (though it isn't declaration of self or man but really God who is declaring this as He alone is) "I Am" "I am the Truth" "Glory to Me." One discovers God within. The Self is its own beloved. God perceives Himself in the mirror, Love celebrates itself. Nothing exists save the Self. *Arif* sees with the eye of certainty. As the realm of time and thought is transcended only pure perception, pure awareness, awareness of what is remains. Infinite appears, Unknown dawns. Everything becomes blissful. One is joyous with the whole of existence. Every beautiful thing expresses Beauty of the Beloved. By surrendering our self we get liberated by the Infinite. By overcoming subject-object duality knower known duality utter certainty is achieved. One becomes what one knows. So postmodern critique of knowledge obtained by a subject through reason is bypassed though acknowledged at its own level. The Sufi agrees with postmodernist in his distrust of reason (*aql-i-juzyi*) and thought or language. But the Sufi sees everything in the light of Eternity, Time thus becomes moving image of Eternity. Meaning

and purpose can be only in Eternity, not in time. The postmodernist can't step outside time. Time is the unceasing hemorrhage of existence in postmodern world of Beckett. If Eternity doesn't appropriate/ground time it becomes intolerable, meaningless. Time couldn't be vilified only if it is from God. The question of meaning and purpose doesn't arise from the perceiver of Absolute and Eternity. Sufi is *ibn al waqt*. But thereby he is also outside time. He is innocent of becoming. Question of future doesn't arise for him. All he sees is God or Truth because he has disappeared as a seer only God sees through him. He lets Reality overcome reality and thus gets dealienated. Grounded in the infinite he can't be other than Infinite. Part of the infinite is also infinite. Infinite is Truth as seeker of Truth has disappeared and truth isn't something out there but our very subjectivity, our deepest Self. So scepticism has no room in Sufi perspective. The Sufi grants that one can't know the Truth in its absoluteness by the signs. He denies the seeker so only Truth remains. Both knower and known disappear and only the pure experience of knowing remains. The Sufi is a watcher or pure witness. He allows existence or Reality or Truth (Real is equated with Truth in East and Islam though not in West and Truth isn't reduced to property of propositions also in the East) to speak, having surrendered/transcended himself. He becomes a hollow bamboo, a flute on which God plays the notes. In silence is revealed the treasure that God is. This silence is because one can't speak with human tongue of the Ineffable, of the Unconditioned. Absolute has never been defiled by human speech. as Ramakrishna has said. How could it be? Since nothing answers the question what is It as Jili says one has to be silent. Of what one can't speak one should be silent.

We will focus on Sufistic perspective (if one could at all say perspective in case of Sufism because Sufi vision) transcends all seeing, all imagining, all visualising, all constructions of thought and thus all perspectives on Reality. The Sufi doesn't talk about Reality or God but talks Reality or God. He transcends the realm of "about" which theology is unable to do. That is why the Sufi doesn't need to interpret and wrangle about the question of

interpretation. He isn't caught up in textual world at all. He lives truth, is truth. He doesn't need mediation of language. He is pure awareness, prereflective prelinguistic awareness. He has become a mirror as mind and separating principle of thought has disappeared. Seer and seen have disappeared and only seeing is there. Language doesn't enter. No metaphysics of presence is there. No centralism. The Sufi is centered in God and thus in Nothingness or Void. God being not the name of a thing, a person, an entity and substance, a being, among other beings. God is Reality, Isness in *wahdatul wajudi* (which is not synonymous with pantheism as it emphasizes transcendence of God unequivocally) perspective. He is Pure Consciousness. He eludes all apprehension. One can well say He is not because Nothing is naught, blank, void to the conceptual intellect. Nothing is like Him. He signifies, in a way, impossibility of all signification. Nothing can describe Him. We shall elaborate this theme of unknowability of Absolute and vanity of all reasoning to show how Sufism escapes (and corrects in turn) postmodern agnosticism) critique.

God is a hidden treasure. (This oft quoted prophetic tradition even if not authentic expresses something which plainly follows from the Quranic emphasis on divine transcendence.) And hidden He remains even now. Absolute in itself has really never manifested and can't manifest. It remains unknowable. The Absolute in its absoluteness is Nameless and It has no signs by which It can be approached. It is beyond all perception, conception and imagination. No qualification or relation (even such a category as existence) can be attributed to It for It even transcends transcendence. No linguistic category can describe It. It lives in permanent abysmal darkness and is "the most unknown of all the unknowns." It is *Gayyibul-gayyib*. None can have, in principle, access to It. The Pure Absolute or Essence (*Dhat*) in its fundamental aspect is beyond the insatiable human quest and all attempts to reach It, track it, pinpoint it, catch It in the net of language or realm of the finite or time, to conceptualize It, to imagine It, to speak about It, to affirm anything of It are doomed. Before the Ipseity or *Dhat* one can only be bewildered as

Khaja Gulam Farid says "Where to seek! Where to find You Friend. All the fiery creatures, human beings, forces of Nature and the entire world is amazingly drowned in the sea of bewilderment. The Sufis, devotees, men of wisdom and learning have ultimately lost. Arshi and Bistami while embracing each other cry in vain...saints, prophets, mystics, poles and even messengers and deities incarnate proclaim weepingly that He is beyond the reach of vision. Scientists, erudites, gnostics and professionals in all humility have admittedly resigned. Ask Farid naive and simple: where do you find."¹ Absoluteness in its absoluteness, the highest metaphysical stage of Reality, is undifferentiated. It is Infinite. So nothing from the world of relativity, no categorization, no definition, no conceptualization is relevant. *Wahdatul wujud* (Oneness of Being) envisages the idea that the Supreme Reality is both absolute and infinite. The absolute allows of no augmentation or diminution or of reality or division. "The infinite as another fundamental aspect of the Real is limitless for it isn't determined by any limiting factor. It has no boundary. The true infinite is the metaphysical "Whole" which can in no way be limited. There is nothing outside it for then it would not longer be the whole. The metaphysical "Whole" is "without parts" for these parts of necessity being relative and relative have no existence from its point of view. This true Infinite or the metaphysical "Whole" under a certain aspect is understood as universal possibility. "There are no 'distinctive' or 'multiple' aspect existing really in the Infinite, it is our limited determinate and individual conception which makes us conceive like that. That limitation comes from the human side to make the Infinite expressible. The imperfection of a definite and conditioned existence mustn't be transferred to the unlimited domain of universal Possibility itself."² Postmodernists are right in emphasizing these limitations and denying rational knowledge of the whole. In fact whole can't be spoken at all. The doctrines of Infinite and universal possibility in Sufi metaphysics appropriate all postmodern critique. By definition they are all inclusive and totally total conceptions. Sufi denies reason's totalizing view and say that to intuition only is vision of God given and nothing, no linguistic formulation or conception, can problematize revelations of intuition because they aren't of the

order of finite, of relative, of time, of this world (or even in a way, of next world).”

“Gnosis is the realization of thy ignorance when His knowledge comes” as Junaid has said³. Postmodernist only sees the fact of our ignorance and nothing dispels his darkness because he chooses to be blind by denying that we can go outside language and history or discourse and thus intuition is denied especially by Derrida. Since all contradictory truths are unified in the Truth as Al Jili says⁴ one needn't despair and be a skeptic. Postmodernist rightly sees the fact that logic or reason (Aristotelian) is wooden legged and bedeviled by contradictions. But the Sufi though acknowledges this would unify all contradictions in Truth and celebrate life's contradictions, its mystery, its transcendence of logic and reason. Gnostic sees by means of God Himself as Sarraj says and since God by definition is Truth so the Sufi sees Truth (or our inability from human perspective to see the Truth) and sees it whole, undiluted, directly. The Quran denies man as long as he remains man true knowledge of Truth. Exclusivist totalizing attitude is thus rejected by the Quran. “Over every possessor of knowledge is one more knowing.” So we must all acknowledge our ignorance and let other speak as postmodernists would have it. Whoso sees God transcends both speech and silence, as Niffari has said.⁵ Since “All are one, both the visible and the invisible” as Shabistari says⁶ the charges of dualism, binary thinking, marginalization, exclusivism can't be labelled on Sufism. Oneness and undifferentiatedness of Being and emphasis on subject's inability to know the highest Principle or Absolute appropriates all possible problematization by deconstructionist is taken care of. Sufi is one who has put dual way of sees two worlds as one. One he seeks, knows, sees and calls as Rumi tells us. Even binary of truth and falsehood, good and evil are transcended in Sufi vision. “Since I have known God, neither truth nor falsehood has entered my heart” as Abu Hafs Haddad said.⁷ This is because Sufi is in a state where neither good nor evil entereth as BaYazid says.⁸ This metaethical transcendence of mystic has been misunderstood by its critics as implying rejection of law and ethics while as the fact is that mystics alone in the history of religion have shown

exemplary moral character as they have transcended desiring self or *nafsi amara* which incites one to evil . Only good comes from the mystic because he has transcended the plane of mind, of desiring self which chooses and is caught up in the net of time or desires. His hands have become God's hands and God acts through him, so to speak. Binary of time and Eternity too is transcended as one term of the binary (time) though acknowledged at its own level is nevertheless transcended "Eternal and temporal are not separate from one another/For in that Being this non-existent has its being". The Sufi's place is placeless and his trace traceless. So what can you say of him. "When contemplation is firmly established, there is no difference between this world and the next" as Hujwiri says.⁹ The Sufi's tongue flaggeth after *irfan*. As Rumi says, "Be silent that the lord who gave thee language may speak."¹⁰ Bistami has made similar point: "The furthest from God among the devotees are those who speak the most of him."¹¹ The Sufi is extraordinarily ordinary. He celebrates the mystery of existence. The concept of negative divine in mysticism is expression of the fact that Existence refuses to be demystified. God or existence can't be known. Thus we see Sufism transcending postmodern position while appropriating its critique of philosophy, reason and the like. He sees God in an age where conventional theology knows nothing of Him and postmodern theology declares him dead. Sufism could be never be so relevant as now when finality of interpretation, intolerance, exclusivism, dogmatism, fundamentalisms and totalizing metanarratives has plagued the world.

I quote Rumi from *Diwani Shama Tabriz* to show how he appropriates all deconstructive elements in his negative description of himself and how he then comes to the stage of affirmation that is all inclusive and thus not marginalizing or exclusivist in any sense of the term and that also doesn't compromise his orthodox Islamic credentials although he would redefine orthodoxy in universal (perennialist esoteric terms) terms as Schuon does. A postmodernist knows only deconstruction or "*fana*" but a Sufi knows reconstruction and subsistence in all inclusive reality of God or metaphysical Whole.

