

# *Shi'ism*

- The Imam was transformed into a metaphysical being, a mirror of God and the primordial light that sustains the universe and bestows true knowledge on man.
- Through the Imam alone the hidden and true meaning of the Qur'anic revelation can be known, because the Imam alone is infallible.

# *Shi`ah concept of Imâm*

- The concept of the Imam implies that the cycle of prophecy is succeeded by the cycle of the *walâya*. The Prophet must be followed by a Keeper of the Book (*Qayyim al-Qur`ân*).
- The Qur`ân must be “taken back” (*ta`wîl*) to the level on which its true meaning is manifest.
- The Imâm is God’s *Hujja* (Proof).

# *Esoteric Tradition*

*The Prophet said: 'The Qur'an possesses an external appearance (zâhir) and a hidden depth (bâtin), an exoteric meaning and esoteric meaning. This esoteric meaning in turn conceals an esoteric meaning. So it goes on for seven esoteric meanings (seven depths of hidden depth).'*

*Imâm Ja`far al-Sâdiq said: 'Our cause is a secret (sirr) within a secret, a secret of something which remains hidden, a secret which may only be disclosed by another secret; a secret upon a secret which is supported by a secret.'*

# *Shi`ah concept of Imâm*

- After the Prophet who was God's *Hujja* (Proof), it is impossible that the Earth should remain without a *Hujja*, God's surety answering for God before men and thereby enabling them to approach God.
- The technical vocabulary (*zuhûr, mazhar*) always has reference to comparison with the phenomenon of a mirror.

# *Shi`ah concept of Imâm*

- The Imâm are the Names of God, and as such they preserve us for the twofold dangers of *tashbîh* (anthropomorphism) and *ta`tîl* (agnosticism).
- The fact that it is only “legislative prophecy” which has come to an end makes possible the continuation, under the *walâya*, of an esoteric prophecy (*nubûwa bâtiniyya*).

*“Sermon of Great Declaration (Khutbat al-bayân)” attributed to Alî:*

- “I am the Sign of the All-Powerful. I am the gnosis of mysteries. I am the Threshold of Thresholds. I am the companion of the radiance of the divine Majesty. I am the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden. I am the Face of God. I am the mirror of God, the supreme Pen, the Tabula secreta. I am he who in the Gospel is called Elijah. I am he who is in possession of the secret of God’s Messenger.”

# *Twelver Shi'ah*

- The Twelver Shi'ah recognise 12 such Imams, the last (Muhammad) having disappeared in the 9th century. Since that time, the *mujtahids* (religious leaders) have been able to interpret the law and doctrine under the putative guidance of the Imam.
- The Shi'ah believe that sure and true knowledge can come only through a contact with the infallible Imam.

# *Isma'iliism*

- Instead of recognising Musa as the seventh Imam, the Isma'ilis upheld the claims of his elder brother Isma'il.
- Isma'ilis are subdivided into two groups: the Nizaris, headed by the Aga Khan and the Musta'lis in Bombay, with their own spiritual head.

# *Islamic Mysticism*

- Islamic mysticism had several stages of growth, including 1) the appearance of early asceticism, 2) the development of a classical mysticism of divine love, and 3) the rise and proliferation of fraternal orders of mystics.
- From their practice of constantly meditating on the Qur'anic words about Doomsday, the ascetics became known as “those who always weep.”

# *Islamic Mysticism*

- The introduction of the element of love, which changed asceticism into mysticism, is ascribed to Rabi'ah al-Adawiyya (d. 801), a woman from Basra who first formulated the Sufi ideal of a love of God that was disinterested.
- A number of mystics in the early generations had concentrated their efforts upon *tawakkul*, absolute trust in God.

# *Poetry of Râbi`a*

O God, if I worship Thee for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell and if I worship Thee in hope of paradise, exclude me from paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thy own sake, grudge me not Thy everlasting beauty. O God, my whole occupation and all my desire in this world of all worldly things, is to remember Thee, and in the world to come, of all things of the world to come, is to meet Thee. This is on my side, as I have stated; now do Thou whatsoever Thou wilt.

# *Islamic Mysticism*

- In the Iranian school, al-Bistami (d. 874) is considered to have been representative of annihilation of the self (*fana*‘).
- The first of the speculations about the nature of man and the essence of the Prophet were produced by Sahl al-Tustari (d. c. 896). Sahl was the master of al-Hallaj who has become famous for his phrase *ana al-haqq* “I am the Truth.”

# *Islamic Mysticism*

- The Spanish-born Ibn al-Arabi (d. 1240) created a comprehensive theosophical system that was to become the cornerstone for a theory of “Unity of Being”. According to this theory all existence is one, a manifestation of underlying divine reality.
- The greatest mystical poet in the Persian language was Jalal al-Din Rumi (d. 1273).

# *Poetry of Rumi*

- Hearken the tale of the reed flute, complaining of the pangs of separation: Since they tore me from the reed-bed, my laments move men and women to tears. O for bosom torn like mine with wound of severing, that I may tell it of the pain of longing! One who is far from the place of origin longs for the day of the Return.