Mystic interpretation of Islamic life within the bonds of religious orthodoxy is known as Sufism, which was initially launched by God fearing people of Perso-Arab world. They renounced the world and devoted themselves to His service. As the seekers of Tawhid (Unity in God) they helped in spread of Islam through mystic movement with intellectualisation of Sunnah (The orthodox customs of Islamic world) as one of its basic principles. (Encyclopaedia of Islam). The Sufis either in their lifetime or their tombs after death became a symbol of supernatural power with metaphysical features ascribed to them under the guidelines of Quran and Sunnah. The disciples of Sufis adopted the path of peace or even armed jehad for Shariatisation of the whole world as a mission of holy duty. "Seekers of Tawhid should strive to dedicate themselves to the Prophet Mohammad, so much so that their entire selves, including their hearts and their spirits, were free of thoughts other than of God" (History of Sufism in India by Saiyied Athar Abbas Rizvi, Volume 2, 1992, Page 178).

"Mysticism is a practical spiritual discipline based on the insight of illuminated seekers after truth". It is in fact a mission of higher religious order of any faith, which disdains strife and conflict in any form. Joy of self-realisation being the essence of religion is experienced after a long spiritual practice. The mystics discard outward form of religion once they attain such joy. The concept of Sufism was therefore, to focus the mystic power on the spiritual dimension of Islam with a view to shield the believers from the outwardly and unrealistic dogma of the faith.

**Sufism- was it spiritual or politics?**

Contrary to the spiritual mission of Sufism, the cult was primarily introduced in India for spread of Islam with a view to help the Muslim rulers for political domination. By and large the spiritual successors of mystic Islamic saints enjoyed the royal favour of Muslim rulers and gave
moral support to the atrocious Muslim invaders and looked other way to ignore the growing social conflict. They also guided the State in political affairs with their experience of regular interaction with common people.

The way Sufis' tombs emerged as a place of pilgrimage suggests that the missionary objective of the Islamic mystics was formulated mainly for conversion and to establish the Perso-Arabian cultural domination in South Asia. Even though the Sufi saints got convinced with non-Islamic worldview on metaphysics in course of their interaction with non-Muslim saints, they did not allow their followers to accommodate it in the straight jacket of Islamic theology. Sufi saints commonly viewed as symbol of secularism however, never opposed Jejiya (Tax imposed on non-believers) levied on Hindus in Islamic India.

Sufis had accompanied the Muslim marauders in their conquest and brought Islam in contact with Hindu priests and saints. They were receptive to some of the local Hindu traditions may be for a tactical reason to entice the locals towards Islam but ensured that local norms are not accommodated against the watertight Islamic belief, dogma and practice of Quran, Hadith and Sharia which were the fountainheads of Sufism. Their deeply rooted belief and practice of Islamic norms within Perso-Arabic traditions remained the bedrock of the mystic movement. Therefore, in stead of advising the Muslim marauders against their inhuman deeds, the Sufis overlooked the plight of Hindu priests and saints, who were forced to flee and hide themselves.

Passion to the essential spirituality of life was hardly found in any Muslim ruler or Prince except Dara Shikoh (1615-1659). He was perhaps the only sincere Muslim prince, whose "effort was to find a common ground between Hindu and Muslim religious thought" (Islamic Mysticism in India by Nagendra Kumar Singh, Page 179). For this he was accused of heresy.

Under the patronage of the State under Muslim rulers, the Sufi mystics while offering spiritual guidance and support to the Hindu subjects allured them for adoption of Muslim identity, superiority of Arbo-Persian-Turkish tradition and accordingly transplanted them in the cultural tradition of India. "The establishment of Sufi orders in India coincided with the rising political power of Muslims (Muslim-Almanac edited by Azim A.Nanji, 1996, Page 61).

Despite the fact that except Prophet Mohammad, the sainthood in Islam has been a debatable issue, Sufism of various orders in the name of their founder saints has become a universal aspect of Islam. Sufis are known as Islamic spiritualists and the Muslims commonly view them as intermediaries between God and individuals.

Sufism is the sultanate period:
During the period of Sultanate in India these mystics were supposed to guarantee the prosperity to Islamic kingdom. They were patronized by the state for spreading Islam among the non-believers with their acclaimed spiritual influences in the mass. The gift and land provided to the Islamic mystics were used for hospice and their tombs became a place of pilgrimage after their death.

"On paper, the Sultanate seemed to be a perfectly Islamized state (but) religious leaders often of Arab origin and the religion (Islam) were subordinated to the political exigencies of the Turko-Afghans, who were in power" (A History of Modern India edited by Claude Markovitz, Anthen Press, 2002, Page 30). "No document attests to the peaceful preaching of the Sufis that most defenders of Islam put forward today" (Ibid. Page 33). "The attraction exercised by the politico-economic benefits that Islam offered seemed to have been the primary motivation for conversion, which particularly affected the middle strata of society" (Ibid.page 33).

Even though the majority of Sufi orders have a Sunni orientation, early Shia Imams were also revered commonly in Sufi circles. However Nakshbandi order of Sufism, which reached the Prophet via Abu Bakra was notably known for anti-Shia views. Suhrwardiyya and Naqshbandiyya orders of Sufism had more support of Muslim political powers in India. "The numerous Sufi religious establishments in India were the major means of spreading Islam and adapting it to indigenous cultural tradition" (Islamic Mysticism in India by Nagendra Kumar Singh, former Chairman, Islamic Research Foundation, Delhi).

Various Sufi Orders:

Of the various Sufi orders, Muslims of India prominently follow Chistiyya, Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya and Suharabardiyya. Of them the impact of Chisti order is visible even in small villages of Indian subcontinent. Kwaja Moin-ud-Din Chisti, a disciple of Khwaja Abu Abdal Chisti, the propounder of this order introduced it in India. Born in Afghanistan in 1142 AD, he came to India with the army of Shihab-ud-Din Ghuri in 1192 AD and selected Ajmer as his permanent abode since 1195. His shrine became a place of pilgrimage largely with the support of Muslim rulers. Akbar used to have annual pilgrimage there (Indian Islam by Murray T.Titus, 1979, Page 117).

Four Islamic mystics from Afghanistan namely Moinuddin(d. 1233 in Ajmer), Qutbuddin(d. 1236 in Delhi), Nizamuddin (d.1335 in Delhi) and Fariduddin (d.1265 in Pattan now in Pakistan) accompanied the Islamic invaders in India (A History of Modern India edited by Claude Markovitz, Anthen Press, 2002, Page 30). All of them were from the Chistiyya order of Islamic mysticism. Radiating from Delhi under Nizamuddin and following the trail of Mohammad ibn Tughlaq towards the south, the Chistiyya spread its roots all across India ( A History of Modern India edited by Claude Markovitz, Anthen Press, 2002). Internationally famous Sufi Shine at Ajmer Sharif in Rajasthan and Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi belong to this order.

A section of Sufis under Chistiyya order was not against adjustment with Hindu saints of Bhakti cult and used even Hindi language for Islamic devotional songs. However, the orthodox Ulama with royal support forced the Sufis to raise the slogan of "back to Shariat" Even
though Ulama had certain differences with Sufis over theological and mystic issues, Shariat remained a cementing force between them. Later both the Islamist groups joined together to woo the rulers with a view to furthering their self-seeking interest.

Suharawardy order of Sufism was founded by Shihabud-Din Suharawardy of Baghdad and introduced in India by his disciple Baha-ud-Din Zakariya of Multan. Suharawardiyya order of Sufism became popular in Bengal (Contemporary Relevance of Sufism, 1993, published by Indian Council for Cultural relations). Qadiri order founded by Abdul Qadir whose tomb is at Baghdad. Its influence is extensively among the Muslims of south India.

Baha-ud-Din Naqshband (1318-1389) of Turkistan founded Naqshbandi order of Sufism. Insistence on rigid adherence to Shariat and nurturing love for prophet was the essence of this order that established its hold in India under the patronage of Mogul rulers, as its founder was their ancestral ‘Pir’ (Spiritual guide). "The conquest of India by Babur in 1526 gave considerable impetus to the Naqshbandiyya order" (History of Sufism in India by Saiyied Athar Abbas Rizvi, Volume 2, 1992, Page 180). Its disciples remained loyal to the throne because of the common Turk origin. With the royal patronage of most of the Mogul rulers Naqshbandi order served the cause for revival of Islam in its pristine form.

Khwaja Mohammad Baqi Billah Berang whose tomb is in Delhi (E.I.Rose ) introduced Naqshbandi order in India. Though, the Sufis of this order were lying low during the period of Akbar, Khalifa Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, (1564-1624), a favourite disciple of Baqi Billah achieved increasing importance and popularised this order when the Great Mogul became bed ridden. Baqi Billah, nicknamed him as 'Mujaddid (Reformer or reviver of Islam for the second millenium).

**Sufi Thinkers:**

The Sharia-guided mystic influence of Sufis produced the Muslim thinkers like Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Shah Wali Ullah, Sayied Ahmad Barelavi, Karamat Ali, Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan, Allama Iqbal and Maulana Maududi. They used the mystic philosophy befitting to the political exigencies of the time for revival of political supremacy of Islam. Of them the Sufis like Sirhindi and Wali Ullah, who politicised the mystic ideology for political domination of Islam. They were projected as Islamic reformists for purifying Islam from any extraneous influences. They conveyed the political aspect of Islam to Muslim masses so aggressively that it created a permanent imprint on their psyche. It is therefore said that the Sufi Islamists saved the Islam but failed to save the downfall of Mogul Empire.

The mission of Shaikh Sirhindi popularly know as Mujaddid was to purify Islam from the influence of Akbar with a view to counter his policy of "the Hindu wielding the sword of Islam" and "Peace with all". Unhappy with the regime of Emperor Akbar for withdrawal of Jejia tax imposed on the Hindus, Sirhindi made hectic effort to purge Islam of all extraneous influences. He viewed Hindu mystics like Guru Nanak and Sant Kabir contemptible, as they did not follow Sharia.
With contempt against old schools of mysticism for tolerance, Sirhindi condemned the reign of Akbar for his 'broadmindedness' and policy of 'peace with all'. Propagating against the contemporary socio-cultural situation Sirhindi, felt that the attitude of Akbar "sullied the purity of Islam and the political social and cultural life of Muslims" (History of Sufism in India by Saiyied Athar Abbas Rizvi, Volume 2, 1992, Page 212). During the closing years of Akbar reign, when his son Salim had revolted against him, Sirhindi spread the virus of communalism with some success "in the beginning of Jehangir's reign". He strongly criticised freedom of worship granted to the Hindus. Hate-Hindu syndrome was so deep in him that "death of Akbar (1605) filled Shaikh Ahmad with hopes that the pristine purity of Islam would be implanted in India" (Sufism in India by Saiyied Athar Abbas Rizvi, Volume 2, 1992, Page 204). "Misguided and greedy Ulama, he (Sirhindi) believed, were responsible for the alleged downfall of Islam in Akbar's regime" (Ibid. Page 365.)

With his strong contempt against Shia and the Hindus, Sirhindi wrote several letters to the nobles in the court of Jehangir for guiding the emperor on the path of Shariat, and for removal of Qafirs (Shias and Hindus) from the administration. He was dead against any honourable status of Hindus in Islamic government. Sirhindi wanted the religious freedom enjoyed by the Hindus during Akbar regime to be curbed. Enraged with his too much interference in administration, Jehangir imprisoned him in Gwalier (A History of Sufism in India by Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi, Vol. II, 1972, Page 178) but released him after one year. Sirhind not only "injected communal virus into the body politic of the country but also generated hatred, mutual distrust and discord among the various sections of Muslims"(Ibid. page XII). Despite this anti-Hindu tirade of Sirhindi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in 1919 eulogized the role of Mujaddid (Sirhind),"who did not see eye to eye with the policy of state" (Ibid. Page215).

Shah Wali Ullah, a prominent Muslim thinker of eighteenth century who shaped the destiny of Indian Muslims was also a Sufi of Naqshbandi order. His contempt against the Hindus was identical to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. The rise of two Hindu rebellious groups namely Marathas and Jats against the Muslim rulers in 1750s stirred the mystic spirit of Wali Ullah and he invited Ahmad Shah Abdali, the Afghan ruler to invade India to save the Muslims from the subjugation of Hindus. While formulating the contours of his mystical ideology, he transformed the Islamic mysticism to a theo-political concept for supremacy of Islam and for political power to the Sunnis.

Wali Ullah started a tradition of reformed Sufism in which Islamic mysticism was far superior to other form of mystic philosophy. His reform in Sufi cult made the spirituality of Islam subservient to Political Islam. His doctrine for internal unity of Muslims through complete adherence to pure Islam was only to fight against the infidels and for reestablishment of assertive Islamic political power. His ideology had no scope to accommodate any order of non-Islamic mysticism, which he regarded unhealthy. He tried to comb out all the foreign influences, such as neo-platonism and Vedantism from Islamic mysticism. Carving out a new path for Sufism he became an active Islamist with a sole objective for resurgent Sunni political power in Delhi. (A History of Sufism in India, Vol. II, Rizvi, Page 259).

Bridging the gulf between the Islamic clerics and Sufis, Wali Ullah infused new vigour in practice of Naqshbandi Sufi order. He synthesised the disciplines of the three major Sufi orders namely Qadari, Chisti and Naqshbandi with a view to unite the Muslim society against the
Hindus. Like Shaikh Ahmad Sirhind he was also against the presence of Hindu employees in the administration of Muslim rulers as he viewed it detrimental to the purity of Islam. His attempt was to purify Islam from the mystic influence of Hinduism. Under the influence of Serhindi whose belief that Islam is a complete way of life stirred the Muslims to retrieve the medieval glory of the faith in this sub continent. The exclusivist Ideology of Wali Ullah, which sowed the seed of Muslim separatism in South Asia had nothing to do with the secular intellectual approach towards spiritualism.

Against the total rejection of Sufism by his contemporary radical Islamist Wahhab of Saudi Arabia, Waliullah used his mystic ideology for political domination of the Muslims in the region. However, the spirit and aim of both were for adherence to pure Islam. He was the main guiding source for Muslims after the decline of Islamic rule in Indian subcontinent. Contrary to the commonly viewed Sufi tradition he was not receptive to the spiritual tradition of local Hindus in any form. His main spiritual concerns if any was for revival of Islamic India.

The Muslim ruler under the influence of the doctrine of Shah Wali Ullah patronised Islamic learning and "took away the administrative and economic power that had passed into the hands of Hindus" (Islamic Mysticism in India by Nagendra Kumar Singh, Page 185). "For Shah Wali Ullah, the decline of Mogul political power and the spiritual decadence of Indian Islam were closely related "(The Sufi Orders in Islam by J. Spencer Trimingham, Oxford, 1971, Page 196).

Sayyid Ahmad Barelavi, a disciple of Abd al Aziz, (the son of Shah Wali Ullah) continued the tradition of Waliullah by synthesising the three major Sufi orders" (The Sufi orders in Islam by Spencer Trimingham, Oxford, 1971, Page 129). He launched armed jehad against the non-Muslims but was killed in the battle of Balkot against Sikh leader Ranjit Singh. Karamat Ali, a disciple of Sayed Ahmad Barelavi further developed the ideology for purifying Islam from the influences of Hindu custom and tradition. "His work largely paved the way for the establishment of the organisation which has more recently been developed under the name of Ahl-I-Hadith" (Indian Islam by Murray T Titus, 1979, Page 186). It was a neo-Sufi concept of Islam interpreted by Shah Wali-Ullah.

The leaders of Deoband movement were also under the influence of both Wali Ullah and Wahhab and accordingly they resisted against the British and were critical of Aligarh movement because of its leader Sir Sayed Ahmad being loyal to it. Protracted struggle with the concept of greater jehad was the basic creed of Deoband movement, which is a synthesis of Wahhab and Wali Ullah. Deobandis extreme austere approach towards Wahhab and harsh condemnation of the much popular practice of Sufism in India are being viewed as a totally anti-Sufi movement. Ahmad Riza Khan Barilavi(1856-1921), the founder of Barelavi movement was the defender of traditional Sufi movement but Mohammad Ilyas, a pietistic missionary group though, appropriated the ethical emphasis of Sufism rejected its ritual, metaphysics and sainthood (M.A.Haq - The Faith Movement of Maulana Ilyas, London, 1972 - Quoted from Encyclopaedia of Islam Vol. X, page 336).

Sufi during British Rule:

Sufi movement became dormant with the decline of Muslim power in India. With the failure of armed resistance against the British and Sikh-
Hindu combined, the followers of hard line Sufism were forced to adjust with the ground reality of non-Muslim occupation of Indian subcontinent but did not reconcile with it. The failure of Sepoy mutiny and consolidation of British power in Indian subcontinent was a further jolt on the radical Islamists but all the Islamic revivalist movements like Deoband, Aligarh and Pakistan drew their inspirations from the anti Hindu syndrome of Sufi saints like Sirhind and Shah Wal Ullah. Khilafat movement and subsequent Pakistan movement were the outcome of the jehadi interpretation of Walli Ullah brand of neo-Sufi jihad against the political domination of non-believers. The resistance of Muslims against the British and subsequently against the Indian National Congress was due to deep and hard line influence of Shah Wali Ullah over them.

Before the failure of 1857 Sepoy mutiny Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan was a follower of the neo-Sufi cult of Shah Waliullah.. Elizabeth Surriyeh (Sufis and Anti-Sufis, 1999) maintained that Syed Ahmad Khan gradually distanced himself from Shah Waliullah. But firmly rooted in the Indian Islamic mysticism he was deeply pained with the plight of Muslims after the collapse of Sepoy mutiny of 1857. He therefore, took up the challenge of modern education and transformed the revolutionary mystic ideology of Shah Wali Ullah for revitalisation of Islamic glory through western education. Had he distanced himself from Wali Ullah, he would not have initiated the two-nation theory on the line of this Sufi Islamist to promote the movement of Muslim separatism through his Aligarh movement.

Sir Sayed's philosophy was a synthesis of progressive and orthodox Islam. On one hand he favoured modern education on European pattern and on the other he supported Islamic orthodoxy for superior religious identity of Muslims. He reinterpreted the cultural heritage of Islam within the mystic ideological frame of Wali Ullah, His Aligarh movement was a tactical but a hidden alliance of the Muslims with British under latter's sovereignty to revive the supremacy of Muslims. He advocated for free discussion on Islam but due to his communal obsession he did not strive hard to prove his point for the socio-religious integration of Indian society. His excluvist belief of Muslims' superiority was based on the mystic ideology of Wali Ullah. It was against the unity of Indian society.

According to Allama Iqbal, "he (Wali Ullah) was the first Muslim to feel the urge for rethinking the whole system of Islam without in any way breaking away from its past" (The Sufi Orders in Islam by J. Spencer Trimingham, Oxford, 1971, Page 198). In fact Wali Ullah and Abd al Wahhab recommended religiously approved jihad against unbelievers (non-Muslims) but rejected the commonly viewed difference between lesser jihad and greater jihad. "This physical armed struggle had commonly been termed 'lesser jihad' (al-jihad-al -asghar), the greater jihad (al-jihad-al akbar) being the struggle for the interior spiritualisation of individual battle waged against the base self rather than exterior armies" (Sufis and anti-Sufis by Elizabeth Surriyeh, 1999, Page 29).

Iqbal was a known follower of Islamic mysticism of Qadiriyya order. He, synthesised the mystic ideology of Wali Ullah and the modern view on Islam of Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan and made his Islamic mystic approach completely subservient to political domination of the Muslims. Applying modern philosophy in his intellectual exploration of Sufism he gradually turned to an anti-Sufi philosopher. He said, "The present day Muslims prefer to roam about aimlessly in the dusty valleys of Hellenic -Persian mysticism, which teaches us to shut our eyes to the hard reality around, and to fix our gaze on what it describes as 'Illuminations' a blue, red and yellow reality springing up from the cells of an
overworked brain" (Sufis and anti-Sufis by Elizabeth Syrrieh, 1999). "Sufi shaikhs constituting a spiritual aristocracy, Iqbal appealed to Muslim youth to cast off the Sufi noose from their neck" (Ibid. Page133). For Iqbal Sufism was a formulation of Islamic Persianism. It was contrary to the purity of Arabic faith in its original version. His rejection of Sufism was influenced by Wahhabi movement of Saudi Arabia, which was more concerned with Islamic power following the decline of Muslim power in eighteenth century.

CONCLUSION

The concept of Tawhid (Unity in God), which is the real formulation of Sufism suggests that Islamic mysticism has no difference with the formulations of other non-Islamic faiths about the oneness of God. On this basis Sufism became popular in India during the period of Muslim rule. But when the Sufis supported the Muslims in their political conflict with the Hindus and played important role in conversion of indigenous people to Islam, it gave birth to politicisation of religion, which generated communal tension between the two major religious communities. The movement for purifying Islam from extraneous influences, which was launched by the Sufis like Saikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Wali Ullah was against the spiritual doctrine of 'Tawhid' (Unity in God). Creating a far-reaching impact on the psyche of Indian Muslims it continues to keep the Muslim mass away from the modern global changes.

Sufism in India has commonly been viewed as a secular attempt for eternal quest of the soul for its direct experience of the ultimate Super power. For centuries the Hindus accepted Sufi shrines as symbol of communal harmony. A large number of them have been offering prayers in Sufi shrines without any reservation but this liberal gesture has not been reciprocated Muslims.

Had Sufism as commonly been viewed as an attempt to adapt Islam in Hindu tradition, the philosophy of two-nation theory would not have emerged. The Hindu revivalist movement like Arya Samaj was a reaction to politicisation of the doctrine of Sufism, which widened the gap of mistrust between the two major religious communities of South Asia.

Contrary to the common perception that Sufism tried to unify the Hindu-Muslim spirituality for a communal harmony, the political Islamists of Sufi background used the doctrine of Tawhid to accelerate the process of Muslim separatism in Indian subcontinent. Their movements were the by-products of Sufi tradition of Islam. They were basically the mystics for the political domination of Islam activists.

The basic creed of mystic movements is unity of God irrespective of religious connotation. Unity of God denotes social unity and universal brotherhood. But these political mystics not only divided the society on the basis of religion but their doctrine created a permanent Hindu-Muslim conflict in the region. The spirit of mysticism is to resolve any dilemma confronting the society. But Sufi movement failed to resolve confronting Hindu-Muslim dilemma in Indian society. In practice they launched a movement for systematic dehumanisation of Islam and negated the concept of Islamic spiritualism of Tawhid (Unity of God).