



Intoxication or Sobriety? Examining the Most Famous Example in Islamic Mysticism

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Abstract: The present article examines Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī’s reputation as a mystic of “intoxication” (*sukr*). The origin and validity of such labels are analyzed by examining their most famous example. It should be noted that for the first time, the author of *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* labels Bāyazīd as the pioneer of “intoxicated” Ṣūfis. Thus, the main question of this paper is to find out whether Hujwīrī had a correct criterion in his attribution of the ‘Path of Intoxication’ to Bāyazīd or Ibn’ Arabī was right in referring to Bāyazīd’s eminence and fixity (*Tamkin*). In other words, Hujwīrī introduces Bāyazīd as an intoxicated Ṣūfi, and Ibn’ Arabī calls him as a sober gnostic. To explore our question, we have critically examined *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* and Hujwīrī’s other reports and have argued that Hujwīrī’s main criterion for attribution of intoxication to Bāyazīd is due to his ecstatic utterances, which is not always an applicable criterion. Moreover, because intoxication and sobriety are not alike and identical, dividing Ṣūfis into two separate sects as ‘intoxicated’ and ‘sober’ is not a precise division. Also, calling a certain sect *Tayfūriyya* can be of Hujwīrī’s own innovation. Then, taking into consideration the words of Ibn’ Arabī about Bāyazīd, we have presented some evidence of Bāyazīd’s sayings and mystical practices to indicate his sobriety.

Contribution: This study accurately portrays a renowned Islamic mystic while enhancing the understanding of mystical concepts. It also explores the origins of labeling in Islamic history, illustrating how labels emerge and are subsequently perpetuated by later authors despite inadequate citation or contrary documentation.

Keywords: Bāyazīd; intoxication; sobriety; Hujwīrī; Ibn ‘Arabī.

Introduction

Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī (d. ca. 261/875 or 234/849) is probably the most prominent and inspiring Khurāsānī Ṣūfī. He held such an exalted place among his Ṣūfī contemporaries that some famous Ṣūfis such as Dhū al-Nūn al-Mesri (d. 245/860), Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194/810), Ahmad Khadrūya and his Ṣūfī wife, Fātīma Umm ul-Ali have respected and praised him.¹ Bāyazīd's majesty and fame were dominant in the history of Ṣūfism even posthumously. Abū al-Hasan Kharāqānī (d. 425/1033) says to his disciple: "I wish the world were full of men, all like Bāyazīd."² Also, even several centuries following his death, the title "Bāyazīd of the times" has been used in veneration of some other mystics.³

In the eyes of Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī is among the "Muhammadan pole" (*qutb al-Muhammadiyah*) who has surpassed all mystical states and stations and sits with God in a circle of awe (*hayba*) and intimacy (*uns*). Thus, Ibn 'Arabi has regarded Bāyazīd as companions of equilibrium, stability, repose, and a man of excellent manners in the presence of God, who journeyed in the "Place of no attributes."⁴ In Ibn 'Arabī's terminology, the term "place" is a divine utterance adapted from the same Qur'anic term in verse: 'We raised him to a high place' (Qur'an 19:57) and is comparable to 'Aṭṭār's (d. ca. 618/1220) notion of "being without attribute" mentioned in his introduction to his famous hagiography, *Tadhkirat ul-Awliyā*.⁵ On the other hand, the author of *Kashf al-Mahjūb* considers Bāyazīd and his followers (whom he calls *Ṭayfūriyya*) people of rapture and intoxication and introduces him as the pioneer of the Intoxicated as opposed to the Sober, whose pioneering figure is al-Junayd of Baghdād (d. 298/910).⁶ The intoxication and rapture attributed to Bāyazīd by Hujwīrī clearly lie in contrast with Ibn 'Arabī's admiration of his fixity and excellent manners. Thus, the main question of this paper is to find out whether Hujwīrī had a correct criterion in his attribution of the 'Path of Intoxication' to

¹ Muhammad Ibn Alī Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i 'Irfān-i Bāyazīd*, trans. Muhammad-Rizā Shafī'ī Kadkanī (Tehran: Sukhan, 2005), 88, 120, N 27; 122, N 63.

² Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, ed. Reynold Nicholson (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i Asāfir, 1994), 741.

³ Fereidūn Sepahsālār, *Risāla-i Sepahsālār Dar Manāqib-i Ḥazrat-i Parvardgār*, ed. Mohammad Afshīn Vafāi (Tehran: Sokhan, 2009), 118; Shams al-Dīn Ahmad Aflāki, *Manāqib Ul-'Arifīn*, ed. Tahseen Yāzījī (Tehran: Donyā-i Ketāb, 1996), 2: 737.

⁴ Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, ed. Ahmad Shams Al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'ilmiyya, 1999), 4: 23.

⁵ 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 68.

⁶ Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, ed. Mahmood 'Abedī (Tehran: Soroush, 2004), 280.

Bāyazīd or Ibn ‘Arabī was right in referring to Bāyazīd’s eminence and fixity (*Tamkin*).

Literature Review

Examining the opinion of Ernst and Mujaddedi

Regarding Ibn ‘Arabī’s attitude towards Bāyazīd, many articles have been written. One can refer to Ernst’s paper, in which Bāyazīd has been seen from the perspective of the man without attribute, and Bāyazīd is discussed from the perspective of his ecstatic utterances, as Ibn ‘Arabī considers Bāyazīd’s ecstatic utterances, not his own volition but ordered God’s will.⁷

Ibn ‘Arabī considers Bāyazīd’s words as related to his position; Ernst comes from these words and a quote from Bāyazīd to the fact that Bāyazīd is without attributes as he is placed in a position that cannot be said about. This description is more closely related to the position of annihilation than the concept of subsistence; from this point of view, although Ernst does not talk about sobriety and intoxication in this article, with an implicit interpretation, according to his description of Bāyazīd and placing him around ecstatic utterances, in a way, by calling Bāyazīd without attributes, as he has placed him in intoxication, because he refers to Bāyazīd "without attributes" according to a narration, and Ernst’s article also It is called so.⁸

Ernst is more interested in ecstatic utterances than any other concept, and of course, he seeks to provide an interpretation of those to be knowledgeable, so that in the book “Words of Ecstasy in Sufism,” he mentions:

“The very commentaries on shathiyat by Junaid, Sirāj, and Rūzbahān are decisive proof of a tradition of exegesis. The spiritual riches of shaṭḥ are, on principle, potentially accessible to those who wish to find them, as much, indeed, as any profound religious statements are accessible to sympathetic investigators.”⁹

From this approach, of course, for Ernst, intoxication and sobering of Bāyazīd’s is not in question. Still, the knowledgeable essence of the ecstatic utterance and the manner and its meaning is a fundamental question. In this regard, he refers to Hujwīrī’s division from the point of being intoxicated and

⁷ Carl W. Ernst, “The Man Without Attributes: Ibn ‘Arabī’s Interpretation of Bāyazīd Al-Bistami,” Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society, 2019, <https://ibnarabisociety.org/the-man-without-attributes-carl-ernst/>.

⁸ Ernst.

⁹ Carl W. Ernst, *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 50.

sober. He considers this division artificial, but this statement does not clarify Bāyazīd's position between annihilation and subsistence and intoxication and sobriety. According to his interpretation of Bāyazīd in his article "The Man without Attributes," He introduces Bāyazīd to annihilation and ecstatic statements, which are related to intoxication because even if intoxication and sobriety are artificial between the school of Bāyazīd and even though Junaid, the position of annihilation, subsistence, and ecstatic utterances cannot be considered artificial. And mystics are closer to one of them according to their behavior (Sulūk) and words. In Ernst's approach, Bāyazīd is more related to intoxication.

He believes Hujwīrī's division is artificial because Junaid also gave the first commentary on Bāyazīd's ecstatic utterances, and people like Shiblī and... have ecstatic utterances in his school.¹⁰ However, it is not the case that he does not consider Bāyazīd to be intoxicated. We quote his words directly to make his meaning clear:

“Against Hujwīrī's agnosticism regarding the description of states of ecstasy is the fact, of capital importance, that Junaid was the first to comment on the shathiyat of Bāyazīd; this is hardly the act of one who only allows significance to apparently “self-controlled” utterances. It further reveals the artificiality of separating the “schools” of Junaid (sobriety) and Bāyazīd (intoxication).”¹¹

Among the others who have paid attention to Bāyazīd from the point of view of his ecstatic utterances and considered Hujwīrī's division to be artificial is Jawid Mojaddedi, who, in the book “THE BIOGRAPHICAL TRADITION IN SUFISM” does not consider Bāyazīd's intoxication to be compatible with his biography against what Hujwīrī stated. He depicts that as Hujwīrī's innovation, and it was repeated by others after him.¹²

Considering that Jāvīdī's interpretation of Hujwīrī's text is that Bāyazīd is not intoxicated, apparently, according to this text,¹³ but Jāvīdī suffices to mention this narration and says in this regard:

“The fact that Hujwīrī resorts to using this particular narrative as the only one about Bāyazīd with the message that intoxication is superior to sobriety, despite the fact that it can only serve his purposes if the more obvious interpretation is

¹⁰ Ernst, 50.

¹¹ Ernst, 50.

¹² Jawid A Mojaddedi, *The Biographical Tradition in Sufism* (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), 134.

¹³ Mojaddedi, 144.

ignored in favor of his innovative one, is understandable since it is the only segment about Bāyazīd to be found in his earlier biographies which refers explicitly to intoxication.”¹⁴

It seems that Mojaddedi considers Hujwīrī’s innovative interpretation to be contrary to appearance and does not make a specific comment to reject it. He also mentions that:

“Intoxication (sukr) is mentioned only in one other instance in the earlier biographies of Bāyazīd, namely in the introduction of the hadith transmission of Bāyazīd’s biography in the *Hilyat al-awliyā* where it is suggested that his deep utterances were produced and issued from his intoxication.” (nāfathāt sirrih al-mutaivallada ’l-muntashara min sukrih) (H, X, 41.8).¹⁵

In this regard and the transmission hadith which is mentioned in *Hilyat al-awliyā*’ for Bāyazīd, Jāvīdī says:

“The above demarcator in the biography of Bāyazīd is particularly significant because of its claim that his utterances are generated ultimately by his intoxication (sukr).”¹⁶

Jāvīdī does not consider the narration of the transmission hadith in *Hilyat al-awliyā*’ and the conclusion that Bāyazīd was intoxicated to be compatible with his biography. Still, he does not provide reasons why this is not the case, and he only makes a short comment about it. Finally, in the case of Hujwīrī, he makes the division He shows with difficulty, but he suffices to mention the reasons for his claim, except that he does not consider the two claims of Hujwīrī’s book and *Hilyat al-awliyā*’ s book to be sufficient. Jāvīdī has not addressed this issue in his book, and in an article about Bāyazīd more than what has been mentioned, he clarifies his idea as follows:

“One also cannot find any utterances specifically in support of a doctrine of drunkenness or sobriety in the respective biographical traditions of Bāyazīd and Junaid up to this point in time.”¹⁷

On the other hand, with these words, it is clear that Mojaddedi’s intention is simply to express the fact that, based on the biographies of Junaid and Bāyazīd, the terms of being intoxicated and sobriety cannot be attributed to them. Hujwīrī

¹⁴ Mojaddedi, 144.

¹⁵ Mojaddedi, 204.

¹⁶ Mojaddedi, 58.

¹⁷ Jawid A Mojaddedi, “Getting Drunk with Abū Yazīd or Staying Sober with Junayd: The Creation of a Popular Typology of Sufism,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 66, no. 1 (February 3, 2003): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0041977X03000016>.

sets up a term, but he does not consider Bāyazīd to be sobriety in any way. Because he considers him closer to annihilation more than subsistent, according to his biography, based on this belief, he also considers intoxication more related to Bāyazīd than sobriety and says:

“For instance, the notion of drunkenness which Hujwīrī attributes to Bāyazīd and the Tayfuriyya, one of the utmost self-annihilation or obliteration in the desire for union with God, is arguably represented by several utterances attributed to Bāyazīd in his earlier biographies; that is to say, they express similar sentiments, albeit without mentioning the term drunkenness.”¹⁸

Hujwīrī is also self-aware and does not make a deep distinction between intoxication and sobriety; he puts intoxication on the path of truth and sobriety and subsistence as the last destination. He says:

"When the principle (asl) is firmly established, sobriety and intoxication redemption one another, but when the principal is wanting, both are baseless. In short, where true mystics tread, sobriety and intoxication are the effects of difference (ikhtilāf), and when the sultan of 'truth displays his beauty, both sobriety, and intoxication appear to be intruders (tufayli)..., as the poet says, when the morning-star of wine rises the drunken and the sober are as one."¹⁹

Therefore, Hujwīrī is aware of the type of division and the absence of a border between these two, but still, he considers Bāyazīd to be intoxicated rather than sober. The point that should be taken into consideration is that the concept of intoxication is related to annihilation, and sobriety is related to subsistence)²⁰ Therefore, when we consider Bāyazīd closer to sobriety, on the other hand, it means that he places the position of subsistence higher, and he has reached subsistence at the peak of his behavior (Sulūk).

This is the point that neither Ernst nor Mojaddedi paid attention to, and Mojaddedi has confirmed that Bāyazīd did not get to the subsistence, and his ecstatic utterances are from this point of view by quoting Sirāj. Mojaddedi has mentioned, based on Junaid's commentary utterances, that Bāyazīd has been placed in a lower degree than Junaid. Mojaddedi also considers Hujwīrī's interpretation in his article from the point of view that intoxication is in a lower

¹⁸ Mojaddedi.

¹⁹ Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 284; Hazrat Ali bin Usman Al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub-A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, trans. Reynold A. Nicholson (Lahore: Zia-ul-Quran Publications, 2001), 188.

²⁰ Lloyd Ridgeon, *Routledge Handbook on Sufism* (London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2021), 22.

position compared to sobriety, which actually expresses the lowest position of annihilation compared to subsistence.

“In this substantial sequence of commentaries, Junaid finds ways of accommodating Bāyazīd's ecstatic utterances, despite the fact that others have condemned them, while at the same time stressing that he had not yet reached the higher, more perfect, stations. This seems to parallel to a significant degree the structure of the argument in Hujwiri's work.”²¹

As it was mentioned, Mojaddedi does not present Bāyazīd as a perfect mystic based on Junaid's quotes, even though Junaid considers bāyazīd among themselves, such as Gabriel among angels according to *Kashf al-Mahjūb*.²²

Therefore, from this point of view, Bayazid's position of subsistence and sobriety is more compatible with his biography, and annihilation has been a part of his conduct. We offer several pieces of evidence from Ibn ‘Arabī's approach and Bayazid's own words to prove this claim.

Method

This article employs an analytical-descriptive approach to classical Islamic mysticism texts, incorporating and critiquing the works of contemporary thinkers like Ernst and Mujaddedi while verifying these attributions through earlier texts, particularly those concerning Bāyazīd.

Results and Discussion

Critique on *Kashf al-Mahjūb*

Before criticizing Hujwīrī's introduction of Bāyazīd as the pioneer of the Intoxicated, a note on the style in which *Kashf al-Mahjūb* has been compiled shall be pointed out here. What distinguishes Hujwīrī's scholarly style in *Kashf al-Mahjūb* from that of his famous contemporary, Abu al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072) –whose treatise (*Al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*) has been itself one of Hujwīrī's primary resources– is his theologically critical approach to the views and sayings of his Ṣūfī predecessors. Hence, the text of *Kashf al-Mahjūb* is rigid and scholarly.²³ Unlike al-Qushayrī, who, in a precautionary manner, avoids dealing with disagreements in the teachings of different Ṣūfis as well as with controversial figures such as al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), Hujwīrī had a passion for

²¹ Mojaddedi, “Getting Drunk with Abū Yazīd or Staying Sober with Junayd: The Creation of a Popular Typology of Sufism.”

²² Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 162; Al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub-A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, 106.

²³ ‘Abedī's introduction to his edition of Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 42.

challenging subjects and personalities, and presumably juxtaposing opposite beliefs and teachings of different Ṣūfis. Accordingly, he has allocated a certain chapter to the sects and schools of Ṣūfis and criticized them.²⁴

In his preface to *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, R. A. Nicholson raises an important question: whether the Ṣūfi schools mentioned by Hujwīrī really existed or been merely invented by him as a result of his enthusiasm for establishing a structure for Ṣūfism?²⁵ This skepticism towards Hujwīrī's classification of the Ṣūfi schools grew even stronger by certain Iranian researchers who subsequently regarded Hujwīrī's naming of the Ṣūfi schools as "fabricated invention" and without objective grounds and even considered it arbitrary. Shafi'ee Kadkanī, for instance, argues that if Ṣūfi orders such as *Ṭayfūriyya*, *Sahliyya*, and *Khafīyya* were real, they would have been mentioned in the biographies of the Ṣūfi masters, whom Hujwīrī claims to be the founders of those schools.²⁶ However, no reference is made to such names in their surviving biographies.²⁷

It is also appropriate to compare Hujwīrī's approach to Ṣūfism with that of his predecessor Ṣūfi hagiographer, Abū Abd al-Rahmān Sulamī (d. 412/1021), whose main concern was to present Ṣūfis as justified and acceptable as transmitters of the Ḥadīth. As the chain of transmission indicates the authenticity of a transmitter, likewise, the order of a Ṣūfi testifies to his mystical position. As a result, Sulamī applied the concept of order (*ṭabaqāt*) to Ṣūfi generations to trace each Ṣūfi's relation to his predecessors up until the time of the successors of the Prophet.²⁸ The introduction of this concept to Ṣūfism gradually led to the formation of the notion of 'chain' (*silsila*) among later Ṣūfis, which is quite in contrast to 'sect'; as the former emphasizes the unity of Ṣūfi generations, while the latter is based on differentiation and division of Ṣūfi schools from the main body. Thus, Hujwīrī's task to inaugurate the chapter "on

²⁴ Nicholson's preface to his translation of Ali B. 'Uthman al-Jullabī Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb* (New Delhi: Taj Company, 1982), xxii.

²⁵ Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb*.

²⁶ Such as *Maqāmāt-i Bāyazīd*, *Maqāmāt-i Sahl Tustai*, *Sra-i Abu Abd Allah Khafī*.

²⁷ See Shafi'ee Kadkanī's introduction to Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i 'Irfānī-i Bāyazīd*, 16–17.

²⁸ The concept of 'order' (*ṭabaqāt*) was traditionally applied to the generations of the narrators of the Ḥadīth. The order of each narrator suggested his temporal distance from the age of the Prophet himself, which was regarded as the first order in the narrative tradition. Sulamī's approach to sufism, which remarkably resembles the common approach to the narrative tradition, is best represented in his works *Arba'īn fī Taṣawwuf* and *Ṭabaqāt al-Sūfiyya*.

the difference of Ṣūfī Sects and Schools,"²⁹ does not comply with the spirit of Ṣūfism which is characterized by unity and is in contrast with the notions of order and chain suggested by the earlier and later Ṣūfis, respectively.

Nicholson suggests a stronger possibility: perhaps Hujwīrī has added his own ideas to the certain teachings he has attributed to each Ṣūfī founder of a sect, or at least, has expressed his opinions alongside theirs.³⁰ This incorporation has appeared in a number of cases as fictional or based on personal taste. For instance, one of the main concerns of Hujwīrī in *Kashf al-Mahjūb* was to collect and compare the views of Khurāsānī and Irāqī Ṣūfis on different schools of Ṣūfism. This concern is evident in his words on *Muḥāsibīyya* or the followers of Ḥārith Ibn Asad al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), which has been introduced as the first Ṣūfī sect, Hujwīrī points out:

The peculiarity of al-Muḥāsibī's doctrine is that he does not mention Satisfaction (*riḍā*) among the 'stations' but includes it among the 'states.' He was the first to hold this view, which was adopted by the people of Khurāsān. The people of Iraq, on the contrary, assert that satisfaction is one of the 'stations,' and it is extreme quietism. The controversy between them has gone on to the present day.³¹

As it can be inferred from this quotation, explaining the subjects of controversy and Ṣūfis' disagreements was the main stimulus for the writer of *Kashf al-Mahjūb*. Evidence for this claim is Hujwīrī's quotation of Bāyazīd before dealing with the opinions of *Muhasibis* at the beginning of his chapter on Ṣūfī sects: "The disagreement of divines is a mercy save on the point of Unification."³² These words of Bāyazīd seem to have served as an authorization for Hujwīrī to deal with controversies and polemical debates rather than to defend the principle of mysticism. For instance, in his discussion on al-Ḥallāj, Hujwīrī reports the various attitudes of the Ṣūfī Shaykhs towards al-Ḥallāj and his teachings and al-Qushayrī's full cautiousness in dealing with him. He classifies Ṣūfis as those who reject al-Ḥallāj and accuse him of being a magician and those who accept him as an exalted Ṣūfī. He also mentions another class who suspends their judgment about him, among whom al-Qushayrī is given special importance for his cautious remarks.³³: "If al-Ḥallāj was a genuine spiritualist, he

²⁹ Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 267.

³⁰ Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb*.

³¹ Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 268; Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 176–77.

³² Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 267; Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 176; Al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub-A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, 185.

³³ Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 229–30.

is not to be banned on the ground of popular condemnation, and if he was banned by Ṣūfism and rejected by the Truth, he is not to be approved on the ground of popular approval.”³⁴ Finally, Hujwīrī expresses his own view on al-Ḥallāj as follows:

In conclusion, you must know that the sayings of al-Ḥallāj should not be taken as a model, in as much as he was ecstatic, not firmly settled, and a man needs to be firmly settled before his sayings can be considered authoritative.³⁵

He makes a similar comment about the doctrine of Bāyazīd under the discussion on *Ṭayfūriyya*. Introducing the doctrine of Bāyazīd as rapture and intoxication, Hujwīrī continues to state that “The intoxicated man is enraptured and pays no heed to created things...” and that “Ṣūfi Shaykhs believe that no one is a proper model for others unless he is steadfast and free from the circle of ‘states.’”³⁶

According to the above-mentioned remarks, one can discern a subtle contradiction in Hujwīrī’s classification of accepted and condemned Ṣūfi sects. Considering the fact that Hujwīrī disapproves of taking the ‘intoxicated man’ as a prototype, he still regards *Ṭayfūriyya* as an approved sect of Ṣūfism.³⁷ Then, what does distinguish Bāyazīd’s doctrine from that of al-Ḥallāj? As claimed by Hujwīrī, both al-Ḥallāj, and Bāyazīd were intoxicated, enraptured Ṣūfis. What does justify Bāyazīd to be taken as a model for *Ṭayfūriyya* but not al-Ḥallāj for his own followers? Is it possible that Hujwīrī exaggerates when he introduces Bāyazīd’s path as intoxication and rapture? To find out the answers, one needs to figure out what, in the first place, has encouraged Hujwīrī to think of both al-Ḥallāj and Bāyazīd as two enraptured Ṣūfis.

It seems Bāyazīd’s ecstatic sayings might have led Hujwīrī to view him as an intoxicated Ṣūfi. This appears to be the ground for his putting Bāyazīd and al-Ḥallāj under the same category of Ṣūfis. This interference can be explained in the form of a syllogism as follows: whoever expresses ecstatic utterance is intoxicated, Bāyazīd and al-Ḥallāj both expressed ecstatic utterances, so they are intoxicated. The problem with this conclusion lies in the erroneousness of its major premise since expressing paradoxical sayings by Ḥallāj is irrefutable, but by Bāyazīd is questionable. Additionally, Hujwīrī claims to have read fifty

³⁴ Hujwīrī, 150; Al-Hujwiri, *The Kashf Al-Mahjub-A Persian Treatise on Sufism*, 232.

³⁵ Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 152.

³⁶ Hujwīrī, 184.

³⁷ Hujwīrī, 176, 184.

fragments by al-Ḥallāj,³⁸ and this leads us to the conclusion that his judgment of al-Ḥallāj is based on examining the latter's words. Regarding Bāyazīd, however, Hujwīrī avoids referring to any of his words and claims that Bāyazīd and his followers preferred intoxication over sobriety.³⁹ Hujwīrī mentions that contrary to *Ṭayfūriyya* (followers of Bāyazīd), *Junaydīs* (the followers al-Junayd) preferred sobriety over intoxication.⁴⁰ In the following pages, based on Hujwīrī, Ibn 'Arabī, and even other Sufī masters, we will show no objective grounds for such a clear distinction.

Paradoxical Utterances as a Measure of Intoxication and Sobriety

We start our exploration by examining some of the most famous ecstatic utterances of Bāyazīd. One of these utterances, which has received the most attention from scholars throughout centuries, reads: "Glory be to me! How great is my Majesty!"⁴¹ This famous utterance by Bāyazīd has long been investigated and commented on by many scholars, including Abū Nasr al-Sarrāj (d.378/988). In response to Ibn Sālim, who was denouncing Bāyazīd for this utterance, al-Sarrāj raised the possibility for it to be a directly reported speech of God's words in the Qur'an. According to al-Sarrāj, had we known the precedent of "*Subḥānī* (glory be to me)" in Bāyazīd's words, we might have found it a part of God's words referring to Himself.⁴²

Almost the same assumption has been suggested by two other famous Ṣūfis, Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī (d.606/1209) and Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār (d.618/1221) about other ecstatic utterances of Bāyazīd. Rūzbihān quotes through Abū Mūsā, a disciple of Bāyazīd, that once on a trip with his master, while they were staying in Samarqand, people were coming to receive his blessings. As they were leaving the city, a large crowd came to escort them. Bāyazīd asked Abū Mūsā: "who are these?" He replied: "They are the blessed." Bāyazīd climbed a hill and shouted to the crowd: "O people! I am your Lord, the Most High!"⁴³ The crowd said: "Bāyazīd has gone insane," and turned their faces from him.⁴⁴ Rūzbihān attributes this odd conduct of Bāyazīd to his *malāmatī* (blame) attitude; he writes: "O friend! This is

³⁸ Hujwīrī, 231.

³⁹ Hujwīrī, 280.

⁴⁰ Hujwīrī, 281.

⁴¹ '*Subḥānī, mā a'ẓama sha'nī*'

⁴² Abū Nasr al-Sarrāj Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma' Fi Al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, Gibb Memorial Series, Vol. XXII (London: Luzac and Co. LTD, 1963), 391.

⁴³ '*ana rabbukum ul-a'lā*'

⁴⁴ Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i Shaḥīyyāt*, ed. Henry Corbin (Tehran: Institute of Iranist for France Publications, 1995), 99.

the act of the *malāmatī*, not whoever recites the Qur'an is mad.⁴⁵ 'Aṭṭār mentions a similar story in *Tadhkirat ul-Awliyā*, according to which Bāyazīd, in order to expel the love of him from the hearts of the crowd who wished to keep him company, turned to them and said: 'Verily I am God; there is no God but I; therefore serve Me.'⁴⁶ 'Aṭṭār, too, considers this utterance to be simply a recitation of a Qur'anic verse⁴⁷, and says: "The Shaikh was talking on behalf of God, the Exalted, as people say: "as a narration from his God."⁴⁸

The remarkable result of the argument put forward by al-Sarrāj, Rūzbihān, and 'Aṭṭār is that at least some of such utterances of Bāyazīd are not ecstatic at all, but, according to the two latter, simply the words of a sober *malāmatī*.⁴⁹ It should be noted that a *malāmatī* act and reciting the Qur'an are deliberate acts, while an ecstatic utterance is said out of rapture and involuntarily. It is also worth noting Ibn 'Arabī calls Bāyazīd a *malāmatī*.⁵⁰ On the other hand, evidence on the state and station of Bāyazīd confirms his words were stated in order to disperse people in a *malāmatī* manner. We shall return to this point regarding Bāyazīd's *malāmatī* attitude later on, but before that, another significant point should be noted here.

One may logically say that even if some of Bāyazīd's utterances are truly ecstatic, there is still no concrete reason to believe that his state of intoxication was dominant enough to justify attributing the title "Intoxicated Šūfi" to him. In fact, al-Qushayrī, in his explanation of the terms 'intoxication' and 'sobriety' in his famous treatise, *Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, regards the two aforementioned states as more alternating than opposing. Therefore, speaking of the preference or dominance of any of the two states does not seem to be right. In Bāyazīd's case, the alternation of these two states becomes evident in many stories recounted about his ecstatic sayings. 'Aṭṭār, for example, mentions in his *Tadhkirat ul-awliyā* an occasion in which Bāyazīd experienced an ecstasy and

⁴⁵ Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i Shaḥīyyāt*.

⁴⁶ 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 137.; translation of the quotation from Farid al-Din 'Aṭṭār, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, trans. A. J. Arberry (Iowa: Omphaloskepsis, 2000), 124.

⁴⁷ 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*. This utterance of Bāyazīd is exactly the same as the Qur'anic verse 20:14.

⁴⁸ 'Aṭṭār, 163.

⁴⁹ al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, however, expresses doubts as to the truth of the outpouring of the utterance 'Glory be to Me!' by Bāyazīd, as according to him, Bāyazīd's descendants, whom he had visited in Biṣṭām, were unaware of that saying. Nevertheless, al-Sarrāj admits the prevalence of this saying among the people of his time and in the works of his contemporaries. See Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma' Fī Al-Taṣawwuf*, 391.

⁵⁰ Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, 50.

lost his consciousness after regaining his consciousness and being told that he had uttered the words: Glory be to me! How great is my dignity! Tells his disciples to cut him in pieces if he spoke such words again.⁵¹ Thus, he implicitly affirms such utterances to be heretic. In ‘Aṭṭār’s account, Bāyazīd’s obtaining consciousness obviously refers to his state of sobriety after intoxication. Moreover, al-Junayd has admitted that different accounts of Bāyazīd’s experiences show that the latter used to go through various times and stations, and therefore, his words would be different.⁵² Since the words are in compliance with the stations, it is difficult for people to understand them: "One, being in the ocean of unity, said: 'I am God,' the other, being in proximity or distance, spoke of sailing."⁵³

Considering all the above, one who says ecstatic utterances is not necessarily intoxicated. The literal meaning of *shaṭḥ* (paradoxical saying) is to “get moving”; as of Rūzbihān’s definition, this meaning refers to “disclosure of the secrets and their involuntary outpouring from the heart onto the tongue at the time of delighted ecstasy. Although, in this view, intoxication has been introduced as a powerful factor for expressing secrets, what Rūzbihān states as the ultimate meaning of ecstatic utterance relates to its audience, not to one who says it. The listener of the ecstatic utterance is faced with an ambiguous statement with an absurd appearance. If he/she cannot decipher its meaning by incorporating the proper criterion, he/she will be driven to reprobation and reproach. Emphasizing the ambiguous aspect of an ecstatic utterance, Rūzbihān mentions three sources for it: the Qur'an, *Ḥadīth*, and divine inspirations in the hearts of the friends of God.⁵⁴ By introducing the Qur'an and *Ḥadīth* as resources of ecstatic utterances, he considers God and the Prophet among the tellers of paradoxical sayings, for ambiguous verses and *Ḥadīth* unveil the secrets of the Divine manifestations or covering (*iltibās* in the words of Rūzbihān), so, if God and the prophet have ambiguous utterances, ecstatic utterances not be necessarily referred to intoxication. Even if an ecstatic utterance is said at the time of intoxication, rapture might be a state and not a station for the Gnostic. As when Rūzbihān talks about the paradoxical utterances of the prophet, the

⁵¹ ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 140; ‘Aṭṭār, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, 141.

⁵² Al-Ṭusī, *Al-Luma’ Fi Al-Taṣawwuf*, 380..

⁵³ Mahmood Ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm Shabistary, *Golshan-i Rāz*, ed. Kazim Dezfoolīan (Tehran: Talāyeh, 2003), 74.

⁵⁴ Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyyāt*, 58.

term "intoxication" is not applicable.⁵⁵ Or when he recalls the ecstatic utterance of Ali (Shiite first Imam), who said: "Alas! Ibn Abbās! That inner impulse erupted, then settled down,"⁵⁶ he is also referring to returning to sobriety.⁵⁷ Based on Rūzbihān's criterion that considers ecstatic utterance unveiling the secrets, even the sober al-Junayd is also a teller of ecstatic utterance where he says: "wealth fits lordship, and mendacity suits servitude."⁵⁸ Therefore, a manifestation of ecstatic utterance from a friend of God or a prophet does not necessarily refer to his intoxication. Therefore, one may conclude that labeling Bāyazīd's path with one specific state would be totally a reductionist attitude towards his *taṣawwuf*.

Evidence for Sobriety of Bāyazīd

As we have discussed earlier, Ibn 'Arabī considers Bāyazīd as a *Malāmatī* (blame-taker). Moreover, some ecstatic utterances attributed to Bāyazīd were willingly uttered by him to repel people, where such a Will is both consonant with sobriety and *Malāmatī* manners. In addition, a *Malāmatī* focuses on the detriments of worship instead of indulging in his prayers. Abū Ḥafṣ al-Ḥaddād says about the appellation of *Malāmatīs* that they observe their times with God and keep their secrets by blaming themselves in all their worship and other acts of proximity to God.⁵⁹ In line with this *Malāmatī* principle, Bāyazīd said:

"Repent of the sin once; repent of the worship a thousand times"; "Laymen repent of sins, and I repent of uttering '*lā ilāha illā Allāh*' (there is no god but God), For, I utter this with letters and [speech] organs, while God is outside such letters and organs.⁶⁰ There are harms in worship so that there is no need to search for sins."⁶¹

Even the pleasure of worship might be an obstacle on the mystical path: "The seeker is given the pleasure of worship, and once he is gratified, he will be veiled from proximity [to God]."⁶² Another *Malāmatī* principle is the concealment of one's worship, which can be so evidently observed in Bāyazīd's practice that he was told: "You call us to asceticism and worship, but you

⁵⁵ Shīrāzī, 62.

⁵⁶ هميات يا ابن عباس تلك الشقيقة هدرت ثم استقرت»

⁵⁷ Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ-i Shaḥīyyāt*, 71–72.

⁵⁸ Shīrāzī, 158.

⁵⁹ Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān Al-Sulamī, *Collection of Works of Abū 'Abd Al-Raḥmān Al-Sulamī*, ed. Nasrollāh Pourjavādī (Tehran: Markaz-i Nashr-i Dāneshgāhī, 1993), ii, 405.

⁶⁰ Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i 'Irfānī-i Bāyazīd*, 175, 153.

⁶¹ Sahlagī, 185, 188.

⁶² 'Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 238.

yourself do not adhere to these!” He angrily replied: “asceticism and worship are departed from me.”⁶³

The first evidence for Bāyazīd’s sobriety consists in his own statements cited as poems or prose in hagiographies. His utterances sometimes involve explicit references to sobriety and sometimes imply his tendency to sobriety. The utterance in which he explicitly refers to sobriety is what is quoted from him in the book *al-Nūr*:

"He covered me with me, I died; he then covered me with Himself, I came to life. He then concealed me from Himself and me, and I vanished. Then, he kept me in the station of *sobriety* and asked about my whereabouts. I said: 'Hiding in me is my annihilation, and hiding in You is subsistence, and hiding from both me and You is light, and You are prior to us in any case.'"⁶⁴

In these remarks, Bāyazīd makes it explicit that he was kept in the station of sobriety rather than intoxication. Moreover, when he talks about the two stages of hiding in himself and hiding in God as annihilation and subsistence, it is implied that he eventuated in subsistence, not annihilation. Just as subsistence after annihilation (*al-baqā’ ba’d al-fanā’*) is subsistence by God and not subsistence by Self, sobriety after intoxication is sobriety by God and not coming to one's Self. Intoxication is present in this kind of sobriety, but the person is not dominated by intoxication. In Rūmī’s words, “the wine became intoxicated with us, not we with it.”⁶⁵ Such a person is intelligent and not intoxicated. al-Qurshayrī has referred to the three stages of “*mutasākiri*” pretender to intoxication, “*sukrān*” (intoxicated), and “*ṣāhī*” (sober) as follows:

“One who tastes is a pretender to intoxication; one who drinks is intoxicated, and one who has intelligence (*rayy*) is sober. If the attribute persists in him, then the drink will not induce intoxication in him. And he is sober by God and negligent of any pleasure, not affected by whatever comes to him.”⁶⁶

In his exposition of the three terms, ‘Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Kāshānī (d. 1334) characterizes the “taster” (i.e., the semi-intoxicated) as an ecstatic (*wājid*), the fire of whose ecstasy dies out soon, just like a person who tastes wine mixed with water. He characterizes the “drinker” (i.e., the intoxicated) as an ecstatic whose

⁶³ ‘Aṭṭār, 198.

⁶⁴ Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mirās-i ‘Irfān-i Bāyazīd*, 316, 530.

⁶⁵ Jalāl al-Dīn Mowlawī Rumi, *Mathnawī Ma’nawī*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Tehran: Amirkabir, 1984), 1812.

⁶⁶ Abu al-Qāsim Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla Al-Qushayriyya* (Cairo: Dar-i- Jawāhir al-Kilam, 1995), 107–8.

reason is dominated by his frequent raptures, just like a person who consecutively drinks glasses of wine and then loses consciousness. Finally, he characterizes the "intelligent" as an ecstatic who is not affected by his frequent raptures because of the strength of his spirit, just like a tippler who is not intoxicated and does not lose discernment by any amount of wine because the wine has become part of his nature.⁶⁷ Al-Qushayrī and ‘Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd cite the following verse after explaining the term, *ray*: “I drank the love, glass after glass, Neither did the wine run out, nor was I satiated.”⁶⁸

Ibn al-Mulaqqin (d. 1401) attributes this verse to Bāyazīd and cites it after the citation of a correspondence between Yaḥyā b. Ma‘ādh al-Rāzī and Bāyazīd.⁶⁹ In *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, the verse is followed by the story of the correspondence between Yaḥyā and Bāyazīd:

“It is reported that Yaḥyā Ma‘ādh wrote a letter to Bāyazīd, inquiring him about someone who drinks a cup and becomes intoxicated for eternity. Bāyazīd replied: ‘There is a man here who drinks the sea of eternity day and night and then cries: is there more?’”⁷⁰

The citation of the story in *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*, after its exposition of the term "*rayy*" and Bāyazīd's verse, implies that Bāyazīd was a "*rayyān*" (intelligent) and sober since he was not intoxicated by seas of wine. Ibn 'Arabī has also pointed to Bāyazīd as "*rayyān*". He asks if there is "intelligence" after drinking and quotes a person as saying that he drank and was satiated while quoting Bāyazīd as saying that it is impossible to be satiated.⁷¹

Hujwiri's Characterization of Bāyazīd as Intoxicated

The author of *Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, to whom *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya* was also available, refers to the correspondence between Yaḥyā b. Ma‘ādh and Bāyazīd follow a dialogue on the superiority of intoxication over sobriety. Before citing the story, he writes:

⁶⁷ ‘Izz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Kāshānī, *Misbāḥ Al-Hidāya va Miftāḥ Al-Kitāya*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Homāyi (Tehran, n.d.), 137.

⁶⁸ Kāshānī, 137; Abul Qosim Qusyairī, “Al-Risālah Al-Qushairiyah,” 1989, 108.

⁶⁹ Sirāj al-Dīn Abi Ḥaḥḥ Umar Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Awliyā*, ed. Mustafā ‘Abd Alqāder ‘Aṭa’ (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 2006), 280–81.

⁷⁰ Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i ‘Irfānī-i Bāyazīd*, 292, 490; Ahmad Ibn Hussain Ibn al-Kharaqānī, *Dastūr Al-Jumhūr Fī Manāqib-i Sultān Al-‘Arifin, Bāyazīd Ṭayfūr*, ed. Mohammad Taghī Dāneshpazhooh and Iraj Afshār (Tehran: Research Institute of Written Heritage, 2009), 118–19; Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla Al-Qushayriyya*, 108; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt Al-Awliyā*, 280–81.

⁷¹ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, iv, 265.

“A fabricated story is reported about Abū Bāyazīd [Bāyazīd]—may God be satisfied with him—according to which in reply to the question ‘What do you say of one who drinks a single drop of the ocean of love and becomes intoxicated?’ Bāyazīd wrote: what do you say of one who, if all the oceans in the world were filled with the wine of love, would drink them all and still cry for more to slake his thirst?”⁷²

Hujwīrī’s claim that the story was fabricated shows he was aware of its implication of sobriety, which is at odds with the intoxication he attributes to Bāyazīd. In fact, the story is counterevidence for his assumption that Bāyazīd was intoxicated. Thus, he goes through efforts to establish his assumption, reinterpreting the story on flimsy grounds:

“...People imagine that Yaḥyā was speaking of intoxication and Bāyazīd of sobriety, but the opposite is the case. The man of sobriety is he who is unable to drink even one drop, and the man of intoxication is he who drinks all and still desires more. Wine being the instrument of intoxication, but the enemy of sobriety, intoxication demands what is homogeneous with itself, whereas sobriety takes no pleasure in drinking.”⁷³

Hujwīrī’s claim that the sober cannot stand a drop of wine shows, firstly, that he compares the mystical sobriety with sobriety before intoxication, and secondly, that he overlooks the notion of *rayyān* (intelligent) in *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya*. A sober person who becomes intoxicated with a sip of wine has never experienced the wine and intoxication before, while a mystical traveler obtains sobriety after experiencing intoxication. Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī analogically articulates the four stages of ecstasy (*wajd*) as follows: (1) bewilderment (*dhuhū*): this is analogous to someone who hears the sound of the sea, (2) wonder (*ḥayrat*): this is similar to someone who comes close to the sea, (3) intoxication: it is like someone who enters the sea, and (4) sobriety: it is analogous to someone who is carried by the sea waves.⁷⁴

Based on this analogy, a sober person has no will of his own despite his sobriety. Complete abandonment of Will is observed in Bāyazīd’s experience of meeting God: Bāyazīd said, “The Exalted God stopped me in one thousand stations before Him. In each station, He presented me with a kingdom, and I said, ‘I do not want this.’ In the last station, He asked me, ‘O Bāyazīd! What do you want?’ I replied, ‘I want not to want.’”⁷⁵

⁷² Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 283; Hujwīrī, *The Kashf Al-Mahjūb*, 187.

⁷³ Hujwīrī, *Kashf Al-Mahjūb*.

⁷⁴ Kāshānī, *Misbāḥ Al-Hidāya va Miftāḥ Al-Kifāya*, 137.

⁷⁵ Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i ‘Irfānī-i Bāyazīd*, 244–45, 349.

Ibn ‘Arabī comments on Bāyazīd’s statement (“I want not to want”) as follows: with this statement, Bāyazīd considers Will to be abandoning Will since he uttered this while Will had been realized in him.⁷⁶ According to Ibn ‘Arabī, abandonment of Will Bāyazīd means abandoning selfish desires inconsistent with Divine Satisfaction.⁷⁷ Thus, Bāyazīd journeyed in the station of Satisfaction, which is compatible with sobriety and fixity.

Compatibility of Sobriety with Bāyazīd’s Mysticism

In his exposition of the section on *ṣ tīṣām* (fasting) in *Manāzil al-Sā’irīn*, ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī (d. 736/1335) identifies Bāyazīd’s abandonment of the Will with the highest mystical station, that is the station of Satisfaction:

“And with regard to this, at the time he was at the inception of this station, Bāyazīd al-Biṣṭāmī—may God sanctify his soul—was asked: ‘What do you want?’, and he replied: ‘I want not to want’ and this is the station of Satisfaction.”⁷⁸

At the station of Satisfaction, which is the final point of fixity, the mystical traveler sacrifices his will before God. This is the true stance towards God, to which Khwāja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī alludes in his definition of *riḍā* (satisfaction): “Satisfaction refers to a true stance.”⁷⁹ And his commentator, i.e., Kāshānī, believes this was exemplified by Bāyazīd since he opted not to choose any stature for himself when he said, ‘I want not to want.’⁸⁰ The manner of abandoning one’s will or discretion is originated in other manners of sober treading.

Bāyazīd’s sobriety and manner before God led him to the station of no attributes- a station that could not be easily overlooked by Yaḥyā b. Ma’ādh al-Rāzī. Thus, upon hearing Bāyazīd’s reply (the feeling of thirst after drinking all the seas of love), he wondered and sought to meet him. Yaḥyā finally met Bāyazīd while the latter was worshipping God and uttering the following: “I seek refuge in You from asking this station.” Yaḥyā asked him the wisdom behind this, and Bāyazīd replied: “I was presented with twenty-some stations, but I said that I did not want any of them since stations are veils.”⁸¹ Yaḥyā wondered why Bāyazīd did not ask for gnosis when God Himself permitted him to ask whatever

⁷⁶ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, iv, 225.

⁷⁷ Ibn ‘Arabī, 473.

⁷⁸ Kamāl al-Din ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, *Exposition of Manāzil Al-Sāyerīn of Khwāja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī*, ed. Mohsen Bīdārfar (Qum: Bīdār, 1993), 80.

⁷⁹ Kāshānī, 204.

⁸⁰ Kāshānī, 205.

⁸¹ ‘Attār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 220.

he wished. ‘Aṭṭār, who gives an account of the story, comments on Yaḥyā’s remark as follows: “Yaḥyā was a novice, and Bāyazīd was a master.”⁸² ‘Aṭṭār’s opinion as a perfect mystic is evidence that, in the station of Satisfaction, asking for gnosis does not make sense since Satisfaction is the ultimate mystical stage.⁸³ Gnosis is the third of the seven mystical stages recounted by ‘Aṭṭār.⁸⁴ Indeed, since Satisfaction is the endpoint of the mystical path at which the traveler attains to God, it cannot be, precisely speaking, deemed a station, since if it were a station. The traveler had to cross it, while there is nothing beyond Satisfaction.⁸⁵ Thus, knowing that it is disrespectful towards God, as well as incompatible with his satisfaction with God, to ask Him for any high position, Bāyazīd replied to Yaḥyā’s question by saying that the mystic’s gnosis fades out in comparison with the Divine Knowledge. Thus, it is unjustified to make such a request. Moreover, a mystical traveler should not even seek the position of the highest Prophets (Ulu l-‘Azm):

"If you are given the attributes of Adam, the sanctity of Gabriel, the seclusion of Abraham, the passion of Moses, the purity of Jesus, and the Love of Muhammad—peace be upon him—be cautious not to be content and ask for more, which is beyond actions. Be resolute! Do not be content with anything! You will be veiled by what you content to."⁸⁶

Bāyazīd’s Manner and Fixity

Bāyazīd’s aforementioned remark: “Be resolute! Do not contend to anything,” might imply that one should not rest content with any mystical station since a station has to do with landing and going down and deals with acquirements, not divine gifts.⁸⁷ Thus, in this statement, Bāyazīd encourages Yaḥyā to abandon all stations. This is referred to by Ibn ‘Arabī in the 194th section of his book as the “station of being without attributes”—the abandonment of all stations, which is a characteristic of *Muhammadan* saints—to which Ibn ‘Arabī refers as Place (*makān*). Ibn ‘Arabī alludes to the Qur’anic verse, “People of Yathrib! There is no place for you; therefore, return” (13:33) and takes this to be exemplified by Bāyazīd:

"For mystics, Place is a station in the circle; it belongs to the people of perfection who have surpassed stations and states and Majesty (*jalāl*) and Beauty (*jamāl*).

⁸² ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*.

⁸³ Al-Ṭūsī, *Al-Luma’ Fi Al-Taṣawwuf*, 54.

⁸⁴ ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*, 393.

⁸⁵ Kāshānī, *Misbāḥ Al-Hidāya va Miftāḥ Al-Kifāya*, 403.

⁸⁶ ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat Ul-Awliyā*.

⁸⁷ Kāshānī, *Misbāḥ Al-Hidāya va Miftāḥ Al-Kifāya*, 125.

They have no qualities, attributes, or stations like Abū Yazīd. Beware that going beyond stations and states is characteristic of *Muhammadans* and is only possessed by people of fixity who are companions of God in the circle of awe together with intimacy."⁸⁸

Ibn ‘Arabī makes it explicit that *Muhammadan* Poles (including Bāyazīd) have left behind such stations and states and are companions of God in the circle of awe and intimacy. Thus, they are people of fixity. It is evident that only people of sobriety can carefully observe the manners before God. According to Rūmī: “In such intoxication, observance of due respect/ will not be there at all; or if it be, it’s a wonder. To observe humility in independence/ is to combine two opposites, like ‘round’ and ‘long’”.⁸⁹

Bāyazīd’s Sublime Aspiration

In his discussion on the station of Truthfulness (*ṣidq*) and its mysteries, Ibn ‘Arabī provides a unified definition of Truthfulness and aspiration (*himmā*): truth is intensity and steadfastness in religion and enthusiasm for the Exalted God, and the person of truth acts with his aspiration, which is the power of faith. He immediately appeals to a statement by Bāyazīd when he was asked about the Greatest Name (*al-Isim al-a’zam*): "Show me the smallest name, and I will show you the greatest! What is required is Truthfulness. Be Truthful, and you will find all names to be the greatest".⁹⁰ According to Ibn ‘Arabī, this statement shows the importance of Truthfulness in one’s relation to God, as well as its effect on one’s aspiration, in his recommendations to Yaḥyā b. Ma‘ādh, Bāyazīd points out the necessity of having a high aspiration. In order to reach the station of being without attributes or Place, it is necessary to have a high aspiration. If, as Bākharzī suggests, “the position of one who goes from intoxication to sobriety is higher than an intoxicated,”⁹¹ Bāyazīd’s sublime aspiration demands the abandonment of intoxication and inclination to sobriety. Ibn ‘Arabī characterizes Bāyazīd as having a “sublime aspiration” (*al-himmat al-‘arshiyya*) in that he was not qualified with any attributes. People of such resolution are placed at the interior of *a’rāf* (Heights), and their gnosis is *raḥmānī* (Gracious) since *‘arsh* (the Sublime Throne) is where the Gracious (*Raḥmān*) God stands. People of sublime aspiration are familiar with *‘arsh* on the one hand and with *a’rāf* on the other

⁸⁸ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, iv, 23.

⁸⁹ Rumi, *Mathnawī Ma’ nawī*, 1394–95.

⁹⁰ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, iii, 335.

⁹¹ Sayf al-Dīn Bākharzī, *Awṛād Al-Aḥbāb Wa Fusūs Al-Ādāb*, ed. Iraj Afshār (Tehran: Dāneshgāh-e Tehran Publications, 2004), 241.

since the interior of the latter is mercy and its exterior is punishment (e.g., Quran 57: 13). People of *a'raf* are characterized as not being limited to any attributes, a character that applied to Bāyazīd as well:

“The aspiration of this person was sublime. As in the case of the Heights of the Gracious, the aspiration for such gnosis was a stand. Thus, it is said that his aspiration was *'arshiyya* (sublime). The station of such a person is the interior of *a'raf*, which is the wall between people of happiness and people of misery. There are men in *a'raf* who will praise [God]?? and their sublime aspirations do not limit them, for the *'arsh* is the stance of *Rahmān*.⁹²

Given that God, because of his *Rahmāniyya* (Graciousness), bestows His general grace on every being. Likewise, humans with sublime aspirations show a general mercy to all beings. An example of such a general mercy was Prophet Muhammad, who was "merciful for all the worlds."⁹³ He prayed for those who displayed contempt towards him: “O God! Guide my people; they do not know.”⁹⁴ His Household can remove punishments from his people, as he said: "My Household are sanctuaries for my people."⁹⁵ Thus, the Household of Muhammad is characterized in Shiite traditions as *a'raf*, that is, those who stay between Heaven and Hell, and by knowing them, people will go to Heaven.

Compassion towards People

An indication that a mystic is sober is his care for people, which is due to his travel from God to people. An intoxicated mystical traveler is dominated by a state in which he is absent from himself, such that he fails to discern good from bad and benefits from harm.⁹⁶ Such an absence may lead to his inattention to himself and people as well. However, there is evidence in Bāyazīd's statements of his general mercy and compassion. It is in this respect that Ibn 'Arabī takes himself and Bāyazīd to be on the path of Muhammadan poles, characterizing them as follows:

⁹² Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, 325.

⁹³ The Quran, 21:107.

⁹⁴ Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, 458; Badī' al-Zamān Forūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī* (Tehran: Amirkabir, 1991), 60.

⁹⁵ Ḥakīm Muhammad Ibn Alī Al-Tirmidhī, *Nawādir Ul-Usūl Fi Akhbār Al-Rasūl* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1993), 2: 61.

⁹⁶ Isma'īl Ibn Mohammad Al-Mustamlī al-Bukhārī, *Sharh Al-Ta'arruf Li Madhhab Al-Taṣawwuf*, ed. Mohammad Rowshan (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishārāt-i Asāṭīr, 1984), 1487.

“The first people they intercede for on the Day of Resurrection, before the [Divine] interrogation, are those who had hurt them, and this is made explicit by Bāyazīd al-Bisṭāmī, which is on our path, too.”⁹⁷

This is very similar to the Prophet Muhammad's attitude: when he was injured by his people, he wiped the blood off his face with his hand and said to God: "O Lord! Forgive my people" or "O God! Guide my people; they do not know".⁹⁸ As Rūmī puts it:

“While thy heart was roasted by the fire of these unrighteous men / (yet) all thy appeal (to God) was: ‘Guide my people!’”⁹⁹

In this regard, Sahlagī transmits an utterance, where al-Junayd appears in its chain of transmitters:

“I heard Abū ‘Abdullāh who heard Junayd who was told by Sirrī Saqṭī that he heard Bāyazīd Ṭayfūr b. ‘Īsā says: 'If one looks at people with the eye of knowledge, he will be angered and will escape to God, and if one looks at them with the eye of truth, he will excuse them and will become their path [or guide] towards God’”.¹⁰⁰

Of the eight endowments allegedly bestowed on Bāyazīd by God, what is more salient is compassion towards people. When Bāyazīd was asked how he reached such a position, he replied: "Forget about the position! The Exalted God bestowed eight endowments on me. Here are the eight endowments:

1. I saw my soul lagging behind and saw people ahead of me.
2. I was happy to go to Hell on behalf of all people because of my extreme compassion for them.
3. I intended to give joy to the heart of the faithful.
4. I did not store anything for my tomorrow.
5. I wanted God’s mercy more for people than for me.
6. I tried my best to give joy to the faithful and banish remorse from their hearts.
7. Out of an abundance of compassion for the faithful, whenever I met them, I would be the first to greet them.
8. If, on the Day of Resurrection, God forgives me and gives me permission for intercession, I will first intercede for those who have hurt me.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Ibn ‘Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt Al-Makkiyya*, ii, 350.

⁹⁸ Forūzānfar, *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī*.

⁹⁹ Rumi, *Mathnawī Ma’ nawī*, ii, 1872.

¹⁰⁰ Sahlagī, *Daftar-i Rushanāyi: Az Mīrās-i ‘Irfānī-i Bāyazīd*, 176, 159.

¹⁰¹ Sahlagī, 149, 86.

Conclusion

This article explores the mystical concepts of intoxication and sobriety within Islamic mysticism, emphasizing that sobriety is generally regarded as a higher spiritual state than intoxication. Unlike other pairs of mystical terms, such as fear and hope, intoxication and sobriety are akin to annihilation and subsistence, where the ultimate goal is subsistence. The text argues that perfect mystics transition from intoxication to sobriety, making them capable of guiding others toward spiritual perfection. The discussion includes the example of Ḥallāj, who was criticized for his state of intoxication, and contrasts him with Bāyazīd, who achieved sobriety and was thus considered a “King of Mystics.” The article also addresses the misclassification of mystics into categories of intoxicated and sober, attributing this misunderstanding to Hujwīrī’s personal interpretations.

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