TUHFAH AL-MURSALAH ILA RUH AL-NABIY
AS THE SOURCE OF THE DOCTRINE SEVEN GRADES OF
BEING IN THE MALAY-INDONESIAN ARCHIPELAGO

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Abstract:
The doctrine of seven grades of Being (Martabat Tujuh) has been widely known to be a sufi interpretation of God’s Oneness (al-Tawhid). It originated in the subcontinent of India in the early of seventeenth century. The doctrine was later introduced in Aceh and gained popularity among the Malay sufi authors and practitioners until the present day. Amid its wide acceptance, the teaching has long been considered by many scholars to be incompatible to the Islamic principle teachings of God’s Unity. The purpose of this article is to give an insight on the background of the writing of the Tuhfah al-Mursalah ila Ruh al-Nabiyy and to establish its credibility as an authentic Islamic work by a recognized Muslim sufi scholar. In order to achieve its objectives, datas of this writing was gathered through the usage of document analysis and then described using deducted and inducted analysis. This article found that the Tuhfah al-Mursalah was originally written to combating misinterpretation of the teaching of wahdat al-wujud in the subcontinent India. It was later exported to the Aceh in the early sixteenth century. The work was written by a knowledgeable and an important Indian Muslim sufi scholar. His credentials as a Muslim scholar was testified with few commentaries on the Tuhfah al-Mursalah by famous and well-known Muslim scholars in the Muslim world. Therefore, this work occupies an important place in providing a true comprehension of the doctrine of seven grades of Being.

Keywords: Tuhfah al-Mursalah; Martabat Tujuh; Fadl Allah al-Burhanpuri; wahdat al-wujud, Ibn Arabi

A. Introduction
One of the controversial doctrines of Sufism (Tasawwuf) in the region of Malay-Indonesian Archipelago (Malaysia, Indonesia and southern part of Thailand) has been the doctrine of Seven Grades of Being (Malay-Martabat Tujuh or Maratib al-Sa`bah). The doctrine has been elucidated in many Kitab Jawi (religious book by the Malay scholars) written in the seventeenth century onwards and spread in most part of the Archipelago due to the popularity of and efforts by Malay Muslim scholars who had been known for their acceptance to the doctrine.
Glancing through the history of the development of Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago since its introduction in the thirteenth century, there were two diverse interests in Sufism among the Malay Muslims, that are; the orthodox and speculative sufisims. However, between the two, the latter was popular than the former. In the second part of the sixteenth century until first quarter of the twentieth century, speculative Sufism was firmly established in numerous mystical writings by the Malay scholars cum authors. It was during the early seventeenth century that we first encounter the doctrine of Martabat Tujuh.\(^1\) The evidence shows that Aceh in the northern part of Sumatera, Indonesia was the first place where the system first became known and it later became the center for its dissemination to other parts of the Archipelago.

There were four major Sufi authors in the early and mid-seventeenth century whose works are known to us and who wrote in Malay. Three of them were Sumatrans: Hamzah Fansuri, Syamsuddin of Pasai and Abdul Rauf of Singkil; the fourth, a Gujarati, Nur al-Din al-Raniri. Hamzah's exact dates are unknown. He is generally believed to have flourished between c.1550 - 1600, may have written many works. Unfortunately, only some of the are known to have survived through the centuries. These are concerned with metaphysical Sufism, based primarily on the idea of wahdat al-wujud. His teaching is nothing more than a Malay reproduction of Ibn\(_n\) Arabi's ideas from whom he undoubtedly drew much inspiration. His prose, Asrar al-`Arifin contains a number of poems which could be said to have been modelled approximately on Ibn\(_n\) Arabi's Tarjuman al-Ashwaq, Lamga of Farid al- Din\(_r\) Iraqi and Lawa'ih of Abd al-Rahman Jami. His Sharab al-Ashiqin is considered to be the earliest Malay work on philosophical Sufism, as well as being the earliest complete prose work by Hamzah. He also wrote many poems which could be collectively called Rubai Hamzah Fansuri, but are sometimes referred to as Syair Burung Pingai, Syair Sidang Faqir.\(^2\)

But records testify that he lived and wrote some years earlier than Syamsuddin of Pasai, who died in 1630. Syamsuddin b. Abdullah of Pasai (d.1630). He served the Achenese court under the reign of two sultans, Alauddin Riayat Shah al-Mukammil (r.1589-1604) and Iskandar Muda (r.1607-1636). He may indeed have been the "Archbishop" with whom the English sea captain, James Lancaster, negotiated in 1603. Samsuddin probably served as foreign minister under the rule of Iskandar Muda until his death in 1630 (Johns 1980: 169). There are many works that have been positively


attributed to him, both in Arabic and in Malay, such as Jawhar al-Haqiqah, Nur al-Daqa’iq, Tanbih al-Tullab, Mir’at al-Haqiqah and Sharah Rubai Hamzah Fansuri.3

Nur al-Din al-Raniri served as Shaykh al-Islam of Acheh between 1637 and 1644, before leaving for Ranir, India, where he died in 1658. A contemporary and opponent of Syamsuddin, Nur al-Din al-Raniri is also known to have utilized the Martabat Tujuh. Belonged to a category of Sufis who believed in the teaching of the "Oneness of Being", al-Raniri made use of the system in some of his works such as Marifat al-Saniyyah, Jawahir al-Ulum fi Kashf al-Malum, and Hill al-Zill.4

Abdul Rauf was born approximately c.1617 and died in c.1690. Another Malay Sufi who employed the system in his writings was Abdul Rauf as-Singkel (d.1690) who served under four Achenese Queens in the second half of the seventeenth century. Among the books in which he discussed the system of Martabat Tujuh, as well as the basic principles of the teaching of the wahdat al-wujud were: Daqa’iq al-Huruf, Kifayat al-Muhtajin ila Mashrab al-Muwahhidin al-Qa’ilin bi Wahdat al-Wujud, Bayan al-Itlaq, and Risalah Ayan Thabitah.5

Among these four major authors, three of them, Syamsuddin, Nur al-Din al-Raniri and Abdul Rauf are known to have referred to the Tuhfah al-Mursalah in their work as well as employing the Martabat Tujuh system in a similar way to the Tuhfah. Nonetheless, of the three, however, Syamsuddin was the first to use the system. According to A.H.Johns, Syamsuddin began his career as a religious writer at the Achenese court in 1601, which means that he began his writing activities while serving in the royal court of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah. Since he died in 1630, this means that the Tuhfah al-Mursalah must have been known that date although how long before cannot be ascertained.6 However, we may now date the introduction of the Tuhfah al-Mursalah with more certainty. According to Peter Riddell, in 1601 under the rule of Alauddin Riayat Shah, Syamsuddin wrote his work, Mir’at al-Mu’timin, which contains the core of his monistic teachings, in which he expounds upon a system of

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Seven Grades of Being. In the light of this information, we may say that the teaching of Martabat Tujuh was already known to Syamsuddin and in Acheh as early as 1601 and later won a remarkable degree of popularity in Sumatera and Java.

B. Introduction Tuhfat al-Mursalah ila Ruh al-Nabiy to the Malay-Indonesia Archipelago

As far as the evidence permits, the system of Martabat Tujuh in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago originated from a work by an Indian Sufi, Muhammad bin Fadl Allah al-Burhanpuri, entitled Tuhfat al-Mursalah ila Ruh al-Nabiy (The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet). It had occupied an important place in the history of the development of Sufi teaching in the Archipelago ever since it was introduced into the region. Nevertheless, it is uncertain when it first made its appearance in the Archipelago.

Johns suggests that the Tuhfah al-Mursalah was written as early as 1590. It could have become known to the people of the region in the following pilgrimage season after it was written, for Gujarat and other ports of call such as Surat, were only one or two monsoons away from Acheh, the first area to have been under the influence of the Tuhfah al-Mursalah. It has also been suggested that the author himself, Fadl Allah, came to Acheh, where he gained many students which helped to provide perfect platform for his work to be known in Acheh. Although there is a possibility that Muhammad bin Fadl Allah himself might have been to Acheh, the fact that his name is never mentioned in Bustan al-Salatin, written by Nur al-Din al-Raniri, as well as other traditional writings, indicates that it seems highly unlikely that he did ever visit Acheh.

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7 Peter Riddell, Transferring a Tradition: Abd Al-Ra’uf Al-Singkili’s Rendering Into Malay of the Jalalayn Commentary, Monograph 31 (California: Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies University of California at Berkeley, 1990), 7.
9 Johns, “Islamization in Southeast Asia: Reflections and Reconsiderations with Special Reference to the Role of Sufism,” 52.
10 Johns, The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet, 10.
In addition, Drewes has pointed out that Shaykh Ibrahim al-Kurani (d. 1689) composed a commentary on the *Tuhfah al-Mursalah* specifically for the Jawi students by order of his master, Shaykh Ahmad al-Qushashi (d.1661). Since Ahmad al-Qushashi died in 1661, the commentary must have been written before then, though how long before cannot be ascertained. However, the use of a commentary presupposes a knowledge of the text. Thus, to suggest that the *Tuhfah al-Mursalah* could have been known in the region during the author's lifetime, that is by 1619 or earlier, is not impossible.\(^\text{12}\)

The *Tuhfah al-Mursalah* is a short treatise and eclectic in character which to explain the basic ideas of the Oneness of Being (*wahdat al-wujud*), a doctrine that has been associated with Ibn `Arabi. Like many followers of Ibn `Arabi's teaching, Fadl Allah begins his *Tuhfah al-Mursalah* by identifying the Reality with Being, who manifested (*tajalli*) Itself through six stages. This first stage is named non-determination (*la ta`ayyun*) or Oneness (*ahadiyyah*), i.e., the Being was the Absolute *per se*. Fadl Allah maintains, like other exponents of the doctrines of the Oneness of God, that the Being at this stage is unknowable and inconceivable. Therefore, any attempt to know It would be in vain. The six stages of manifestation that proceed from It are *wahdah*, *wahidiyyah*, *`alam ul-arwah*, *`alam al-mithal*, *`alam al-a'jsam* and *`alam al-insan al-kamil*.\(^\text{13}\)

It seems that the *Tuhfah al-Mursalah* was known to the intellectual community in Mecca and Medina. This is proved from Ibrahim al-Kurani's mention of its author Fadl Allah in the commentary of the *Tuhfah*, *Ithaf al-Zakiy*\(^\text{14}\) wherein Ibrahim al-Kurani gives several biographical information on Fadl Allah and his teachers, establishing his credentials as a teacher.\(^\text{15}\) According to Risvi, he visited these holy places which helped not only to popularize his work but also that of the Chistiyyah order there.\(^\text{16}\)

However, it is not clear to what extent the work was known or how it was used in intellectual society in Mecca and Medina as well as in other Muslim countries. According to Michel Chodkiewicz,\(^\text{17}\) the *Tuhfah al-Mursalah* has been translated into Persian and Turkish and has provoked numerous commentaries in the Ottoman empire like that of Shaykh `Abd al-Ghani b. Ismail al-Nabulusi (1640-1730), a *hadith* scholar.

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\(^\text{13}\) Johns, *The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet*.


The Tuhaft al-Mursalah was also read in the circle of the Emir Abdul'l-Qadir in Damascus and among the disciples of Shaykh Abd al-Rahman Illaysh in Cairo.\(^20\) The popularity of the work continued into the eighteenth century wherein many Malay scholars and authors in the period like Abdul Samad of Palembang,\(^21\) Muhammad Nafis of Banjar,\(^22\) as well as Daud of Fatani,\(^23\) referred to Fadl Allah's work. Judging from the wide circulation of the work, we may thus conclude that the work was held in high esteem by the Muslim scholars.

The popularity of the Tuhaft al-Mursalah ever since it first became known to the Malay people is borne out from the statements written by Mustafa al-Hamawi, a disciple of Ibrahim al-Kurani (d.1689), in his biographical dictionary, Fawa'id al-Irtihal wa Nat'i'ij al-Safar (The Profits of Travel and the Gains of Journeying). According to al-Hamawi, he met and became Ibrahim al-Kurani's disciple in 1675.\(^24\) The dictionary provides revealing insights, not only into the close relationship between his master, Ibrahim al-Kurani and his Jawi students, but also into the popularity of the Tuhaft al-Mursalah in Mecca and Medina as well as in the Archipelago where it was also used as a minor treatise in religious schools to be learnt by young students who had to learn and memorize its contents. In this work, al-Hamawi states:

Our Shaykh al-khatimat al-muhaggiqin Ibrahim al-Kurani told me that one of our Jawi companions and he was reading the Tuhaft with him at that time, and we

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\(^{18}\) Risvi, A History of Sufism in India, 2:343.

\(^{19}\) Abdullah, Pemikiran Umat Islam Di Nusantara, 154.


\(^{21}\) A well-known Palembang scholar, Shaykh Abdul Samad b. Abdullah, for instance, mentions Syamsuddin of Pasai and Abdul Rauf of Singkel in one of his own books, Siyar al-Salikin ila Ibadat Rabb Al-Alamin. It is probable that he learned those works of Syamsuddin entitled Jawhar al-Haqi' and Abdul Rauf's Umdat al-Muhtajin fi Suluk Maslak al-Mufarradin while he was in Acheh judging from his familiarity with their contents. Abdul Samad al-Jawi Al-Palimbani, Sa'ir Al-Salikin Ila Ibadat Rabb Al-Alamin, vol. 4 (Cairo, 1953), 176–84.


\(^{23}\) He was one of many great Malay scholars in the early of nineteenth century. His contribution to the religious education and intellectual life of the Malay peoples of the Archipelago, especially of Patani and Malaysia was enormous. He was the source of reference although he lived most of his life in Mecca and left around sixty works. Faudzinaim Badaruddin, Manhal Al-Safi: Text and Translation (Bangi: Department of Theology and Philosophy, 2006).

\(^{24}\) Azyumardi Azra, Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Melayu Abad XVII Dan XVIII (Bandung: Mizan, 1995), 120.
were present-informed him that this treatise and matters it treats was popular and famous in the lands of Jawi, and that it is read in their religious schools, and that youths study it as a minor treatise on the rudiments of their studies. And every reasonable minded man knows that this could only have happened by virtue of its dedication to the Prophet, and the author's (pious) intention, otherwise the best of the Sufi doctors would have rejected it, any more, their followers, nay more their general public, nay more even youths at the schools. But when God desires good for one of His servants, he makes faith loved to him and makes both it and those things conducive to it attractive to his heart. So just as the child learns the basic doctrines and obligations of religion by imitation without understanding them fully, but when he becomes adult and his mind has developed he perceives their true significance, in precise the same way if a person is instructed in the great truths of religion when he is a child, when he is adult God gives the light to understand them fully, and this he finds easy because he is already familiar with the formulations of them that he has learnt by heart.25

In addition, in his introduction to his commentary on the *Tuhfah* entitled *Ithaf al-Zaki bi Sharh al-Tuhfah al-Mursalah ila al-Nabi* (A Presentation to the Discriminating in Explanation to the Gift Addressed to [the Spirit of] the Prophet), Ibrahim al-Kurani himself explains the circumstances leading him to write his commentary. He writes:

We have had reliable information from a group of Jawi (pl. Jawiyyin), that there have spread among the inhabitants of the lands of Jawah some books on Realities (*haqiqah*), and esoteric teachings by men attributed with knowledge because of their study and the teaching of others, but who lack any understanding of the Laws of [Muhammad] the Chosen, the Elect [of God], and even less of an awareness of the knowledge of Realities bestowed upon those who follow God's path, may He be exalted, those brought close to Him, those excellent ones, or those who have entered upon anyone of their paths based on the Book and the *Sunnah* through perfect obedience, outwardly and inwardly[physically and spiritually], as have the devout and pure. This has led many of them to deviate from the right path, and given rise to faulty belief, in fact they have been attracted to camp in the valleys of unbelief and heresy—we take refuge in God from error and from all evil, in sect as in public.

Further, these Jawi have told me that among the best-known books among them was the compendium entitled *al-Tuhfah al-Mursalah ila Ruh al-Nabi* [The Gift Addressed to the Prophet] written by the gnostic of God, may He be exalted, *Shaykh* Muhammad ibn *Shaykh* Fadl Allah al-Hindi al-Burhanpuri, may Almighty God render him of service. And more than one of then has asked my humble self to prepare a commentary upon it to make clear the conformity of the questions[it discusses] to the basic principles of religion, confirmed by the Noble Book, and the *Sunnah* of the Lord of the Apostles, may God's blessings and peace be upon him and upon them and their families all of them, a reply came - hoping that, by leave of God, Lord of the world, it will yield a sound fruit, despite the fact that my ability to express myself is slight, and knowing that the communication of

what has been beheld to the understanding in intelligible language in harmony with the Book and the Sunnah is a high mountain difficult to climb. But Allah, the Strong, the Mighty, who 'let the two seas flow together, between which had been a barrier they did not overpass' [Qur'an 55:19-20], He it is who is able to raise whomever of His servants He wishes to the meeting point. So what is necessary is to do one's best; it is God from whom help is to be sought, Who is to be asked in words of humility and neediness to give me the grace to give a sufficient explanation, selected from the writings of those successful in unveiling and vision, those who have beheld the al-Haqq [through His Names] after observing them, by way of perfect obedience, the people of Truth and Devotion, 'Oh Lord, enlarge my breast and make my task lighter, and loosen the knot on my tongue that they may understand my words. "My Lord, give me judgement, and make me with the righteous; and make me well-spoken of among later generations...Amin [Qur.26:83-84].

Johns says that it is impossible to judge how many years were involved or how many of the Jawis met him nor who they were to determine when the commentary of the Tuhfah al-Mursalah was written. On the contrary, Drewes has maintained that Ibrahim al-Kurani wrote his commentary on the Tuhfah al-Mursalah at the request of his master, Ahmad al-Qushashi although neither Ibrahim al-Kurani nor Mustafa al-Hamawi has provided any proof to support this view. If, however, the situation is as Drewes claims, the commentary could have been written before Ahmad al-Qushashi died in 1661. In addition, it is obvious that it had already been completed before 1675 as al-Hamawi states that he studied the Ithaf al-Zakiy together with other works such as Sahih al-Bukhari, Jamis al-Saghir of al-Suyuti, Ihya' Ulum al-Din of al-Ghazali and Futuhat al-Makkiyyah of Ibn 'Arabi.

Whether he wrote the commentary to comply with his master's or the Jawis' request, what is clear is that Ibrahim al-Kurani took the responsibility very seriously. He prayed long at the tomb of the prophet in Medina asking guidance and answer before writing the commentary. It was only after receiving an answer that it was right for him to undertake that task that he began writing his commentary. Eventually, what is presented in the Ithaf al-Zakiy is a long presentation on the Islamic mystical interpretation based on the Qur'an and the Hadith.

According to Drewes, it is still uncertain whether the classification of the manifestation of God in seven grades was firstly promulgated by Fadl Allah. On the

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28 Azra, Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Melayu Abad XVII Dan XVIII, 120.
29 Azra, 121; Johns, “Friends in Grace: Ibrahim Al-Kurani and Abd Al-Ra’uf of Al-Singkili,” 480.
30 Azra, Jaringan Ulama Timur Tengah Dan Kepulauan Melayu Abad XVII Dan XVIII, 120.
contrary, referring to the major work of Shaykh Muhammad Ghawth al-Hindi al-Shatari, the Jawahir al-Khamsah, Voorhoeve points to the classification of the manifestation of God in six grades by its author as identical to the first six grades according to Fadl Allah in the Tuhfah al-Mursalah. The only difference between the two works is that Muhammad Ghawth does not separate the alam al-ajsam (the world of bodies) and alam al-insan al-kamil (The world of Perfect Man) while Fadl Allah treats the two separately.32

According to Voorhoeve further, it does not seem likely that the extension from six to seven grades by a division of the two world can be attributed to Wajih al-Din al-Alawi, Fadl Allah's master, because there is nothing that suggests a treatment of this theme anywhere in his list of works. Thus, it seems that Fadl Allah was the first to promulgate the classification of the manifestation of God to seven, known later to Malay authors and the people of the Archipelago as the Martabat Tujuh seems justifiable.33

We do not know for what made the Martabat Tujuh so popular among the Malay authors. It is highly likely that the wide usage of the Martabat Tujuh as offered in the Tuhfa was probably due to its having been written in an easily understandable manner. This would explain the appeal of the system to the Malay authors in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nonetheless, it is particularly interesting that many aspects of the sacred seven are commonly observed in the Islamic tradition: the sevenfold circumambulations of the Kaaba, the seven stonings of Satan near Mina (repeated twice) during the Hajj, the sevenfold meaning of the Qur'an, the seven canonical ways to recite it, the seven gates of Hell and the seven gates of Paradise (Schimmel 1994: 79).

C. The Tuhfah al-Mursalah in the Indian Subcontinent Context

Fadl Allah did not state his reason for writing his book, the Tuhfah al-Mursalah. This has given rise to various opinions as to his motives. It is obvious from the work that the author's intention was to explain the doctrine of wahdat al-wujud of Ibn al-Arabi by means of the Martabat Tujuh system in an orthodox interpretation. Thus, according to Johns, it was written as an attempt on the part of the orthodox Sufi tradition to restrain the extremist tendencies of certain groups of mystics in India and elsewhere, and to ensure the grasp and practice of the essential elements of Islam.34 It is as Johns says further "a documentation of the tension between the orthodox and

33 Johns, 127.
34 Johns, 5.
heterodox wings of Sufism current throughout the length and breadth of the Muslim world".  

Questioning Johns' assumption, Drewes writes "it seems a fair question to ask what exactly is meant by 'the orthodox Sufi tradition', which is represented here as some kind of active corporation. Likewise, one would be glad to hear more about these extremist groups our author supposed to combat, since the text contains no specific reference to them. And secondly, on examining the contents of the *Tuḥfaḥ al-Mursalah* one cannot fail to observe that, apart from a number of exhortations to keep to the Law, there is very little of the essential elements of Islam in this tract". Having given the reasons for rejecting Johns' claim, he states:

Therefore, I cannot share the editor's conviction [Johns] that the author was prompted by the desire to combat extremist tendencies. His book is a short treatise on Sufi ontology, completely in the vein of thinking of Ibn al-`Arabi and the author of the *insan al-kamil*, and one gets the impression that the first and foremost incentive for composing it was the author's desire to lay claim to a recognized place for this ontological within the body Islamic. The doctrine was not modified but by stressing the need for keeping within the bounds of the Law the author apparently aimed at making it acceptable (*muwafiqah*; cf. the title of his own commentary on the text) to the people of the orthodox persuasion.

There is, however, another way of looking into the matter concerned. As the work was produced in the atmosphere of the Indian subcontinent, it seems appropriate firstly to understand the religious controversies surrounding Sufism in the second period of the sixteenth century within that geographical context. According to Risvi, Khwaja Baqi` Bi Allah Berang (1563/4 or 1564/5 - 1603), a master of Ahmad Sirhindi, relentlessly criticized those Sufis who he believed to be observing the external form of the *tawḥid* (i.e. observing that everything is God). Although he himself was an exponent of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, he argued that Sufis who busied themselves with the external form of the *tawḥid* were wayward and also misled others by identifying everything with God, even believing that the universe was an illusion and a fantasy. This type of philosophy, the Khwaja asserted, was not the way of the Prophet. The truth formulated by Ibn al-`Arabi, according to him, had been misinterpreted.

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35 Johns, 6.


37 Drewes, “Nur Al-Din Ar-Raniri’s Charge of Heresy against Hamzah and Shamsuddin from an International Point of View.”

The religious affairs of the Indian Muslims in the second period of the sixteenth century are best recorded by Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), who writes in his *Maktubah* (Epistles):

The life of the masses was ridden with *shirk* (polytheism) and *biđah* (innovation), due, first to their contact with the polytheistic religions and cultures of India. Ignorant to their faith, Muslims participated in the religious rites of the non-Muslims; prayed to their idols and gods for various purposes; women, in particular, sought their protection against diseases such as smallpox. They joined Hindu festivals such as rakhi and dipavali; celebrated the latter by lighting lamps, cooking rice and sending it as a present in coloured pots to relatives and friends as the Hindus used to do on that occasion. (...) The other cause of the religious degeneration of the Muslim masses was the influence of ignorant and misguided Sufis. At their bidding they made votive offerings (*nadhr*) to saints (*mashayikh*) and offered sacrifices on their graves. Women usually fasted in the name of Sufi teachers, even their wives, and observed various rituals in this connection. (...) Those who subscribed to *wahdat al-wujud* cared little for the *Sharjah*. They believed that the goal of the *Sharjah* was to attain knowledge; hence if anyone realized the truth of *wahdat al-wujud*, he did not have to perform the duties of the *Sharjah*. Some of them disparaged *salat* because it differentiated between God and the servant; others equated resurrection with the Sufi experience of *fana’*, and denied judgement and punishment, Some even loved to gaze at beautiful faces and hear sweet voices, because they were the manifestation of the Eternal Beauty.39

Ahmad Sirhindi referred to these ideas and practices in his letters and denounced them for *shirk* (polytheism), *kufr* (infidelity) and *biđah* (innovation). He then urged Sufi teachers to discard these evil practices and reform their lives.40 In connection with the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud*, Ahmad Sirhindi explains that the Creator of the World cannot be identified with His Creations. Thus, according to him, the experience of *wahdat al-wujud* is not objective but rather subjective experience. In his journey to God, he says, a Sufi will experience that he is identical with God, but in reality, it is not so. In other words, in his rapturous ecstasy, the Sufi gets lost in the object of his love and adoration. He begins to feel as if his self was completely annihilated. This experience of the annihilation of identity is a trancient one, after the Sufi regains his consciousness and comes back to the stage of *abdiyyah* (servitude), which is the *summon bonum* of the spiritual life of one who believes in the transcendental God.41

Hence, according to Ahmad Sirhindi, the Sufi will then finally realize that his relation to his Creator is that of slave and master, or that of worshipper and the Worshipped, not of a lover and Beloved as many Sufis generally believed.42 Ahmad Sirhindi also viewed the doctrine as an expression of an immature spiritual experience

40 Ansari, 21.
42 Hussain, *Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture*. 
and fraught with danger to Islam and Muslim society because it facilitated the absorption of non-Islamic ideas and practices which ran counter to the monotheistic ideals of Islam. Therefore, according to Ahmad Sirhindi, the doctrine of wahdat al-wujud is wrong in the identification of the world with God and in its ideas that the worship of any object is the worship of God provided it is worshipped as a manifestation of God.  

The doctrine of wahdat al-wujud was firstly introduced into the subcontinent by a Suhwardiyyah, Farid al-Din `Iraqi (d.1289).  

Many Indian Sufis wrote commentaries on Ibn `Arabi's Fusus al-Hikam, as well as taught his magnum opus, Futuhat al-Makkiyyah. In the fifteenth century, the teaching of Ibn `Arabi became more popular among the Sufi masters and their disciples. At the time of Akbar the doctrine was predominant among Indian Muslims. Nevertheless, it was misinterpreted and thus invited criticisms from scholars such as Ahmad Sirhindi.

It was within this context that the Tuhfah al-Mursalah was written. Having considered this, it may be concluded that the main reason for the writing of the work was to attempt to present a true understanding of the doctrine of wahdat al-wujud in the framework of the seven grades of Being. It seems that Fadl Allah was a firm follower of Ibn al-`Arabi's "Unity of Being" who worked enthusiastically during his lifetime to correct what he believed to be misinterpretations and accretions of the doctrine in Indian Muslim society. This explains why he sought the support of the Qur'an and Tradition, and thus at the same time rejected any claim that it was against the monotheistic teaching of Islam.

Johns' assumption that the Tuhfah al-Mursalah is a documentation of the tension between the orthodox and heterodox wings of Sufism is thus justified. The fact that there is no specific reference to any extremist group as argued by Drewes does not mean, however, that the work was not written to combat the extremists who misrepresented Ibn al-`Arabi's teachings. There was no need to mention any of them for two reasons: firstly, the doctrine itself was very difficult and bound to be misunderstood as described by Baqi bi Allah and Ahmad Sirhindi in their writings; and secondly, the text is self-evidently very short which its purpose was to elaborate the main principles of the "Unity of Being" so that they can be rightly understood.

D. Muhammad Fadl Allah al-Burhanpuri, The Author of the Tuhfah al-Mursalah ila Ruh al-Nabiy

Muhammad bin Fadl Allah, whose ancestors are reported by Risvi to have originated from Jaunpur, was born in Gujarat around 1545 or 1546. Not much is

43 Ansari, Sufism and Sharī`ah: A Study of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi’s Effort to Reform Sufism, 107–8.
44 Risvi, A History of Sufism in India, 2:217.
45 Hussain, Glimps of Medieval Indian Culture, 57.
known about his early life, except that, according to Risvi, he obtained his spiritual training from a well-known Sufi, Shaykh Safi of Gujarat before leaving for Mecca.46 In Mecca, he is said to have studied with a well-known Indian scholar of the time, Shaykh Ali Muttaqi (c.1480/1-1567) under whom he probably learned about the Tradition (Hadith), Islamic Law (Fiqh) and Sufism.47

According to Risvi, Ali Muttaqi was recognized during his lifetime as a great Sufi as well a distinguished scholar of Hadith. He taught Hadith, Fiqh and Tasawwuf in Mecca where he, and his most talented disciple, Shaykh Abdu al-Wahhab al-Muttaqi (1536/7-1606/7) made a remarkable impact on Mecca and Medina in that period.48 Fadl Allah later returned to Ahmadabad where he continued his study of theology as well as received initiation into several tariqa orders from another well known scholar of that period, Shaykh Wajih al-Din al-Alawi, the most prominent disciples of a Shattariyyah master, Shaykh Muhammad Khatir al-Din, well known as Ghawth al-Hindi. Fadl Allah later settled at Burhanpur and taught there.49

According to Risvi again, the reputation of the Chistiyyah order in Burhanpur was enhanced with the presence of Fadl Allah who stayed there until he died in 1620. It is said that while he was in an ecstatic state, he would leave Burhanpur on a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. But if he failed to get a boat, he would reluctantly return. During his lifetime, he managed to visit Mecca and Medina several times. It is also reported that Fadl Allah divided his accrued futuh (gifts) which he gained each year into three parts, giving one part to his family, a second to the Dervishes of his khanqah, and a third to the needy of Medina.50

During his lifetime, Fadl Allah befriended many well-known scholars and Sufis who were not only known in India but also in Mecca and Medina. One of his friends was a great Sufi figure known as Sayyid Sibghat Allah b. Ruh Allah Jamal al-Barwaji (some scholars read his name as al-Baroci or Broach in Gujarat),51 who is mentioned in the Hikayat Acheh as living in Mecca and conversing with the pilgrims from Acheh. Sibghat Allah was generally known as a Shattariyyah master as he was initiated,

46 Risvi, A History of Sufism in India, 2:284.
47 Risvi, A History of Sufism in India.
49 Risvi, 2:284.
50 Risvi, 2:284–85.
51 Born in Broach, Sayyid Sibghatu'l-Lah is known as the most prominent disciple of Shaykh Wajih al-Din Ahmad b. Shaykh Nasr Allah Alawi, a famous Shattariyyah master who lived in Ahmadabad. He taught the Shattariyyah doctrines and forms of dhikr in his birthplace for several years. In 1591 he embarked on a journey to Mecca to perform his hajj. Then he went back to India and travelled to many places before staying in Ahmadabad for a year. In 1596, he again journeyed to Mecca during the hajj season and never returned home to India. Instead, he stayed in Medina where he built his own house and a khanqah. He continued to stay there where he initiated and taught his disciples until his death in 1606-1607 and was buried at Baqi in Medina. Risvi, 2:329–30.
together with Fadl Allah, by Wajih al-Din al-`Alawi into the order.\textsuperscript{52} He is believed to be responsible for introducing the *Jawahir al-Khamsah* of Ghawth al-Hindi (d.1563) and other Shattariyyah mystical treatises to the Sufis and scholars operating in Mecca and Medina.

Ahmad al-Qushashi, one of Sibghat Allah's most prominent disciples, reports that his master also initiated his disciples into the Chistiyyah, Suhrawardiyyah, Madaniyyah, Khalwatiyyah, Hamadaniyyah, Naqshabandiyyah and Firdawsiyyah orders, beside the Shattariyyah, on the authority vested in him by his own spiritual master, Wajih al-Din al-`Alawi who had himself been initiated into these eight orders. Basically, according to Risvi, he and his disciples were Shattariyyah. As to Fadl Allah, he was first and foremost a Chistiyyah. Nonetheless, as he was a student of Wajih al-Din al-`Alawi, we may not be far from the truth to say that he also practised other order such as Shattariyyah and many others on the authority vested in him by his master as was his fellow sufi and friend, Sibghat Allah of Broach.\textsuperscript{53}

\textbf{E. Conclusion}

It is clear from discussion above that the *Tuhfah al-Mursalah* is undoubtedly responsible for the introduction of the doctrine of seven grades of Being or *Martabat Tujuh* in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago in particular and Muslim world in general. It was authored by known and recognized sufi scholar, Muhammad Fadl Allah of Burhanpur affiliated with Chistiyyah *tariqa*. The fact that the *Tuhfah al-Mursalah* was known in Medina, read in the circle of Islamic learning and given commentary by many well-known Muslim scholars show the truthfulness of its contents. Although it was written in a short and concise manner, there were no vivid objection and rejection to its content known to take place at the time and subsequently centuries it was written. Therefore, it is appropriate to suggest that the text’s content should be made available and studied to combat wrong interpretation of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* and *Martabat Tujuh* in particular.

\textsuperscript{52} Johns, *The Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet*, 126.

Bibliography


