

SPIRITUALITY: A MILESTONE IN FOSTERING UNIVERSAL SOLIDARITY IN INDIA

Dr. Nazmul Islam Barbhuiya,

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Arabic, Assam University, Silchar

Email: nazmulbarbhuiya@gmail.com

Abstract: As the most of the people in the world belong to the belief that the Creator of this universe is only One and He is the Unseen God, the Almighty and Omniscient. As per the Semitic religions' beliefs, He is Almighty Allah and as per the most of the non-Semitic religions it is given various names based on its various Attributes. Sometimes it may differ from belief to belief as per their scriptures and dogmas. And, interestingly, it is found that one of the common characteristics of all the religions or beliefs is to live with peace and to establish a peaceful society and environment where all the members of a society can entertain his rights peacefully without hampering the others and consequently a universal harmonious cohesion among them would be set. But it is a matter of regret and sorrow that there is a kind of unrest, injustice and misunderstanding among the people of the society throughout the world. Some people seem to be the cause of such turmoil situations. On the other hand, it is also found that some other people of great souls are available in the same society who practice some esoteric activities in their lives and also recommend and encourage others; and accordingly, a few people become influenced to do so. As a result, this way of living helps people a lot to establish a peaceful society having mutual amity and cooperation among them for fostering universal solidarity as well. This practice is known as Spirituality or Sufi order of life. So, this paper aims at understanding the meaning, history, values and importance of *Sufism* or Spiritualism in general and specially as per the Islamic perspectives.

Key-words: spiritualism, esoteric, tumult, mysticism, multicultural, fraternity, integrity, communal harmony.

1. Introduction:

Now-a-days, we witness almost at a regular basis, a kind of unrest, terror, arson violence, injustice and misunderstanding among the people. A turmoil situation or enmity prevails in the world. Though it would not be there, rather it would be a peaceful living atmosphere expected from us; as we are the best creature of Almighty sent to the universe for establishing a sweet and peaceful scenario here on earth for which the angels also hoped as a better one. As such, we often feel a lack of peace and harmony among the people. Further, we cannot deny the fact that most of the today's common human character has undergone to a kind of negative and pessimistic thinking. Humanistic outlook has been changed tremendously to a very rare one. The entire humanity is, as if, desperately panting for its own resurgence. It is found a lack of environment for inter-faith or inter-reliability among the people of the earth. The earth is full of naughty disposition. This is really a matter of being upset for everybody.

However, though it seems now that the whole world is suffering from a kind of mass chaos inwardly and outwardly; but simultaneously, on the other hand, it is waiting for a very solution to get rid of this situation. People are found extremely desirous of a peaceful environment for living here on earth and also to establish at least a minimum provision for salvation in the Hereafter; and the way or medium with which one can comply and abide by to earn that credit is known as Divine Message.

And naturally we see that the world is mixed with good and bad, optimism and pessimism, wealth and poverty, wisdom and ignorance, friendship and enmity and sorrow and happiness, etc.; so, at every span of moment, it prevails a sound of peace in the midst of manifold tumult. So, it is wise for us to find out the better one and follow up for its implementation as far as possible.

That is why we can say that in such a crucial situation, it is imperative for us to exercise Spirituality, Sufism, Mysticism, Communal Harmony, Bond of Fraternity, Unity in Diversity and Integrity in Multicultural society, etc. which is of inevitable matter for us. And along with this, the rare personalities who practiced and exercised these very things in their lives are also the worthy of mention and discuss for successfully complying with in our lives too.

2. Objectives:

The main objective of this paper is to discuss the meaning of Sufism, Spirituality, communal harmony, etc. and also to analyze how far practicing spirituality plays a vital role in minimizing the injustice, misconceptions among the people and also in fostering and promoting social harmony and communal co-existence in the society.

3. Material resources and Methodology:

Both the primary and secondary sources of data available in various languages will be consulted for the study of this topic. As to follow up the methodology to this article, both descriptive and historical analyses research design will be accepted.

4. Discussion:

India, particularly north-eastern region, is a vast tapestry embroidered with flowers of many hues which nevertheless gives the impression of a single masterpiece made by the Creator (SWT). It is really a multilingual part of land with great diversities in respect of language, religion, culture and race, etc. Though there are two major races – Aryan and Dravidian – which inhabit Northern and Southern parts of the country respectively, yet there are other racial complexes and tribal nationalities with their own customs and dialects. After emerging as a free nation in 1947 and after keeping in view the unique and distinguishing features of our vast country, the national leadership sought to preserve and promote the sum total positive qualities and characteristics of our living heritage through Constitution and State policies.

Furthermore, this country has been always a land of religious thoughts and practices from the time immemorial or from the moment of inception of Adam here on earth.

Communal Harmony refers to the co-existing or mutual tolerance of various communities of a nation. It is opposite to communal violence. Community means a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a large society. So, in broader sense communal harmony means that the typical atmosphere where people of different religions, castes, creeds, sex and different backgrounds live together in the society with love and peace among them having been accustomed or complying with own belief. It strives to create goodwill and harmony among various communities. So almost similar is the concept of ‘Unity in Diversity’, ‘Integrity in Multicultural society’ and the ‘Bond of Fraternity’, all are referred to mutual harmony, peace and tolerance, etc. in a society diversified in various aspects.

Now so far the concepts about ‘Spiritualism’, ‘Mysticism’ and ‘Sufism’ are concerned, so we see that ‘Spiritualism’ is a movement comprising religious organizations emphasizing the belief that the spirits of the dead can communicate with the living one through a medium; or it is the view that the spirit is prime element of reality.¹ This idea has been developed in between 1749 - 1756 as a modern doctrine by the Swedish scientist, Christian mystic, philosopher and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) in his book *Arcana Coelestia*.²

‘Mysticism’ literally means the belief that direct knowledge of God, spiritual truth, or ultimate reality can be attained through a subjective experience. In Islamic science, it is similar to ‘*Sufism*’, but with a little different interpretation. It is noteworthy here that ‘*Sufism*’ is sometimes used by the western thinkers as ‘Islamic Mysticism’ or ‘Spirituality’ and by the Arabs or muslim scholars as *Tasawwuf* as well. So, we find many mystic or Sufi poets and figures; like Sa’di, Rumi, Ibnul-A’rabi, Abul-A’tahiya, Dhun-Nun Misri, Junayd Baghdadi, Shibli, Abdul Qadir Jilani, Shihab Uddin Suharwardi, Ibnul-Farid, etc.

Sufism is born in the bosom of Islam. It is found in its special identity in the Islamic world from long back 8th or 9th century A.D. The solution of the problems relating to the human spirit or soul is the fundamental subject matter of Islam. Sufism is basically concerned with the progress of soul and its final union with Almighty Allah (SWT). This Sufism, a splendid subject of Islamic studies, synthesizes the spiritual and moral teaching of the religion. Metaphorically, Sufism in Islam is like a soul in a body and it can be termed as the essence of Divine Order to the mankind.

¹ Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus (Online).

² AR, Robert, ed. 1001 IDEAS, Hachette Book Publishing India Pvt. Ltd., 2016, p 404.

Since Sufism is of great importance in Islam, it has a tremendous role in propagating true humanity and peace among the mass people and also in establishing communal harmony devastating all the ongoing turmoils of today's world as it successfully carried out in past days.

So, the very word 'Sufism' in English is basically originated from Arabic word or term *Taşawwuf* deriving from the stem *şuf* means wool. The great personalities who adopted this path often used to wear the cloths made of wool, were known as *Sufi* or *Mutaşawwifeen*. Some critics say that the etymological root of the word *Şufi* is traced to Arabic *Şafa* which means 'purity'. The Sufis always try to keep themselves pure from any corruption or ugly activities. So, they deserved such title.

Now, *Sufism* or *Tasawwuf* means to adopt a life of Islamic mysticism or to follow *sufi* way of life. Conventionally it is defined as below:

Tasawwuf is that branch of knowledge which provides for us the various kinds of learning about building up self-purification, moral honesty and external-internal character through which we can attain the Eternal Fortune, perform soul ratification and get God's satisfaction.

Needless to mention here that during the time of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and his Companions (*Sahaba*), there was no full-fledged term given to *Şufism* or *Tasawwuf* as an independent subject, as it was not given to other Islamic sciences also; viz. *Tafseer* (Quran Commentary), *Hadeeth* (The Tradition of the Prophet), *Usul al-Hadeeth* (Theory of the Tradition), *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and *Usul al-Fiqh* (Theory of Jurisprudence), etc.; all these subjects were established at a later stage of time to protect Islam looking into accounts the viewpoints adopted from the Holy Quran and *Sunnah*. Like other subjects, the basic regulations and contents were available in those early periods and no *Sahaba* was given the title of *Muhaddith* or *Mufassir* or *Faqeeh*, or *Sufi*, etc. Rather they themselves deserved such qualities or more than that for entitling so; no need to be entitled with these names. Similarly, is the case of *Sufism*. It was one of the duties assigned to the Holy Prophet to make the people purified in every sense.

In the spiritual field of Islam, no clash in opinion is found occurred, which means the integration and spiritual harmony among the mankind and not for any breakage or disintegration. It is due to this fact that *Sufism* is a way of mutual understanding and mental peace. A *Sufi* never makes any kind of distinction among the creations of God, rather he looks everybody equal. He is like a nuncio from Almighty. *Sufism* regards the whole creation as a reflection from the light of Almighty Allah (SWT). So, there is no chance to be any kind of lack of harmony or any violence in the society where such practice is available; and consequently, the influences of the people who exercise this practice spreads over the others positively and a peaceful environment creates in the society.

Sufism spreads religious harmony and brotherhood through its commitment to tolerance and non-violence ideals of Islam as commanded by the Holy Quran and *Sunnah*. *Sufism* altogether promises a way out to this thought in diverse society like India. Communal harmony is a required fact for maintenance of peace and tranquility in a multi-religious and multi-culturally diverse country like India. To make it a continuous process, a social fabric has to be cultivated connecting every person at individual and community level.

We find easily that the secular credentials are available at the institutional level as our constitutional parameters which are meant for enshrining to maintain and promote communal harmony and peace. But how we uphold and cherish these constitutional parameters for the very purpose, is not only a big question but a matter of deep upset too. So, we must depend on unbiased socio-religious platforms or organizations, like *Sufism*, for largely nourishment of communal harmony. *Sufism* emphasizes on serving the mankind through spiritual self-development which has already proved phenomenal in Indian context; as it has been looked upon as tightening the sectional gap which is not seen as a sect of Islam, but as a way of proper life. Moreover, *Sufism* adheres to cultural syntheses also which provides a basis for a unity amongst the muslims and non-muslims living together that our present-day India needs. Even if it admits some basic disagreements between theological traditions, yet it believes that these could be discussed together with peace and understanding.

When there is any fanatic or extreme interpretation made by anybody in the religious or any other context then these sufi-saints and spiritual personalities play their role tremendously to content all of us. Their focus always has been on the safeguarding the faiths and in defense of national peace for better interest of the situation.

Further, *Sufism* gained a prominent position in Indian religious scenario since the start of the second millennia. It has thrived as a confluence of Arabic, Persian and native religious practices and socio-cultural environment. Since its advent, it has blended well into the Indian society also.

Sometimes it is found that *Dargah* tradition or shrine-based *Sufism*, though not based on true Islamic ideology, has emerged as a cross-fertilization of religious, ethical and spiritual ideas and it has worked remarkably to promote and spread the communal harmony within our country. It has embedded perfectly into India's pluralist culture. Irrespective of religious and spiritual orientation, many non-muslims visit *Dargahs* and also seek suggestions from the *sufi* saints in many aspects. These sites are perceived as peaceful places to them which promote inter-religious interaction and mutual brotherhood.

5. Conclusions:

To conclude, it can be said that the spiritual practices or *Sufism* is that branch of study or wisdom with which a person can be able to cultivate himself towards the path of purity in true sense; and if all of us try our level best to exercise so then gradually the whole mankind will live a life of peace. In the midst of ongoing social disturbances, we must be optimistic. We should not be panic, rather we follow the path of promoting communal harmony and enshrine the ways of establishing such an atmosphere where a sweet Bond of Fraternity survives in the society.

6. References:

1. Ahmad, Julfiqar: Tasawwuf wa Suluk, Maktaba-e-Millat, Deobond, India. n.d.
2. Al-Ghazzali, Imam Abu Hamid: Minhajul A'bdeen, Trans. Ahmad, Mohammad Say'eed, Maktaba-e-Thanvi, Deobond, India, 1988.
3. Al-Qushayri, Lataif al-Isharat Trans. Kristy Zahra Sands, Sara Lawrence College, New York, USA. n.d.
4. Nadeem, Dr. S.H., A Critical Appreciation of Arabic Mystical Poetry, Adam Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2003.
5. Thanvi, Asharaf Ali: Shariat wa Tariqat, Maktaba al-Haq, Bombay, India. n.d.
6. AR, Robert, 1001 IDEAS, ed, Hachette Book Publishing India Pvt. Ltd., 2016.