

Mysticism And Its Traces In Islamic World

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Abstract: *Mysticism means many things to many minds and is undeniably a term that is used in varying contexts with different shades of meanings. Many have used this term to designate a special mark of spiritual disposition, and others have employed it to mark off a higher and final development of life itself. Anyone who reflects God or the Holy Spirit as the vital, determining norm or principle of his or her life could validly be called "Mystical." Mysticism means, the attainment of higher levels of being in which this knowledge is fully realized in conformity with man's destiny on earth.*

Mysticism is a living tradition that continues to occupy a central place in philosophy of the Muslim world. Sufi orders continue to flourish openly in worldwide and its mystical presence is apparent even on the more external plane. In the contemporary world which is full of materialism, Islamic mysticism is the solution which could provide mental and spiritual relief. Through this paper I want to say that Islamic mysticism is the solution which could provide mental and spiritual relief. The image of Islam is a faith that has primarily been based on spirituality and an oneness with God. If genuine understanding of Islam is propagated globally, then it is also more likely that a better understanding of Sufism will also emerge.

Keywords: *Mysticism, Islam, Sufism, Divine Reality, Religion.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Mysticism is a teaching about the Divine Reality and a method of realization that permits the seeker to reach it in one way or another. In Islam, that teaching revolves around tawhid, which is the central doctrine of both the Quran and the Sunnah. The foundation of mysticism is the life- determining belief in God.

Mysticism is nearly universal and unites most religions in the quest for divinity. Mysticism is a union with the Divine, or a reunion with the infinite. Sufism is the name given to the mystical movement within Islam; a Sufi is a Muslim who dedicates himself to the quest after mystical union or better said, 'reunion' with his Creator. The Sufis trace their origin of Sufism or Tasawwuf to the Prophet of Islam. The claim of Sufis that Tasawwuf had its source in the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions is based on certain facts.

Islam presents more attractive and functionality of Sufism is as a tool for the revival of true spiritualization which is mysticism that involves awakening of self and illumination. Sufism is defined as the inner mystical dimension of Islam. S.H. Nasr in his approach to Sufism as an alternative that is able to meet the spiritual needs of Modern Man and to able to

achieve the level of existence and train the intellectual activity.

If Islamic law demands as the first duty of every believer, that he 'witness' the Unity of God, Islamic mysticism requires that this witness (shahada) should not merely be a form of lip service, nor even a mental assent, but that it should be, beyond all reflections and sentiments, a total and immediate act of witness (shahada); 'witness' such that this means nothing other than knowledge of God. The goal of the mystical path is transcending the ego, and this path cannot be embarked upon without grace (tawfiq). Islam is not only a religion, but the living spirit of a major world civilization. It has a fairly long history stretched over fourteen centuries. Islam created a civilization that has covered the middle belt of the old world for over a millennium.

From H. Nasr's point of view as presented in the "Islam in the Modern World: challenged by the West, Threatened by Fundamentalism, Keeping Faith with Tradition", In Islamic world, spiritual currents are faced with two challenges: one from modernism and secularism and the other from those movements that have now become known as "Islamic fundamentalism." These spiritual currents have suffered a setback but remain nevertheless alive and vibrant in many places.

For the first and most important source of Islamic spirituality, is to be found nowhere but in the spiritual understanding of the Quran. The three dimension of Islamic spiritual life, that is, the doctrine, the (spiritual) virtues, and the spiritual practices, are all in fact traced back to it. To say that the Quran is the supreme source of Islamic spirituality is only another way of saying that its spiritual comprehension is exactly this source. Without the inspired commentaries upon the Quran, its esoteric reality and far-reaching spiritual potentialities for both spiritual life and knowledge can never be fully comprehended. Moreover, it is in the truthfulness of the spiritual understanding of the Quran that the legitimacy of the spiritual life in Islam should be first sought.

Sufism emphasizes raising awareness of the 'Real', as distinct from a distorted understanding of what is taken to be real everyday life, through genuine knowledge of the self and the 'veils' which divide it from any experience of the truth. It also emphasized compassion from one human being to another, regardless of all other distinctions. Mysticism in the Islamic context has traditionally been intertwined with the notion of *Hikmah*, which is at once both wisdom and philosophy (Nasr 1996). The source of mysticism and the mystical elements in Islam are to be traced to the Qur'an and the Islamic doctrine itself.

The Sufi's were drawn to the following verses which suggest a mystical approach:

O ye who believe! if any from among you turn back from his faith, soon will Allah produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him, (Al-Maidah 5:54)

II. ORIGIN AND ORDERS OF SUFISM IN ISLAMIC WORLD

Several centuries after the birth of Islam, a number of informal private Sufi teaching circles in Iraq and Persia grew in numbers and organized into orders (*tariqa*). Soon thereafter, dozens of other orders, most of which evolved as sub-branches of the initial ones, arose throughout the Middle East, Central Asia, India, East Africa, and Spain. Sufi influence continued to expand with the spread of Islam throughout the world. The various orders trace their lineages to, and are generally named after, extraordinary Sufi masters who lived at different times and came from different locales. The Naqshbandi take the name of their order from Khaja Bahaudin Naqshband of Central Asia (1318-1389), the Qadiri from Abdul Qadir Gilan (1077-1166), the Chishtiya from Abu Ishak Chishti of Syria, etc. All genuine orders have a record of their chain of spiritual transmission (*silsilah*) passed down from one spiritual preceptor, called a *shaykh* in Arabic and a *pir* in Persian, to another. All of the *silsilah* trace back to the original *silsilah* of the Prophet Mohammed through Abu Bakr or the fourth Kalif Ali.

The three regions principally associated with Sufism are Mesopotamia (Iran and Iraq), Central Asia and North Africa. The most important orders to emerge out of Mesopotamia are Rifa'iyah, Suhrawardiyyah, Kubrawiyyah and Qadiriyyah. These are all among the earliest of the Sufi orders. Rifa'iyah was founded in Basra, Iraq in the 12th century, soon spreading from Iraq into Syria and Egypt. Suhrawardiyyah, also founded

in 12th century Iraq spread westwards into India. Qadiriyyah and Kubrawiyyah are both Iranian orders. Qadiriyyah, the earliest of the two orders, emerged in the 12th century, and spread both eastwards and westwards into India and North Africa. Kubrawiyyah is historically linked to Suhrawardiyyah in that its founder, Nayim al-din Kubra (1145-1221), was a disciple of the founder of Suhrawardiyyah, Abu Najib as-Suhrawardi (1097-1168). The presence of Rifa'iyah inspired the founding of other orders. In the 13th century Badawiyyah was founded in Egypt by Ahmad al-Badawi (1199-1276).

At about the same time that Sufism was developing in Egypt, it was gaining in strength in North-West Africa through the support of the ruling Almohad dynasty (1130-1269), who ruled over Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Muslim Spain. In the Communist countries like Albania, Bosnia, and Macedonia Sufism is still alive. In Central Asia and Caucasasia, where, the Naqshbandiyyah Order founded was vibrant though it was in Central Asia in the eighth/fourteenth century that later spread throughout the Islamic world. As for Turkey, some seventy years after being banned, Sufism is again quite active there, with a number of important masters and centers.

In the 18th century the Islamic world fell under the influence of a reform movement called Wahabiyyah. This movement sought to rid Islam of what it regarded as unlawful innovations such as the worship of saints and to encourage strict adherence to the shari'ah. The spirit of reform spread into North Africa, leading to the establishment of new orders which rejected the more extreme forms of behavior characteristic of some Sufi orders. An important order that came out of this context is Tidjaniyyah, which was founded in the 1780s by Ahmad al-Tidjani (d.1815) and which rejected many popular Sufi practices such as the adoration of saints. This order continues to exist today and has spread throughout North Africa and western Sub-Saharan Africa. Sufism, in certain areas where neo-Wahhabism and Salafism are on the rise, its outward practice is bound to become reduced with the achievement of those politico-religious forces opposed to Sufism, as has happened in such a country as Saudi Arabia since its foundation. But even in such areas, the inner activity will continue in the manner that one observes in Saudi Arabia today.

Another order of this type is Sanusiyyah, which was founded in Cyrenaica (in eastern Libya) in the 1840s by Muhammad b. al-Sanusi (1787-1859). This order was characterised by the rejection of all forms of luxury and a strong sense of veneration for the Prophet. Following the departure of European colonialists from North Africa in the 1940s and 1950s the Sanusis established the state of Libya. The Sanusis were overthrown in 1969 by Colonel Muammar al-Qadafi. Since then the Sanusis have provided an important source of opposition to the Qadafi regime and survive to the present day in spite of the Qadafi regimes attempt to curtail their activities.

In Central Asia and Anatolia (equivalent to modern day Turkey) a number of major Sufi orders emerged between the 12th and 17th centuries. The earliest of these, Yasawiyyah, was founded in the region now known as Turkestan and played a major role in spreading Islam among the Turkish tribes of Central Asia. Possibly deriving from Yasawiyyah is the Bektashiyyah order. According to tradition, Hajj Bektash,

the putative founder of Bektashiyyah, originally belonged to the Yasawiyyah order. Bektashiyyah continues to survive in the Balkan region to the present day. Another Central Asian order is Chishtiyyah. The origins of this order are uncertain, although the founder is generally believed to be Mu'in al-Din Chishti (c.1142-1236), a native of Sijistan. The order gradually spread into India where it remains today as the largest and most important Sufi order.

Mawalwiyyah traces its origins to the famous Turkish mystic and poet al-Rumi (1207-1273). The order's name derives from the Arabic word Mawlana (our master), a title given to al-Rumi by the order. Mawlawiyyah is based in the Turkish town of Konya. Like many Turkish orders it was effectively suppressed when Turkey became a secular state in 1925.

The Khalwatiyyah order was founded in Persia but spread quickly into Anatolia. Out of Khalwatiyyah two other important orders emerged: Bayramiyyah and Jalwatiyyah. Bayramiyyah was founded at Ankara in the 14th century and continued until its dissolution in 1925. Jalwatiyyah was founded in the 17th century by Aziz Mahmud Huda'i (d.1628) who was previously a member of the Khalwati order. Like the other Turkish orders it was banned in 1925 by the Ataturk government; the last master of the order died in 1946.

Wahhabism at the present moment, is the famous Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), founded in Egypt before World War II by Hasan al-Banna', but later extended to other Muslim countries, especially those in the Persian Gulf region, where many of its members settled after the execution in Egypt of its leader, Sayyid Qutb, during the rule of Jamal' Abd al-Nasir. In Turkey, the appearance of a remarkable politico-religious figure, sayyid Badi' al-Zaman Nursi, during the early decades of the fourteenth/twentieth century at the time of Ataturk and the outward secularization of Turkey, made possible the founding of a semisecret organization, usually known as Nursi, whose aim was the protection of Islam from secularism. The members of this organization grew rapidly in number and represent today a very significant voice in Turkey. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 itself took place with the participation of "Islamic Marxists," Communists, and secular Western-oriented so-called intellectuals as well as traditional Islamic elements.

Mysticism is the heart of the oneness but they are never accepted by those in religious power since it will shake their corrupt and empty foundations. There is a long way to go, even in 21st century people are still ignorant and they have to be educated. So there is one way and it is to go within and touch the fountain of knowledge that is given to all. Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan in India and Muhammad 'Abduh in Egypt were concerned mostly with education.

By educating the masses and deepening the spiritual concerns of the Muslims, Sufism has played an important role in the formation of Muslim society. The Sufis have been further responsible for a large-scale missionary activity all over the world, which still continues. Sufis have elaborated the image of the Prophet Muhammad the founder of Islam and have thus largely influenced Muslim piety by their Muhammad-mysticism. Mysticism is still believed in by the people. So if one can mobilize them they might come back to

life, and bring life to the society. Industrialization and modern life have led to a constant decrease in the influence of Sufi orders in many countries. Sufism is popularized, but the genuinely and authentically devout are aware that it requires strict discipline, and that its goal can be reached if at all as they say, only by throwing oneself into the consuming fire of divine love. Sufism isn't a separate current within Islam. It isn't a separate branch of the tree. In many ways, it's more like the sap of the tree that springs from its roots and flows up to the leaves. It's knotted into all the other branches, groups and sects.

III. CONCLUSION

Trying to concluding my paper I have to say that if a genuine understanding of Islam is propagated globally, then it is also more likely that a better understanding of Sufism will also emerge. In the contemporary world which is full of materialism, Islamic mysticism is the solution which could provide mental and spiritual relief. The image of Islam as a faith that has primarily been based on spirituality and an oneness with God has been heavily shaken. Sufism or "Tasawwuf" is a recognized branch of Islam that is concerned with achieving the highest form of spiritual perfection and purification of the soul. The aim is to examine certain facets of traditional Islam or mystical Islam. The central task of Sufism is the education of the whole of the human person until it reaches the full realization and perfection of all of its possibilities. The goal of Sufism is to lead man from the world of Form, to the world of Spirit.

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