

## Sufic poetry and the reformation of Society

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**Abstract** *Peace and harmony tends to disappear from our societies gradually. This paper throughs light on the essence of Mysticism in dealing with the inherent and outward onrest in human being and societies. The message of Mysticism that is patience, tolerance, love of diversity, selflessness and unconditional love have been elaborated through the lense of the Mystic in classical poiets of Pashto classical literature.*

Modern society is passing through severe crisis and the future seems to be uncertain and confusing. This has always been a challenge for sensitive minds to analyze the reasons and suggest solutions to the crisis.

Various groups such as scientists, politicians and priestly peoples have addressed these crises using different techniques. The Sufis have also played a remarkable role in the reformation of society. This fact struck me during my Ph.D study which I conducted on the "Rowshanites and Pashto literature in the year 1991-1995. The Rowshanites (The illuminated ones) are the descendants and followers of the famous Pashtoon mystic writer, Bayazid Ansari, popularly known as Pir Rowshan" (The illuminated spiritual Guide)

I found out during this study that the methodology of Sufic literature is a powerful tool which can be used for interfaith harmony, mutual and peaceful co-existence and for the promotion of universal values such as love, peace, justice, tolerance, moderation and interaction.

Sufis lay stress on purification of self and forbid selfishness, greed, avarice and hatered. The popular Sufi poet Abd\_ur\_Rahman Baba says in this connection

"خکه سپینې شوې اول د حباب سترگې  
چې له بغضه په درياب کښې چوي تڼاکه  
گېډه وتره په پري باندي کلکه

د روتی طمع و نه کړې له فلکه  
 له اسمانه چې څوک طمع د وفا کا  
 دغه طمع ئې طاعون گڼه بې شکه" (1)

(The bubble's eyes first became shameless.  
 Then burst like a blister in the ocean of malevolence.  
 Tighten your belt, endure starvation.  
 Don't expect fate to provide you food.  
 Whoever expects fate to grant him Love,  
 He would do better to consider it a plague)

The popular Sufi poet and the strong follower of Bayazid's mystic philosophy Arzani Kheshki advises to abstain from Suspicion. He Says,

"د تا دل د حق اړسي دی :: و ئې کاره له نمده  
 دا نمد دې تور گمان دی :: د گمان تیاره ده بده  
 چې د گمان قميص ئې واغوست :: هغه بد شة تر ابده  
 د گمان تیاره کره لرې :: د یقین ډیوه کره بله" (2)

(Your heart is the mirror of the truth.  
 Take it out of the filth.  
 The filth is your dark suspicion.  
 And the darkness of suspicion is very bad.  
 One who puts on the dress of suspicion,  
 He becomes mischievous forever.  
 Remove the darkness of suspicion, (doubt)  
 Kindle the lamp of faith (certainty)

They renunciate all selfish pleasures as it is said : "It is Sufism to put away what thou hast in thy head, to give what thou hast in thy hand and not to recoil from whatsoever befalls thee." (3)

The Sufis devote themselves and what they possess to Allah, the Almighty. They never show interest in the temporal world. Khushal khan Khattak who although was not a practical Sufi but knew much about Sufism, Says:

"چي ڄامي ئي مرده شوئي ته پاتي نه شي  
خدايه! ورکري و خوشحال هسي رحلت" (4)

( O God ! Give Khushal the death of a person,  
Who does not have clothes to be left to the washer of dead bodies)

Among the leaders of the Sufis were Hassan-al- Basri, Wasil Bin Ata, Ibrahim Bin Adham, Maruf Karkhi, Omar ibn-ul-Farid , Mansoor-al-Hallaj, Jalal-ud-din Rumi and Rabiah-al-Basri. Rabiah was devoted to the love of Allah to such an extent that she used to say that there was no place left in her heart for love and hatred of anybody else except the love of Allah.(5)

The Sufis expressed themselves in the language of love. For them the divine reality is first of all the limitless object of desire. The object of spiritual love is divine Beauty which is an aspect of infinity and through this object desire become lucid and clear. It is highly significant that there is hardly a single Muslim metaphysist who did not compose poetry and whose most abstract prose is not in some passages transformed in to rhythmic language full of poetic images while; on the other hand the poetry of the most famous hymners of love such as Omar Ibn-al-Farid, Jalal-ul-Din Rumi and Rehman Baba is rich in intellectual perceptions.

The great Spanish Sufi and the expounder of wahdat-ul-wajood (unity of being), Muhyi-ud-Din Ibn-e-Arabi considers love to be the highest station of the soul and sub-ordinates to it every possible human perfection. Abu Yazid –al-Bistami was so involved in the love of Allah, that he founds his being with the being of Allah, the Almighty.

The Sufis believing in the “Unity of Being” looked at Allah with love and fervor and they did not look at Him with fear and awe. Although the great thinker Pashto poet Ghani Khan was not a practicing Sufi, yet he has composed many verses on Sufism. He says:

"زما مينه د ادب د پنجرې اوځي  
وايه څومره دې جانان کړمه رب څومره" (6)

(Lest my love goes out of the limits of respect,  
O God! Guide me. To what extent should I make you my friend  
and how much I should call you the God) The first romantic and the  
great Sufi poet Mirza Khan Ansari Says:

"دا زما محبت واره په خپل يار شئ  
اوس د يار محبت اوجاروت و ما ته" (7)

(All my love is with my beloved (God).  
And now my love with Him changed in to the love of Him with me).

Another Romantic and Sufi poet Wasil Rokhani explains this  
subject as follows:

"د عارف زړگي په خاي دي :: چي اول او اخر خدای دي" (8)

(The heart of the Gnostic is unwavering.  
As he knows that the first and last is God).

Khushal khan Khattak Says:

"خاص بنده د خدای هغه گنه خوشحاله!  
چي د خان په معرفت ئي سرفراز کا  
چي ئي خان سره اشنا کړم له هر چا ئي شا په شا کړم  
له عالمه بي گانه وم بي گانه يم لاتراوسه" (9)

O Khushal! The selected servant of God is the one,  
Who is exalted by the God due to his knowledge about Him.  
When my beloved (God) made me a friend of Himself,  
He turned me from others away)

Abdul Qadir khan Khattak son of Khushal Khan Khattak was a  
good mystic poet and eloquent writer. He says:

"په هرڅه کښي ننداره د هغه مخ کړم  
ځکه نور عالم غمونه کا زه سخ کړم" (10)

(I enjoy looking at the face of the one (God) in  
everything of the world. Therefore I rejoice while  
others laments)

The philosophy of Unity of being tells us that there exists nothing in the universe except one being (God). This conception is very old. The great Persian poet Jalal-ud-Din Rumi explains this theory as: “Not being is the mirror of being, being can only be seen in not-being” (11)

This theory says that the relation between the world and God was one of the identity, and the worship of everything whatsoever is the worship of God, because the infinite being is an ocean of existence from which the waves of the phenomena arise only to sink back into it and their being and not being are identical. Except having some minor differences, almost all the mystics of this philosophy agree on its basic principles. Shankaracharya among the Hindus, Plato among the Greeks, Plotinus among the Christians and Shaikh Muhyi-ud-Din (Ibn-e-Arabi) among the Muslims are the Great elaborators of “Unity of Being”. When writing his commentary on the Holy Quran, Ibn-e-Arabi approached the subject from the same angle, from which shankaracharya had interpreted the Gita. This doctrine mainly corresponds to Vedantism.

Majority of Indians Sufis adopted this philosophy during the middle ages. But it must be kept in mind that Sufis were attracted to this philosophy mostly because it was in line with their own ideas and attitudes.

Wahdat-ul-Wajood teaches humanistic values. This is because its metaphysics imply that there is unity if oneness in all that exists. The differences, disagreements and divisions among human beings, ideas and all that exist are illusory. They come into being only when we look at things, matters in a limited and biased perspective and fail to see their true reality. If all differences are illusory, then it clearly means that mutual difference of human beings, creeds and culture are also superficial. They are absurd in the ultimate sense.

I selected more than twenty Sufi poets for my study. They preached a direct and personal relationship between man and God over religious, ritualistic and abstract forms. Their preaching provided the metaphysical basis of accepting dissent and treating others with tolerance. They all had liking for music and did not agree with the religious scholars who believed that Islam has no patience for it. They thought the people who did not relish a beautiful voice or music and melody are either liars or hypocrite

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and considered the people having no aesthetic sense and taste even worse than animals and cattle.

Bayazid Ansari (the founder of Rowshani Movement) had shown great sensitiveness and sentiments towards music, and made contribution to the improvement of music. He had contributed in producing new tunes in music. He also improved the rhythm of the tunes. Following Bayazid, his descendants, and followers also made great contributions in the field of music. Most of them were experts in music, and were fond of listening to it.

According to "Halnamah" when the poet khwaja Muhammad, the elder brother of Ali Muhammad Mukhlis, and a disciple of Bayazid reached Khyber from Peshawar, and met the leaders of Shinwari tribe, he had musicians with him; they used to hold musical meetings for Khwaja Muhammad.

Ahdad, (the grandson of Bayazid) used to hold musical meetings during the travels and sojourns, nights and days, wakefulness and even when he was sleeping. When Ahdad would go to his bedroom, he would make a place for "Qawalan" (choristers) besides his bedroom had used to listen to music. One of the choristers named Hassan asked Ahdad: "It is not justice that you are sleeping, and we are holding music all the night." Ahdad said: I hear music while I am sleeping. The chorister inquired about his claim and it proved true".(12)

The Sufi promoted the flexible system of thought. They gave a message of harmony among the diverse religious communities. They tried to counter the oppression of what we now term as Fundamentalism.

Arzani Kheshki says:

"يو الله دې وړاندې بيار ته :: نبي او کين تهه و بالا  
د يوه وهاب صفت شي :: هم له چنگ او له رباب  
يو اواز دی چې ئې اورې :: هم له چنگه هم له عوده  
يو چراغ دی چې بليږي :: پوشيده دی له احوله  
د دغه چراغ رڼا ده :: تر اعلى هم تر اسفله" (13)

(there is only one God existing in the front, back, right, left, up and down directions.

The music of harp and violin praise only one god.

There can be heard only one sound (song) in the music of lute and harp.

There illuminates only one lamp.

Which is hidden from the squint-eyed man

The light of the same lamp reaches the superior as well as the inferior people).

Rehman Baba says in this connection:

"دا زما د يار جلوه ده چې ليده شي  
لکه نمر په صومعه په سومنات" (14)

(This is the appearance of my beloved (God).

Which is seen like a radiance in church and temple).

The popular Rowshanite poet Karim Dad describes this point as follows:

" که مسلم او که هندو دی  
د یوه ملا او تار دی  
په یوه نامه جاروخي  
که تسبیح او که زنار دی  
دغه یو یواځې اصل  
رسېدلی تر هزار دی  
کُل هنر چې نن لیده شي  
پسول که ډېر شئ یو سنار دی" (15)

(The Muslims and Hindus are the incarnate of the one God.

Both the rites (wearing the cross thread by Hindus and telling the beads by Muslims) are performed to praise God.

This one and the only origin has reached the number of thousands.

All the skills which seem today are the results of the skill of one goldsmith (God).

The garland of the flowers of various kinds are stringed on one thread).

They promoted the true spirit of humanistic values regardless to the religion, class, color and race. The ultimate goal of religion before them is selfless love for human beings. They sought the reconciliation of God in service to mankind, cleansing from sin, renunciation of the world and subduing of the ego.

The famous Sufi poet Amir Hamza Shinwari says in his poem “insaniyat” (humanity):

د هستی له درانه بار که رو گردان شی  
 په خپل ځان باندې په خپله به تاوان شی  
 دا شریکه دنیا واره ځان ته غواړې  
 ځکه داسې په دنیا کېنې ځان په ځان شی  
 لا خواهش د ناممکنو ستا فطرت دی  
 که ادم ئې د جذبې لاندې حیوان شی  
 چې کوربه د جهان بل دی ستا نه څه څي  
 ته مهمان ئې ولې تنگ په بل مهمان شی  
 ستا عمل به روڼ دلیل ستا په اسلام شی  
 چې راجمع سره ټول په دسترخوان شی  
 د مذهب نامه دې پرېښوه سړي خوره  
 ستا مذهب خو تا ته وائي که انسان شی (16)

(If you refused to lift the heavy load of life,

You will be in trouble,

In this world you are not comfortable.

Because you wish to get the collective world for yourself.

Your nature compels you to do the impossible things,

Therefore being a human being, your ambitions make you a  
 beast

When God is the host of this world and not you what you do  
 you lose,

You are a guest in this world, why you are sad to see the guests  
 in same house.

Your actions will be considered according to the laws of Islam.

If you eat the meal together with other human beings

O man eater (human being) you forgot the principles of your  
 religion (Islam)

It advises you to be a good human being.



They gave preference to the rules that govern man's relationship with men rather than the rules in relation to God. This good nature is termed as humanity which includes helping the needy and serving others before self. Rehman Baba says:

"راشه مه كوه له چا سره جفا  
 لږ ژوندون دى ضائع كيږي بې وفا  
 كه يوه دانه د اوږي په لاس وركړې  
 هم دغه به دې توبنه شي د عقبې  
 كه يو خاڅكى اوبه تږي لره وركړې  
 د دوزخ او ستا تر مينځ به شي دريا  
 بازار دا دى كه څوك سود او سودا كاندي  
 په هغه جهان نه سود شته نه سودا  
 اشنايان كه څوك پوهيږي نن ئې وخت دى  
 چې خاږيږي يو اشنا تر بل اشنا  
 كه ژوندون دى خو هم دا دى په جهان كېسې  
 چې له چا سره تېريږي په خدا  
 كه مشكل دي خو د زړونو رغول دي  
 سهل كار دى سود او زيان د دې دنيا  
 لكه ځان هسې و بل و ته نظر كړه  
 لكه ستا دى هسې ځان دى د هرچا(17)

(Come on! Don't be cruel to anyone.  
 This brief life is wasted without loyalty.  
 If you give just one grain into the hand of a hungry one.  
 This very thing will become your provision for the future.  
 If you give a single drop of water to the thirsty.  
 It will become a river between you and the hell.  
 This is the market for anyone to profit and trade.  
 In the next world there is neither profit nor trade.  
 If you can grasp it, today is the time for friends.  
 Friends should be devoted to one another  
 If there is life in this world, it is this  
 That is spent with others in laughter  
 What is really hard is to mend the hearts  
 The profit and loss of the world is a simple thing

Regard others as you do yourselves.

For every one is like you).

Khwaja Muhammad Bangash says in this connection:

"زړونه مه ماتوه لعل د بدخشان دي  
بيا مشکل وي رغېدل د شکسته وو" (18)

(Don't break the hearts, they are like Rubies of Badakhshan.

It is very difficult to unite the broken hearts again).

They rebuked violent and revengeful people and adopted a path of mercy. They followed the principles of doing good for bad.

The following couplets of Rehman Baba and Khushal Khan Baba are worth mentioning here. Rehman Baba says:

"که بل بد کاندي ته بڼه ورسره وکړه  
هر يو نخل چې مېوه لري سنگسار شي" (19)

(if another does you harm, do him good.

For every tree that bears fruit is stoned)

Khushal Baba says:

"په بارداره ونه تل ورپري کاني  
ورته گوره چې بارداره ونه خه کا" (20)

(the tree that bears fruit is always stoned.

Look! What does the tree give in reward).

They composed poetry against social evils and against the "nufs" (carnal lower nature) because uncontrolled "nufs" drags man away from the higher rank of humanity. To control the impatient "nufs" they laid stress on patience, contentment and abstinence from luxury and enjoyment. Although their poetry has not received a remarkable scholarly attention by the non Pushtoon scholars yet some Orientalists the prominent among them being Sir Olaf Caroe, Dupree, Raverty, Morgensterne and Jens Enevoldsen have to some extent discussed their poetry.

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