



Vision and mechanism of spiritual training in Mysticism

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ABSTRACT

Spiritual training is one of the fundamental roles in the religions of the world. The concept of spiritual training is in most of the religions. Sufism is a school of thought for spiritual training in Islam and Sufi is the spiritual trainer and has a significant role for the spiritual healing of the people. Mystical Islamic School of Thought has performed a vital role in spiritual training of the people in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. The purpose of the study was to analyze the vision and mechanism of spiritual training in Islamic Sufism. The study was helpful for religious scholars and researchers in order to understand the vision and mechanism of spiritual training in Islamic Sufism. The study was of great importance for curriculum developers. The study was historical and documentary analysis in nature. The relevant material was analyzed to meet the objectives of the study.

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Introduction

Sufism (Islamic Mysticism) is the marrow of the bone or the inner dimension of the Islamic revelation. The goal of the spiritual man is to journey through the cosmos and ultimately beyond it. Sufi (Spiritual Master) cosmology provides the plan with the aid of which man can get his bearings for his journey (Nasr, 1972, p-43, 46). Just as there are specialists for physical maladies like for ear, nose and throat, so too there are specialists for spiritual illness. One of them was Imam Ghazzali (renowned Sufi) who writes in his book, "Ahya' al-Ulum" that arrogance is the mother of all spiritual illnesses. If it infects anyone once, it makes way for other illness. Hence, it is necessary to get rid of this malady first (Usmani, 2001, V-1 No.1, p-194). Dr. Abdul Hayyi (Muslim Scholar) frequently quoted Mujaddid Alf Thani. He said, "When I accomplished the known sciences, I listened that there were some unseen sciences too which the Sufis possess. So, I went to them and found out that they had four kinds of traditions: Chistiyah, Naqshbandia, Suhrwardiyah and Qadriyah. Each had its own sub-branches, I went to each of the Silsilah (Chain) and learnt from them their sciences. Not only that, I even conducted myself on each of their ways. And Allah granted me a very high station. Then I researched a station which put the Ulema of the known sciences aside; the Ulema of the secret sciences too were unable to understand" (Usmani-2002, V-2, p-301)

Vision of Spiritual Training

The ultimate goal of spiritual training in Islamic Mysticism is to establish relationship with Allah. As a renowned Muslim Scholar of the Indo-Pak Subcontinent, Maulana Thanawi has said, "the arrangement and reality of establishing relationship with Allah are that one must first reform his deeds, both the seen and the unseen. The reformation of the unseen deeds is more important and difficult (Usmani, 2002, p-191). Maulana Thanawi has described that, "nisbat" relationship with Allah and the method of acquiring it. It is really the goal of "Tasawwuf"

(Islamic Mysticism) and tariqat (method) to establish a relationship with Allah (Usmani, 2002, p-193). The vision of spiritual training in Islamic Mysticism is to follow the teachings, practices and the life style of a Sufi whole heartedly. As the life of a Sufi attributes the qualities of Prophets. Hazrat Junaid (Sufi) attributes eight exemplary qualities of a Sufi, "A true Sufi possesses (1) the courage and magnanimity of prophet Ibrahim, (2) the obedience of prophet Ismail, (3) the patience and forbearance of prophet Ayub, (4) the signs of prophet Zakria, (5) the poverty of Prophet yahya, (6) the traveling nature of Prophet Isa, Christ (7) the simplicity of dress of Prophet Musa (Moses) and (8) the "Fuqr" (contentment and renunciation) of Prophet Muhammad" (Khan & Ram, 2003, p-21). Sufism contains a complete method of curing the illness of the soul and in fact succeeds where so many modern Psychiatric and Psychoanalytical methods, with all their extravagant claims, fail (Nasr, 1972, p-46). Allamah Busayree (R.A) (a renowned Muslim Scholar) has compared the soul to a child in Qaseedah Burdah (Praise of Prophet Muhammad). The soul is like a sucking child. If you let him keep his habit, he will grow old but not give-up milk. If parents wean him off, he cries and shrieks. His mother applies something bitter to her nipples that may turn away from her. If parents are firm and do not relent even when he shrieks, he will mend his ways after three days. Frightening of Allah (taqwa) is the comprehensive way for spiritual training to gain pleasures of Allah. Maulana Romi (a great Muslim Scholar) said: The wordly desires are like fuel. Do not regard the desires in your heart as weak. They are very useful. The more you burn them, the more Tqwa (frightening of Allah) will brighten your heart (Usmani, 2002, V-2, p-196-197).

Mechanism of Spiritual Training

Spiritual training of the soul is the most essential feature of Sufism. The spiritual path is covered by the traveler under the instructions of a Spiritual Director, i.e., the "Shykh" or the

“Pir”. The initiated disciple (murid) proceeds along the various stages (maqamat) of the path under the mystical guidance, develops his spiritual knowledge and experiences the truth (al-haqq). The entire process of the spiritual training of the wayfarer (Salik) is strictly personal which can not be disclosed in any form (Bhatnagar, 1984, p-19).

The mechanism of spiritual training in Islamic mysticism is to follow the stages of the path to acquire spiritual perfection through the practices of Islam in the supervision of a Sufi. There are two signs that tell us that a person has acquired a relationship with Allah and He is pleased with him. They are, “abundant Zikr, (remembering of Allah) and constant obedience”. The meaning of abundant zikr is that his tongue and heart are often engaged in Allah’s mention. If one is inclined to make zikr often then it is a sign of having established a relationship with Allah. When one is inclined to both things indulgence in zikr abundantly and regular obedience then that is a sign that he has gained Allah’s pleasure what then can he want? There can never be a nobler goal and greater blessing than the pleasure of Allah (Usmani, 2002, p-193-195). The Sufis (Spiritual Master) see the stages of physical life as the outward signs of the soul are blossoming and unfolding. Rumi (Sufi) is well known for his description of the soul’s growth from a stage that is practically inanimate to one that surpasses the angels. The fact that the soul ascends stage by stage explains why, even though “All are He”, no one can truly be aware of this without achieving perfection. As long as people have not passed through the levels of moral and spiritual growth, they will remain ignorant of their own true nature. During the soul’s unfolding, the traces of the divine names manifest themselves gradually. Many Sufis (as well as many of the Muslim Philosophers) compare inanimate object or mineral (Chittick, 2005, p-85-86). The Sufis recognize various stages or degrees of spiritual perfection. According to one sect of Sufis, certain saints can be called, “Sidqallh” while others can be named, “MinnatAllah”. The saints called, “SidqAllah” are the devotees of God who realize the different stages (maqamat) of the path and acquire spiritual perfection through the practice of “Sharia” (Bhatnagar, 1984, p-21).

The master watches every moment of the disciple’s spiritual growth; he watches him particularly during the forty-day period of meditation (arbain, chillah) that became, very early, a regular institution in the Sufi path (derived, as Hujwari says, from the forty-day fast of Moses, when he hoped for a vision from God, as related in Sura 7:138). The sheikh interprets the murid’s dreams and visions, reads his thoughts, and thus follows every movement of his conscious and subconscious life (Schimmel, 2003, p-103).

Our soul is turned in the direction of sin and disobedience to Allah. The cure lies in folding it in the reverse direction and get it to abandon some lawful things too see that it may return to moderation. This is why the Sufis instruct fresh disciples to reduce food, speech, mixing with people and sleep. According to Mawlana Thanawi, in view of today’s conditions one must not worry about reducing on food intake but should eat in accordance with Allah’s blessings on him. So, he said, “I do not impose on you the mujahadah of less food. Similarly, I do not prescribe the mujahadah of less sleep because the physical stamina of contemporary people is such that they would fall ill if they do it, and will fail to observe even the little worship they are used to observe” (Usmani, 2004, V-3, p-2002).

Imam Gazzali (Spiritual Master) says in his book, “Ihya-ulm-Id-Din” that there are three modes of gaining soul-power,

(1) Mode of inspiration. God’s inspiration comes on some souls unknowingly and for that they gain spiritual knowledge, (2) Some souls acquire spiritual power learning and efforts, (3) Some souls acquire spiritual power quickly and some late (Karim, 1963, p-8). The medicine of the disease of soul is to accustom itself to the opposite attribute. If there is disease of miserliness, the medicine to remove it is to give constant charities and spending money. There is limit to charity and expenditure. He who exceeds the limits falls into another disease- the fault of extravagance. He becomes then just like the man suffering cold who uses such hot thing which takes him to another trouble. Our object is to gain the limit of moderation avoiding the two extremes. The middle path is the straight path which is narrower than a hair and more sharp-edge than a sword. He who can remain in the straight path in the world can cross the bridge easily in the hereafter ((Karim, 1963, p-65). Tustari discerns two fundamental and antagonistic forces within the soul of mystic man: a positive force, the heart (qalb), which turns man towards God, and a negative force, the lower self (nafs), which induces man to turn towards his own ego. On the basis of these two principles, Tustari develops a spiritual psychology of mystic man which testifies to a high degree of mystical awareness and introspection, is marked by an elaborate edifice of expression and terminology, and is deeply rooted in his mystical experience as mediated by the Quran (Spuler, 1980, p-241).

Hallaj proposes a test for the sincerity of spiritual claims, juxtaposing each moment (waqt) of inner experience with the practices and qualities that are required of one who claims it: And among their manners is striving in the gnosis of claims (da’awi) and seeking (to attain) every moment with the manners (of the state) announced by the one who claims that moment. Husayn Ibn Mansur said, (1) one who claims faith needs guidance, (2) one who claims submissions (Islam) needs morals (akhlaq), one who claims gnosis (marifa) needs spirit, peace, and fragrance, one who claims the soul (nafs) needs worship (ibada) (Lewisohn, 1999, v-1, p-442).

Conclusion

Vision of Spiritual training in Islamic Sufism is to establish relationship with Allah through His obedience in the supervision of a Sufi. The Sufis recognize a degree of spiritual perfection. The first stage for spiritual training in Islamic Mysticism is constant obedience of Allah and for this; the heart and mind of an individual should always be in obedience of Allah. The second stage is to attain highest excellence in words, deeds and thoughts through practices of Islam. The third stage is abundant, “Zikr” (remembering of Allah).

The procedure of spiritual training in the circles of Sufis is based on the transfer of knowledge through practices with sincerity. The mechanism of spiritual training in Islamic Mysticism is the reflection of all stages of spiritual training in Islam and is based on five pillars of Islam including prayer, fast, almsgiving, pilgrimage and Jihad. The comprehensive and magnetic characteristic of spiritual training in Islamic Mysticism is the sincere affection of a Sufi for his followers for their spiritual training.

The affection of a Sufi with his followers is only for the sake of Allah and because of this; the personality of a Sufi becomes attractive for his followers. After the analysis of related material, the researcher concluded the following mechanism of spiritual training in Islamic Sufism.

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