

SUFISM AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF INTERFAITH POLICY IN THE AAD GURU GRANTH SAHIB

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Islamic mysticism is known as Sufism. In early days of its development, ascetic and quietistic tendencies dominated and some great personalities of those days such as Hasan of Basra (d. 728 CE), Ibrahim Ibn Adham (d 777 CE) and Rabe'A-AL-Adawiya of Basra (d 801 CE) made valuable contribution to its growth [2 – p 51]. Mecca-Madina, Basra and Kufa were the main centers of the ascetic movement. Sufis of the earliest times believed in self-mortification and meditation and is leading a life of contentment and purification. Repentance, abstinence, renunciation, poverty, patience and trust in Allah were the milestones on their way to the house of God.

After gaining strength from asceticism, Sufism moved into the realm of mysticism in the 9th century CE. Sufism based its philosophy purely on the religious scriptures of Islam – The Qur'an and Hadith. Sufism is Islamic in letter and spirit and has its roots in Middle East Countries. It was a natural development within Islam, owing little to non-Muslim sources. Sufi refers to that person, who is a follower of Islam, believes in One God – Allah, Prophet Mohammad and Qur'an.

During the 9th and 10th centuries CE Sufism had developed into full fledged philosophical movement. Rabe A introduced the concept of 'Selfless Love' (*Ishq*) and Dhu'l-Nun Misri made it popular among the Sufis [3 – p 51, 78]. He also introduced the idea of 'Gnosis' (m'arifa) and analyzed the doctrine of 'Tauhid'. He classified the stages of 'Spiritual Development'. *Ma'ruf-al-Karkhi* propagated the importance of 'Grace' and Abu Yazid-Al-Bistami introduced the concept of 'passing away in God' (*fana*) [2 – p 100]. Al Junaid of Baghdad made it popular and acceptable to Muslim mystics. By the end of the 10th century CE Sufism had grown into a great mystical movement in Islam and great saints and mystics had enriched this system with their oral and written instructions.

Sheikh Ali Ul-Hujwiri (known as Data Ganj Bakhsh in the Punjab) was a great Sufi philosopher of the 11th

century CE [4]. His book *Kashf-al-Mahjub* written in Persian was the first treatise on Sufism. He emphasized that the real explanation of Islam could be found in Sufi philosophy.

During the 12th century CE Sufi Silsila came into being. They played an important role in popularizing and propagating Sufism. With the help of these Silsilas, Sufi mysticism reached every corner of the Muslim and non-Muslim world. The aim of these Silsilas was that the followers of Islam should concentrate on their inner self rather than follow the religious dogmas blindly. The Sufi Silsilas which gained prominence in India were the Chishtiyya, the Suhrawardiyya, the Qadiriyya, the Naqshbandiyya, etc. The founders of these Silsilas placed Sufism on firm mystical ground and gave it an organized shape.

Sheikh Farid-ud-Din-Ganj-I Shakar popularly known as Baba Farid, the most popular saint of the Chishtiyya Silsila of the 12th and 13th centuries CE was a pioneer of Sufi movement in the Punjab and his 112 Sloks and 4 Sabds were included in the Aad Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan [1]. Baba Farid propagated selfless love for God who was present everywhere and in every human heart. He based his idea on Holy Qur'an. For him, phenomenal world was short lived and man must detach himself from it and surrender before God. Sufism is nothing but cleansing of the heart. It is altogether a self-discipline. It is to possess nothing and to be possessed by nothing. It is a moral disposition. It is spiritual in substance. A Sufi keeps his spiritual journey clean by self-mortification. He believes that the love of the world is a major cause of all sins. Accordingly a person who derives pleasure in contemplation on the Almighty is of a high spiritual status. Detachment and renunciation are two major factors which help a Sufi to continue his spiritual flight, helping him in cleansing the heart.

Baba Farid advocated a life of purity. He advised his followers to wipe out pride, arrogance, anger, jealousy and hatred from their heart. He wanted to inculcate in

them the moral qualities which would help them attain the goal. To achieve this, Baba Farid felt the need of a spiritual guide who is considered to be perfect and illumined personality. Such a person is gifted with spiritual power and brings a change in the inner world of his disciple. Baba Farid is aware that without a guidance of a perfect *Shaykh*, man does not reach anywhere. In Sufism, *murshid* is in physical form but in Gurbani Sabd is the Guru [1]. It is because both mysticism have their different religious backgrounds and they gained prominence as per their traditions.

In Sufism, constant contemplation on God is most important as it helps in cleansing the heart. It creates love in the heart of the searcher and what remains there is just God. In such a situation a Sufi considers everything belonging to the world false and perishable.

In Islam remembrance of God is obligatory. A true mystic cannot overlook it, for it leads to the integration of the heart and the tongue. In Sufism, it is not only a ritual or a religious act but an act through which a Sufi unites himself with God. Baba Farid was of the opinion that only through prayer or remembrance of God, one can reach one's destination. Through this act, a person learns to concentrate all his energies, i.e. physical, mental, and spiritual on God alone. He forgets everything of this phenomenal world except God.

As the Sufi movement moved ahead in the Punjab, it gained sufficient strength and influenced a large section of people. Baba Farid belonged to that school of thought who laid stress on *Shariat*. I consider *Shariat* as discipline and Baba Farid asked his followers to observe the different tenets of *Shariat*. Belief in One God, in angels, in religious scriptures, i.e. the Qur'an, in doomsday, in moral values, emphasis on five times prayer during the day to be observed in a mosque. In fact all these acts help a Sufi to purify his inner-self.

Baba Farid advocated poverty which is the beginning of Sufism. This means renunciation of all worldly thing for the sake of Almighty. The highest type of morality is born in love and Baba Farid believes that the object of man's love is God who resides in him. His kingdom is within man's heart. Love of God means renunciation and self-sacrifice giving up wealth, honor, will, life for God's pleasure. A Sufi does not seek any kind of reward for his love. In fact love has not been used in an ordinary sense in Sufism. It is the divine instinct of the soul and Baba Farid wanted to enjoy the sweetness of such a love.

To realize it, grace of the Lord is necessary. Human steps without divine grace cannot travel over this path.

At this stage the spirit of the Sufi is stripped of all kinds of worldly relations. When the spirit is illuminated with divine qualities, it feels peace. It negates all goals, destroys his pride and egotism, closes his eyes to all kind of worldly attachments, passions and lusts, only the divine love has the power to weed out all those things which impede his spiritual journey.

The writings of Baba Farid are a mirror into his inner world and he wants that everybody should lead a pious life. The ideas and concepts of Sufism which Baba Farid propagated were quite clear and had become important by that period.

In Gurbani, Sikh Gurus also laid stress on moral and religious ethics. In 'Jap' Guru Nanak puts a question "How to be truthful?" and next Guru Nanak himself answers that man should live as per God's *hukm* (In scientific world these are the Laws of Nature / Universe) [1]. By leading a life of purity one can attain the unitive state. In Sufism and Gurbani the start and end of spiritual journey is the same but middle path is different because both have different religious and mystic backgrounds.

Keeping in view the Muslim religious and mystic philosophy explained by Sheik Farid in his writings, a number of Islamic concepts un-known to the Punjabi folks, became part of religious literature of the Punjab for the first time. Guru Arjan incorporated his philosophy into the Aad Guru Granth Sahib for the benefit of the non-Muslims following the principle of interfaith of Guru Nanak:

ਗੁਣਾ ਕੀ ਘੋੜੀ ਵਿਸ਼ੀ ॥ ਕੀਫ਼ ਵਿਸ਼ੀ ਏਲੀ ॥
ਜਿਯਗੁ ਘੋੜੀ ਸਿਯ ਨੀ ਏਲੀ ਸੀਯ ਕੀਯ ਆ ॥
ਸੀਯ ਕੀਯ ਯਿਯਗੁ ਕੀਯ ਚੀਫ਼ ਆਗੁ ਚੀਯ ॥

AGGS, M 1, P 765

*"If you have a box full of virtues,
Open it so that everybody can share your virtues.
(Similarly) If your friends have virtues,
Share with them together.
Share only the virtues,
Abandon the vices."*

(Also see Prof Chahal's article, *The Aad Guru Granth Sahib, Sacred Interfaith Scriptures*, on pages 14-20 in this issue)

This was the greatest step taken by Guru Arjan, based on the principles of interfaith laid down by Guru Nanak, to make the Aad Guru Granth Sahib as the first interfaith sacred scripture for the whole humanity of this tiny planet, the earth.

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