

## An Overview of the Educational Practices of Sufis in Iran from the Beginning Until 1301

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### Abstract

Mysticism and Sufism is one of the notable issues regarding culture and civilization of Islamic Iran. Theosophy and mysticism and educational activities of this group have been considered by some scholars of East and West; it has been shown that Sufis in their education have provided a special knowledge of the God, human and his characteristics, achieving the man's perfect place, and understanding the world and its various attractions; and they have attracted many God lovers towards this direction. Using descriptive methodology and library and archival method of data collection in this research, primary and secondary sources of Sufi's educational textbooks have been studied and information have been provided on their customs and activities. It seems the purpose of the Sufis educational system is the understanding of human about their true position in the universe so that they would find the best way for living.

**Keywords:** Education, Sufism, Islam, Iran.

### Introduction

Sufism is one important issue often challenges Iranian Islamic theosophy and mysticism. This means that many Sufism critics believe Sufis and mystics remove their followers from community and social life for Sufism teachings and bring up them as secluded, indulgence, and lazy persons Such that they leave work and career and family and become dependent on others for livelihood.

This article tries to consider Sufis customs and activities in the form of:

A - educational purpose of Sufis,

B - self- purification based on moral teachings and time situation.

It also tries to respond to these challenges Whether Islamic Theosophy and mysticism causes the separation of individual from society? Whether Iranian Sufism, because of eliminating prejudice and dogmatism, had a great and positive impact on social and personal life?

Finally, conclusion and bibliography will be provided.

### **A) Educational purposes of Sufis**

The main purpose of Sufis education is to understand the universe and man presence is not accidental; rather, this presence is for sublime movement. Human being in sublime movement toward perfection performs three major stages: "having", "becoming" and "being". The stage "having" includes basic survival needs such as food, clothing, housing, etc. These needs are very important in moving man towards perfection. But if they become the only needs of a man, they would be highly lethal and inhibitory; this is the situation that many moral evils are manifest. Naturally there would not be sacrifice, forgiveness, generosity; because the man has not yet known himself. An empty cup will not overflow; but once it will be filled, it will overflow. Demanding is the nature of empty cup and giving is the nature of filled cup.

If human on the path to perfection seeks highest spiritual position, they step into the "becoming". In this stage, human feels the need to be loved and to be respected; so, they try to be successful. If at this point, they have no transcendent vision and consider this need by business vision- they give to be given so many times-, this will not cause advancement to them unless they consider both need as the basis for understanding the essence of existence and the true nature. I am is not the end of joys and pleasures; it is passing from a stage to another stage. This is the man, who can share their spirit or soul or mind or think with God and with perfecting them, reaches God and His perfection. At this stage, moral virtues emerge.

A person who has reached the highest level of humanity and achieved a peak life. if he has the world's property, he ignores them such that losing them does not concern him. Hence, to achieve this goal, mysticism guides human toward intuitional knowledge and new vision; so, he gains good traits and gets capable of performing their duties and discovers new ways to achieve perfection. In other words, mysticism helps the human to remove old habits, see, hear and touch the world differently, describes his behaviors in another way, does not neglect the fact, and finds the best way for living (Navali, 1994).

Therefore Sufi teachings, on one hand, educate the individuals and on the other hand, educate community. However, these both have led to a goal; educating human leads to the building of society and any deeds of the mystical life is not in vain.

### **B) Self-purification based on moral teachings and time situation**

#### *- Moral teachings*

Man deals with two sets of values. A set makes up the core of ethics that is stable and universal. The other set is formed around the core that is dynamic and unstable (Shamshiri, 2006). If ethics is human behavior, in this case, morality is relative and in different situations, different behaviors will occur. But if ethics include more abstract and general characteristics such as justice, kindness and cruelty, in this case, morality is absolute and ethical topics always maintain their positive or negative ethical charge and will not change. In this case, the moral

education will be the creation of feeling and recognition and eliminating the negative traits and caring and nurturing the positive traits. In this respect, Sufism revitalizes and enhances the moral teachings in the human (Mohammadzade, 2008)

Sufis has tried to teach two types of ethics: speech ethics and act ethics. Anyone who does not learn speech ethics will not understand act ethics. Every heart will love anyone who seeks closeness to God with act ethics; his imperfections will not be seen and he will share the reward of learners. Narrated from Ibn Mubarak: "We need a little complaisance more than piles of sciences" (Mujtaba, 2003). Tolerance and friendship with others is helpful in leaving arrogance and purifying action for the sake of God (Forozanfar, 2006). Also, staying away from bad ethics such as "avarice" has been understood as the source of salvation (Forozanfar, 2006). The position is a good position where man wants virtue of goodness more than anything else and does not consider its reward and punishment. Sufi should clear their inside from any grudges, hatred, hostility and opacity. Having these ethics is the code of getting rid of arrogance and egotism. If someone has not egotism, he will worship God.

The foundation of Sufism is quitting the hardness. Also, Sufi teachings include giving charity, not reserving wealth and supplies, contentment, not asking what you do not have, and do not need what you have (Forozanfar, 2006). Sufi turns the mortal into the lasting. Because all assets and possesses in the world are mortals, the best act in the world is giving them to charity, not saving them greedily. Those are the real wealthy men of the world who have not fortune of their own and consider themselves as the agent of God. Also, Sufis have encouraged the knowledge acquirement in order to give ambition to the believers and brothers. Ibn Ata said: "If anyone has tried for years to make a fortune for benefiting Muslim brother, he is more virtuous than the man who tries to save his soul."

The best ethics of Sufi is humility and obedience. Sufi believes everyone who has humility, they can benefit from this good behavior every day. With such a treasure, he interacts with others more easily and others can enjoy being with him (Ansari, 1985). The Sufis have strengthened these habits to inhibit the sense of pride and superiority and to help others. Of course, being arrogant to the rich and modest to the Dervishes is also humility. Humility is a gift that any one is not jealous to its owner and arrogance is a toil that is ineligible for compassion (Forozanfar, 2006).

### **Conclusion**

Islamic Sufism Spirituality reached its zenith when people were tired of sectarian and ethnic conflicts and wars between different religions. For moderating people pain, Sufis have broadened the horizons of human vision and advised them for tolerance and elimination of prejudice, pride and malice. In fact, Sufism has considered leaving useless disputes, considering spirit of brotherhood, loyalty and cooperation, true and honest life and freedom, and fighting the oppressors as the necessary factors for achieving personal and social prosperity.

Those mystical teachings that focus on the inner world of human mind are for building righteous men. Training and guidance in the Sufism are based on the social education; Sheikhs have focused on preparing the disciples for a good and healthy life and building a good family

foundation and social welfare. The purpose of these efforts against the soul is that the people will not be isolated from society.

It is obvious that between Sufis like any other ethnic groups, there were both real and pious contenders and swindlers misusing this for achieving their evil intentions. Also, some of their teachings are mixed with decadent elements and superstition; therefore, one should be very careful in studying the works, lives, and teachings of Sufis. However, mysticism has provided transcendental insights about ethics, training and dealing with the realities of social that could not be ignored because of some negative aspects. If one consider isolation, laziness, and abandoning job, home, and family as the teachings of Sufism, their idea is false, void, and superficial.

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