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Humanizing Elements of Sufism in India

ABSTRACT: Sufism is no doubt an Islamic way of life to enjoy the blessings of God, which involves vigorous meditation and prayers as well as emphasis on “inner-self” rather than external rituals. This paper, by applying the historical method and qualitative study, is intended to analyse the ideology of Sufism and side by side the nature of their activities so as to avoid conflict in the human society as a whole and obviously among the Muslims. The findings show that Islamic mysticism is not separated from Islam and, at the same time, Prophet Muhammad SAW (Salallahu Alaibi Wassalam or peace be upon him) is considered in high esteem in its ideals. The teachings of the Sufi saints are still relevant today, because it invites and elaborates spiritual unity of humanity and above all intra-religious and inter-religious understanding in order to minimize conflict between various creeds and faith holders of India. It is a fact that India is famous for her composite cultural tradition and in the atmosphere of multi-religious as well as multi-lingual society, an idea of mutual co-existence is essential and a vital role was played by the Sufi saints at a moment, when Islam came to India as a new religion and way of life. Love of God in the form of developing a mind to love His creatures became an important theme of common concern of the mystic saints, who came to India and settled in this country in a historical moment. They taught and appealed to the people at large that the Divine discloses itself in the human races as a whole and, thus, they propounded to all the philosophy of love and cordial relationship among human being; and, thereby, to provide means for the betterment of humanity and also to enjoy His blessings.

KEY WORD: Islamic Mysticism; Intellectual Currents; Inner-Self; Islamic Humanism; Greater India.

ABSTRAKSI: “Humanisasi Unsur-unsur Sufisme di India”. Tasawuf tidak diragukan lagi merupakan cara hidup Islami untuk menikmati berkah Tuhan, yang melibatkan meditasi dan doa penuh semangat serta penekanan pada “batin” daripada ritual eksternal. Makalah ini, dengan menerapkan metode historis dan studi kualitatif, dimaksudkan untuk menganalisis ideologi tasawuf dan berdampingan dengan sifat aktivitasnya sehingga dapat menghindari konflik dalam masyarakat manusia secara keseluruhan dan jelasnya di kalangan umat Islam. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mistisisme Islam tidak terpisahkan dari Islam dan, pada saat yang sama, Nabi Muhammad SAW (Salallahu Alaibi Wassalam) dianggap sangat terhormat dalam cita-citanya. Ajaran para Sufi masih relevan saat ini, karena mengundang dan menguraikan kesatuan spiritual umat manusia dan terutama pemahaman intra-agama dan antar-agama untuk meminimalkan konflik antara berbagai keyakinan dan kepercayaan di India. Ini adalah fakta bahwa India terkenal dengan tradisi budayanya yang komposit dan dalam suasana masyarakat multi-agama dan multi-bahasa, gagasan tentang hidup saling berdampingan adalah sangat esensial dan peran penting telah dimainkan oleh orang-orang suci, para Sufi, pada saat itu, ketika Islam datang ke India sebagai sebuah agama dan cara hidup yang baru. Cinta Tuhan dalam bentuk mengembangkan pikiran untuk mencintai ciptaan-Nya merupakan tema penting yang menjadi perhatian bersama orang-orang suci, para mistikus, yang datang ke India dan menetap di negara ini dalam momen yang bersejarah. Mereka mengajarkan dan memohon kepada orang-orang pada umumnya bahwa Tuhan mengungkapkan dirinya dalam ras manusia secara keseluruhan dan, karenanya, mereka mengemukakan bahwa semua filosofi cinta dan perlunya hubungan baik antara manusia; dan, dengan demikian, untuk menyediakan sarana bagi kemajuan kemanusiaan dan juga untuk menikmati berkah-Nya.

KATA KUNCI: Mistisisme Islam; Arus Intelektual; Batin; Humanisme Islam; India Besar.

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INTRODUCTION

Sufism, as we mean, is no doubt an Islamic way of life to enjoy the blessings of God, which involves vigorous meditation and prayers as well as emphasis on “inner-self” rather than external rituals (Stoddart, 1976; Valiuddin, 1980; and Nasr ed., 2008). It may be considered an innovation in mind for a consistent service towards humanity and renunciation of worldly pleasure. Its genesis is lying in the *Al-Qur’an* (holy book of Islam), which states “the Creator is the First and Last, the Outward and the Inward” and, in other words, the indication is that the God is one and everything else is transient as well as of no use. In the Islamic world, it is known as *tasaww*; and in the Western world, it is known as “Islamic mysticism” (Nicholson, 1963; Schimmel, 1975; and Muedini, 2010).

Historically, the emergence of Sufism is connected with a circumstance, with a new way of life replete with intellectual currents being formed as essential element in Islamic thought (Austin, 1971; and Hanieh, 2011). There was an appeal that grew up in the face of increasing materialism and consumerism in the Muslim society. To prevent such trend among the Muslims from such an absolute materialism in their approach to life, Sufism as a philosophy aimed at a state of human life based on piety and perfection. Through this, a lesson was given to a devoted Muslim who achieved by purifying his inner self and unlimited desire through avoiding the greed for worldly pleasures (Austin, 1971; Hanieh, 2011; and Arslan, 2014).

The Sufis wished to be associated with those who happen to be close to God and were liked by Him. Incidentally

in doing so, they are supposed to do their duties in accordance with the *Al-Qur’anic* injunctions, which discourage the accumulation of riches and advise the believer to live a life of righteousness which might promise a privileged place in Heaven as reward (Burckhardt, 1959; Schimmel, 1975; and Baianonie, 2000).

The democratic spirit of Islam does not recognize any class differences. The Sufis, who are supposed to be man of peace, understanding, and toleration, took every care to treat all men in the same platform and virtually did not practice any social discrimination against the non-Muslims, even the people of the lower order. The spiritual guide for the Sufis was the “be-all and end-all” of their existence and for spiritual satisfaction they depended to a large extent on *ziker* or *jaap* that means chanting the name of God, which can be uttered at all the time (Bakhtiar, 1979; and Gupta, 2017).

In addition to five time *namaz* or prayer, they are to make congregational chanting of names with accomplishment of music taken as a means of cleansing the mind of evil thoughts. Thus, the Sufi saints took up a reformative bridge of *bhakti* and *samarpan* to God with a commitment to bring about harmonious situation among men irrespective of faiths and identities. The situation was, thus, created when the Sufi saints made the propaganda of broad humanism, democratic, and eclectic beliefs to bring about harmony among the people at large. In this case, the Sufis seem to have emerged as the best specimen of Islamic humanism (Nasr ed., 2008; and Gupta, 2017).

The proposed paper, by applying the historical method and qualitative study (*cf* Rösen, 2006; Flik, 2009; and Spilackova, 2012), is intended to analyse the ideology

of Sufism and side by side the nature of their activities so as to avoid conflict in the human society as a whole and obviously among the Muslims. They attached an esoteric significance to the teaching of the *Al-Qur'an* and to them it had a deeper as well as inner idea to convince people about the philosophy of life and the good deeds that might bring reward in the after life.

It is also a point to focus, in this paper, how the Sufi saints propounded a scheme of life within the limits set by the law of Islam (*shariat*), which they considered and communicated to the people as true path (*tariqah*) to the ultimate goal of attaining nearness to God. It is also a fact that they seem to have preached the form of inward light as against the dogmatic formalism propounded in the name of religion (Lings, 1975; Nasr ed., 2008; and Bilqies, 2014).

Their spirit was free from so called superstitions and rigidities, which caused stagnation in the Indian society and Islamic schools. Against such trend of orthodoxy, the new popular and liberal approach to life and thought awakened a fresh spiritual zeal and let loose high creative power based on the element of human values. It released powerful spiritual energy hitherto barricaded by social barriers among the people.

In this way, it may be taken for granted that if anybody else desires to form a correct appreciation of Islamic theology and its contribution to the development of a greater India, one should study the writings of the spiritual leaders of Islam, i.e. Sufi saints who lived with the people of India and worked for their betterment by their precept and example in the proper Islamic spirit, which calls for unselfish purpose of life (Baljon, 1973; Nasr ed., 2008; and Gupta, 2017).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

During the first centuries of the *Hejira*, the Muslim mystics or the Sufis were ascetics and those men with deep religious zeal who are said to have laid great emphasis on the principles of *tauba* or repentance, and *tawakkul* or trust on faith in God (Husain, 1959:33; Schimmel, 1975; and Hanieh, 2011). The ascetic tendency of the early Sufi saints developed a regular movement of a particular theology aiming at the deep and loving devotion to God and a mental discipline of an individual.

It is said that in Baghdad, during the Abbasid period, the Sufi philosophy reached its zenith but the influence of Greek, nevertheless, shook the grounds of the Islamic order and, subsequently, there was skepticism within the system that developed at that point of time (Austin, 1971; and Nasr, 2006). Under these circumstances, logically, the Muslim theologians had to justify their faith and dogma in the light of some logical interpretations. At the long last the mystical doctrines found a spiritual satisfaction to the troubled "souls", who sought more pleasure for the inner light than any external ritual (Valiuddin, 1980; and Nasr, 2006).

Before coming to India, Sufism by all means had reached the highest point of its development in the 12th century AD (*Anno Domini*), when northern India under the control of the Muslims, various Sufi orders found its birth and the Sufi orders like *Chisti* as well as *Suhrawardy* began to spread in different parts of the country and enjoyed appreciation and recognition of the people (Upadhyay, 2004; and Gupta, 2017). In course of time, India witnessed various Sufi orders, like *Qadiri*, *Shattari*,

Madari, Naqshbandi, and so who began to function on more or less on the same lines (Abidi, 1992; and Gupta, 2017).

Incidentally, the *Chisti* order became much more popular and it is said by Yusuf Husain (1959), as follows:

[...] it knew better how to adapt itself to the usages and customs of the country, in which it had come to settle and it was also due to the personality of its early leaders (Husain, 1959:36).

It may be noted that the Sufis have never been treated as a separate sect of the Muslim community; nevertheless, they have all along preferred to enjoy the association of man of piety and spiritual attainments through various organizations of religious orders or *silsilas* (Abidi, 1992; Husain, 2003; and Geoffroy, 2010). Since this paper is not intended to highlight the theological side of Sufism, it is enough to say that many Sufi orders that had arisen in the world of mystic Islam, India was turned into a “hospitable place” for a large number of Sufi schools (Abidi, 1992; Nasr ed., 2008; and Gupta, 2017).

Suffice it to say that the arrival of Shaikh Muin-ud-Din Chisti in India just before the emergence of the Delhi Sultanate heralded a new era, the era of liberal Islam, in the religious history of the country (Hussain, 2003:19). In the next three hundred years, or so during the time of the Sultanate period, Sufism seems to have reached every nook and corner of India (Abidi, 1992; Nasr ed., 2008; and Gupta, 2017).

It is a fact that the development of Sufism, as a form of realization of God, was a new ideological revolution in India. It had certainly popularized the ideas of monism and the nature of the Perfect Man

as propounded by Ibnul Arabi and Abdul Karim Jilli (Schimmel, 1975; Corbin, 1981; and Nasr ed., 2008). They are said to have appealed to the people in the style that:

God is the Unity behind the Plurality, and the Reality behind all phenomenon. Reality is one and indivisible. The Creator (*Haq*) and the created (*khalq*) were the same. It was an extension of the Islamic doctrine of *Tauhid* (Unitarianism). It was to be realized not through reason or intellect, but love. Again, the creative power of God works through his servant or *insan-i-kamil* (cited in Sarkar, 1984:128).

Infact, Ibnul Arabi’s doctrines became much more popular not only with the scholars and the Sufis, but also with the common masses (*cf* Schimmel, 1975; Corbin, 1981; Takeshita, 1987; Dobie, 2007; and Nasr ed., 2008).

The fact remains that Sufism originated in the framework of ethical monotheism of the *Al-Qur’an*, which requires that obligations of the human beings be fulfilled, whether they are due to God or to the people as well as all items of the universe (Schimmel, 1975; and Nasr ed., 2008). Here lie the humanizing fundamentals of Sufism. It has been repeatedly focused within the realm of Sufism that worship of God means a form of worship of Eternal Truth; and truth is one but God is universal; and whenever we are to go for perfection, this may be directed through law of action and reaction.

This perception leads us to find out how the Sufi saints sought to popularize the “Divine Unity” by offering love and affection to all (Schimmel, 1975; and Bilqies, 2014). On the other hand, as Arthur J. Arberry (1992) states, as following here:

[...] they proclaimed and practiced the equality of all believers of the faith, and embraced in the very centre of the social structure of their society the new Muslim converts from the non-caste Hindus so long despised and condemned by the proud *Brahmin* and *Kshatriya* rulers (Arberry, 1992:vii).

It may be mentioned here that the Muslim missionaries had the credit to win conspicuous success and, again according to Arthur J. Arberry (1992), that Islamic Sufism with its cognate mystical yearnings after union with Arthur received the most hospitable home on Indian soil (Arberry, 1992:vii). It, thus, brings us to find out the inner values propagated by the Sufi saints and thereby influenced the people to come within the fold of Sufism. It is likely that they developed in them an intuitive insight, which was extended to the people a lesson “love of God leads us love of humanity without which the former would be incomplete” (Schimmel, 1975; Nasr ed., 2008; and Muedini, 2010).

As to Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, as cited by Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (1991), it is said that he had a peculiar spiritual realization based on the fact that:

[...] no spiritual exercise, no penitence, no prayer, no vigil had greater value in the eyes of God than bringing consolation to distressed hearts and helping the needy and the down-trodden (Nizami, 1991:91).

Equally important to note is Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya's propaganda as a basis of human relationship. It has been said about him that he prescribed three types of relationship with other human beings. Again, Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (1991) precisely analysed this aspect and according to him, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, categorically mentioned that: (1) any man may be neither good nor bad to

others and this is what happens in the long living world or *jamadat*; (2) a man may not do harm to any person but only what seems to be good; and (3) there may be a man, who may do good to others and if others do harm to him, he remains patient and never retaliates (Nizami, 1991:96).

Still according to Khaliq Ahmad Nizami (1991), Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya popularized such course of action to be adapted by a “truthful person and that the Sheikh advised his followers to carry out this” (Nizami, 1991:96). All these quotations of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya have definitely a direct reference to social justice and humanism enshrined in Islam.

Whatever he had propounded is nothing but “love and justice”, and along with the idea of benevolence which can be taken as the essence of the Islamic way of life once proposed by Prophet Mohammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or peace be upon him). It is likely to be nothing but “love of humanity” as ethical ideal, which was being inculcated in the minds of the followers of Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya (*cf* Nizami, 1991; Faruqi, 1996; Siddiqui, 2003; and Engineer, 2017).

Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya, also called *Mahbub-i-Ilahi*, is said to have communicated his messages to many disciples in different parts of the country. Among his disciples were Sheikh Sirajuddin Usmani (known as *Akhi Siraj*), then Ala-ul-Haq who are said to have continued the work of his master in the eastern part of India, especially Bengal. It is said that Ala-ul-Haq's son and successor Nur Qutb-i-Alam spent most of his life time among the poor and the oppressed people at large. Ala-ul-Haq responded to the Islamic message of brotherhood

and equality and obviously this is directly connected with the teachings of the *Al-Qur'an* (Nizami, 1991; and Faruqi, 1996).

In the light of the above, it may be accepted that despite the speculative and emotional leanings, the Sufi saints did not neglect or undermine the realities of life. Social justice, peace, and tradition cannot be ignored and these are altogether bound up with the deepest foundation of life. Here, the mystics might have honoured and appreciated the socio-moral aspects of human life in the interest of spiritual exaltation within themselves. They might have realized the importance of socio-moral existence of man and instructed the followers to practice and communicate the value of justice and benevolence (Schimmel, 1975; Nizami, 1991; and Faruqi, 1996).

This approach very likely sounds, like the teaching of the *Al-Qur'an* which enjoins the people that “prayer is correlated with charity and be bestowed to the fellow-men” (Schimmel, 1975; and Nasr ed., 2008). The implication might, however, be seen in the beginning of the *Al-Qur'an* which gives three essential elements of religious life of a man. The *Al-Qur'an* is no doubt, according to Marmaduke Pickthall (1991), a “guidance for those good people, who believe in the Unseen and establish worship and spend of that we have bestowed upon them” (Pickthall, 1991:6).

This temperament seems to have brought them in conflict with the state; and they were outspoken critics and it is likely that the state intervention in the life might have infringed their independence of mind and action. Incidentally, this is not an issue of discussion here, but it is enough to know that there are huge

examples when there were bold criticisms of the Sufi saints against the state (Abidi, 1992; and Alvi, 2012).

Now, why this was the attitude towards life and their consideration about the moral philosophy of the people needs explanation. In fact, this was a historical experience and its impact when there was a situation in India and elsewhere, when there was the tendency of increasing “materialism and consumerism in the Muslim society” (Abidi, 1992; and Hanieh, 2011). According to a modern researcher, Fatima Husain (2003), said as following here:

[...] to prevent the Muslims from turning wholly materialistic in their approach to life, Sufism aimed at a state of piety and perfection which a devout Muslim was to achieve by purifying his inner-self through renouncing the greed for worldly possessions (Husain, 2003:34).

There were in fact, many Sufi saints who were not only practical guides but also extraordinary exponent of the ideological side of mysticism. In course of time, they had developed the Unity of Being, i.e. *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* with the law of Islam. In fact, this doctrine was expounded by Ibnul Arabi and was popularized in India. It is a fact that this doctrine was not accepted by the orthodox Sufis. But, the system as it stands happens to be an open monastic idea with a support by the *Al-Qur'anic* principle. So, naturally, *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* was an Islamic doctrine of *Tauhid* as well as a system of knowledge based on intuitive experience of the individual (Schimmel, 1975; Corbin, 1981; Takeshita, 1987; and Rizvi, 1992).

This extraordinary influence of Sufism or Sufi saints on all social classes appears striking, if someone is to think about

the approach of the *Mujaddiyya*, one of the dominant Indian branches of the *Naqshbandiyya* propounded by Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi, 1564-1624 (Friedmann, 1971; Rizvi, 1992; and Gupta, 2017). The doctrinal part of this school has been compared with the Vedantic philosophy of *brahma-vidya*. From a recent research by the scholars, such as Thomas Dahnhardt (2002) and A. Rambachan (2006), it appears that this *brahma-vidya* doctrine is very much connected with the gnostic aspect of the Sufi *Ilm-i-ilahi* (Dahnhardt, 2002; and Rambachan, 2006). It has been held by the researcher that *it*:

[...] appears more than a pure accident that the position assumed by the *Mujaddidi saints* to a large extent reflects the viewpoint held by Sri Ramanujacarya's *Vaisnavavistadvaita*, which agrees much better than Sri Sankaracarya's *Shaiva Kevaladvaita* with the Sufi doctrine developed by Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi known as *Wahdat-al-Shubud* (Dahnhardt, 2002:382).

This researcher, Thomas Dahnhardt (2002), again has in the long run concluded that:

[...] it would be highly interesting to undertake a thorough comparison of the two mentioned Vedanta doctrines, one consonant with a *Vaisnava* perspective and the other corresponding to a *Saiva* perspective with the two Sufi doctrines, i.e. Sirhindi's *Wahdat-al-Shubud* and Ibnal Arabi's *Wahdat-al-Wujud* (Dahnhardt, 2002:382).

The Sufis, therefore, emerged as the best specimen of syncretic philosophy propagating peace and harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims of India. The spirit was developed by Akbar through his *Ibadat Khana* and also *Din-i-llahi* and was continued by his princely mystic great-grandson Dara Shukoh. In his spiritual quest and analysis, Dara Shukoh

experimented on doctrine of *Tauhid* or Divine Pantheism in which Dara Shukoh studied Christian and Brahmanical scriptures side by side other religious texts to find out the meeting point of all religions through his famous book *Majma-ul-Bahrain* (cited in Haq, 1998). As to Dara Shukoh, it has been said that, as cited by Radhakamal Mukherjee (2006), as following here:

[...] he seems to have reached the summit of Sufi mystical experience, which leads to the complete freedom and perfection of man and which [...] makes thee (*murida*) universal from partial, and ocean from a drop, a sun from a shining particle of sand, and existence from non-existence (Mukherjee, 2006:245).

What is more interesting is that whether Dara Shukoh or any other Sufi saint worth to name they understood the meaning of a good and pure life within the fold of religious life, where love and devotion are its soul. This can be ineffective unless they are expressed through service, because the emotions of the heart are substantiated by actions only, which stands for "good action" i.e. *amale saleha* (Haq, 1998; and Mukherjee, 2006).

Sufism, Meditative Practices, and its Impact on Hinduism. From the above experiences, one may conclude that there is a Hindu and Sufi meditative practices and in such a situation, the Sufis could not but wield considerable influence on Hindu thought, and not only the saints but also the thinkers of these two leading religions conclude that when Sufi saints came to India to preach and spread their gospel Islam, which was transformed and modified and in the long run it did not remain an alien philosophy in India (Abidi, 1992; Rizvi, 1992; Husain, 2003; Upadhyay, 2004; Alvi, 2012; and Gupta, 2017).

We have already seen how the Sufi saints by their humanitarian approach towards life and examples of personal piety as well as equal treatment to all other faith holders' co-religionists made a profound impression on the Hindu psyche. This was possible, because they did much to temper and lighten the rigidity of Islam being the religion of the invaders, who sometimes thoughtlessly wounded the sentiment of the Hindus of India (Abidi, 1992; Rizvi, 1992; Husain, 2003; Upadhyay, 2004; Alvi, 2012; and Gupta, 2017).

Chaos and crises in Hindu religious ideas amidst the bewilderment of the elites and common masses on the eve of Muslim invasion in India. In historical situation and reality, with the extinction of Buddhism and the chaos and crises in Hindu religious ideas, especially in north India, a peculiar type of bewilderment had confused the elites, intellectuals, and the masses as to the actual goal and meaning of life. The constant warfare and the feeling of insecurity of helplessness, due to the political victories of the Turko-Afghan invaders and the devastations followed at the same time had shaken the faith in Puranic legends and exposed the empty rituals dictated by the priests. The result was the Hindus tightened their social defenses as a defence, due to the prevailing historical situation and reality of despair and disaster (Ramaswamy, Nicolas & Banerjee eds., 2007).

There was rigidity in the rituals, and taboos were enforced strictly and orthodoxy prevailed all the time. This situation was, however, saved on account of two positive factors: one was the reformative move of *bhakti* and *samarpan* that covered the society from north to south (Kabir, 1955; Sarkar, 1984;

Upadhyay, 2004; and Mukherjee, 2006). In these circumstances, most important was the broad humanitarian, democratic, and eclectic beliefs and lifestyle of the great Sufi saints who dedicated their life in elevating the people from the social crisis and could move the hearts of common people. This happened during the Turko-Afghan as well as the Mughal period (Sarkar, 1984; Upadhyay, 2004; Mukherjee, 2006; and Alvi, 2012).

The Sufis, therefore, emerged as the best specimen of Islamic humanism. They stood against the so called Muslim priest class, who insisted the Muslims in general to follow every letter of the tenets of Islam. The Sufi saints were appreciated by them, not because of their eclectic knowledge but by their faith and devotion. A Sufi saint considered himself a simple servant of God to do service to humanity without any distinction. He had the mind to put aside his own desires to dedicate himself acceptable to all irrespective of caste, creed, and all probable complexes (Abidi, 1992; Rizvi, 1992; Upadhyay, 2004; and Gupta, 2017).

Thus, the Sufi saints proved to be potent and effective propagators of the true and liberal contents of Islam in India. They were much concerned about the common folks of the country and could promote a spirit of love and sympathy among the non-Muslims along with the converted masses of the country. They had an exceptional quality of mind related to mutual toleration and respect for each other's faith suitable to the general atmosphere of the country (Abidi, 1992; Rizvi, 1992; Siddiqui, 2003; and Upadhyay, 2004).

The Sufi saints, in fact, developed a quality of mind breeding Catholicity

and stainless devotion to Reality, which should be applied to all the creatures of the universe and to be imbibed through Divine Illumination and grace. Their sense of moral duty and unstinted ideals of personal life, ascetic practices similar to the *Yogic* discipline of *Pranayam* and *Samadhi*, and also inspiring spiritual commitment for the masses through devotional music found an echo in the hearts of the Hindus and brought Islam in the broad stream of Indian tradition (Oman, 1905; and Upadhyay, 2004).

Thereby, it liberated Islam as religion from the vested interests of many professional priests, who guided and dominated the society through many dogmatic principles in the name of religion. This has adequately been viewed by Humayun Kabir (1955), who commented as follows:

[...] it brought a dynamic message of social democracy that few systems of existing political or social civilization could resist [...] like an explosive force it burst through the bonds and conventions which shackled the human mind (Kabir, 1955:103).

It is likely that there was a message of freedom for the individual through, such channels of daily life of a human being and definitely it made the advance and popularity of Islam as a faith not only in India but elsewhere. This trend had, however, begun as a “great social and reformative” movement, which was monitored and engineered by great seers, like Kabirdas (1398-1517), Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1538), Goswami Tulsidas (1497-1623), Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486-1533), and so on, who set the ball of changing the tone and temper of the religious life of the Indian

people for a better India (Kabir, 1955; Champakalakshmi & Gopal eds., 1996; and Satpathy, 2015).

CONCLUSION

It has already been stated the background of Sufism and how this particular doctrine revolutionized the social setup of India. The social rapprochement and philosophical synthesis was set in motion and the spiritual attainment in the long run left an everlasting imprint in the socio-religious mindset of people of India. The powerful Sufistic values and influences fostered a congenial environment all over India and still today stand as a spirit of communal harmony, universal brotherhood, and feeling of love in a pluralistic society like that of India.

In the present study, it has again been highlighted that Sufism, i.e. Islamic mysticism is not separate from Islam and, at the same time, Prophet Muhammad SAW (*Salallahu Alaihi Wassalam* or peace be upon him) is considered in high esteem in its ideals. The teachings of the Sufi saints are still relevant today, because it invites and elaborates spiritual unity of humanity and above all intra-religious and inter-religious understanding in order to minimize conflict between various creeds and faith holders of India.

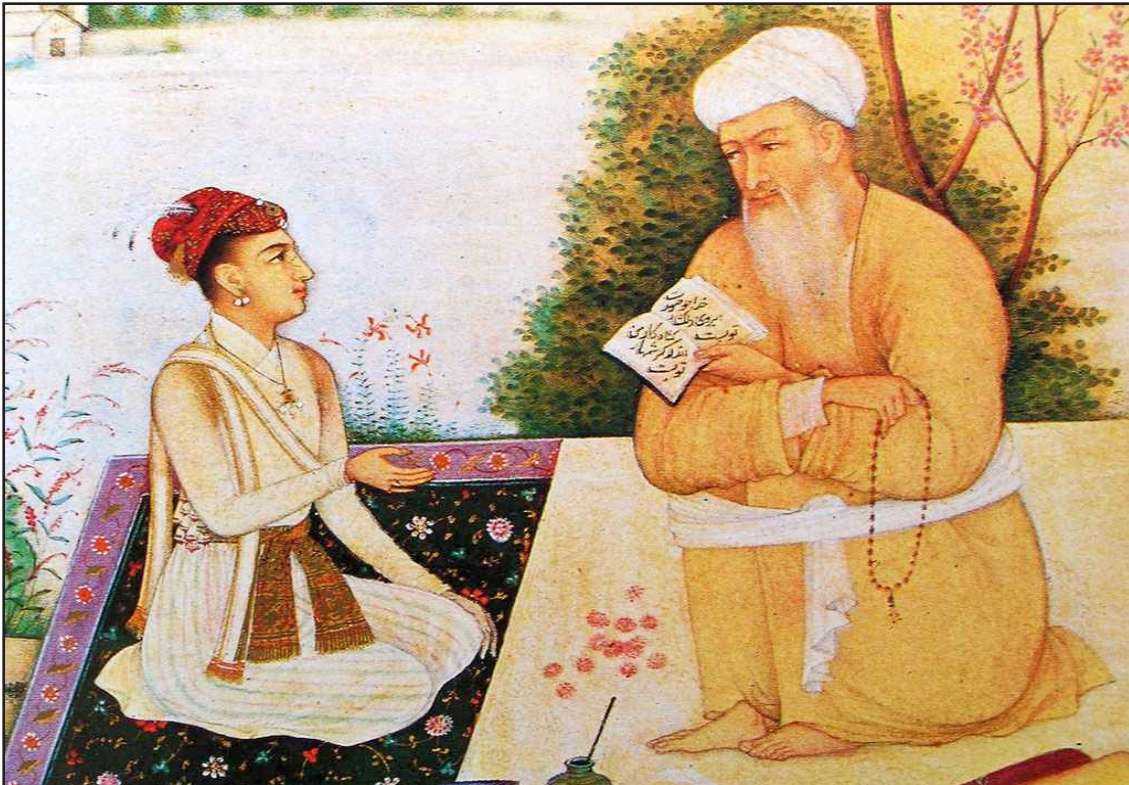
It is a fact that India is famous for her composite cultural tradition and in the atmosphere of multi-religious as well as multi-lingual society an idea of mutual co-existence is essential and a vital role was played by the Sufi saints at a moment, when Islam came to India as a new religion and way of life. Love of God in the form of developing a mind to love His creatures became an important

theme of common concern of the mystic saints, who came to India and settled in this country in a historical moment. They taught and appealed to the people at large that the Divine discloses itself in the human races as a whole and, thus, they propounded to all the philosophy of love and cordial relationship among human being; and, thereby, to provide means for the betterment of humanity and also to enjoy His blessings.¹

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Thus, the Sufi saints proved to be potent and effective propagators of the true and liberal contents of Islam in India. They were much concerned about the common folks of the country and could promote a spirit of love and sympathy among the non-Muslims along with the converted masses of the country. They had an exceptional quality of mind related to mutual toleration and respect for each other's faith suitable to the general atmosphere of the country.