

Inevitability of Sufism to Practice Real Teachings of Islam in the Modern Society

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ABSTRACT: *Sufism, in arabic, tasawwuf, is a belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of the Creator. Sufism is not a new concept per se but the same old way of Al Qur'an and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) which is vibrant, practical and completely free from extremism and malpractices. Sufis support an inner path which harmonizes inner spiritual life while also maintaining religious codes for daily life. It has been argued that the greatest achievement of the Sufis of Bengal is the growth of cordiality and promoting religious harmony, co-existence and peaceful societies. There are misconceptions about Sufism, among others, that many observers have depicted Sufism as marginal to mainstream Islam and have predicted the demise of Sufism as the world modernizes and becomes more educated. The purpose of this study is to throw light on the idea of 'Sufism' how the concept originates in core experiences of Islam. Then it investigates how 'Sufism' is engaged in establishing a harmonious society as well as in developing a culture of tolerance, love and compassion in this modern time. Thereby 'Sufism' has been aptly injecting the true teaching of Islam to existing society. Finally it concludes that 'Sufism' is inevitable to realize and practice authentic teachings of Islam.*

Keywords: *Religious Harmony, Culture of Tolerance, Mainstream Islam, Peaceful Society, Teachings of Islam*

1. INTRODUCTION

The term Sufism embraces the philosophy and practices, which aim at direct communion between God and man, and those who practice Sufism are called Sufis. According to Rabia Basri - "The best thing that leads man to God is that he must not care for anything of this world or next other than God". Sufism or *tasawwuf*, is an umbrella which refers to the inner mystical dimension of Islam (Nasir et al. 2). Although Sufism has undergone many changes over its history, certain concepts remain central to most practices of *taşawwuf*. True nature of a Sufi is an inherent awareness of freedom beyond his/her human form. As Al-Ghazālī narrated- "A bird I am: this body

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*was my cage, but I have flown, leaving it as a token” (Imam Al-Ghazali’s Deathbed Poem, Abdur Rahman’s Corner). The inevitable perspective of human life is intuitional and spiritual development. The existence and sustainability of society in Islam depend on spiritual accomplishment which presupposes every individual in society to be inclined to *tasawwuf* (Qadri 09.52). A deep study of the Holy Qur’an reveals that the ideal and purpose of individual existence is acquisition of the highest form of moral excellence which leads to total concentration of man on the attainment of God’s pleasure, and this can be achieved by a constant remembrance and companionship of God and by a permanent association with those who have already acquired the pleasure of God (Qadri 04. 358). Here arises the necessity of following the ‘*Tarikath*’ (sufi order) through practice of ‘*Tasawwuf*’. Ibn al-jala said- “Sufism is a reality without a form”. But in the materialistic modern time, the development of Science and Technology has brought not only a lot of convenience to mankind but also a deep cynicism towards the religious and spiritual aspects of life.*

There emerges the value crisis of humanity marked by the crisis of spirituality. Multi-dimensional crisis, ecological crisis, violence, crime, social inequalities, poverty and diseases haunt modern society (Suraiya et al. 21). The phenomenon of spiritual movement in the dimension of Sufism has a real power to mitigate social problems of the modern society. Therefore, the global community has to be more vigilant than before to fight the situation with religious values (Malory 177). Outer work alone cannot resolve the problems that beset humanity, for these problem roots lie in the human heart. Moreover, there are also serious attempts to rediscover the minds of great Sufi figures, especially Ibn Arabi and to use Sufism in addressing the challenges of humanity and spirituality in modern times (Suraiya et al. 21). Sufism in Bangladesh is directly connected to the faith, history and culture of social evolution. Sufis and Sufism have made a lasting impact on the life and living of the people through upholding the real philosophy of Islam.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sufism or *tasawwuf*, spiritual belief and practice in Islam, consists of a variety of mystical paths that are designed to ascertain the nature of humanity and of God and to facilitate the experience of the presence of divine love and wisdom in the world (Ahmed 6). The term ‘*tasawwuf*’ is derived from the Arabic word ‘*safa*’ meaning purity and hence someone who attempts to purify their inner being by following ‘*ilm al-tasawwuf*’ (the path of self-purification) is regarded as a Sufi. The idea of *tasawwuf* as considered in Islam is *tazkiyah* (تذكية, meaning: self-purification), which is widely used in Sufism. *Shariath* (divine rules) and *tasawwuf* are complementary to each

other. *Fiqh* (Islamic law) and *Tasawwuf* collectively direct human being to the perfect path (Mannan 7-8). The indication of ‘Sufism’ is found in the well-known “Hadith-E-Jibrail” narrated by Muhammad ibn Ismail Bukhari (d.870). The Hadith speaks of the relationship between ‘Islam’ (perfect submission), ‘Iman’ (perfect faith) and ‘Ihsan’ (perfected character). In this Hadith ‘Ihsan is meant to worship Allah as though we see Him for it is certain that He sees us’ (Bukhari1:12). This exposes the essence of the *Tasawwuf* (Geaves 22). The motto of Sufi teachings is to arrive at fundamental truth in which a follower continuously remains in profound quest, so as to get you unified with the one omni-present infinite God (Ghosh 2). Rabia al Adawiyah of Basra (d. 801 AD), recognized as the first female Sufi, whose prayer highlighted the Sufi approach: “Oh God, if I worship thee in the fear of Hell, burn me in Hell; and if I worship thee in the hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise; but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold not Thine Everlasting beauty” (Dehlvi 70). Muhi’d-Din Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), the great Andalusian Sufi, puts this idea more succinctly: “Enter me, O Lord, into the deep of the Ocean of Thine Infinite Oneness” (Sikand 3). Searching for knowledge and spreading the message of love and brotherhood all over the world became a life-long vocation for many Sufi scholars. It was Ferdowsi (935–1020), the Persian poet from Khorasan, who flagged a couplet in his epical work *Shāhnāme*: “He who has knowledge, possesses power/knowledge gives an old heart a new flower” (Martin 14).

Different views about Sufism when it came into existence. Many scholars are of the opinion that after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the imams and their sheikhs spread the knowledge of Sufism. During the sixth and seventh century of the Islamic era, the way Sufism reached the height of its popularity, and Sufis like Ibn Arabi and Rumi wrote important books about the mysteries of gnosis and the journey towards God (Nasir1). In the early twenty centuries, the Sufi orders had found a new appreciation among the educated. This was partly no doubt a response to the Islamic resurgence and the prominence of increasingly militant groups in many societies. Sufism offered a more irenic discourse, which was more tolerant of non-conformism and more conducive to interfaith harmony, and was embraced by quite significant sections of the modern middle classes and intellectually more respectable alternative to Islamism. The fact of complexity in modern society that leads to the thirst for the values of spirituality sees the neo- Sufism movement (the new Sufi), which puts the balance of world life and the hereafter forward (Suraiya 11). Those engaged in Sufi practices played their knowledge of *tasawuf* to many fields as varied as sustainable development, education, therapy, parenting, science and technology, and cross-cultural communication. (Suraiya 13). Sufism has an important value for modern life, which is further away from social life. It is viewed that in recent decade,

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Sufism has experienced resurgence in the Muslim world such as Syria, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and Southeast Asia. There was a remarkable upsurge of interest in Sufism, especially among educated and modern segments of the urban middle class. Moreover, there are also serious attempts to rediscover the minds of great Sufi figures, especially Ibn 'Arabi and using Sufism in addressing the challenges of humanity and spirituality in modern times (Amin 127). Most scholars believe that the majority of the population of Bangladesh embraced Islam through the influence of the Sufis (mystics, holy men). In fact, when it comes to Bengal, the Sufi saints could easily impress upon the people with their message of love and brotherhood. It is viewed that the charisma of the Sufis of Bengal is the growth of cordiality and promoting religious harmony, co-existence and peaceful societies. Therefore, it has been argued that the "growth of cordiality and unity between the Hindus and the Muslims" is the greatest achievement of the Bengal Sufis. Yet, Sufism is a contested phenomenon in Bangladesh. Islamic reform movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries preached against some Sufi rituals and practices, and Sufism as a whole.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is to investigate whether the 'Sufism' is inevitable to practice authentic teachings of Islam. Other objectives include-

- a. To analyze how the concept of '*Sufism*' originates in core experiences of Islam,
- b. To identify the way the '*Sufism*' is engaged in establishing a harmonious society with a culture of tolerance, love and compassion in modern society,
- c. Finally to uphold that 'Sufism' has been pertinently injecting the true teaching of Islam into prevailing society.

4. METHODOLOGY

The paper has mainly used qualitative method. Data has been collected from secondary sources i.e. relevant books, journal articles from home and abroad, commentaries and lectures of Islamic jurists. Extensive review of texts from holy Qur'an and Hadith has been conducted. The literature review of the secondary sources has attempted to make a consistent pattern of description. After a critical analysis of outcome of the study, major findings have been drawn at the end.

5. BACKGROUND OF *SUFISM*:

Devotion and love seem to have contributed to the birth of the Sufis. There is

a general consensus among scholars that the first Sufis could be found from the time of the Prophet. Sufism is more likely to trace its origin to the ‘*Ahl al-Suffa*’, the People of the Bench or Porch (Geaves 9). They were a group of people who had accompanied the Prophet and earned the title *Ahl al-Suffa* or *Ashab-i Suffa* (The People of the Verandah) for living an austere and ascetic life in the vicinity of the Medina mosque and observing incessant prayer and fasting (Rizvi 21). It may be pointed out that many a believer take Hazrat Ali to be the ‘vital link in the spiritual chains connecting Sufis to the Prophet, and eventually to Allah.’ There are numerous Sufi orders (*tariqa*) in the Islamic domain, including South Asia. Presently in Bangladesh, there are four prominent *tariqa* with several offshoots and combinations. Among the prominent ones include the *Chishtiyya*, the *Qadiriyya*, the *Suharwardiyya* and the *Naqshbandiyya*. There is also the presence of *Naqshbandi-Mujaddiditariqa* or for that matter a combination of *Qadiriyya-Chishtiyya turuq* in the name of *Maijbandari tariqa* in Bangladesh. Save the *Naqshbandiyyas*, however, all claim a lineage or *silsilah* leading back to the Prophet through Hazrat Ali. Only the *Naqshbandiyyas* claim a lineage going back to Hazrat Abu Bakr, the first Caliph (Dehlvi70).

Historically, Sufis’*turuq* or "orders"-congregations formed around a grand master referred to as a *wali* who traces a direct chain of successive teachers back to the Islamic prophet Muhammad (pbuh). These orders meet for spiritual sessions (*majalis*) in meeting places known as *khanqahs*. They strive for *ihsan* (perfection of worship), as detailed in a hadith mentioned earlier: "Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him; if you can't see Him, surely He sees you." Sufis regard Muhammad (pbuh) as *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, the primary perfect man who exemplifies the morality of God, and see him as their prime spiritual guide (Rizvi 20). The journey of Sufi usually consists of following laborious stages:

- a) ***Fanna Fizzat***- This is the first stage where Sufi aspirant destroys every wish and feels that ‘I am the creator of myself’. Through the removal of the “*nafs*” or the animal spirit, our higher qualities come to the fore;
- b) ***Fanafil Sheikh***- At this stage one has to destroy himself and feels that if something exists in this world is only sheikh;
- c) ***Fana- fi- Rasool***- If something exists in this world is Rasool (pbuh);
- d) ***Fana Fillah***- Whatever exists in this stage is Allah;
- e) ***Baqa Billah***- This is the state where man comes back to his existence and Allah appoints him to guide the humans. This is the stage where the individual is the part of the world, unconcern about his or her reward or position (Suraiya et al. 13).

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6. SUFISM AND MODERN SOCIETY

In this modern world, as everyone is so busy in his life and believes that money, possession, physical comfort and many more that happen are more important than spiritual value of life. We forget that what happens to us are not because of our ideas and plans but are our rewards as God blessings. Our egos make us imagine that we are the cause of action. As Sufism teaches that it is possible for us to see beyond the veils of darkness which enclose our belief systems. (Nasir 2). A trustworthy and authoritative teacher can show them the way out of the darkness. Today, humanity has lost tract of the brotherhood and human relations. Neither there is love, affection, and justice; what remains manipulation, exploitation, dishonesty, greed. Sufism offers a remedy to these evils in the modern world. Sufism offers support to the individual by training him in the needed values such as respect for relations and living, appreciation for love (Nasir 4).

Sufism has social and economic impacts as well on the people. Sufis have been involved in establishing co-existence and peaceful societies. For a time, beginning in the 12th century, Sufism was a mainstay of the social order for Islamic civilization, and since that time it has spread throughout the Muslim world, and to China, West Africa and the United States. As Sufism spread, it adapted elements of local culture and belief, making it a popular practice. Sufism has shaped literature and art for centuries, and is associated with many of the most resonant pieces of Islam's "golden age," lasting from roughly the eighth through 13th centuries, including the poetry of Rumi. In modern times, the predominant view of Sufi Islam is one of "love, peace, tolerance," leading to this style of worship becoming synonymous with peace-loving Islam (Specia 1). It can be said that Sufism really teaches humanism, love, brotherhood and oneness and believes in creating a world citizenship through "*Tauheed*" (monotheism) (GHOSH 74).

The growth and expansion of Sufism occurred at a time when Greek philosophy and scientific development were highly valued in Muslim societies. It coincided with extraordinary achievements in science and literature as many Muslim mystics produced exceptional works in philosophy, medicine, astronomy and the arts (Suraiya 12). Influence of Sufism in promoting religious harmony in Bangladesh and establishing co-existence and peaceful societies is well known. The first Sufis, who had arrived in modern-day Bangladesh, were able to impress upon the locals with their freshness of thought and message of universal love (Ahmed 10). Despite the sliding of the emancipatory discourse of the Sufis into ritual-prone Sufism, the Sufis, particularly the great ones, continue to impress upon the minds of the people, making millions of them visit their shrines and seek

blessing on matters ranging from the most mundane to the most sublime. In this context, it may be pointed out that all the major political parties, save the fundamentalist Jaamat-i Islam and pro-Communist platforms, begin their election campaign from the shrine of Hazrat Shah Jalal. Accordingly, the International Airport at Dhaka was renamed after him as well. Right or wrong, the fact remains that the revered Sufis continue to remain a potent force in the life and living of the people. Although it must be admitted that Sufism has lost its relevance in the reproduction of 'new knowledge' and creative ventures. Hope, however, lies in recovering the Sufi discourses and engaging the latter afresh in the task of reproducing tolerance and good will amongst people of various cultures, languages, races, castes and religions(Ahmed 27-28).

There has been considerable influence of Sufi on contemporary Muslim societies in terms of intellectual, economic and political lifestyles contrary to the early theories of modernization of the Muslim societies. This new discourse is termed as 'New Sufism'. Neo-Sufism affirms a balanced religious life between worldly and heavenly life because they are very important to every Muslim. Therefore, Neo-Sufism, as described by researchers, tried to address the concept of *tawazun* or balanced as its basis (Suraiya 1-21). The concept of "*Bangalee Nationalism*" emerges, among others, from various Sufi ideologies that recognize another's faith.

These traditions have hitherto been engaged in establishing a pluralistic society as well as in developing a culture of tolerance and interfaith dialogue. Sufi orders in a global context will bring attention to the world as a crossroad of ideas and spirituality, which continue to enlighten our life and times (Alam 18-25). Despite a relative decline of Sufi orders in the modern era and criticism of some aspects of Sufism by modern thinkers and conservative *Salafists*, Sufism has continued to play an important role in the present world, and has also influenced various forms of spirituality in the West (Mark 56).Sufism flourished in Iraq, Iran, Egypt, Central Asian regions, India, and South East Asia as these regions had very rich civilizational history and culture and integrated themselves with local cultures, customs and traditions (Suraiya et al. 13).

7. SUFISM VS CONCURRENT MISCONCEPTIONS

Confusion about Sufism is common; even among Muslims. It is nothing more than the spiritual dimension of Islam. While some Muslims view Sufis as quirky, even eccentric, some fundamentalists and extremists see Sufism as a threat and its adherents as heretics or apostates. The opponents of Sufism see the shrines and these living saints as idols. Their existence and their worship violate the main principle of Islam, which are the uniqueness of God

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and the uniqueness of the object of worship (Specia 7). Opposition to Sufi teachers and orders from more literalist and legalist strains of Islam existed in various forms throughout Islamic history. It took on a particularly violent form in the 18th century with the emergence of the *Wahhabi* movement. Around the turn of the 20th century, Sufi rituals and doctrines also came under sustained criticism from modernist Islamic reformers, liberal nationalists, and, some decades later, socialist movements in the Muslim world. Sufi orders were accused of fostering popular superstitions, resisting modern intellectual attitudes, and standing in the way of progressive reforms (Suraiya 1-21).

However, defying these predictions, Sufism and Sufi orders have continued to play a major role in the Muslim world, also expanding into Muslim-minority countries. Its ability to articulate an inclusive Islamic identity with greater emphasis on personal and small-group piety has made Sufism especially well-suited for contexts characterized by religious pluralism and secularist perspectives (Alam 45). In the modern world, the classical interpretation of Sunni orthodoxy, which sees in Sufism an essential dimension of Islam alongside the disciplines of jurisprudence and theology, is represented by institutions such as Egypt's Al-Azhar University and Zaytuna College, with Al-Azhar's current Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb recently defining "Sunni orthodoxy" as being a follower "of any of the four schools of [legal] thought (Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki or Hanbali) and ... [also] of the Sufism of Imam Junayd of Baghdad in doctrines, manners and [spiritual] purification" (Profile of Sheikh).

8. SUFISM AS PRACTICE OF CORE TEACHINGS OF ISLAM

Sufism is traced to the Quran and Hadith. The mystical expressions from the verses of Quran are direct sources of Sufism. 'Shariath' (Islamic code of life) comprises in *Fiqh*, *Akhaaid* and *Tasawwuf* (Haque 9). *Shariath* through *Tasawwuf* regulates the human beings to the perfect path (Mannan 8). Quranic guidance for acquisition of pre-determined ideal (*siratal mustakeem*) is referred in the fourth verse of *Surah Fatiha*- "O God, guide us along with the path that leads towards the ideal". The seeker of guidance needs to go through the fulfillment of conditions like incentive, the first one. Incentive is the desire for self-purification or *Tazkiyyah*. Many verses of Quran (Fatir, 35:18, Baqarah, 2:232, Maryam, 19:19, Kahf, 18:74, Najm, 53:32, Baqarah, 2: 151) clarify that 'Tazkiyyah' means the purification of selves from all sorts of evil and corruptive influences. The process of purification has (as indicated by Quranic verses) three aspects-

- a. Purification of selves from all evils in the path of virtue.

- b. God's remembrance without any worldly distraction in the heart and mind of man.
- c. Prayer in the state of spiritual concentration.

Human nature is the victim of a basic contradiction. Quranic study reveals that human nature has two aspects-

1. **Potential Nature:** Natural feelings which are innate in man i.e. Acknowledgement of God's omnipresence, Discrimination between piety and impiety, Insight of the self, a feeling of responsibility of trust (See Holy Qur'an *A'raf: 172, Shams. 8, Qiyamat: 14, Al-i-Imran:25. Also Abu-Daud 2:252*).
2. **Actual Nature:** Emotional and psychic needs and other physical compassions i.e. sexual desires and carnal propensities, love of children and blood relations, love of material goods and gold and love of social and official status (See Qur'an Al-i-Imran:14).

The contradiction in human personality is produced by the tension between his unconscious intuitions and conscious rationalizations i.e. potential nature versus actual nature. The purpose and effect of prophetic training is that the genetic trends of potential nature should not only be promoted but allowed to supersede the acquired trends which are then permitted to organize themselves under the inborn inclinations. Therefore Quran has stated in reference to the training of Holy Prophet (pbuh): "He, the Messenger, recites to you the divine commandments, purifies yourselves, teaches you the book and wisdom and besides he teaches you that which you do not know" (Baqarah, 2:151). Recitation of divine commandments may egg them on to the act of self-purification then the Holy Prophet (pbuh) will help them in purifying their selves and in chlorinating their infected personalities (Qadri. 05: 65-79). Stages of Self Purification are indicated by Qur'an As follows-
- If the compulsions of actual nature dominate the self, it acquires the figuration of "*Nafs-i-Ammarah*" which is mentioned by Quran in the verse: "There is no doubt that the self of man is readily inclined towards evil" (Qur'an Yousuf. 53).

This "*Nafs-i-Ammarah*", by the process of purification through discrimination between good and evil, is converted into "*Nafs-i-Mulhama*" which, later on due to the promotion and evolution of good, is converted to "*Nafs-i-Lawwamah*". When virtue and piety stabilizes in it, the *Nafs* turns into "*Nafs-i-Mutmai'annah*". When this self is pleased with God in every way, it turns to "*Nafs-i-Radhiyyah*" and when God himself is pleased with it, the soul is changed into "*Nafs-i-Mardhiyyah*" and at this stage the human self is converted into "*Nafs-i-Kamila*" (perfect self) and Allah addresses this perfect self: "Join My chosen servants and enter My peaceful paradise" (Qur'an Fazr: 29-30). Every act of Shariath has internality and externality e.g. every

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external requirement (visible acts) for *fasting or salath* is performed but if the internal requirement (*nyath*) is defective the prayer may not be accepted. So the correction of the external acts is Fiqh or Shariath, and correcting the internal acts is *Tasawwf* or *Tariqath*. There need a balance between *Shariath* and *Tariqath* for the perfection of human personality (Qadri, 09: 52). According to Sufis, the Holy Quran has two meanings- one is in letter and the other is in spirit. The meaning in letter (i.e. Zahir) is meant for general people but the meaning in spirit (i.e. Batin) is meant for the Sufis who really attained *belayeth*. The whole of Sufism as regards both doctrine and practice is summed up in the saying of the Prophet pbuh quoted by Sahih Al-Bhukhari- "Nothing is more pleasant to Me as a means for My slave to draw near to me, than the worship that I have made binding upon him. And My slave ceaseh not to draw near to Me with added devotions of his free will until I love him.

And when I love him I am the hearing wherewith he heareth and the sight wherewith he seeth and the hand wherewith he smiteth and the foot whereon he walketh." By practicing devotions characterized by constant 'Zikr' i.e. remembering the name of Allah, the Sufis worked out a method leading to the soul to attain to the gnosis (i.e. ma'rifat) which is termed as knowledge of the attributes of the Divine Unity, peculiar to the saints who behold Allah with their hearts (Rasul 20-21). Sufis believe the sharia (exoteric "canon"), tariqa ("order") and haqiqa ("truth") are mutually interdependent. Sufism leads the adept, called *salik* or "wayfarer", in his *sulûk* or "road" through different stations (*maqamat*) until he reaches his goal, the perfect *tawhid*, the existential confession that God is One. Through the process of self-purification, Sufism has become the voice of peace, co-existence, compassion and equality, a call to universal brotherhood. The values of harmony, welfare, compassion and love for human being are the foundation of just society. We need just not constitutional provisions or legal safeguards, but also social values to build an inclusive and peaceful society, in which everyone belongs, secure about his rights and confident of her future.

Therefore, because there is no aspect of Islam that is not ethical at its base, experts are of the opinion that Sufism is the spirit and essence of its teachings (Suraiya 13). It is viewed that- "Absolute Being (God) is also Absolute Beauty". The core principle of Sufism introduced by the Prophet is the theory of *wahdat al-wujud*, Unity of Being, which descendent Sufi from the companion of Prophet *SallallahuAlaiheWaSallam*, took as the ultimate aim of his Sufi teachings. The philosophy rests on this central issue. So devoted was they to *Tariqa* (Path to Islam) and so diligently did they preach Islam. Descendent Sufis believed that true knowledge could be gained through mystic intuition. The mystical literature reveals that a true Muslim should practice and experience union with Allah. Man has the potentiality to achieve

'*tajalli*', the divine illumination through which he can awaken his latent Soul and control his egocentric *nafs*(self) so as to attain the compassion of Allah. The mystic teachings of Sufis have been widely embraced by the disciples. Throughout the main stream of thought, descendent Sufis via middle-east to India and then in Bangladesh exhibited a silent revolution of peace and progress and morality in the greater sphere of life (Damanhuri et al.). For Sufis, the universe, with all of its seemingly complex entities, forms a unified whole, bound together by love. Although Sufism has undergone many changes over its history, certain concepts remain central to most practices of *tasawwuf*. Among these are the practice of *dhikr*, the personal relationship of spiritual transmission between spiritual guide (*murshid*) and disciple (*murid*), and the focus on inarticulable truths that must be experienced. Charisma of Sufism to see God is not only developing the humanity but also a road of excellence in Islam. It is learning to think what Muslim need to do or not and how to develop their character or to see the God or whatever in any way.

9. MAJOR FINDINGS

The study identifies the following key findings-

- Through the process of '*Tazkiyyah*' (purification of selves as indicated by Quranic verses) sufism keeps human being protected from all sorts of evil and corruptive influences in the path of virtue and consequently God's remembrance without any worldly distraction in the heart and mind to the state of spiritual concentration converts an ordinary man into *Nafs-i-Kamila*" (perfect self).
- The perfect souls (Sufis) have been contributed and will do to convert the materialistic modern society into a phenomenon with spiritual and social values where egos of greed, hatred, anger, enmity etc. will be controlled.
- Sufism has shaped literature and art for centuries, and associated with many of the most resonant pieces of Islam's "golden age." In modern times, the predominant view of Sufi Islam is one of "love, peace, and tolerance" following '*ilm al-tasawwuf*' (the path of self-purification).
- Practice of Sufism can meet the religious and social challenges in the existing society by reducing religious hatred, fanaticism and fundamentalism of any kind and promoting religious harmony, cordiality, co-existence and peaceful inclusive society.
- Islam has since its origins a spirituality that can so easily be overlooked by an approach that focuses on the five pillars and six core beliefs. Sufism is as the name for the inner or esoteric dimension of Islam, deals with morality and ethics, which is supported and

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complemented by outward or exoteric practices of Islam, such as Sharia.

- Sufism in Bangladesh is a silent and spontaneous movement. The Sufis and the Sheikhs in India and Bangladesh are believed to have shown many miracles and divine activities. The Bangladeshi people are tender minded in terms of religious principle; they can be easily convinced if they are given the right direction and shown the right path towards truth.
- There emerges a new discourse characterized as ‘New Sufism’ on contemporary Muslim societies in terms of intellectual, economic and political lifestyles contrary to the early theories of modernization. It is a doctrine of the esoteric values of religious practice that encourage people to engage in society actively and pay good attention to their social problems. Neo-Sufism affirms a balanced religious life between worldly and heavenly.
- There are misconceptions about Sufism. Whereas some observers have depicted Sufism as marginal to mainstream Islam and have predicted the demise of Sufism as the world modernizes and becomes more educated, Sufism has for centuries been central to mainstream Islam.
- Many observers predicted the demise of such mystical tendencies in an inexorably secularizing and rationalizing modern world. Such depictions are based on misconceptions about the nature of Sufism, Islam, and modernity. Islam was introduced throughout much of the now-predominantly Muslim world by scholars who practiced Sufism, and Sufi thought and practices consequently permeated the default Islam, scholarly and otherwise, of these areas.
- Although limited to rituals and qualitatively different from the discourses and practices of earlier Sufis, post-colonial Sufism in Bangladesh has come to face yet another great challenge. This is with respect to the rise of petro-dollars and the hegemonic aspirations of the Hanbali juristic tradition or, as some would say, ‘anti-Sufi’ Wahhabi creed, particularly at a time when a formidable Bangladeshi diaspora has come to reside in the heartland of the latter and maintain daily interactions with family members and friends back home. As a result, for an increasing number of people in Bangladesh the authenticity of Islam is no longer found in the midst of the Sufis and the much tolerant Hanafi juristic tradition. Rather, it shifted and is now found amidst the relatively rigid juristic tradition of the Arab world. This fueled both intra Muslim and intra-Sunni conflicts with the Muslims themselves becoming the major target of violence. Various attacks on the Sufi shrines indicate the intolerance of such

forces, presumably those subscribing to *Wahhabism* (Ahmed27). The recent attack on the Sufi shrines in Bangladesh is as much a product of intolerance at home as it is a product of rigid dogmas abroad, particularly in the so-called Wahhabi belt of the Arab world where petro-dollars and ill-educated migrant workers proved a deadly combination in so far as religion and Sufism were concerned.

- Sufism (*tasawwuf*) ought to be just as important today as it has ever been throughout its long history. Being a way of purifying the soul a necessity for each new generation – its role should never diminish with changing times and circumstances. Yet, paradoxically, although it still has millions of adherents, as a form of religion, it is definitely in a state of decline. This is because the traditional form of *tasawwuf*, which has been shaped by many historical accretions, has no great appeal for the modern educated mind. *Tasawwuf* should now be developed as a mind-based philosophy. It will thus have a much stronger attraction for educated minds.
- The need of the hour, therefore, is to modernize Sufism, couching it in the contemporary idiom, and explaining its ideology in a way that should address the present-day individual, whose major concern is as much with intellectual development as it is with purification of the soul. That is why *tasawwuf* should necessarily be linked with real events and its objectives expressed in a scientific manner. Its attraction will thus reach far beyond the poor, the distressed, the under-educated and the downtrodden who at present make up the bulk of its following.

10. CONCLUSIONS

Sufism has provided guidance to mankind in all ages and shall continue to do so. Sufism is not a single clearly defined movement, but an interrelated network of ideas and practices aimed at a deeper understanding and faithful pursuit of the Qur'anic messages. Spiritual belief and practices have a large impact on the personal lives and influence public life on a daily basis. All social relations were inevitably and legitimately engaged with religious tradition and practices. The possibility of religion in a modern world can be felt through altered functioning of religion. When the spiritual love of Sufism, not the violent force of terrorism, flows across the border, this society will be the paradise on earth. Peace is primarily peace of mind and heart, a state in which there is orderliness in one's relation with God in the first place and with others in the second place. As a holistic and transcendent philosophy, Sufism provides Muslims greater latitude to engage in debates about increasingly divisive politics shaping their societies, while confronting the stringent and narrowing ideologies of fundamentalists. Whereas many

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observers have depicted Sufism as marginal to mainstream Islam and have predicted the demise of Sufism as the world modernizes and becomes more educated, Sufism has for centuries been central to mainstream Islam, and it continues to thrive around the world among all social classes. Sufism continues to attract people of diverse socio-economic, educational, and ethnic backgrounds worldwide. In the midst of the lifestyle of modern society that is individualistic and materialistic, Sufism tends to be one alternative to the achievement of a balanced human life of the world and the hereafter.

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