

Sufism is a Path Leading to Peace and Harmony: A Study of Islamic Mysticism

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Keywords	Abstract
<p>Sufism, Peace, Harmony, Islamic Mysticism.</p>	<p><i>Sufism promotes social values, good moral characteristics of humanity, and basic ethics among people. It reduces religious, gender, economic, and other social differences. It is a more profound philosophy or a neutral approach promoting tolerance, peace, and spiritual harmony. It is constructive for controlling the commanding wishes (Nafoos) by offering certain qualities such as the purification of self, moral etiquette, and the practice of doing good to others as a human being. By this path, someone achieves a state of virtue and nearness to God. The present research is qualitative in design with techniques of active participant observation and thematic framework analysis. In the first sampling stage, the list of 200 respondents was gathered through snowball sampling. Out of these, a final list of 132 respondents was arranged. This figure of 132 respondents was calculated through an online sample size calculator. The respondents were further bifurcated as custodians, Muhibs, Talibs, and Mureeds – who were found in roles of transforming the true spiritual legacies of Sufi Saints. The descriptive notes, poetry, prose, and speech quotes of Sufi Saints were obtained as raw data. 13 themes were drawn, which were split into 08 encouraging and 05 unhelpful categories. 02 most encouraging themes were drawn out of 13 themes for the final analysis. The results were drawn on behavioral changes through the practice of Sufi notations, speeches, and practices of rituals. It was discovered that peace and tolerance were learned through mysticism. The rigidity and intolerance (ill habits) were reduced with Sufi practices. A cumulative result discovered that Sufism education through a scientific approach is needed to address the growing phenomenon of rigidity and intolerance in the current millennial era.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion of tolerance, harmony, and peace. The concept of peace and co-existence is well reflected in the mystical dimension of Islam. In the early centuries Islamic mysticism, or “ilm e tasawuf”, was disseminated as the study of Sufi philosophy which works for planting the seed of tolerance, love for mankind, and brotherhood among people. It was a real approach to Islamic teachings as practiced by the Sufi saints, devotees, and common people. In recent times, the misinterpretation of such true words has been reported which has caused a threat to interfaith harmony and religious tolerance. Innocent people have suffered due to such misinterpretation of true messages. The mystical teachings in Islam as reflected in Sufi traditions help common people understand the philosophy of peace and tolerance. The Sufi orders in history teach us that the entire creation of Allah must live with co-existence. The objectives of the present research study on Islamic mysticism are given as under:

Objectives of the Study

1. To study peace and harmony through the Mystic dimension of Islam
2. To describe the Sufi narratives of major Sufi orders
3. To review published books on Islamic Mysticism

Sufi Order

The major Sufi orders in Islam disseminate the message of peace and tolerance. Each Sufi order is a set of principles and practices that enhance human brotherhood. Details of four major Sufi orders (i) Suherwari, (ii) Naqshbandi, (iii) Chishti, and (iv) Qadri given here below:

Suhrawardiyya Sufi Order

The Suherwardiya Sufi order traces spiritual lineage back to Hazrat Ali Ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him). It was founded by Abu Najib Suharwardi (1097-1168). The Suharwardi Sufi order teaches the ritual of prayer based on the repetition of the seven names of Allah. In this Sufi order, the seeker is a disciple (Murid), a mystical guide (Murshid), and the path (Tariqah). The remembrance of the sacred names of Allah is a pure attempting exercise of reach the right path. The real practice is a constant struggle to diminish worldly wishes and attain spiritual strength or destination (Maqam). Islamic mysticism often denotes a spiritually guided, wise person in Dervishhood. They remember the lesson of patience and tolerance. Wealth, or being rich, is not their precedence in society. Their regular practice is all virtue, good moral character, and remembrance of Allah's name despite unfavourable circumstances. The lesson of virtue is learned from the teaching of our Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He said, "Poverty is my pride." The ritual prayer, or Zikr (Remembrance), is derived from the Quranic injunction "and remember God often" (Surah—Chapter 62—Verse 10).

The Islamic practice of remembrance purifies the heart and soul through the thirty-three beads and ninety-nine names of Allah. This process transforms good behaviour among people and reduces social differences such as colour, caste, creed, matters of wealth, etc. In the mid-9th century, some musical sessions as a remembrance of Allah's names and poetic notations (Sama) were introduced initially in Baghdad, Iraq, and later in other parts of the world, particularly in the subcontinent.

Naqshbandi Sufi Order

Silent prayer and Zikr are the main themes of the Naqshbandi Sufi order. Hazrat Bhauddin Naqshbandi Bukhari was the founder of the Sufi order. He was born on 4th Muharram 718 A.H, corresponding to 8th March 1318 A.D, in Bukhara city in Iran. Therefore, he is known as "Bukhari". The word "Naqshbandi" comes from the original Persian language. It is used in reading, writing, and speaking Arabic. Hazrat Bhauddin Naqshbandi Bukhari received the nickname "Naqshbandi" due to the inclusion of the "Naqsh of Allah's Name" in worship. According to another opinion, the word Naqshbandi means an image-maker. Some people believe that he used to do the business of making carpet patterns in his childhood. That's why the word Naqshbandi was associated with his name. Hazrat Bhauddin Naqshbandi Bukhari formulated the basic principles of silent prayer, Zikr, and Sufism.

Three basic principles of Sufism are mentioned here. The first (waqf-e-zamani) means the knowledge of time; the second (waqf-e-Addadi), in which the knowledge of numbers is described, and the third (waqf-e-qalbi) means the knowledge of the heart. Detailed narratives of the three Sufi principles with prescribed meaning and spiritual aspects are given.

(i) The first principle (Waqf-e-Zamani) is awareness of time. This means that a seeker should watch how he spends his time. How much time is occupied in moving towards spirituality, destination, and truth? Does it remain in the power of understanding to be reached on the path of truth with humility in the presence of your Lord? According to this principle, a seeker should spend all his time searching for the deep secrets of God's love. He should deeply recognize divine presence. Number 01 is associated with the oneness of Allah. It is a great testimony. Be a seeker of truth. Make it a priority to take stock of your actions and intentions every day and every night. Also, be on the alert to analyse your actions every moment, second, minute, and hour. In a state of sadness, remember the forgiveness of sins, and in a state of happiness, praise and glorify Allah abundantly. Keeping in view these two distinct qualities, i.e., attraction and expansion, is the meaning of "Waqf-e-Zamani". In this connection, Hazrat Bhauuddin Naqshbandi Bukhari said, "You have to think about how you spend every passing moment of your life." With presence or negligence, both matters are at your disposal. Attendance is to be a true servant of the Lord, and inattention is to be distracted by worldly worries, away from His blessings and remembrance.

(ii) The second principle (Waqafe Addadi) rational number means what the learner is referring to; the exact number of its count should be seen. It involves silent meditation of the heart. Keeping an account of Zikr is to protect the human mind from whispers and bad thoughts. In this effort, more attention should be paid so that the destination is achieved through Zikr. Counting is the pillar of remembrance. It is the safe way to bring the heart into the presence of the Holy One. The purpose of remembrance is to recognize the greatness of the entire creation of the One. The observation of numbers in Zikr is the first step towards enlightenment for heavenly knowledge and the secrets of the universe. Look at the curriculum, where basic counting and mathematical concepts start from number one and then it goes to further numbering. In the end, every secret of the rest of life is to believe in its attributes.

(iii) Third (Waqf-e-Qalbi): This principle leads one's heart to the presence of God. It means to experience and deeply observe the manifestation of His wonders in the universe. By following these principles, the heart gets internal peace. Because the heart is the center of power, the heart is the fertile field of remembrance. By accepting these blessings, one can avoid the temptations of the world. All thoughts, inspirations, good and bad, and changes in circulation are possible through the path of the heart.

The ethics described by Hazrat Bhauuddin Naqshbandi Bukhari are a good way for common people in society. He says, "All hearts have the same capacity, but the practical wisdom inside the heart is very different from one heart to another." And his words, if I had looked at the relationship of my friends and their faults or shortcomings, I would have been completely alone. Because there is no perfect friend. All of us in this world love good people. But learn the human art of converting bad habits into good habits of people. Also, encouraging them to become beneficial for society. By following the philosophy of silent prayer and Zikr of the Naqshbandi order. People learn healthy practices such as avoiding political narrow-mindedness, economic inequality, and human biases. Much more they learn that Allah forgives our faults if someone performs "Astagharullah". This is a real path of moving on toward the long journey of Sufism.

Chishti Sufi Order

Sufi songs are sung and heard in the vast circle of humanity. The chants of "Main Lajpalaan Di Lad Lagyan, Meri Tun Gham Pari Rahinde, Ajmeri, and Gharib Nawaz" awaken the Sufi soul of hearts to the Chishti order. The continuation of the Sufi Silsila is written by Gharib Nawaz Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti. He was born in 1141 in a small town called Chisht, a distance from Herat, located on the borders of Afghanistan. The place of birth is also known as Sanjar, a village near Khorasan in the Sistan region of southern Iran. While the year of his death is 1236. The reason for the title Chishti is attributed to the connection with the city called Chisht. Their mausoleum is located in Ajmer Sharif. This is why it is also called Ajmeri. He introduced the Chishti arts in Ajmer (India) in the middle of the 12th century. Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti is also known as "Gharib Nawaz, the one who shows mercy to the poor". Because he treated common people with generosity, warmth, and compassion. Reciting the names of Allah and giving great emphasis to the Sufi doctrine of Oneness made it a special education to reject material things and engage in meditation and remembrance of God's divinity.

Even today, collections of Chishti series of sayings, speeches, poems, and letters are preserved in the form of enclosures. The name of Abu Ishaq Shami, 930 A.D., is also found in the chapter of history in compiling the Chishti series. According to the spiritual principles of the Chishti chain, reciting the names of Allah out loud, sitting in a fixed position at a fixed time, is "Zikr Jali", and silently reciting the names of Allah is called "Zikr Khafi". By repeating and mentioning these special names of Allah, Al-Basir, All-Hearing, and All-Knowing, a person is blessed with the special grace of Allah and adopts a compassionate attitude toward the poor. Five more names of Allah i.e. Samad—Abdi, Shaheed, and Shahid—are also special topics of remembrance. This process is called the twelve names of Al-Qudus, Muqds, Al-Wudud, the Loving; Al-Baqi, the sustainer; the visible; the Al-Bateen, the invisible; Al-Gaffar, the forgiver; Al-Halim, Noor, Hadith, the guide; Al-Badi', the worker; and Al-Qayyum, the self-controller. In Chishti principles, meditation, i.e., forty days or more of spiritual abstinence in a solitary corner or a secluded place, worshipping Allah, and meditating on the deepest secrets of the universe, is a Sufi practice. By having this Sufi disposition, a person shares his sorrows and sufferings with the Lord. Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti said in one of his speeches, "Never ask for help, charity, or favour from anyone except God. "Never go to the court of kings, but if they come to you, never refuse to help them; treat the needy and the widow and the fatherless." The Chishti message described is very useful for promoting peace, harmony, and tolerance in this modern age. On the other hand, inequality, narrow-mindedness, and religious bigotry are increasing rapidly in the sphere of society, from families to the borders of countries. Endurance and lack of patience are the same; everyday trivial things are causing serious problems.

Qadiri Sufi Order

The Qadiriya Sufi order belongs to the Hanbali sect of Islam. The foundation of this Sufi order was laid by Abd al-Qadir Jilani in Baghdad, Iraq, around (1078-1166). He was born on March 17, 1078 A.D., in Gilan, Iran. Because of this, his name was also written as Abdul Qadir Gilani. Their spiritual knowledge is related to Junaid Baghdadi. They have also received the address of Ghous Azam Dastgir. Qadiriya Sufi preaches the teachings of human friendship, humility, piety, moderation, and surrender to God. Abd al-Qadir Jilani used to give sermons and teachings during his daily routine, emphasising the pleasure of Allah, generosity, peace-loving, and establishing human brotherhood. Because of this, even today, a large number of people follow their teachings.

During his initial Sufi practice, he meditated in the Arabian desert for 25 years and continued teaching and preaching activities 40 years later. As their philosophy was simple and easy to put into words, many groups took full part. In this way, Qadiriya Sufi rituals are confirmed. With this process, people belonging to different sections of society started to be attracted to the rituals, and the scope of establishing the Qadiriya Sufi principle, including Zikr, was widened. Human brotherhood, service to humanity, the spirit of equality, the reduction of the caste system, and the work of common welfare continued to grow. Engaging in prayer, meditating, and worshipping Zikr, paying special attention to external and internal cleanliness, or not doing any act that hurts or harms people of another religion. The continuation of the Qadiriya Sufi order has spread to many countries. Various groups have dealt with this issue. In the light of history, this Sufi order began to spread beyond the borders of Iraq in the fourth century. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, it spread to Syria with its centres in Damascus and other cities.

In this way, the propagation spread to the countries of Central Asia, India, Eastern Europe, Malaysia, Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula. In today's era, the search for modern knowledge is our basic need. In the same way, such an academic philosophy is also necessary, with which we should emphasise the education of human behaviour instead of promoting religious harmony or dividing into sects. The simple philosophy of the Qadiriya Sufi order has helped to achieve this good goal and create social harmony among different human groups. By explaining the path of truth through this philosophy, many goals, such as human welfare, are achieved. In the same way, practices of abstinence, special stages, and Sufi destinations are prescribed. Walking on the true path of Sufism is considered to be the renouncing of worldly desires, or "the path of annihilation". In general, all Sufi lineages are considered to be the basic principles of piety, trust, or complete faith in God. A simple solution to the current social problems is to examine the teaching and learning process with a deeper perspective. Sufi curriculum is also required to properly understand and practice the message of peace, harmony, or religious tolerance. It is necessary to have academic discussions and academic studies of the ancient process in educational institutions. Because in the universities of advanced countries like the United States, in-depth study of the history of the academic study of Sufism is also part of the curriculum. Since the 20th century, in the subcontinent, Great Britain, America, Canada, Australia, and Eastern and Southern Africa, teachers associated with the field of reading and studying had established centres by bringing Chishti and other Sufi chains into the practical structure of educational teaching. In this way, high centres of modern knowledge were established in the Western world, and spiritual knowledge also came under serious consideration.

For this reason, the thinkers of the Western world are considered to be good people along with their academic profession. There are intellectuals in the affairs of the world with technical knowledge. On the one hand, we have not been able to advance much in the race to get modern education. Dissemination of the Sufi mood in the schools has also been limited to speeches. According to a scholarly opinion, reading and reciting Chishti Sufi messages as part of the teaching process would be an intellectual advance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The reviewing of published books and research papers regarding peace, tolerance, and broadly Islamic mysticism has been worthy. It has been instrumental in the synthesis of framed notions of various scholars. The research work of Muslim scholars as well as other experts was found with multiple factors crucial to learning about the dimensions of peace and humankind's love. On the other hand, there are very crucial and heartbreaking social circumstances that cause uncertainty and hopelessness. Beyond any doubt, there is a social

media challenge. People are disseminating rigid and fixed-type messages that are not relevant to institutional growth. Such irrelevant information is susceptible to youth because people often do not check whether it is correct or invalid; they just share it. Sometimes concepts related to other religions are also frustrating if portrayed negatively (Syed, 2024). Sufism is a system composed of rules and a science of moral disposition. It is a freedom, generosity, and absence of self-constraints. The Sufi who sets principles to seek God calls himself a traveler (Salik). He advances by slow steps to stages (Maqamat) along a path (Tariqat) to the goal of union with reality (Fanafil-haqq). Meditation is nearness to God, love, tranquility, and certainty (Nicholson, 2022). The Islamic traditions are compiled through theological school. The collectors of ascetics sought to convince their readers. The elements of Sufi theory and practice have been part of Islam since its very inception (Knysh, 2015). A dignified scholar argued that human beings are capable of the most sublime capacities: kindness, generosity, clear thinking, and common sense. These social skills are necessary for the smooth running of society and for anybody wishing to approach Sufism (Shah, 2017). It is to attain a life goal of truth and reality through Sufism, which is the highest level of a path of knowledge (Marifah). The knowledge of truth is like the light of the Sun; whole love is like the heat that always accompanies that light (Nasar, 2007). Mohammad Saeedimehr, in his views, explained three principles for interreligious dialogue. The implications of these principles for interreligious dialogue promote co-existence and tolerance in two different areas: doxastic and moral. He has elaborated that mysticism is derived from Greek music, which means “to close the eyes and lips”. The meaning of knowledge of the truth is not by mere reason or by heart (Saeedimehr, 2020). The physical body of a human being passes through the stages, from infancy to youth, adulthood, and old age. In Arabic, stages mean maqdm, which controls worldly wishes that help reach the divine station near Allah (Chishti, 1991). An identity-based approach to forming a culture of peace and tolerance through education is an aspect of promoting interfaith harmony among the global community. This culture, while acknowledging human values, richness, and diversity, strengthens the global community (Korostelina, 2012). Language gives us the insight to choose words, phrases, and speech over all aspects of human cooperation and teamwork. It helps to socialise morally worthy ideas and speaks to reduce tensions and build a strong point for morally rich webs (Smith, 2009). In the context of investigating linguistic dimensions of mystic concepts, the scholarly work of Prof. Annemarie Schimmel is remarkably treasured in studying the mystical dimension of Islam. She documented the mystics, cultural narratives, and broad translation work to find Sufism roots among people in Sindh (Schimmel, 1957). Another aspect of such social circumstances is seen as intolerance. The social borders between in-groups and out-groups are distorted and weakened; people have increased intentions to protect the distinctiveness of their social groups (Branscombe, 1999).

The above literature review is captivating and instrumental to continuing Sufism as a comprehensive text for people beyond religious differences. It is a synthesis of notions on the Islamic dimension of Sufism and relates the education of peace and tolerance for society through the transformation of the academic framework among the institutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research method with an effective technique of active participant observation and a thematic framework for the descriptive responses was implemented. The observational notes were gathered during the regular rituals at the shrines in Sindh. The recitation of sacred words Zikr and the rhythmic repetition of such sacred words were also noted, reflecting the deep substance of tolerance. Thirteen (13) themes were drawn from the raw data – these themes were categorised as relating to encouraging and undesirable

behaviours. Eight (08) themes were found related to a constructive approach and five (05) with an unhelpful one. In the process of thematic coding, only two (02) themes were placed for assessing behavioral results. The disciples' behaviours, gestures, majestic voices, sound notations, rhythmic musical orders, and a continuous flow of sacred words were subject to observing the mystic phenomenon. It was continued while customs were held with a set of usual norms.

A list of two hundred (200) participants was drafted using the snowball sampling technique. It is usually used when there is no secondary data available and the researcher gathers primary information by asking one respondent to another. Out of two hundred (200) respondents, one hundred and thirty-two (132) were chosen as a sample size. The online sample size calculator was used with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. Respondents were 1) custodians of the shrines, those who carried forward the legacy of Sufi Saints. The other categories of respondents were 2) Muhib, 3) Talib, and 4) Mureed. The respondents were directly involved in the rituals and norms of Sufi Saints for more than a hundred years.

The observational notes were recorded carefully for the meaningful passages. Therefore, ethical consideration was potentially applied during the data collection process. The obtained data was arranged in an MS Word file in paragraph form, and results were drawn. Finally, all descriptive information was properly ordered. The phrases used as Zikr were more in-depth segments of information that were carefully handled from all spiritual and moral aspects.

Respondents Bifurcation

The categorical information of respondents is given below, as custodians, Talib, Muhib, and Mureed, whose particular responses were gathered.

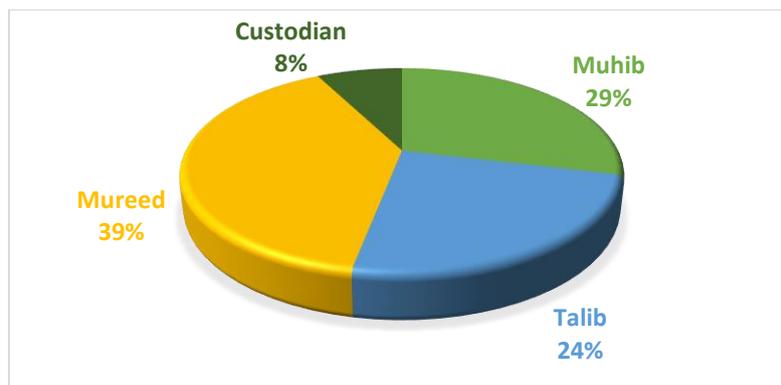


Figure 1: The Categorical Information of Respondents

The above diagram states the categorical bifurcation of respondents. It shows custodians 8%, Muhib 29%, Talib 24%, and Mureed 39%. There is a figure of 8% reflected as custodians because of eight shrines in Sindh. 39% Muhib, the person having affection for the Sufi message but attending customs seldom. However, this category of respondents was among the well-qualified women and men serving in different fields. They talk about the benefits of Sufi practice and suggest the young population follow the principles of humankind's love. 24% of Talib were found deeply loving the true teachings of Sufi Saints. They reflect the social phenomenon of Sufism with devotion to tolerance and dignity for human beings without any discrimination. Mureed 39% was the highest percentage among the respondents. They were followers of the Sufi legacy. All categories of respondents were socially tied to the sanctity of norms and principles. Such practice reflects peaceful manners and the overall teaching of saints at shrines. It was observed that followers were well-connected to the

principles of Sufism under the legacy of saints and their custodians. The social indicators reflect that people whose love reflects Sufi Saints also behave for positive peace, manage anger, and do not create issues on grounds of religion. It is a spiritual strength and a way of social bonding that is well reflected in Sufism for humankind's love and tolerance.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Qualitative data Phrases, words, sentences, and peculiar sacred words of Zikr that reflected Sufi customs were gathered as primary data. It was a blessed teaching and recitational text relevant to the concept of Islamic mysticism.

Theme—promoting the socialization

Themes were bifurcated into two categories. The first thematic category reflected constructive behaviour, social bonding, and social harmony, and such approaches as patience, tolerance, social bonding, humbleness, the cherishing of moral support, and the capacity to control anger were merged as socialization. The social fabric is promoted through the recitation of sacred words or by performing Zikr.

Theme—reducing the radicalization

The second category of the theme was drawn as anxiety, intolerance, incapability to manage anger, less religious harmony, and other social differences as weak areas of behaviourism—such concepts were merged as radicalization. Scientific studies have produced evidence that such biological factors are found among many people. But remember that Zikr is vibrant to control negative behaviours.

The Zikr (Remembrance) of sacred names was found to be very beneficial in promoting industrious behaviours and reducing radicalization or undesirable attitudes. The people associated with Islamic mysticism used the following concepts: peace and harmony. Below is the description of Zikr.

Table 1. Description of Zikr on prompting socialization and reducing radicalization

Zikr/Zikir	Conceptual Meaning	Peace and Harmony
لا إله إلا الله	There is no one but Allah	There is only one Allah truly worthy
الله أكبر	Allah is greatest	Allah is greatest – Islamic declaration of faith
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ	Praise be to Allah	Thanks only be to the Lord
أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ	I ask Allah's forgiveness	A humble submission before Allah, if I am wrong – a firm belief that all goodness comes from Allah.
الله هو الله	Allah only Allah	It is a rhythmic chant reflecting – concentration on prayers not thinking about who is standing beside

The above five sacred terms are given: Zikror prayer words. These words reflect the purpose of Islamic mysticism: to perform prayers through spiritual strength levels to control worldly wishes (Nafoos). It is essentially a remembrance of Allah to learn the mercy of the entire creation. The performance of Zikr offers the capacity of pardon, humbleness, and brotherhood, and they strive to lead a simple life. Selectively names of Allah, Allahoo, Allahoo, Ya Ahad, Ahad. The above-cited Zikr was performed at shrines in two-fold, i.e., Zikr Jali (Zikr aloud or with a high-pitched voice) and Zikr Khafi (silently), Allah Al-Basir, Abdi, Shaheed, Shahid, Al-Qudus, Muqds, Al-Wudud, The Loving, Al-Baqi, Al-Bateen, Al-Gaffar, Al-Halim, Noor. The comprehensive teachings and speeches of Sufi saints are needed by society during the current crucial circumstances to handle modern-day issues.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Sufism is the experience of truth towards the divine and the stages of reaching destiny with a divine goal. The Sufi orders are the path to performing Zikir for people to achieve more spiritual strength. It helps to overcome worldly wishes and is even more beneficial to reduce ill habits such as dishonesty, revenge, backbiting, gossiping, and other evil thoughts that may cause major social differences in society. The Islamic moral standards are honesty, forgiveness, tolerance, mercy, brotherhood, equality, general cooperation, and social bonding. This Islamic aspect of mysticism is achieved through attending Zikr and teaching Sufi Saints. Salik (Dervish) or Sufi guides have assisted innocent people to become friends with each other and promote brotherhood. It is an experience of behaving with politeness, the transformation of the Sufi teachings, and the true path of peace, tolerance, and mysticism. The practices of mysticism are instrumental in promoting social fabric, intellectual contributions and equally adjusting with people by reducing social differences in such a modern era.

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