

Sufi poetry promotes social integration and tolerance: an analysis on teaching contents at University level education in Pakistan

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Abstract

The family is a first social institution of every human on earth. Every one of us learns social skills and nurturing practices within the sphere of the family in early years of age. The social, moral, and cognitive development remains associated with the family members in this way. When age turns to adolescence, the academic journey enters at higher education institution i.e., University. During academic journey at university level students take social responsibilities on their shoulders – truly students think analytically on careers opting from the market and becoming independent in secondary and tertiary social spheres. This age group is very critical for young generation, where family members allow their sons and daughters to closely interact with people and build their own viewpoint. Unfortunately, this age group is involved in extremist and terrorist activities. The subjects of technologies, natural sciences, and social sciences are taught to become skillful professionals for getting maximum financial return in the society. Unfortunately, the syllabus related to forgiveness, tolerance, spirituality, religious harmony or the message of spiritual Saints is not explored and taught at required level. As a result students get a comprehensive knowledge on particular disciplines. The education of tolerance and interfaith harmony is not included anywhere in the course outlines and teaching practices – nobody can guarantee that such students would not become suicide bombing agents but the education of tolerance and interfaith harmony, the comprehensive teachings practices on tolerance can guarantee us on promoting the social integration, tolerance among the future generations. It is highly needed to develop syllabus on themes of tolerance, interfaith harmony, and message of spiritual Saints in Asia and over the world. The contents related tolerance and spiritual harmony can be included in the course of different disciplines. Sufi poetry, spiritual customs, norms are the applications of Sufi education. Beyond doubt, the comparative study of different religions is needed as well.

Keywords: Sufi poetry, Tolerance, Spirituality, Interfaith Harmony, Social integration.

Introduction:

The religion is a set of norms and principles to lead a peaceful life according to particular religious Shariat. Unfortunately, rigid and fundamentalists misinterpret the actual teachings and use the religious education for political cause. After the event of 9/11 confrontation and complex phenomenon of extremism is reported as major issue in different countries. Pakistani nation is victim of fundamentalism, Mosques, Imambragahs, public places are not safe from the suicide bombing – there are sever frequent attacks reported in different newspapers and news channel. Day-by-day the attitude and actions of fundamentalists are increased, a large population of innocent people i.e. children, women, men are killed due to suicide attacks. As a whole 30% population in each country is victim of extremism issue. The political leaders, academicians, intellectuals and dignified people from different walk of life are killed in target killings. In Pakistan, countering the terrorism military has developed a strategic plan to root-out the unseen places of these extremists. Still, there is fear they (fundamentalists) may re-group or re-organize for the attacks. In-fact, there is need to target the young population within academic institutions and out of institutions to teach them a true

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message of humanity. In November 2016 on 273rd Annual Uris of Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai an international conference was arranged by custodians of shrines under the Pakistan Mashaikh Itehad Council (PMIC). The title of international conference was “Dahshat-gardi Ka-Jawab- Sufia Karam ka Nisab”. It was demanded that the teaching and practices of Sufi saints be included in the syllabus from primary to University level academic institutions (Dawn, 2016, November 15). Once Moulana Rumi was asked about identity, he replied only “love” for mankind is the real identity for everyone on earth. Muhiyeddin Ibn Arabi also said that “love” is my religion and my Shariat. It is a meaningful gesture that our generations need to learn and practices because Sufi education believes building humanity, tolerance and demolishing the hatred and extremism. Someone who loves humanity cannot be monopoly but adapts humanity and tolerance. Sufism is based on a deep spiritual approach and on looking into one’s inner self. Spirituality is like an ocean and narrow identities are like small rivers bounded by banks and their course predetermined. Spirituality is therefore far more inclusive (Asghar Ali Engineer, 2012, September 7th). The education on tolerance, religious harmony and peace is basic need of present generations. The University of Spiritual Healing and Sufism has been established at Angwin, California, United States of America. Shaikh Said-al-Jamal is spiritual founder of the University. It offers various certificate courses and degree programs on spiritual education. The students learn about wisdom and knowledge, self-limiting habits, experience and beliefs are gently washed away, the heart becomes filled to overflow with love, beauty and peace. It also offers skills and knowledge on qualities of love, peace human love. What the spiritual thought of saints thoroughly interpret the language of humanity, prosperity of universe as a whole and the most important piece of education – remain peaceful person in the society. The spirituality teaches us to be mankind lover without discrimination of caste, creed, and gender. There is need to study the practices arranged at the shrines of Sufi saints and include the basic norms in the contents of curriculum – that will a road-map towards peaceful world (a heaven on earth).

Literature Review:

Since the inception people have been striving for the welfare and survival of the human being. Few people are ignorance and creating troublesome circumstances for innocent and peaceful citizens. There have been two significant paths for leading the life – at first it is building peace and social welfare of the society, second becoming opportunists and not thinking about the welfare of the common people. Latter type of people can be trouble-making at major level anywhere in the world. In the modern era, two important theories influence the human society. European philosophers like Hegel were logical “Sufis” thinkers about the welfare of the society and their approach was mystic and spiritual (Khadim Hussain Soomro, 2008 page-118). Secondly, the pious men from every religion do not harm the people in society. They connect their inner-self with union of (creator) God and consider it the success of life. The special form of modern thought seeks a self-revelation of God in history implies the possibility that the age-old strive of all pious men for a reunion of their own soul with God has re-appeared in the interpretation of history (Warner Kaegi, 1954, page 253). Undeniably, there is need to bring syllabus and teaching practices in the market particularly at University level education system which clearly denote the respect and tolerance on other religious matters because someone who has so held so prominent a place in men’s consciousness

cannot be easily dismissed. Witnessing the manifest evil exhibited in the world in the twentieth century, one could be forgiven for saying the Devil (and his demons) are still at work (Anthony Finlay, 2002, page-154). Unfortunately, the religious misconceptions are caused for the extremism and intolerance in the Muslims and people from other religions but in every severe attack the young population has been involved, prominently. For suppose it did not take long for the world Islamic front for against Jews and crusaders to come up with an authored statement, emphasizing the growing importance of the Israeli issue and even more significantly, the unity of message from all Islamist movements (Yossef Bodansky, 2002, page-279). In the present era, it is widely circulated that western civilization, modernity and a combination of the social political and military attacks on Muslim nations present the most formidable challenge to Islam. Confronted with continuing onslaughts the Muslims world finds itself in a very miserable situation. In spite of growing social, ideological aspirations the world of Islam remains in a void which appears to be devoid of any material, intellectual and scientific reserves to meet the harsh realities of present age (Dr. Iqbal S. Hussain, 2003, page-161). The academic institutions play a vital role in social constructionism i.e. the phenomenon of tolerance, forbearing and a true interfaith scenario. The family is no sense independent institutions capable of being fashioned; sustained or modified it will suit the fancy. It is part and parcel of an organic civilization and must undergo such evolution as will keep it in correspondence with co-existing social institutions whose form and texture seems to depend primarily on the evolution of economic techniques (Arthur W. Calhoun, 1865, page-323). It is an undeniable fact that young population can contribute profoundly on shaping the interfaith harmony and love for human being because education is the only solution to promote cooperation and healthy behaviors among the people. Youth can play vital role in bridging the gap between senior citizens and young children in school going age. Sufi poetry and Sufi customs at shrines of Sufi Saints are models in current era for religious harmony and peace. The same can be added in the educational outlines with multiple strategies. The tract record demonstrates that the education orientation of the mutakalims was connected with their fanatical striving to train the common people, the masses, in rational methods of discourse, and arguments. Their calls to inculcate a capacity for critical thinking in children from an early age were not abstract slogans divorced from life evidence of that in particular, was the circles they organized for children and youths, to which even ideological opponents of mutakalims sent their sons and daughters. Assemblies (majalis) of mutakalims were common; they were not only a place where doctors of speech and profound knowledge could demonstrate their skills in carrying on dispute but also a school of theoretical primarily critical for the broad public (Taufic Ibrahim and Arthur Sagadeev, 1992, page-45). The spiritual Saints have been preaching about their philosophies and practices that every human on earth needs peace and prosperity that comes with education and diversified knowledge learning about spiritual education ranks in high degree of human values. Like Hazrat Shaikh Muhiyuddin Ibn Arabi was at highest rank of mystic education. He had experienced practically all the spiritual states and stations of mystic path. The basic source of his knowledge was the illumination of his heart by divine light, unveiling of divine mysteries, inspiration and illuminative intuitions, and then his rational arguments. This is the logic and comparative knowledge that leads us towards the path of peace and tolerance. The teachings of Ibn Arabi are eye-opener and enlightening and divine of God. It builds inner sanctification

and soul-sublimation to fully understand the dignity of human respect (Muhammad Riaz Qadri, 2012, page-52). The curriculum offers various skills and abilities to students to exhibit professional approach to complete different tasks in the society. The education of mysticism enables population to widen the human efforts and create an environment of love and tolerance in every social group whether poor and rich may lead peaceful life because mysticism is a universal phenomenon, which refers to a streak or a current that runs through many great religious traditions of the world; including Hinduism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Hellenism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The growth of Sufism into fully developed movement with institutionalized practices was the result of a protracted process stretching over centuries, during which it proliferated over the length and breadth of Islamate. The popularity of Sufi movement accompanied with crystallization of set of practices and Sufi legacy was carried generation after generation. Mysticism has been defined the belief that knowledge of God and real truth may be reached by directing one's mind or through spiritual insight independently of reason and the senses. These principles entail a direct consciousness of God by an individual, his or her comprehension of Divine Truth, and the consequent development of his or her meditative and intuitive faculties (Tanvir Anjum, 2011, pages34-36).

Research Methodology:

The qualitative research was carried out for exploring the problem of extremisms and fundamentalism an avoidable phenomenon in the present era. The teaching of Sufi Saints required for the behavioral changes and can be included as subject along with other professional degree programs. The qualitative research was more relevant for studying the social and spiritual observable facts. The research tools of qualitative responses i.e. gestures, words, pictures were included, while the qualitative research methodology. The issue of intolerance is increasing which can be addressed through religious education. It was aimed to study the Sufi contents relevant to curriculum needs. The original notion was explored in context of intriguing perceptions of different women and men on social good practices of people in previous days and present scenario of intolerance and extremism. Categorically custodians of shrines, devotees (faqees), professionals from different fields, well-qualified people were involved in the research study. It was apparently seen that understanding the spiritual philosophy and practice of Sufi Saints is the basic need of present generations. There were face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were held with respondents. The poetry, prose and other spiritual customs arranged at the shrines were included in the research process. The published material on Sufi studies and poetic collections were explored through the content analysis technique. The list of respondents was received from different devotees, and concerned departments and the custodians of shrines. The respondents were selected randomly for involving in research process and custodians, devotees (faqees) were involved in the research process. Sample size was calculated by Raosoft sample size calculator. There was 5% margin of error and confidence level was 95% and (universe) the targeted population was custodians, teaching and non-teaching staff in institutions, devotees (faqees) and folk-poets.

Research tools, primary and secondary data:

In data collection process two research tools were used. (1) The focus group discussion (FGD) tool and (2) a research questionnaire with open ended and open ended responses were developed for primary data. The primary data was collected through visiting different shrines, interviewing from custodians, devotees and other concerned respondents. As per research protocols the primary data collection tools were reviewed at first and piloted/pre-tested in the field. While the process of pre-testing some necessary editing was made with omissions of errors. Then final data collection process was started accordingly. The secondary data was collected from the books, research reports, shrines historical documents and different research articles. The websites were visited and pertinent secondary data was searched from the focused areas. The appropriate references were mentioned of each source as standard level.

Data analysis:

There was non-figurative primary data in form of descriptions, gestures, and other responses. Therefore, thematic framework a qualitative analysis technique was carried out. The list of interviews transcripts were reviewed in very careful manner of each interview and thereafter a list of potential codes was finalized; also a data reducing and indexing exercise was practiced, accordingly. The selective list of themes was prepared and refining and screening of themes was held the final results were drawn. In meantime, four (04) books of collection of Sufi poetry were studied. The books of “Kalam-Bahu” and “Shah-Jo-Risalo” were included in the research from where thematic verses of poetry were studied. From each book 20 verses were selected and contents were reduced and finally seven (07) verses were included as form of qualitative responses. The selected verses were interpreted thematic manner. The detail of selected verses from Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai poetry as well as poetry of Sultan Bahu’s selectively was revealed recited as purposeful – below is the detail.

A few verses from Sufi Poetry of Shah Latif

(1)

اَکَرُ پَڙَہُ اَلَفَ جُو، بِيا وَرَقَ سَيِّ وَسارِ
اَنَدَر تون اُجار، پَنا پَڙَهندين کيئرا

*Peruse just the letter 'A' forget the rest of pages,
Enlighten inner self; rather than perusing pages*

(2)

سئون پَڙَہُ ساجاه جُون، کَنزُ قُدري چَدِ
وانءُ تَنبي جي سَدِ، جَنبي سانگُ ن ساه جُو.

*Peruse lines of awareness; give up scholastic books,
Answer to their calls; who care not for their lives.*

(3)

پَڙَهيو تا پَرهن، کَڙهن کيئ قلوب ۾

پاٹان ذوہ چڑھن، جئن وَرَق وارین وِثرا.

*Pages they peruse; but do not comprehend,
More pages they turn; the more do they sin.*

A few verses from Sufi Poetry of Sultan Bahu
(4)

لکھن سکھون لکھ نہ جاتا کاغذ کی توں ضائع ہو
قلم نوں مار نہ جائیں کا طب نام دہرا یا ہو
سبھ اصلاح تیری ہو سی کھوٹی جاں کا طب ہتھ آیا ہو
صحیح تھناں دی باہو جنھاں الف تی میم پکایا ہو

*You learned to write a beautiful hand
But what to write you didn't learned-
The whole exercise was a waste of paper
You call yourself a calligrapher
When you can't even shape a writing pen!
When you script examined by the real Scribe
All your efforts will prove to have been worthless.
Only when you repeatedly write Ali and Meem
On the tablet of your heart, will you past his test.*

Interpretation:

The above mentioned verses are selected from “Shah-Jo-Risalo”, and “Kalam Hazrat Sultan Bahu”. The themes like devotion, exploring innovations, concrete learning, recognizing application of simple to complex, self-analysis, character is mirror of actions are reflected from the poetic words. There are vivid examples of teaching and poetic words highlighted that application of each study is related with behavioral change. It is clearly articulated that there is diversity in creation of God and concepts love. Truly, there is no need to search large number of books for understanding the concept of oneness of God and creation. Even a single letter is enough to understand the practices of spirituality that offer well-acquaintance of human values; anyone who has recognized his/her inner-self will be tolerated and scholarly behaving with human being, apart from the difference of religion, differences of caste, differences of social status. Sufi poets highlight that wisdom cannot be achieved; it is somewhat inner cleanliness of feeling and heart. Studying true message has many dimensions; it helps in grasping over the knowledge, practicing with honesty, and loving human being beyond the boundaries.

A few verses from Sufi Poetry of Shah Latif

(5)

هو چوئي تون مَر چوئ، واتان ورائي
اڳ اڳرائي جو ڪري خطا سو ڪائي
پانڊ ڀر پائي، ويو ڪيني وارو ڪيئي.

*Seek no retort; let them affront you,
Aggressor would; definitely blunder,
No malicious ever; earned anything.*

A few verses from Sufi Poetry Sultan Bahu

(6)

نه مين جوگي نه مين جنگم نه مين چلا ڪمايا
نه مين بچ مستين وڙيانه تسبيه ڪهر ڪا يا
جو دم غافل سو دم ڪافر مر شدا هي فرما يا
مر شد سو هتي ڪتي باهو پيل وڃ جا پچا يا

*I am not a yogi, I am not a Jangam
I don't do forty, day retreats.
I have never escaped to a masque
Nor have I ever rattled the beads of a rosary
My master has taught me a precious lesson
The movement you have forgotten to remember God
Is the movement you have spent in denial of God!
O, what a marvel my Master has performed
In no time has he transported me to the Lord!*

(7)

نه مين سني نه مين شيعه دوهاڻ توڻ دل سڙيا
مک گئے سب خشڪي پيڙهه در يار حمت وڙيا
ڪنن من تارے تر تر هارے کوئي ڪنارے چڙهيا
صحيح سلامت چڙه گئے باهو مر شد الڙ پڙهيا

*I am neither a Sunni nor a Shia
Both make me sick; both cause me heart bum
The arid part of my journey ended
When I turned away from both
And plugged into the ocean of oneness
Many dived into that ocean ill-prepared*

*And drowned-only the rare one who was able to swim across!
But those who held fast to their Master's hand
Safely landed ashore*

Interpretation:

In above mentioned poetic words both the poets (Hazrat Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai and Hazrat Sultan Bahu) interpret that if anyone makes wrong with you – don't go in revenge. Taking revenge is dual evil and it causes another conflict. On other your forgiveness eradicates the evil from the heart. It creates social sphere of kindness and the person who has done wrong thing, can be guided from avoiding such evil thing in next time. The Sufi poetic treasure of words highlight that the lesson of love to creation can be learned in Mosques, Temples or any other place of worship – the lesson of humanity and love is everywhere in the world. You start doing good things there will be returned of respect, interfaith and forbearing. The referenced poetries were not composed in a room; both the Sufi poets lived with common people, traveled for and wide – thus poetry is reflection of practical experience and it is arranged in the same way as the needle sew the clothes and beads of rosary always remained in sequential order. Every rhythmic word is a true example of teaching good lessons and this is what our generations are needed to learn about.

Conclusion:

The research study on issue of intolerance and extremism was arranged from two shrines in Sindh and Punjab, Pakistan. The sub-questions were added regarding the strategies and effective measures on addressing this issue. Examples of teaching practices in different academic institutions from advance countries were visited through soft-data and this research is useful for promoting peace, tolerance, religious harmony as well as national integration. The Sufi poetry has literary flavor for reading purpose the phenomena has been largely circulating in South Asia and particularly in Pakistan. Sufi poetry has been considered the subject of few literary persons – who make good speeches on the dice and do not look back what message, was practical taken by the public generally. The text books and curriculum narrates specifically introductory passages where the Sufi poets either lived during their lives or shrines are constructed when they were died. The knowledge of technology and professional degrees offer skills and information but it does not work where Sufi poetry intrigue straightly in the mind and heart of every individual. It encourages on performing good behaviors, it interprets the humanity and the language of Sufi poetry effectively conveys the knowledge of peace and tolerance. The present study recommends the contents of Sufi poetry can be added in the curriculum framework and the subject of Sufi poetry and practices can be taught at University level institutions because it promotes peace; while the peace is among basic needs of everyone. It is required to every mother, and it is equally needed to every teacher to transfer the mankind loving contents as well the teaching of other valuable information and skills.

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